

BULLETIN
OF THE
FIRST DISTRICT NORMAL SCHOOL
KIRKSVILLE, MISSOURI

Volume XV

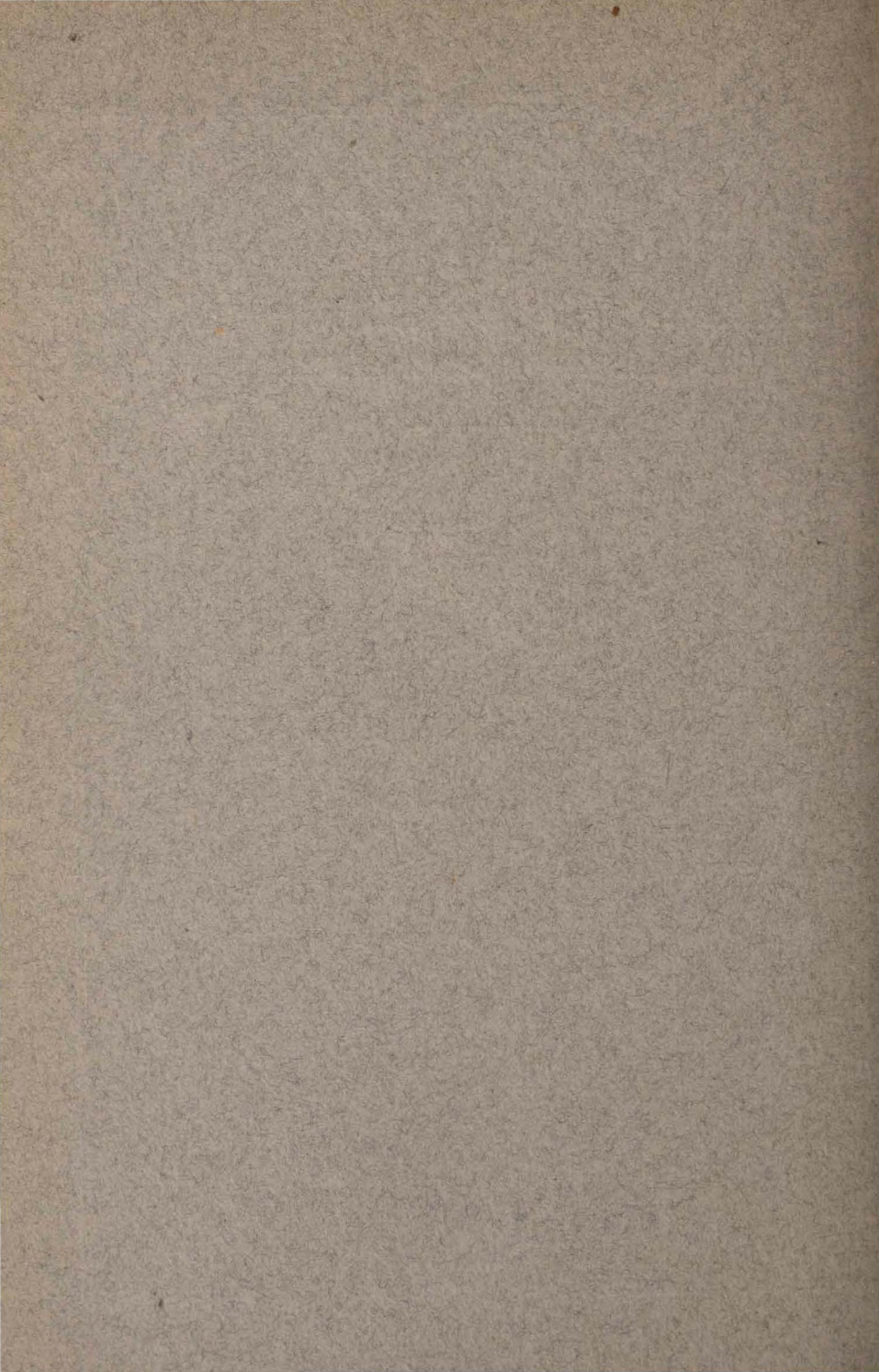
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OF THE
FIRST DISTRICT NORMAL SCHOOL
KIRKSVILLE, MISSOURI

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A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

A Play in Three Acts

BY

STEPHEN BLACKHURST

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A Little Child Shall Lead Them

A PLAY OF RURAL LIFE

by

Stephen Blackhurst

in collaboration with the other members of the class in Advanced English
Composition in the First District Normal School, Summer Quarter, 1915.

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FOREWORD

"A Little Child Shall Lead Them" was written as a class exercise. It is one of sixteen similar plays written by the class in Advanced English Composition of the summer quarter, 1915, of the First District Normal School. The purpose of the instructor in proposing such an exercise (aside from such pedagogic reasons as a desire to motivate the course) was to produce a play dealing with rural life problems for presentation at the Fifth Annual Rural Life Conference to be held in December, 1915. The general plan of the plays was discussed and contributed to by the class as a whole; hence each play is really a composite production, embodying the best ideas of all of the class members. But the actual composition and the arranging of all plot details are, in every case except two, the result of individual effort. In the two exceptional cases mentioned, four students worked in pairs.

The actual writing of the plays occupied the last three weeks of the quarter; but all the time preceding was applied to work leading up to the play,—short daily themes, fortnightly short stories, one-act plays, many round table discussions and exchanges of criticism, and the examination of much illustrative material.

Special acknowledgment is due President John R. Kirk and Dean A. P. Settle for encouragement and criticism, and to Profs. Mark Burrows, Leslie B. Sipple, and Florence M. Lane for expert information and advice on matters pertaining to rural life.

C. M. WISE (Instructor).

A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

A PLAY OF RURAL LIFE

Characters

Hugh Calvert.....	A cultured young farmer
Cyrus Olliver	A good-hearted, hard-headed farmer of the old school
Myra Olliver	His wife
Loreta Olliver.....	His daughter
Angela.....	An orphan, and granddaughter of Cyrus Olliver
Peter Simpson	A wealthy bachelor farmer
Doctor Sylvester	
Sam }	Hired servants of Cyrus Olliver
Betsy }	

ACT I.

Setting, a back yard of an ordinary farmhouse. Pots, kettles, etc. are scattered about in no certain order. In one corner of yard is an old grindstone; in another corner is a sawbuck with a few sawed chunks piled near and a bucksaw carelessly thrown on them. As the curtain is raised a young woman is seen churning with an old dasher churn near center of stage. Her dress of faded calico and worn apron and sunbonnet indicate that the young woman is a hired girl. In her face is a look of simplicity bordering on meager intelligence. Immediately after the curtain is lifted, a young man, apparently some three or four years older than the woman, possibly thirty years old, comes on stage. He is of medium build, neither short nor tall, more inclined to be slender than heavy. He, too, is dressed in a working garb, and his general demeanor would indicate that he is a farm laborer, or hired hand, as he would more ordinarily be called. He is evidently a pleasant, good natured man, and his continual smile is an ever present assurance of that goodness within which prompts his simple acts.

SAM.—Why, B-B-Betsy, wh-wh-what are you d-d-d-doin'?

BETSY.—(With a look of weariness and a very drawly voice) I'm thorry to thay, Tham, that I've been a-churnin' for over thikthty minuttth and the butter won't come.

SAM.—(Coming up awkwardly to the churn and looking sympathizingly into Betsy's eyes) I-I-I'm sorry for you, B-B-Betsy. I-I-I wish I could help you, but I-I-I haven't g-g-got the t-t-time. The b-b-boss told me to s-s-swill the p-p-pigs right away—but there a-a-aint any s-s-swill, so I-I-I've got to g-g-give 'em plain w-w-water.

BETSY.—(Somewhat guiltily) I'm thorry to thay, Tham, that I thpilled the thwill.

SAM.—N-N-never mind, B-B-Betsy, the pigs p-p-prefer cold w-w-water in the s-s-summer time anyway. (Starts away, but suddenly turns back.) I'm s-s-sorry for you, B-B-Betsy. I-I-I'm afraid you'll get s-s-sun struck. I-I-I'll tell you what I'll do, B-B-Betsy—I haven't g-g-got time to churn for you,—but I-I-I'll try to f-f-f-furnish you some shade. (He sets down bucket and rushes off stage. Betsy mops the sweat off her face with her sleeve and continues her churning. Presently Sam rushes back on the stage opening an old umbrella, and Betsy stops churning.) Here we are, B-B-Betsy! I u-use this parasol for e-e-e-emergencies. It sheds s-s-sunshine or r-r-rain. (He comes up to Betsy and holds parasol over her.) N-N-Now churn, B-B-Betsy. (Betsy again starts the churn, but Sam puts his hand on her shoulder and she quits churning and hangs her head. Sam holds umbrella so that it hides them from back of stage, and draws nearer to her.)

BETSY.—Tham, you alwayth wath good to me.

SAM.—(Holding up the umbrella a little and peeping under it to back of stage) I w-w-wonder what the b-b-boss would say if he found us here a-(He hesitates) a-w-w-workin' together. (Lowers umbrella again.)

BETSY.—I am thorry to thay, Tham, that I am afraid he wouldn't like it.

SAM.—I b-b-bet I know s-s-something else that the b-b-boss wouldn't like if h-h-he knew it. (He puts his right arm about her shoulders while he holds the umbrella with his left hand.)

BETSY.—Tell me what it ith, Tham.

SAM.—Now, B-B-Betsy, I don't want to get into t-t-t-trouble with the b-b-boss or his pretty d-d-daughter or with that fine b-b-beau of hers. I am afraid you might t-t-t-tell; then I might get into t-t-trouble and l-l-l-lose my job. (The boss, Cyrus Olliver, enters at back, and unobserved by the hired help, stands and listens to their conversation. He is a man of about fifty years, has slightly gray hair and a gray, stubby beard. He is large and somewhat portly. He is a man of overbearing nature. He is slow of motion, slow of speech, yet firm and decided, and his confidence in himself gives weight to his every word and action. His language suffers from want of school training, but it is none the less emphatic for that. He wears a farmer's garb, consisting of heavy shoes, work shirt and overalls and a broad-brimmed hat. A red handkerchief hangs out of his hip pocket. He stands in an attitude of disgust when first he catches sight of the hired man and the hired girl.)

BETSY.—(Dejectedly) I am thorry to thay, Tham, that you can't trutht me with a thecret.

SAM.—Oh, well, B-Betsy, here g-g-goes anyhow! Now you must hold your t-t-t-tongue.—The pretty d-d-d-daughter's beau is handin' around a p-p-p-paper to get signers for c-c-c-consoli-d-d-d-ation. And he s-s-s-said this morning that he h-h-h-had enough names to p-p-p-put 'er through. (The farmer's digust changes to surprise and indignation.) And B-B-Betsy, if they do p-p-p-put 'er through, watch out for the b-b-b-boss and the d-d-daughter's beau. There'll be some f-f-fur a-f-f-flyin'.

MR. CYRUS OLLIVER.—(Indignant yet composed) What's that you're sayin' about consolidation? (Sam lets the umbrella fall and Betsy jumps screaming and rings her hands.) You tell anybody that wants to know, that this deestriect don't get none of that consolidation till Mr. Cyrus Olliver (Points to himself) says yes. Anyhow, what ye standin' here under a umbrella for when ye ought to be a-workin'?

BETSY.—(Pleadingly) I'm thorry to thay, Mr. Olliver, that the butter won't come. I think it needth thome hot water in it. (She begins churning vigorously.)

SAM.—I-I-I-was on my way to swill the p-p-p-p-pigs, Mr. Olliver, but the s-s-swill—it-it-it——(He nervously picks up bucket.)

BETSY.—(Breaking down) Oh Mithter Olliver! I thpilled the thwill! (Mr. Hugh Calvert steps in at right. He is about twenty-four years old. He is strongly built, tall and straight. His face is smooth-shaven and there is in it an expression of determination, yet one of frankness. He is refined and gentle, but by no means effeminate. He is neatly dressed, yet not what one would call "dressed up". He holds a paper in his left hand, and walks up to Mr. Olliver and extends his right hand.)

HUGH.—How do you do, Mr. Olliver. (Mr. Olliver takes no notice of his visitor, but continues his dialog with his hired help.)

MR. OLLIVER.—Sam! Take that churn and empty what all's in it into them slop pails and swill the pigs. There's more money in pigs than butter anyhow. And Betsy, you'd just as well collect your senses and take that churn to the house and get it washed out. And remember, I'm gettin' tired of this eternal sparkin'. It 'pears to me like there 's more lovin' than money-makin' goin' on around this ranch lately, an' I'm here to say that they's got to be a change in the way things is goin'! (Sam, having emptied the churn, hurries off with the swill buckets, and Betsy runs off with churn, Sam going to left and Betsy to back center. Mr. Olliver picks up umbrella and closes it, still paying no attention to the young man. The young man, however, braces up and opens up his mission.)

HUGH.—Mr. Olliver, I have stopped to see you a moment on a matter that a number of us have been thinking about for some time. I am somewhat hesitant in speaking to you about this, because I am quite aware of the fact that in the past you have taken the side of the opposition. However, I feel that nothing ought to be done in the dark about this thing which affects us all alike. So, in order that it may not appear that there is any underhanded work going on, I am coming to you openly, to————

MR. OLLIVER.—(Impatiently) Young man, if you want anything of me come to the point. My time's too valuable to fritter away listening to orations. What's that paper? (Points to the paper that Hugh holds in his hand.)

HUGH.—I beg your pardon, Mr. Olliver. This is a petition. (He proceeds slowly and carefully.) A petition signed by a number of voters of this school district and the adjoining districts of the north and east and south,—a petition to the effect that these several school districts unite for the purpose of organizing a consolidated district, and that——

MR. OLLIVER.—Young man, let me see that paper. (He scans the paper hurriedly and hands it back to the young man.) I notice that you've got all the names you need to hand in your petition. But I also notice that they's one name that's not on your list, and that's the name of Cyrus Olliver; and when you get his name on your list, then you've got your consolidation. But so long as his name is off the list, there aint no consolidation. Is that clear?

HUGH.—Mr. Olliver, I hoped that we should not create any unfriendly feeling between us. I have known your family a long time and I greatly respect——

MR. OLLIVER.—(Passionately) Why don't you say what you mean, and have it done with? You mean you want my daughter and don't like to do anything that will spoil the match.

HUGH.—(His spirits rising) Sir! I do want your daughter—I love her—and I intend that some day, if she be willing, she shall be my wife.

MR. OLLIVER.—Young man, take notice what I say. They ain't a man in the county but what knows what the Olliver blood is. And they ain't a man in the county but what knows that Cyrus Olliver is true to his blood. If there's any other man on God's green earth can dictate what'll be done in the Olliver family, it'll be after Cyrus Olliver is dead and buried. (Sam rushes in at right entrance and goes up to Mr. Olliver.)

SAM.—M-M-M-Mr. Olliver. There's a m-m-m-man out in the road, and he w-w-w-wants to s-s-s-see you r-r-r-right away.

MR. OLLIVER.—(Turning to Sam) A **man** wants to see me? Well, then, why don't he come in? What does he want? Who is he?

SAM.—I d-d-d-dunno. He was in a auto-m-m-m-obobile. I think it's P-P-P-P-Peter S-S-S-Simpson.

MR. OLLIVER.—Peter Simpson! (He starts off right, but suddenly turns to Hugh.) Young man, you was so anxious to give me a square deal by bringin' me a petition to sign, I'll show ye that I can be just as fair as you brag about bein'. Now listen. It may do you good to think about it. I say that Peter Simpson 'll be my son-in-law a long time before you ever will, and you'll be rummigatin' around with consolidation petitions when my Angela's a grown woman and my unborn grandchildren will be a gettin' a good education down at the old schoolhouse. (He makes his exit at right with a triumphant chuckle.)

SAM.—(Grinning at Hugh) The b-b-b-boss seems to have his f-f-f-fur mussed up this afternoon. I th-th-think he's losin' m-m-m-money on his p-p-p-pigs, Mr. C-C-Calvert. They ain't g-g-gettin' enough s-s-swill. Mrs. Olliver m-m-makes most of the s-s-swill into smear-case.

HUGH.—(Changing the subject as soon as possible) Where's Loreta to-day, Sam?

SAM.—(Taking on a new interest) She's in the house. Her and B-B-B-Betsy is makin' smear-e-e-e-case for supper.

HUGH.—(With a faint smile) Won't you go in, Sam, and tell Loreta to come out here a few minutes?

SAM.—I think I can call her w-w-w-without goin' to the house. My v-v-v-voice is v-v-very strong. It g-g-g-got strong a-callin' p-p-p-pigs. (Turning to the right) L-L-L-Loreta! L-L-L-Loreta! (To Hugh) Do you w-w-w-want me to c-c-call B-B-Betsy too?

HUGH.—I think not this time.

SAM.—(Proudly) I-I-I've known B-B-Betsy a long time Mr. C-C-Calvert. (Loreta comes on right entrance. She is a pretty, plump, cheerful little being, with enough seriousness about her to make her quite lovable. She is about seventeen years old. She is dressed in a neat kitchen garb. Her pretty pink apron shows up in harmony with her rosy cheeks. Her hair is combed becomingly and she makes a very presentable appearance, yet she comes out blushing, because she has been found in her work clothes.)

LORETA.—Oh, Hugh! If I had known you were going to be here I might have fixed up a little. You never do tell me when you are coming. I think

some time when you come I shall be away from home just to teach you a lesson. O Sam, Betsy told me to ask you to fetch her a bucket of fresh water.

SAM.—(Wreathed in smiles) Who? B-B-B-Betsy? (Without waiting for a reply he bounds off at right.)

HUGH.—(In a serious tone) I have been talking with your father, Loreta.

LORETA.—(Anxiously) Talking with father?

HUGH.—Yes. I am afraid, Loreta, that things are not going to be very pleasant between your father and myself. (Loreta looks worried.) Come over into the shade a few minutes. It is so warm here. (He takes her arm to lead her to a bench. He looks up suddenly.) What? A cloud came over just to shade us? (He keeps hold of her arm as he talks.) You know, Loreta, that I have been working for a long time to get our schools into better shape. Some people think I am doing it just to put myself forward. But Loreta, (Passionately) you know my heart's in the work. Even my farm work almost takes second place. I can't help it. It just burns in me and I have to work at it or my conscience tells me that I'm not doing my duty. But **I'm going to succeed**, Loreta. I respect your father, and for your sake, I hate to oppose him; but it's in me to win and whatever the price is, I must pay it.

LORETA.—I think all the more of you, Hugh, for being honest with yourself; and I can't help but respect you for your bravery.

HUGH.—(Encouraged) It strengthens me to hear you say that, Loreta. And do you know, I feel my life can never be complete until it is joined with yours? (He gently puts his arm about her.)

LORETA.—Hugh!

HUGH.—I may as well tell you what I told your father. I was in a passion when I said it; but it was the truth, and I am proud that I said it. I told him that I loved you, and that some day, if you were willing, you should be my wife. Tell me, Loreta, did I say too much?

LORETA.—(With a trembling voice) I am afraid that it can never be, Hugh.

HUGH.—(Firmly yet tenderly) Tell me why, Loreta.

LORETA.—(Drawing back from Hugh) Why? Well, you know that you are an educated man. You have been away to high school, to college, and you have learned—oh, how to be somebody, how to do things. And I have gone only to the country school! And I haven't gone there since three years ago. I have read lots, but that isn't like going to school. All I know is little—oh, Hugh, you see I can't. I love you, but I can't do it.

HUGH.—(Reasoning) If we love each other, then why does it matter if we have not had just the same work in school?

LORETA.—(Coming to Hugh and grasping his arm) If I loved you a little, it wouldn't matter; but I love you so much that—oh! don't you see I can't? If my father would send me away to school—but he won't! (She breaks down and cries.) Oh! if only I had a chance!

HUGH.—(Much determined) **I say**, Loreta, you **shall** have a chance. All the fates combined cannot defeat me! In one year's time we shall have a

high school in this place—a high school where you can learn not alone Latin and algebra, but art and music and domestic science, and—and—all those things that make home life happier, and home work easier and home a better, a more beautiful place to live in. Yes, Loreta, you shall have a chance to have an education, and even if you do not go to college, the things that you learn here will make you my equal, never fear—more than my equal. (He comes back to a more conversational tone.) Do you know that man that called your father to the road?

LORETA.—(Recovering from her tears) What man? I didn't see anybody.

HUGH.—(Somewhat embarrassed) Why a-a-Mr. Simpson, I think they called him—Peter Simpson.

LORETA.—(Again clutching Hugh's arm and a look of horror coming over her face) Oh Hugh! What **made** you mention him? I can't—(She hears voices and she hurriedly falls back from Hugh and assumes a careless, indifferent attitude. Mr. Olliver and Mr. Simpson enter right. Mr. Simpson is a medium-sized man, somewhat tall, with black hair, and a black mustache in which he takes especial pride. His voice is harsh and rasping, yet he has it under perfect control and can make it serve him for any purpose. He is nicely dressed and seems quite aware of it.)

MR. OLLIVER.—Well, you here, Loreta? Mr. Simpson didn't expect you here, did you, Simpson?

SIMPSON.—Well now! That I didn't! I had only hoped to have the pleasure of meeting our young friend who so ably expounds the consolidation theory. (Gives a patronizing glance at Hugh.) But the world is full of surprises, and some of them most agreeable, by the way. (He advances to Loreta and offers his hand, which she reluctantly takes.) Oh! So timid! Has my good friend (Again glancing at Hugh) been dazzling Miss Loreta with appalling facts about our educational environments? Ha! Ha! (Loreta shrinks from him.) And what, to be more serious, are the prospects for furthering the consolidation movement in our own locality, Mr. Calvert?

HUGH.—(Feeling insulted, but holding his temper) The prospects are very encouraging. We have enough signers to present the petition, and we feel very hopeful of a victory.

SIMPSON.—Good! Good! Diligence always brings its just reward. A maxim I learned in the little red schoolhouse. Very crude, perhaps, but after all, right to the point. Strange, come to think of it, how the old schoolhouse has fallen into disrepute these days. Good enough for us older fellows, but a little too old foggy for the young ones, don't you know, Mr. Olliver. (He gives a knowing glance at Mr. Olliver.)

MR. OLLIVER.—I say what's good enough for us is good enough for our children. Cyrus Olliver is one of them kind that says to let good enough alone, and I say when it comes to learnin' there ain't nothin' that beats readin' and 'ritin' an' 'rithmetic, and the good old blue back speller that learned you to spell all the words before you used 'em to read. I never studied no grammar,

nor none of them 'high up things, and I'd like to see the man that can beat me for gettin' on in the world. An' here some of 'em is tryin' to learn farmin' an' sich at school an' out of books. There ain't but one way to learn farmin' an' that's by rollin' up your sleeves an' doin' it. Here I've wore out three farms an' I ain't done yet. I don't claim to have no better blood in me than my old father had in him, and I say that Cyrus Olliver can't be beat for blood by any of his children.

SIMPSON.—Quite so! Quite so, Mr. Olliver! But then, don't you see, we must be liberal, at any cost. Eh, Mr. Calvert?

HUGH.—Gentlemen, I think I understand fully what you—(He is interrupted by Mrs. Olliver, a fat, good-souled woman who wants to make everybody happy and nobody angry; who is likely to say the right thing at at the wrong time or the wrong thing at the right time as the case may be. She walks into the group, much out of breath and quite excited.)

MRS. OLLIVER.—Well of all things! How you do talk! I heerd you clean in the house. Why, Loreta, you are out here! And you, Mr. Hugh! And Mr. Simpson! Why what be you all a-talkin' about?

SIMPSON.—We were having our young consolidation worker review for us his recent progress. His success is delightful to us in the extreme. A worker unusually devoted to the cause. It will be so nice, Mrs. Olliver, to have our old schoolhouses all torn away and our dear children transported up the road a few miles and taught in bunches and herds, so to speak! And the taxes, don't you know! Only a minor consideration! A few hundred dollars more or less is nothing when it comes to giving our children the **advantages** (He pauses here to observe the effect) of which we older ones were so **unjustly** (He pauses again) deprived. Do you not think so, Mrs. Olliver?

MRS. OLLIVER.—(She misunderstands the irony and takes it quite literally.) Oh! That's what I always did say, Mr. Simpson! I think it's simply fine! Just lovely!

MR. OLLIVER.—(To Mrs. Olliver) Aw, you know you never give it a minute's thought in all your born days. You'd agree with a pedler, if he was to come along and tell you your head was cut off an' hid in the hay-loft.

MRS. OLLIVER.—(Innocently) I do believe I would, Cyrus!

SIMPSON.—And Miss Loreta; she has an opinion no doubt? We must give the diamonds a chance to sparkle? Eh, Mr. Calvert?

LORETA.—(Steps out boldly and rather indignantly) Sir, though you speak in jest, I answer in seriousness. Mr. Calvert is doing a good work and I intend to do all in my power to make him successful in the end.

SIMPSON.—Well! Well! And when the work is over, no doubt our friend will claim the little jewel (Indicating Loreta) for his own!

MR. OLLIVER.—(In a rage) Yes, let me see the young scamp try to—(Sam comes in with his swill buckets in his hands.)

SAM.—Mr. O-O-Olliver,—is it t-t-t-time to swill the p-p-p-pigs?

MR. OLLIVER.—(To Sam) Yes, swill the pigs, I gol. That's where the money is. Get out of here! (Sam steps back, but does not get out. Mr.

Olliver continues his threat at Hugh.) Yes, just let yourself be caught around here and I'll—(He is again interrupted, this time by Betsy.)

BETSY.—(Very ceremoniously) I am thorry to thay that dinner ith ready for you all.

MR. OLLIVER.—Shut up, I gol! (Turning to Hugh) You scoundrel! If you don't get off of this farm right now you can have your consolidation clique pull your carcass off with a rope! (Hugh stands his ground, not in the least disturbed by Olliver's threat. His self-possession and coolness only tend to increase the rage of Olliver, who attempts a lunge at Hugh. However, Mrs. Olliver in her excitement gives a little scream and rushes across the path of her husband. She is almost upset, and Mr. Olliver is hurled back by the force of the unexpected impact. Mrs. Olliver whirls around three or four times in bewilderment. Loreta involuntarily hurries to Hugh's side and puts her hand on his arm. Mr. Simpson stands back—twirling his mustache to the accompaniment of his sardonic smile. Sam, scared, puts his arms around Betsy, to protect her, and jumps about in much excitement with intermittent cries of "B-B-Betsy! B-B-Betsy!")

HUGH.—(Stepping forward) Mr. Olliver, I have been the brunt of your friend's jests and your insulting remarks, and have said nothing. (Mrs. Olliver, Mr. Olliver, Betsy and Sam all look at Hugh in amazement, and Mr. Simpson continues his original business.) But now, gentlemen, the die is cast. From now on, I shall consider you my avowed opponents. And gentlemen, I make a prediction. Within twelve months there shall be a school building standing in your community, of which you will some day be proud. And Mr. Olliver, you will see the time when Loreta is graduated from that school; and that will be the time when she shall be graduated from your home into mine.

Curtain.—End of Act I.

ACT II. SCENE I.

Setting, same as Act I. Mr. Olliver sawing wood at wood pile. He stops to wipe sweat from his face, then continues his sawing. Angela, bareheaded, comes running up to him with a cup of water. Angela is a pretty little girl of about nine years. She comes on daintily dressed and her curls fall in ringlets about her shoulders. Her voice is strong and clear—yet sweet and innocent.

ANGELA.—(Handing cup to Mr. Olliver) Here is a cup of nice, cold, water for you, Grandpa.

MR. OLLIVER.—(Taking cup) Ah! My little angel don't forget her Grandpa, does she? (Drinks part of cup and stands a moment meditating.) You're just like your mother was when she was a little girl. Always a-thinkin' of somebody else. I 'low that if she'd 'a' thought a little bit more of herself she might 'a' been livin' yet. She wore herself out tryin' to make your pa get well, and then both of 'em died. (Angela takes up the saw during her grandfather's speech and tries to saw. Mr. Olliver finishes cup of water.) That was fine, my little angel. Tastes like what I used to get out of the old spring, when I was a little boy.

ANGELA.—(Taking up the cup and laying down the saw) At the school where I went, Grandpa, all you had to do was to turn a little thing and cold water bubbled out just as clear and nice? Then you would just put your mouth down and drink. They didn't have cups at all. (Rather knowingly) It's **dangerous** for everybody to drink out of the same cup. (Looks into cup as though she expects to find a few big germs.)

MR. OLLIVER.—(Patronizingly) Well, we haven't got to the place where we have all them new things, and we all seem to be pretty healthy, Angela. (Takes up saw.)

ANGELA.—(Pleadingly) Grandpa, why can't I take some water to school with me in a little pail? Would the teacher care? The water that we drink at your schoolhouse comes out of an old well that doesn't have any top on it. The boys said they got a rabbit out of it last week. (Excitedly) Why **can't** I do that, Grandpa? Just to take water in a pail all for myself! Then maybe I won't get sick. The teacher that I went to before I came here said it made people sick to drink water that wasn't good.

MR. OLLIVER.—(Tightening up his saw) I think lots of you, Angela, and I wouldn't have people a-sayin' that you was proud and was a-holdin' yourself above the rest of 'em. I think you'd better go ahead and drink out of the same cup and buckets with the others, like you've been a-doin'.

ANGELA.—(Quite earnestly) Why don't you have con-consolidation here like they did in the school that I went to before I come to live with you, Grandpa?

MR. OLLIVER.—(Embarrassed) You don't understand, Angela. You'd better run back to the house now. It's not good for you to be out here without your sun-bonnet. (She runs off stage, back center. Just as she goes off, Mr. Peter Simpson enters right. He is dressed in his finery as usual, and comes on twirling his black mustache.)

SIMPSON.—Ah! Exercising a little this afternoon? Good! I might have expected it. If anybody remarks that there is a drop of lazy blood in Cyrus Olliver, send 'em to me. I'll set 'em right. (Gives Mr. Olliver a slap on the shoulder. Olliver steps back and wipes his face.) And his brain works in harmony with his muscles,—always up and doing! (Takes off Olliver's hat.) Eh, Mr. Olliver? (Slaps Olliver's hat back on his head.)

MR. OLLIVER.—(Highly pleased with the compliment) The Olliver family ain't given to boastin', but I 'low it ain't many times you'll find 'em a-settin' in the shade. What are you about to-day, Mr. Simpson? Hope that new Ford of yourn ain't goin' to be the ruination of ye?

SIMPSON.—The Ford! Aha! You've struck the key note! That little Ford's been on duty to-day. You'd guess right if you'd say it cost me a bit of money when I rolled it out the factory,—but never mind! My daddy paid the bill, and you're the gainer, Mr. Olliver. I tell you the man that's got the cash is the man that makes things go. Keep your eye on me, Mr. Olliver. I say it modestly, keep your eye on me.

MR. OLLIVER.—Come, Simpson, talk sense. I don't see what you—

SIMPSON.—Good for you, Mr. Olliver, I admire your frankness. Frankness begets friendship, and friendship is the mother of-of-of-little mutual understandings, shall we say. Eh? (He pats Olliver on the back and gives him a knowing smile. Olliver all the time tightens and untightens his buck saw.) Mr. Olliver, the little Ford and myself have scoured the country up and down to-day. To come to the point, we have lined up the voters. In other words, we have helped a few **honest** (His customary pause for the sake of emphasis) men to decided how they could most **conscientiously** cast their ballots at the old schoolhouse next Tuesday. You may rest assured, Mr. Olliver, that your taxes will be no higher in the years to come than they have in times past. But when it's all said and done, Mr. Olliver, don't thank me! Thank my departed father who so thoughtfully left me the financial inspiration to bring these good things to pass. (He puts his hands in his pockets and backs away a few feet to give Mr. Olliver a chance to express his approval.)

MR. OLLIVER.—You mean to say Mr. Simpson, that you think consolidation's goin' to be voted down?

SIMPSON.—(Very precisely) Exactly so!

MR. OLLIVER.—(Triumphantly) I knew it all the time, I gol. I told that young rascal that so long as he didn't have the name of Cyrus Olliver on his list, he wouldn't get consolidation, and I still say it. Cyrus Olliver's got friends that stay by him; and you're one of 'em, Peter Simpson, and I'm proud of you. I've got an influence over my friends and you've got an influence over yourn. I gol, we'll show that young upstart whether he can run this whole community, just 'cause he's been an' had some schoolin' at some college! We'll show him, and we'll do it honest and on the square.

SIMPSON.—(Somewhat surprised, yet amused) Yes, Mr. Olliver, honest and on the square! Them's the words! (He turns from Mr. Olliver, blinks

his eyes and shrugs his shoulders.) Yes, yes! Honesty is the best policy. Another maxim from the little red schoolhouse. Eh, Mr. Olliver?

MR. OLLIVER.—I gol, there's nothin' like bein' on the right side of a question. I tell you, Mr. Simpson, that our taxes is——(He is interrupted by Sam, who comes rushing in left with a long stick in one hand and his hat in the other. He is quite out of breath.)

SAM.—M-M-Mr. Olliver! The p-p-p-pigs is all g-g-g-got out in the c-c-corn field and is eatin' up the c-c-c-corn! I can't g-g-get 'em out. Without ceremony, Mr. Olliver rushes off left, but he turns around to be sure that Sam is following. Sam, however, is standing looking at Mr. Simpson.)

MR. OLLIVER.—Hurry up, I gol; they ain't no money made standin' around gawkin'.

SAM.—(Starts off to left, but suddenly stops, and making a funnel of his hands, puts them to his mouth and calls very loudly) B-B-B-Betsy! B-B-B-Betsy! (Another pause and the voice of Betsy is heard answering.)

BETSY.—Whathth the matter, Tham?

SAM.—The p-p-pigs is all in the c-c-c-corn! Bring the s-s-s-swill bucket with the left-over s-s-smear-case in it. Maybe we can c-c-c-call 'em back in the p-p-p-pen! (Exit Sam. Betsy rushes on stage with hair loose and flying, and carrying the swill pail.)

BETSY.—(Looking hastily about her) Where'th Tham?

SIMPSON.—(Imitating both Sam and Betsy) Tham'th g-g-g-gone to chath the p-p-pigth. (Betsy turns and rushes towards left. At that time Sam hastily re-enters and Sam and Betsy have a collision of such force that both are sent sprawling on the ground. As soon as they can collect themselves, they sit upright staring at one another.)

SAM.—(Bewildered) B-B-B-Betsy!

BETSY.—Tham! (Mr. Olliver sticks his head in at left entrance.)

MR. OLLIVER.—(Furiously) Cut out that sparkin', I gol, an' help me chase out them pigs. First thing you know, you'll both be out of a job. (Sam and Betsy make a scramble to get on foot; and taking the swill pail between them, they hurry off left.)

SIMPSON.—(Reflecting aloud) Well, well! "How doth the busy little bee (Indicating himself) improve each shining hour!" Let me see! (Counts off on fingers.) Number one, the consolidation scheme. My worthy Ford and my **financial** persuasion and my **moral** influence, (He grins) have all pledged themselves to defeat that. So far, so good. Number two, old man Olliver. Bull-headed, honest, but easy, if you know how to go at him. I clinch him when I defeat consolidation. So far, good again. Number three, the **pretty Miss Loreta**. A prize worth while—and **there's** the problem. But trust me for that. I've worked too many schemes to be—(Simpson catches sight of little Angela, who enters at center. She hums a childish tune, and seems not to notice Mr. Simpson.)

SIMPSON.—Well, my curly locks, out for a little promenade this afternoon? (Angela steps back somewhat abashed.) Don't be frightened, my little one, I am not so fierce as I look.

ANGELA.—(Timidly) I just wanted a stick of wood for Grandma to put in the stove.

SIMPSON.—Good! You shall have a stick of wood for Grandma to put in the stove. (He walks over to the woodpile and gets two light pieces, then turns to Angela.) How does it happen that my little sunbeam isn't at school to-day?

ANGELA.—(More boldly) Grandpa told me I'd better stay at home to-day. It rained awful hard last night and the roads got muddy. Where I went to school before I came here, a man came around every morning in a wagon and took us all to school. We didn't ever get our feet wet. I wish they would do that way here. Why **don't** they have consolidation here. **You** want it, don't you?

SIMPSON.—Why, if I had my way about it, I would come around every day in my automobile and take my little lady to school. But I know your grandmother wants her stick of wood. (Hands sticks to Angela.) Tell Miss Loreta that there is a friend out in the yard who wants to speak to her just a moment. That's a nice little girl. (Angela, glad to get away, runs off back center. Mr. Olliver enters left.)

MR. OLLIVER.—Sorry I had to leave you like I did, but when pigs gets out you know a man's got to get 'em back. Pigs is where our money is, you know. Sam and Betsy's a-leadin' 'em in with the swill pail, an' I reckon I'll have to go an' open the gate when they get back.

SIMPSON.—Business is business, Mr. Olliver, and I respect the man that 'tends to it. I was about to go, but I said to myself, "Mr. Olliver won't know what's become of me, so I'll stay here till he comes back". Why, (Looking off stage) there comes Miss Loreta. Wonder what she has in mind? Don't let me bother you with your work, Mr. Olliver.

MR. OLLIVER.—All right. I'll go, or they'll be a-callin' for me in a minute. Mr. Simpson, (He goes over and puts his hands on Simpson's shoulders) Loreta's a fine gal. The man that gets her won't need to blush because of his connections with the Olliver family. (He goes off left, leaving Simpson alone to talk with Loreta, who is coming.)

SIMPSON.—Good afternoon, Miss Loreta. I called on your good father on a matter of business, and I said to myself, "Now I mustn't leave without passing the time of day with Miss Loreta". And here she comes blushing and dainty as ever. Virtue and modesty, one and the same thing—eh, Loreta?

LORETA.—(Shrinking away) Did you want to see me for something?

SIMPSON.—(Drawing nearer Loreta) Do I want to see her? The world never sings so merry a tune as when I'm near my Loreta. Want to see her? Why! I want to see her all the time. And tell me, has our good friend, the rural benefactor, been this way to-day? (He takes off his hat and daintily brushes off the dust.)

LORETA.—If you mean Mr. Calvert, no.

SIMPSON.—Aha! Just as I expected! Off to the city looking after his interests, no doubt!

LORETA.—(Curiously) His interests?

SIMPSON.—Well, well! The very picture of innocence! Really now, Loreta, I could almost think I were in the Garden of Paradise. Yes, looking after his interests, don't you know. You see he—(Cautiously) but then I mustn't cause a blush to come over your pretty face; and the young man's character—it must be protected, don't you know.

LORETA.—(Indignantly) Mr. Calvert's interests are in this community. He is wearing out his very life to-to- (She hesitates.)

SIMPSON.—Well,—yes, yes! wearing out his life. Quite right, but I never thought **you** would have said it. Dissipation always wears out a man's life.—But then, as I said before, let's be merciful to the young man. Let's protect his character at any cost.

LORETA.—(With even greater indignation)—Mr Simpson, I hate you! Go away! I can't—

SIMPSON.—(Soothingly) Now, now, Loreta, let's be calm. You make me almost sorry that I interceded in behalf of the young man. Suppose we change the subject, my dear. Let us talk about matters—(Rather feeling his way)—about matters pertaining more to ourselves, shall we say? Eh, Loreta? (He comes up to Loreta and starts to put his arm about her, but she shrinks away.) Your father and myself are very close friends,—brothers, laboring together in a common cause, so to speak. Brothers, and yet, don't you know, I could call him **father** with a greater grace?

LORETA.—(Nervously) I must go and help my mother. She needs me, and—

SIMPSON.—Ah! thoughtful of her mother, don't you know. "As a woman is to her mother, so is she to her husband". A worn adage, but very timely. Very encouraging to **me**, Loreta. (He looks at Loreta to observe the effect. A look of disgust mingled with wrath comes over her features.) Why! My pet has a troubled look on her pretty features. I think a little spin in my auto will drive her troubles away. Eh, Loreta? (He takes her hand as though to lead her with him, but she tries to pull away.) What? My love won't go for a little ride? She must go help her mother? Then I know (Draws her up to him) she will make me happy by giving me just one kiss before she goes. (He stoops over to kiss her.)

LORETA.—Stop—(Simpson recoils.) If Hugh, who has always seemed so good and noble, is what you say he is,—(Oh, I can't believe it)—Heaven knows what you are at heart—you, who never have known what it means to be good or noble. (He quails before her gaze and looks nervously about.) See! you can't deny your vile nature! Your own conscience—if you have any—won't let you! Get out my sight! I hate you! (He slinks away. She breaks down and sobs.) Oh Hugh! Hugh!

Curtain.—End of Scene I.

ACT II. SCENE II.

A sitting room in Mr. Olliver's home. Common furnishing, a table, chairs, and pictures on the walls being the main pieces of furniture—other odd pieces to add atmosphere. When curtain rises, Mr. Olliver is seen reading a paper, and his little granddaughter has a book laid out on the table before her. She is tired and is resting her head on the table. She raises her head when she begins speaking.

ANGELA.—Grandpa, can't I quit school? I don't want to go any more.

MR. OLLIVER.—Why, I thought my little angel liked to go to school. I got her a nice slate and pencil, and a speller and reader and everything. I want my Angela to grow up to be a nice, smart woman. She'd better go on to school while she's little and learn lots.

ANGELA.—(Persisting) I don't want to go, Grandpa. I'm the only one in my class, and the teacher says she don't like to hear a class when there's just one in it, 'specially when she's got more classes than she can hear already. Sometimes she don't hear my class at all. She says she is going to turn me back in arithmetic.

MR. OLLIVER.—(Somewhat disappointed) Why, here I thought my Angela was goin' to be smart in her arithmetic. Maybe she don't study hard enough of nights.

ANGELA.—(In a discouraged tone) That's not what's the matter, Grandpa. The teacher said to-day that there wasn't any sense of havin' just one in the class and she said that to-morrow she was going to turn me back, 'way back where the two Smith boys are. (Almost sobbing) Why can't I quit, Grandpa?

MR. OLLIVER.—(Somewhat worried) Guess you'd better go on, Angela. (Encouragingly) Maybe things will get better after while.

ANGELA.—Where I went to school before I came here, there were a whole lot of boys and girls in every class. We had some of the nicest teachers. They didn't have so many classes to make them tired and cross. I wish I could go back there and go to school. Why can't we have a school like that here, Grandpa? (Mrs. Olliver enters room during Angela's speech and begins to sweep.)

MR. OLLIVER.—(Rising and throwing paper on the floor) I gol, Myra! (Loreta, excited by her father's thunderous tones, comes and stands in doorway) I pay enough taxes here. I say there must be somethin' the matter when a child that we're tryin' to educate comes home and says the teacher won't hear her recite 'cause she's the only one in the class.

MRS. OLLIVER.—(In her usual agreeable way) Yes, you sure do pay enough taxes, Cyrus. There must be somethin' the matter.

LORETA.—(Stepping all the way into the room) Now, Father, look here. You say you are paying heavy taxes and you admit that Angela isn't getting out of the school what she ought to. Don't you see, Father, that all of these small schools could be joined together and there would be one big school and full classes, like Angela said she had in her school? And, Father, what if the

taxes were a little higher. Wouldn't it be better than having heavy taxes and **poor** schools?

MRS. OLLIVER.—(Stops sweeping and leans on broom) Loreta's right, Cyrus; you'd better pay higher taxes and have better schools.

MR. OLLIVER.—I gol, Loreta, if you don't quit your eternal preaching about consolidation, you can clear out of here and work by the day. If you had to pay the taxes awhile, you wouldn't be so consarned anxious about havin' 'em raised.

MRS. OLLIVER.—Your Father's right, Loreta; you ought to stop your preaching about consolidation. Your father has to pay the taxes, remember.

LORETA.—Father, Mr. Calvert says that it wouldn't be as expensive as people think. He says that—

MR. OLLIVER.—(Indignantly) What do I care about what **he** says? Who's **he**, more'n anybody else?

LORETA.—(Coolly) Mr. Calvert has studied the matter clear to the very bottom; and besides, he's a tax payer. He owns a farm here and he—

MR. OLLIVER.—And what's there been to hinder me from studyin' the matter to the very botom, I'd like to know? An' I guess I own as big a farm and pay as much taxes as he does. Why didn't you ask Mr. Simpson? He's got more business about him, ten to one, than that fellow your losin' your head over.

MRS. OLLIVER.—Yes that's right, Loreta. Your father's studied the matter clear to the bottom and he has a big farm, and besides you ought to 'a' asked Mr. Simpson, he knows and he—

MR. OLLIVER.—(Disgusted) Shut up, Myra. You run on like a bag-pipe. Loreta's got some wrong ideas, but she's not a parrot.

MRS. OLLIVER.—(Starts sweeping again) That's right, Cyrus, Loreta's not a parrot.

MR. OLLIVER.—(More kindly) Loreta, I saw Mr. Simpson a-talkin' to you yesterday. I like to see you in company with a man like that.

LORETA.—(Almost overcome) Father!

MR. OLLIVER.—I wish you an' him would come to some understandin', Loreta. He's got land an' money, an' a good home. Them's things that not every girl can get. Then he'd be good to you, Loreta. If you'll just— (The door opens and Sam comes in, holding out a letter to Loreta.)

SAM.—Here's a l-l-l-letter for L-L-L-Loreta. She'll be happy n-n-n-now. It's from Mr. C-C-Calvert. I know, for it's g-g-got his n-name in the e-c-c-corner. D-D-D-don't see how the D-D-dickens it got in the m-m-mail box this t-t-time of d-d-day. The m-m-mail went b-b-by a long while ago. I just happened to s-s-see it in the b-b-box. (Loreta opens letter and begin reading.)

MR. OLLIVER.—(Over his glasses) Sam, it's time you was a-lookin' after them pigs. Remember them's what's got to pay our taxes.

SAM.—B-B-Betsy's got the s-s-s-swill pail. She's out in the orchard e-c-c-catchin' it full of g-g-grass-hoppers for the ch-ch-chickens. (Loreta screams, buries her face in her hands and drops letter on floor. Angela runs

hastily to her and throws her arms about her. Sam makes a hurried retreat out left with cries of "B-B-Betsy".)

MR. OLLIVER.—(Going to Loreta) What's happened here, anyhow? (Sees letter on floor.) Is this the thing that did it all? (Picks up letter.) I gol, I guess I've got a right to know what makes such a commotion here.

MRS. OLLIVER.—(Excitedly) Yes, Cyrus, you're got a right to know.

MR. OLLIVER.—(Begins reading) "My dearest Cecelia:—I've been very busy the last few days. The consolidation scheme is going to go like a hot cake." (Loreta jumps up from her chair and tries to get letter, but Mr. Olliver pushes her away.) "I am playing a smooth game of it here. You have heard me speak of old man Olliver. He is a bull-headed fellow, and the worst of my opponents. But I think I can put one over him."—The rascal!—"He has a daughter, Loreta, a smart little minx; and she had more influence with her dad than I have. She's easy. I've got her coming my way and she's got it in her head that some day she will make a haul of me. I'm sure consolidation will carry here next Tuesday."—We'll see, I gol.—"I don't care a rap about it; but if I can win, it will be one more feather in my cap. Peter Simpson is the only fellow who is on to my little game, and I don't think he has sense enough to make me any trouble. I am writing a letter to Loreta on the same mail. The old man won't let me on the place any more. I'll soon have this off my hands and then we can plan more for our little home. Excuse mistakes, for I am in a hurry.

Lovingly yours,

HUGH CALVERT."

(Looks up in a rage) Yes! The ornery devil! Thinks he's workin' us.—But he's caught in his own little trap. Consolidation! Who says consolidation? (To Loreta) What do you think of your Hugh Calvert now?

MRS. OLLIVER.—(Pacing the floor with her husband) Yes what do you think of your Hugh Calvert now?

(Loreta breaks out crying again and little Angela does her best to comfort her.)

Curtain.—End of Scene II.

ACT II. SCENE III.

Setting, same as in Scene II. The night of the election. Lights are burning. Mr. and Mrs. Olliver and Mr. Simpson are seated enjoying their mugs of cider.

MR. OLLIVER.—(Enthusiastically) I gol, we put it over 'em to-day, didn't we, Mr. Simpson?

SIMPSON.—I say we did, Mr. Olliver, clean and slick as you please, and not a soul to say it wasn't "honest and on the square", as you said. Eighty-six for and eighty-eight against. Not a big majority, but as the saying is, "A miss is as good as a mile". Eh, Mr. Olliver?

MR. OLLIVER.—(Rising) I said it twice and I say it again. When this deestriect gets consolidation it'll be when Cyrus Olliver has his name on the petition and not till then. O Loreta! Loreta! (Loreta opens the door and looks into the room.) Come in and be sociable,—Mr. Simpson's here.

LORETA.—(Sad and careworn) I am not feeling well this evening, Father. May I be excused?

MR. OLLIVER.—All the more reason why you should come in, Loreta. Come in and help us celebrate, and you'll forget your troubles. And tell Angela to come. We'd just as well be happy together.

MRS. OLLIVER.—Yes, do tell Angela to come. We'd just as well all be happy together. That's what you said, wasn't it, Cyrus?

SIMPSON.—(As Loreta and Angela enter) Ha! Ha! Good evening, Miss Loreta. Let me see. When did I see you last? Oh yes! When you pretended to be angry with me, don't you know. Ha! Ha! That was the cutest thing I ever saw you do, Loreta. "A little nonsense now and then is relished by the best of men." Eh, Mr. Olliver? And here's little Angela. Still going to school, my pet?

ANGELA.—(Timidly) I don't like to go to school here.

SIMPSON.—Well, well! Bless her little heart! They used to whip us when we talked that way. Eh, Mr. Olliver?

MR. OLLIVER.—(Soberly) Be careful how you talk to our baby, Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON.—Yes, yes! "Guard the hearts of the little ones. In them are fostered all the hopes of the future."

MRS. OLLIVER.—That's what I always told Cyrus. In them is frosted all the hopes of the future.

MR. OLLIVER.—Hey, Betsy! Betsy! (Betsy sticks her head in at the door.) Betsy, bring in another pitcher of cider. Fetch Sam with you.

BETSY.—I'm thorry to thay, Mr. Olliver, that Tham drank the reht of the thider, an' he'th thick in hith thtomach! (General laughter in sitting room. Even Loreta laughs.)

SIMPSON.—Well, don't you know! "A man's appetite, like a pig's snout, leads him into all sorts of difficultes," as the proverb has it. No doubt if Sam were to join our jolly band, his little ailment will not see fit long to endure amidst the hilarity of our **family** festivities. Eh, Loreta?

MR. OLLIVER.—I gol, bring him in, Betsy.

SIMPSON.—(Going to the table where sits the pitcher of cider) Ha! Ha! Just enough to fill my cup. I know our Loreta will not be averse to filling my cup for me, especially if I hold the goblet, don't you know.

MR. OLLIVER.—I gol, fill' er up, Loreta. (Loreta very hesitatingly empties the contents of the pitcher into his cup. Betsy enters leading Sam by his sleeves. Sam holds both of his hands to his stomach, and appears to be in great agony.)

SIMPSON.—(Holding up cup for a toast) Here's to the little red school-house! Long may it live! (Ironically) And here's to our young friend, Calvert, its good benefactor! May he soon find sweet rest from his labors!

Curtain.—End of Act II.

ACT III. SCENE I.

Setting, sitting room of the Ollivers' home as before. Loreta sits in rocking chair slowly rocking back and forth. She has her handkerchief folded to her eyes and catches her breath now and then as though she might be battling to hold back a storm of emotion. Little Angela trips gaily in. She has on a new frock. Her eyes beam with delight because of her new possession. She stops in front of Loreta.

ANGELA.—(Holding out frock) Oh, see my new apron! Don't I look sweet in it?

LORETA.—(Without looking up) Yes, Angela.

ANGELA.—I'm going to wear it to school. No, I won't either. It would get all spoiled. Yesterday was Minnie Smith's birthday, and the boys went out in the road and got some dirty mud and put it all over Minnie's face! And then they threw mud at her, and got her dress all dirty. The teacher didn't see the boys do it at all. She just sits in the house and reads all the time, and don't see the boys do any of the bad things. The boys said they would get me the next time. I'm awful glad this is Saturday so I won't have to go to school. Where I went to school before I came here, the teacher played with us all the time and we liked her. The boys didn't do bad things then. I wish we had a nice big school like that here. What's the matter? Are you crying?

LORETA.—(Bravely) I was just thinking of—I'm just a little lonely, Angela.

ANGELA.—(Coming up closer to Loreta and sitting on a stool that is near her chair) Now maybe you won't be lonesome. Don't you ever go any place? I'd think you'd want to go lots of places.

LORETA.—(Wiping her eyes and taking on a little more interest) There isn't any place to go here, Angela. We used to have spelling-matches in the schoolhouse once in a while, but the boys got to carrying on so that we had to quit having them.

ANGELA.—In my old schoolhouse, they have lots of things to go to. They have a great big room in it,—oh, its just so big,—(Spreads out arms to indicate its size) and everybody goes there and they sing and speak pieces and make music and have things to eat and play games, and oh,—they just do everything. Everybody comes; grown people too. Once I spoke about "Little Orphant Annie", and when I got done they just clapped their hands and wouldn't quit till I spoke another piece. People like to hear me speak. I wish they had a nice big schoolhouse like that here so we could speak pieces and things like that.

LORETA.—They won't do it here, Angela; maybe they never will. Some of the people here wanted to do that and they had a meeting to see about it, but they decided not to do it. I don't know what is going to happen to us here. (Puts handkerchief to her eyes again. Steps are heard and Mr. Simpson walks briskly into the room. Loreta and Angela jump to their feet, Loreta half hiding her tear-stained face.)

SIMPSON.—(Taking off his hat and gloves and bowing) Ah! “So unexpected”, why don’t you say, ladies? I stepped on the porch and looked through the door at Miss Loreta, and I said to myself, “A little surprise will do her sweet life good”.

LORETA.—(Much chagrined and not knowing what else to do, shoves a chair in the direction of Simpson). Ah, I’d rather sit on a footstool given by the gentle Loreta than to occupy the throne of England’s King. But—(Catching sight of Loreta’s sad features) what is worrying my pretty queen? If I mistake not there are tear stains on her damask cheeks? But as my sainted mother used to tell me, “Let the tears flow; they purify the soul!”

ANGELA.—(Trying to come to Loreta’s rescue) Loreta is awful lonesome!

SIMPSON.—Lonesome? Yes, I felt it. Something in my very soul told me that Loreta was lonely and wanted to see me. Strange how the soul of one man and the soul of one woman will draw one to the other as a magnet; that is, you know, if it is the right man and the right woman. Eh, Loreta? (He casts an insinuating glance in Loreta’s direction. She draws herself off to the far side of the room and sinks down into a chair quite exhausted. Simpson moves chair over nearer Loreta. Angela goes over to Loreta.) Ah, my little Angela, a happy thought strikes me! I know you would like to have a nice, big, bright dollar all for your very own. (Holds up a dollar.) Now I want a nice, big, juicy apple from your good grandfather’s orchard. You just run along to the orchard, take pains and **plenty of time**, don’t you know; and when you fetch me the apple, the pretty dollar is yours.

ANGELA.—(Clapping her hands) Oh, that’s fine. I’ll bring you two, a red one and a yellow one! (She runs out.)

SIMPSON.—Your father tells me that our consolidation friend has been playing false notes upon the heart-strings of my trusting Loreta.

LORETA.—(Trembling) I-I-he-maybe—

SIMPSON.—(In a comforting tone) There! There! My dove! Don’t worry! You’re “in the shelter of the rock”, as the old song says; and I’m the rock, shall we say? But don’t you know, I could protect you better if only I had you in my cozy little home. (Loreta gasps and shrinks away.) You see, my dear, (He crosses his legs and gives his black mustache an extra curl) if you can’t come with me where I can shield you from the insults that come so spontaneously from the young man’s heart, then,—well, I don’t like to mix in the little mess—but I must take care of you and—ah—facts are sometimes made public about troublesome young men that make them pack their little grips and hie away to a climate which is—well, because they’re not known there—more healthful, don’t you know. These little things happen and,—(Loreta cries out and sobs, “Oh, Hugh, Hugh”, and Betsy rushes in. Simpson rises.)

BETSY.—Wath thumbbody callin’ me? (Sees Mr. Simpson.) Why, Mithhter Thimphthon! I thought you wath carryin’ the mail!

SIMPSON.—Ha! Ha! Carrying the mail, did you think? No, Betsy, up to date our Uncle Sam has not seen fit to put me in a mail cart.

BETSY.—Yeth, but you did carry the mail onth, didn’t you, Mithhter Thimphthon?

SIMPSON.—(Nervously) Betsy's having dreams, sweet dreams! But that's all right. Dream on. As the scientists say, "Dreams are good brain food for the feeble minded". Eh, Betsy?

BETSY.—(Determined) I'm thorry to thay, Mithther Thimption, I wath out gatharin' grath-hopperth for the chickenth, and I thaw you thneak up to the mail bokth like you wath thorry of your job, an' you put a letter in the mail bokth.

SIMPSON.—(Forcing a laugh) Aha! A little wit is the spice of life. Eh, Loreta? By the way, Loreta, my throat is parched for a drink of cold, sparkling water from your well. Won't you go right now, my love, and fetch me a drink? (Loreta, glad to make her escape, goes hurriedly.) Now Betsy, you're a friend of mine, don't you know, and I love to remember my friends with little gifts. But before I give you this little remembrance, (Holds up a five dollar bill) you must promise that you will never mention the little affair about my being a mail carrier. It doesn't matter, only Loreta's nervous and we don't want any excitement, you know.

BETSY.—(Excitedly) Yeth, thir! Five dollarth! Merthy! (Sam enters with hat on.)

SAM.—B-B-Betsy, where's the s-s-swill p-p-p-pail?

BETSY.—Mithther Thimption! Here'th Tham. He knowth about your carryin' the mail. I ekthpect he won't tell for five dollarth!

SIMPSON.—(Giving a bill to Sam) Here you are, old pal. Now remember your little promise. (Enter Mrs. Olliver carrying glass of water, followed by Loreta.)

BETSY.—(Running to Loreta) Mithter Thimption give me five dollarth not to tell about him puttin' the letter in the mail bokth.

SAM.—(Following Betsy and pushing her aside) Mr. S-S-S-Simpson give me f-f-five dollars, too, not to t-t-tell!

SIMPSON.—Ha! Ha! Capital! Barnum paid a small fortune for a good clown, don't you know. We get 'em for five dollars and cheap at that, eh? (He looks hurriedly at his watch.) Well, well! How flies the time! I shall call another time when there's not so much turmoil, so to speak! (Exit Simpson.)

LORETA.—(Sinking to a chair) Oh, Mother! Mother! I see it all now! I must see Hugh. What **will** he say? (Buries her face in her hands.)

MRS. OLLIVER.—(Putting down cup of water) Yes, Loreta, you see it all now. You must see Hugh.

SAM.—W-W-wish Mr. S-S-S-Simpson would put a l-l-letter in the mail box every d-d-d-day. It's easier m-m-money not t-t-telling than it is feedin' p-p-p-pigs s-s-s-smear-case.

BETSY.—I'm thorry to thay, Tham, that I couldn't thee him put in many letterth, for the grath-hopperth ith about uthed up.

MRS. OLLIVER.—Yes, I'm sorry to say that the grass-hoppers is gettin' scarce. (Mrs. Olliver turns and goes out and is followed by Betsy. A knock is heard at the door. Sam, in a very important way, goes to the door.)

SAM.—How d-d-d-d-do—Mr. C-C-C-Calvert. C-C-C-Come in. (Hugh enters. He has that same open, honest expression, but looks worn. An expression of hope and confidence comes across Loreta's features and she

involuntarily rises. Sam looks around, and seeing that Betsy is gone, rushes out, calling "B-B-Betsy! B-B-Betsy!")

HUGH.—(Taking off his hat and advancing towards Loretta) Loretta, your father forbade my coming on his place again, much less into his home. But I couldn't stand it any longer. I had to come.

LORETA.—(Becoming more like herself) Hugh! (Putting a hand on his arm) Hugh! You don't know what I've suffered! You can't know what I have had to endure. Hugh, I believe in you; I have confidence in you. I couldn't make myself believe that you would do it.

HUGH.—(Puzzled) Why, Loretta! What do you mean? You talk strangely. I——do what?

LORETA.—(Running over to the table, opening a book that lies on it and taking letter from between its pages) Read this, Hugh. (He takes letter and reads it. His expression shows an increase of indignation as he nears its end. After he finishes he stands a moment in silence. Then he hurls the letter to the floor.)

HUGH.—The scoundrel! The wretch! He thought he had beaten me in consolidation, and now he thinks he will keep me from getting the girl that I love.———Loretta, the votes have been counted and the returns say that we have lost consolidation. But there is the work of that man's hand in it, (Points to the letter on floor) and I tell you we **have not** lost. I ask only four weeks in which to prove it. (He pauses. He draws Loretta close to him and puts his arm about her.) Loretta, has he defeated **us**?

LORETA.—No, Hugh. **He** has not. But you know what I said,—I can't. There is still that gulf between us. (Her head falls on his breast. Just then her father steps through the door. He stops only long enough for his rage to muster its forces.)

MR. OLLIVER.—You rascalion! How dare you! I gol, Loretta, what's things comin' to? Haven't you got a bit of Olliver blood a flowin' in your veins? I guess I **would** let that measly deceiver wrap me around his finger again. Get out! I say, get out! (He makes a lunge at Hugh. Hugh straightens up and clenches his fists.)

HUGH.—(Calmly) Hold on, Mr. Olliver. (Olliver stops.) I shall not fight in your house unless forced to. But I will **not** be kicked out like a dog. There is no need for me to try to explain to you, for you will not reason. I shall leave this house; it is yours. But I tell you, Mr. Olliver, the final reckoning is nearer than you think. (He walks deliberately away, leaving Olliver in a storm and the girl in despair.)

MR. OLLIVER.—I gol! A man's house his own castle! This looks like it! Loretta! Are you my daughter?

LORETA.—(Rushes to her father and throws her arms about him.) Oh, Father!

MR. OLLIVER.—(Unclasps her hands from about him and flings them to her sides.) Ungrateful (He gasps and gropes for a word)—huzzy! What right did you have to be born?

Curtain.—End of Scene I.

ACT III. SCENE II.

Time, two weeks later. Setting, still in sitting room of Olliver home. The sitting room is converted into a sick room. A cot is placed in left corner (back) of room. A small table bearing medicine bottles and a glass is placed near the head of the cot. When curtain rises, Mr. Olliver is bending over Angela, who is lying on the cot sick of a fever. He looks at her for several moments, then tenderly tucking the white sheet about her, he sits down in his chair and rests his elbow on his knee and his forehead in his hand. A soft knock is heard at door (R). Mr. Olliver slowly raises his head, looks towards the door, pauses a moment to put his rough hand to Angela's fevered brow, then goes on tiptoe to the door and lets the doctor in. The doctor is a man of heavy build, almost portly, in fact. He is slow, yet not uncertain in his movements, and there is in his face an expression of love and gentleness. He carries a medicine case in his left hand. Mr. Olliver clasps both of his hands around the hand of the doctor, but does not speak. The doctor goes to the cot, puts his hat on the table near by, and stands for a moment looking at the child. He puts his hand gently on her brow. Then he takes hold of her wrist and counts her pulse with the aid of his watch. He takes fever thermometer from his case and puts instrument into the mouth of his patient.

DOCTOR SYLVESTER.—Has the child been ill long, Mr. Olliver?

MR. OLLIVER.—(In a low voice) About two or three days, Doctor.

DOCTOR S.—And her symptoms?

MR. OLLIVER.—Why she—Let me call Loreta, Doctor. (He goes to the door and speaks gently.) Loreta! Come here, daughter. (Loreta enters center.)

DOCTOR S.—I was inquiring about the symptoms, Miss Loreta.

LORETA.—(Slowly) Well, she came home from school day before yesterday evening with a headache and a sore throat and chest. Both grew more and more severe and the fever came on her every afternoon and she has been feeling worse all the time.

DOCTOR S.—Did she have any cold when she took down sick?

LORETA.—A slight cold, Doctor. Yes, it bothered her considerably. She got her feet wet going to school and then she sat all day long without drying them; for there was no fire, and the teacher thought it was not worth while to build one, because the stove smoked so badly. I am afraid that was not good for her.

DOCTOR S.—Perhaps not, perhaps not.

LORETA.—Possibly it didn't harm her any, but near where Angela sits there are some window panes gone, and I remember that she said the wind came up chilly and blew in on her all afternoon.

DOCTOR S.—Has the little girl been drinking the water that comes from the schoolhouse well? Or has she been carrying her drinking water from home? (Mr. Olliver, who has been standing up to this time, now sinks into a chair and sits with bowed head.)

LORETA.—She has been using the school water, I think. Hasn't she, Father?

MR. OLLIVER.—(Speechless, nods his head.)

DOCTOR S.—(Quietly) I happen to have some definite knowledge of the condition of the water that the school children are drinking, Mr. Olliver; and it is, indeed, unfortunate that the children have been permitted to drink of it. There are several instances in the neighborhood where fevers are threatening. It was one of your neighbors who called my attention to the condition of the schoolhouse well, and he asked me to make an examination of the water. Of course, you know him,—Mr. Calvert. (Loreta looks quietly at her father, who still sits with head hung.) A very worthy young man, I think. (The Doctor prepares a mixture and gives it to the child.) I think I had as well go. There is nothing more that I can do now. It's mostly in the nursing. I shall be back every day, at least, for several days.

MR. OLLIVER.—(Rising from his chair and motioning for the doctor to come to him) Come here, Doctor. (They stand together in corner of room farthest from the child.) Tell me about my grandchild—my baby—Doctor. How bad is she?

DOCTOR S.—Mr. Olliver, I think there is no reason why I should conceal anything from you. It is my opinion that the child has a case of typhoid-pneumonia. It means, of course, a great deal of doubt and suspense, but we shall try to be hopeful.

MR. OLLIVER.—(With a broken voice) You **must** save her for us, Doctor. Angela's **part** of us, an' we couldn't give her up. If somethin' was to happen to Angela, I don't think I would want to keep on a-livin'.

DOCTOR S.—(Putting his hand on Mr. Olliver's shoulder.) I'll do all I can for her, my brother.—I don't want to say anything that might be taken as a criticism of your community and its people, but I think this is a timely occasion to say it; and besides, I have always known you and I feel that I can talk plainly to you without being misunderstood. This community made a big mistake, I am afraid, by not voting for consolidation. I don't mean to be personal, and I don't know how **you** voted; but if you'd had a good sanitary building with clean surroundings and pure water, there is no doubt in my mind that your granddaughter would have been running about as frolicsome as ever. And consolidation means all these things. I've seen it tried out, and I think I know, Mr. Olliver.

MR. OLLIVER.—I voted agin' it, Doctor.

DOCTOR S.—I am sure that you did it meaning well. Most of them do, that vote against it. But they don't understand it. Taxes seem higher, but you get value received. And after all, Mr. Olliver, a man of business, like you, doesn't mind paying out his money if only he gets value received. And its a paying proposition from a financial standpoint. If you had a fine school building in the center of your community, you'd be surprised to see how fast your land would increase in value. Then besides, you would have

better roads, better markets; and the general prosperity of the community would be stimulated more than you can realize.

MR. OLLIVER.—I never saw it quite that way before, Doctor.

DOCTOR S.—Well, we, all of us, have to learn. As for me, I admire the man who is willing to learn. Well, I must be on my way. (Goes over to look at Angela again.) We'll hope for the best, Mr. Olliver. I'll be back in the morning. (Mr. Olliver takes his hand and bids him a hearty goodbye. When the Doctor is gone, Mr. Olliver seats himself in his chair again.) Come here, Loreta. (He takes her hand.) Do you **know** Hugh Calvert?

LORETA.—(Surprised) Do I know him? Why, Father, I have known him all my life. He was born and raised here, and so was I.

MR. OLLIVER.—Loreta,—did Hugh Calvert write that letter?

LORETA.—(Breathing heavily) No, he did not. Peter Simpson wrote that letter.

MR. OLLIVER.—Loreta,—you tell Hugh Calvert that I want to see him.

LORETA.—Father!

Curtain.—End of Act II.

ACT III. SCENE III.

Time, some weeks later—late in October. Setting, in back yard as in Act I. Mr. Olliver is sawing wood at the woodpile. Angela is sitting propped up with pillows in a rocking chair, and Loreta is standing by her side.

LORETA.—I don't think it's chilly enough to hurt Angela out here. Do you, Father?

MR. OLLIVER.—I don't think so, daughter. I think the warm sunshine'll do 'er good. Are you cold, Angela?

ANGELA.—(Faintly) No, Grandpa. The sunshine feels good. I like to be out here.

LORETA.—(Looking off stage) Father, there comes Hugh.

MR. OLLIVER.—I wondered why he wasn't a-comin' around. I guess you told him to come, didn't you? I've been so busy watchin' my Angela that the whole neighborhood could 'a' moved off an' I'd never 'a' knowed it. (Enter Hugh.) Good morning, Hugh. I'm goin' to call you "Hugh". That's what Loreta calls you. (Takes Hugh's hand, while Loreta stands by wretched in smiles.)

HUGH.—I'm glad to hear you call me that, Mr. Olliver. It's worth all that the past has cost. (He takes off his hat.)

MR. OLLIVER.—Where have you been so long, Hugh? I've been 'spectin' you over every day. But maybe you did come. I don't know. When Angela was so bad, I didn't know much of nothin'.

HUGH.—I've been straightening out a little affair in regard to our consolidation. I discovered that some of those who had voted against consolidation had not only been bought off by-by—

MR. OLLIVER.—Say it, Hugh. Peter Simpson, it was. I didn't know it then or I wouldn't 'a' stood for it. I was blind as a bat.

HUGH.—As I was saying, I found that some of the opposition had not only been bought off by Peter Simpson, but they were not legal voters, not having been residents the required number of days. I have had the election contested and the court has decreed that the consolidation element has won the fight. So now we have consolidation! (Peter Simpson steps hurriedly in, less nonchalant than usual.)

SIMPSON.—I just stopped to say, Mr. Olliver,—just as I expected! The wily little consolidation advocate around again, trying to rub in a little rural philosophy, so to speak! Eh, Mr. Olliver? And the pretty Loreta. No doubt she's being quite absorbed as usual by his preponderous verbosity. Eh, Miss Loreta? (Enter Mrs. Olliver.) And the little baby, (Turning toward Angela) pale as a ghost, by the way! I don't wonder, though. Things enough have been going on of late to make the D—His Satanic Majesty himself look like a faded pea blossom. Eh, Mrs. Olliver.

MRS. OLLIVER.—That's just what I was a thinkin' when I saw you a-comin', Mr. Simpson.

MR. OLLIVER.—Look here, Simpson, I gol—no, I won't do it. I **could** get mad and cuss you a while, but I don't think you're worth the trouble.

I'm just sorry for you because you're not a common, respectable dog instead of a little feist. The only thing I regret is that I didn't know enough to put you in your class when I first saw you.

SIMPSON.—(Backing off stage with a snarly, venomous look.) Perfectly all right, Mr. Olliver, perfectly all right. But there'll be frost knee deep in—on the equator when I help **you** out again.

MR. OLLIVER.—Ha! Ha! Well, well! (To Hugh) **I said** you wouldn't get consolidation till Cyrus Olliver had his name on the petition. Well, I was wrong, I admit. But old Cyrus Olliver's put his heart in it, and a heart's worth more'n a name any day. And Angela, now you are a-goin' to have a school like you been a wantin' all the time.

ANGELA.—Oh, Grandpa! Won't that be nice?

MR. OLLIVER.—And, Loreta, you've been wantin' a chance to do your high school. It's a goin' to be up to you and Hugh. Cyrus Olliver's in for whatever'll make you better and happier. (Betsy and Sam come on carrying a pail of swill between them.)

BETSY.—I'm thorry to thay, Mithter Olliver, that Tham an' me hath dethided that thingle blethedneth ith awful good, but double blethedneth ith better.

MR. OLLIVER.—Good for you, Betsy. An' I'll set you up in the little house down in the hollow.

SAM.—C-C-Come on, B-B-B-Betsy. Lets go s-s-s-swill the p-p-pigs. (They start off stage. Hugh and Loreta have managed to get comfortably close to each other by this time.)

LORETA.—Hugh, you've won. Now I can go to school. And after that—(Hides her face on Hugh's breast.)

MR. OLLIVER.—Well, I gol, here's where **I** saw wood!

MRS. OLLIVER.—Yes, Cyrus, here's where you saw wood.

Curtain.—End of Act III.

