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Dramatic Publishing

Our American Cousin

Tom Taylor's Comedy Classic

in a New Version

by

LOWELL SWORTZELL



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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This new version of "Our American Cousin" was first presented by Tufts University at the Tufts Arena Theatre, with the following cast:

THE NIGHTWATCHMAN	<i>Dana C. Bate</i>
PEANUTS JOHN	<i>Howard Weiner</i>
FLORENCE TRENCHARD (LAURA KEENE)	<i>Carol E. Ganem</i>
ABEL MURCOTT	<i>Marvin I. Terban</i>
ASA TRENCHARD	<i>Thomas Divoll</i>
SIR EDWARD TRENCHARD	<i>Maurice Breslow</i>
MR. COYLE	<i>Dana C. Bate</i>
LT. VERNON (THE PROMPTER)	<i>William B. Allen</i>
MR. BINNY	<i>John R. McLean</i>
BUDDICOMBE	<i>John DeFelice</i>
JOHN WICKENS	<i>Tom Tobin</i>
LORD DUNDREARY (MR. EMERSON)	<i>Seabury Quinn, Jr.</i>
MARY MEREDITH	<i>Joyce G. Katz</i>
MRS. MOUNTCHESINGTON	<i>June Judson</i>
AUGUSTA	<i>Wendy Farer</i>
GEORGINA	<i>Clare Melley</i>
SKILLET	<i>Anne Gordon</i>
A SOLDIER	<i>Alan Rinzler</i>

Directed by Nancy Foell Swortzell
Settings by Stephen Palestrant Costumes by Lois Aden

A NOTE ABOUT THE PLAY

Tom Taylor's Adelphi producers rejected OUR AMERICAN COUSIN in 1851, not foreseeing that it would become the most popular comedy on the 19th Century American stage, and one day even triumph in London for four hundred nights. Laura Keene, the noted American actress-manager, while slightly more impressed, only bought the play because the role of Asa Trenchard well suited a promising young actor in her company named Joseph Jefferson. Even so, the script still might never have been produced if carpenters working on a revival of MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM had not delayed its opening two weeks, causing Miss Keene to hurry OUR AMERICAN COUSIN into production as a substitute. Jefferson scored his predicted success along with E. A. Sothorn in the ever expanding role of Lord Dundreary. But no one could have predicted the long-lasting popularity of the play itself which opened in New York, October 15, 1858. It was last produced professionally at the Booth Theatre in New York in 1915.

The new version depicts with historical and theatrical accuracy the performance given by Laura Keene and her company in Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C., the night President Lincoln was assassinated. Of enormous assistance in preparation of this play was the Prompter's Copy of Taylor's script, in The New York Public Library Theatre Collection, written in longhand, giving stage directions—many of which are employed here—and valuable information about the original production. Taylor's comedy survives in three different texts, which have been shortened and unified in this version.

Our American Cousin

A Comedy in Two Acts

FOR TWELVE MEN, SIX WOMEN, AND EXTRAS

CHARACTERS

THE NIGHTWATCHMAN
PEANUTS JOHN, *the Stage Doorman*
PROMPTER (*also plays* LT. VERNON)
LAURA KEENE (*also plays* FLORENCE TRENCHARD)
MR. EMERSON (*also plays* LORD DUNDREARY)
SKILLET
BUDDICOMBE
MR. BINNY
JOHN WICKENS
SIR EDWARD TRENCHARD
MRS. MOUNTCHESSINGTON
AUGUSTA
GEORGINA
ASA TRENCHARD
MR. COYLE
ABEL MURCOTT
MARY MEREDITH
A SOLDIER
Stagehands, property men, servants, etc.

SYNOPSIS

The play takes place on the stage of Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C., first in the 1890's, then on April 14, 1865, and again in the 1890's.

ACT ONE: *The morning rehearsal.*

ACT TWO: *The evening performance.*

NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

THE NIGHTWATCHMAN: He is a garrulous old man, partially bent over from age, who speaks clearly in a warm and friendly manner, never waiting for answers to his questions or comments upon his remarks. He has a deep sense of the historical significance of the events he describes, as well as an emotional response to the tragedy he nightly relives. He wears an old sweater and jacket, dark trousers, and a cap that comes down over his ears to reveal tufts of white hair and whiskers that frame his wrinkled face.

PEANUTS JOHN: Peanuts, a young boy, is something of a simpleton, ever ready to please anyone willing to reward him with a nickel to buy a bag of peanuts. He wears impoverished clothes and possesses unkempt hair, which add to his pitiable state.

FLORENCE TRENCHARD and LAURA KEENE: Florence, a spoiled but well-meaning girl, knows very little about the practical side of life although she is willing to learn. Her sweet beauty and pleasant manner make her extremely attractive. Laura Keene is Florence's opposite because as manager of her own company she is practical, efficient, and firm. Her authority is felt by everyone, yet everyone respects her. In the first act she wears a rehearsal dress that reflects Miss Keene's good taste. In the second act she is dressed in Florence's most extravagant gown, every frill of which indicates that she is the leading lady.

ABEL MURCOTT: Murcott, the alcoholic clerk, wears an everyday business suit. His collar is open and his nose is red.

ASA TRENCHARD: Asa, the lean, American clown, is a lovable rustic who charms everyone with his warm folk qualities. Under his rough exterior are a generous heart and Yankee ingenuity. His buckskin clothes resemble those of the typical American

pioneer; for his archery outfit he adds an Indian blanket and a feathered headdress. He speaks with a New England twang.

SIR EDWARD TRENCHARD: Sir Edward, a stuffy aristocrat, is easily duped because of his pomposity. He wears the very best suit of the day, realizing too late that he cannot afford it.

MR. COYLE: Coyle, the attorney, is the epitome of nineteenth century melodramatic villains. Sneering and leering, he wears a long black cape, and exudes evil to the extent of prompting the audience to hiss at him. Under the cape he wears a black suit.

LT. VERNON: Vernon, a handsome young man in love with Florence, wears a naval uniform. As the Prompter, he may remove the jacket or coat. As the Prompter, he acts like a well-organized stage manager, which, in effect, he must be since he supervises all scene shifts.

MR. BINNY: He is the butler and wears a very stiff uniform which puffs his chest out so it appears about to explode. Because of this he seems to strut rather than walk.

BUDDICOMBE: He is another overly proper servant but less ostentatious in dress and manner than Mr. Binny.

JOHN WICKENS: He is the gardener, a man of simple tastes, who worships Mary. He wears knickers and a farmer's shirt.

SOLDIER: The soldier is a private in the Union Army.

LORD DUNDREARY *and* MR. EMERSON: Lord Dundreary, one of the great comic eccentrics of our stage, is famous for his dyed red whiskers. Even though a portrait of an imbecile aristocrat at his most inane, he is entirely charming. His clothes are as outlandish as his personality; his second-act suit is garish, a mixture of plaids and stripes in ridiculous color combinations. He wears a monocle, which he uses as a prop. Appropriately, Mr. Emerson, too, wears a somewhat outlandish suit upon his entrance; to this he may add a different hat, coat, or tie after the rehearsal commences.

MARY MEREDITH: Mary is a sweet child of great beauty and simple taste. She is a child of nature who delights in listening to the birds sing and in caring for her dairy. She is dressed in a milkmaid's costume with apron and bonnet.

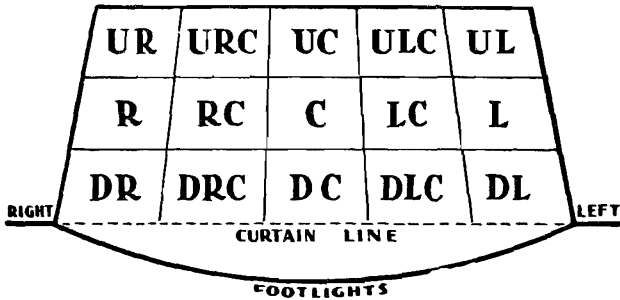
MRS. MOUNTCHESSINGTON: She is an overbearing woman in her middle years, affected and pompous, and well dressed.

AUGUSTA: She is Mrs. Mountchessington's daughter, who, like her mother, is none too intelligent. She is pretty but always self-conscious of her appearance and dependent upon the advice of her mother in all matters. She is dressed far beyond her means.

GEORGINA: Georgina, the perpetually sick girl, claims to be too delicate to walk or even eat. Yet she constantly sneaks food at every opportunity and is, consequently, greatly overweight. Therefore, her dress, designed for an ethereal creature at death's door, does not suit her.

SKILLET: She is a household servant who wears a Victorian cook's costume. She is, of course, very proper.

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

PRODUCTION NOTES

THE BASIC SETTING: Only one basic setting is required for this play: the stage of Ford's Theatre in April, 1865. In the beginning the stage is bare except for a few elements of scenery seen at the sides and in the background. The stage should not be visible to any extent during the scenes in which the Night-watchman appears; instead, the light should be concentrated on the face of the man himself.

As the stage comes to life during the Nightwatchman's description, old-fashioned footlights begin to burn, and a few pieces of scenery suggesting a wing and border arrangement common to nineteenth century theatres are put in place. Drawings and photographs of Ford's Theatre appear in many books on Lincoln and will prove helpful to the director and designer in arranging their setting. However, there is no need to reproduce the actual theatre since a mere suggestion will be most effective. The play has been presented quite successfully in an arena production with almost no scenery whatever.

On one side of the stage, near the proscenium arch, is the Presidential box. It must contain a light and a chair inside, and be accessible for convenient entrances and exits by the Night-watchman. During the intermission this box is decorated with American flags and a portrait of George Washington.

PROPERTIES AND SCENE SHIFTS: As indicated in the text, the furniture and properties are moved in full view of the audience, as part of the planned action of the play. The director must assign each actor a specific task for each scene shift; these must be performed quickly and quietly, without interrupting the continuity of the play.

Before the play begins, the Prompter's table and stool are put in place, along with several rehearsal chairs for the actors in the first scene. The Prompter carries an oversize copy of the play, which is handwritten, as well as a pencil and various checklists. It should be the responsibility of the Prompter to supervise the shifts as well as to see that each shift is complete before the following scene begins.

The Nightwatchman carries a lantern which gives a dim light.

The Drawing Room at Trenchard Manor includes a colorful rug on the floor, one long or round dining table and three Victorian chairs, a side chair, a small love seat, a hanging mirror, an old-fashioned chandelier, two or more potted palms or large house plants, and a French door. The director may use less furniture if he desires. The furniture need not be realistic but should reflect the period of the 1860's in bright colors and reveal a gay, comic spirit. Silverware and china are placed on the table which is covered with a colorful cloth. Also needed are a teawagon with glasses, a tray with various decanters, a mail pouch with letters, Asa's traveling bags, and a knitting basket with yarn.

The Library at Trenchard Manor is composed of a desk containing a globe, an ink stand, a quill pen, a large family Bible, and a small tray with decanters. Murcott carries a bag with letters and legal documents. A chair stands in back of the desk.

Asa's Room requires a large shower bath containing a small amount of water which spills on Asa's head when he pulls the shower rope. Near the bath stands a bureau with a wash basin, pitcher, and hand towel on top. A small bottle of hair dye is in the top drawer of this bureau. Asa's valises are on the floor, which may have a small rug if desired. A chair stands by a small dressing table.

The Dairy scene consists of a section of picket fence, a rustic wooden bench, a large birdhouse on the end of a long pole, a butter churn, two small stools, rose bower (can be simply several flower pots with flowers in bloom), a large spinning wheel, and a small chair.

The Wine Cellar is suggested by a few painted stones and barrels. One open barrel must be large enough for an actor to fall into. Various bottles of wine and candles stand on a table which is really just another barrel with a board on top of it. A small stool stands in front of this improvised table. The scene is completed with several wooden boxes or wine kegs.

ACT ONE

SCENE: *Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C., in the 1890's.*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *The play begins on a totally dark stage. After a moment footsteps are heard, then the sound of a door opening. Lantern light spills on stage from the open doorway where the silhouetted figure of the NIGHTWATCHMAN appears. He raises and lowers the lantern in an effort to determine the identity of the intruder.]*

NIGHTWATCHMAN. Ain't no one allowed trespassing. [*There is no answer.*] I said you're breaking the law coming in here. [*Still there is no reply.*] This is Federal property, you know. What you want this time of night, anyway? There's nothing here for thieves, you can be certain of that. Nothing but memories. Lord knows, you're welcome to take away as many of them as you like. Where you think you're going now in those shadows? Careful where you walk. The floor won't hold up in some places, and there's wreckage all about us. That's why I keep folks out. The Government don't want anything else to happen. And the way I look on it, there's been trouble enough in this building already to last 'til the end of time, Lord knows. [*Looking down.*] Loose timbers fallen from upstairs. Now if you insist on poking about, you better let me show you the way around. I ain't suppose' to. But it appears I can't stop you lurking in the dark. Besides, this time of night, no one will suspect one way or another. And I don't care what they tell you, there ain't a watchman on earth but what's glad for somebody to talk the night out with—especially in a crumbling tomb like this. Hard to believe this was a theater, ain't it? The stage was here. Right over here. Come along, I'll show you. There was boxes on the sides of the stage like they used to do in those

days. [*When he indicates the boxes with his lantern, they come dimly into view.*] And the scenery was right about here. [*As the stage lights come up, a piece of Victorian scenery glides down into place behind the NIGHTWATCHMAN.*] Down there were the footlights. Gas, they used then . . . glowed a yellow glow, I remember. [*The footlights come on.*] And back this way was the dressing rooms. That's the stage door there. Peanuts John always stood there.

[PEANUTS JOHN, a young man, something of a simpleton, appears in the doorway, shelling and munching peanuts.]

NIGHTWATCHMAN. He took care of the horses out back; stables all along the alley out there. [*Moves to a desk and chair.*] See this: where the Prompter sat.

[*The PROMPTER enters and takes his seat.*]

NIGHTWATCHMAN. Ran the whole show, the Prompter. Of course, when Miss Keene was here she ran everything, including the Prompter. She was a real businesswoman; made more money than any man manager in her day, they say. Musta had a fine head on her shoulders. She had rehearsals here every day because she put on a different play every day.

[*The stage of Ford's Theatre, as it was the morning of April 14, 1865, is now fully lighted. Members of the company come on in their street clothes. Some check their lines with the PROMPTER. Others talk softly as they wait in the wings. The NIGHTWATCHMAN has disappeared. Stagehands, assisted by members of the acting company, place the furniture for the first scene of the rehearsal. PEANUTS JOHN leaves the door and runs to the PROMPTER.*]

PEANUTS JOHN. Miss Keene just turned the alleyway.

PROMPTER [*calling out*]. Is everyone ready for rehearsal to begin? Where's Mr. Emerson?

PEANUTS JOHN. Ain't come in yet.

PROMPTER. You better get him from the tavern next door before Miss Keene misses him.

PEANUTS JOHN. I'll get him here. I'll tell him he's late. I'll get him for you. [*Stands perfectly still in front of* PROMPTER.] I'll go get him.

PROMPTER. Oh, very well. [*Reaching into his pockets.*] Here's a nickel for peanuts. Now, bring him in here.

PEANUTS JOHN [*smiling*]. I'll tell him. I'll tell him he's late.

[*LAURA KEENE enters. A tall, stately woman, she hurries on stage only to confront PEANUTS JOHN on his way out. As soon as she appears, the entire company stops talking and moving scenery, and assembles on stage.*]

LAURA KEENE. You're the doorman?

PEANUTS JOHN. Yes, ma'am, Miss Keene.

LAURA KEENE. Then you should be at the door. Isn't that where Mr. Ford expects you to be?

PEANUTS JOHN. I was at the door, Miss Keene. I was. I been standing there all morning. But Mr. Prompter called me away. He called me away, Miss Keene. He said, "Go find Mr. Emerson in a hurry." He gave me money, Miss Keene. He paid me to leave the door. I didn't want to.

LAURA KEENE. If he paid you, then you'd best find Mr. Emerson and earn your money.

PEANUTS JOHN. I'll get him, I will.

LAURA KEENE [*to the company*]. Does anyone know where Mr. Emerson may be located this morning?

PROMPTER. He went to Good Friday services on G Street, I believe I heard him say, Miss Keene.

PEANUTS JOHN. But you told me to look next door.

LAURA KEENE. Then fetch him over, please, from the "church" next door.

PEANUTS JOHN. I'll have him here in a minute, Miss Keene. You can trust me. [*He hurries off.*]

LAURA KEENE [*addressing the company in a businesslike but kind manner*]. About our leaving Washington: The coming week-end may prove difficult, with troops moving and the railways being used by both armies. Then the celebrations of people rejoicing in the streets and attending "Good

Friday" services in every tavern across the country have paralyzed movement in the cities. Therefore, we must depart early and be prepared for delays, for which I can only ask your indulgence. Our scenic effects will be ready to leave Mr. Ford's an hour after the performance tonight, and we must have our costumes and personal belongings ready, too. I have hired two wagons to call at midnight, and whatever you do not send then, you will have to carry with you on the train. This is the most satisfactory arrangement I can manage. Surely you understand that with the war over only a week, it is impossible for me to accommodate you as I would like.

[PEANUTS JOHN *returns, running up to LAURA KEENE, interrupting her.*]

PEANUTS JOHN. He's coming. I got him, Miss Keene. I told you he was next door.

[MR. EMERSON *enters and stands in the doorway.*]

MR. EMERSON. Happy Good Friday, everybody!

LAURA KEENE [*staring intently*]. Mr. Emerson, the first item on our rehearsal agenda today is your walk. You still do not perform it the way I suggested.

MR. EMERSON. Like this? [*Attempts to hop, but stumbles and falls down awkwardly; the company is unable to refrain from laughing at him.*]

LAURA KEENE. The Dundreary walk, Mr. Emerson, is a little hop. Like this. [*She performs it.*] It's very simple. We'll all do it with you. [*The entire company demonstrates the hop to EMERSON, still sprawled on the stage. He finds the lesson funny and begins to laugh; then gets up and hops about with complete abandon. When the cast begins to laugh, he stops abruptly, and stands embarrassed.*] There, Mr. Emerson, you have it. I knew you could do it. [*To PROMPTER.*] Now we are ready for the rehearsal to begin! With the Capital jubilant, we may expect an unusually good benefit this evening.

PEANUTS JOHN. Grover's Theatre announced a victory celebration for tonight. "Aladdin and His Lamp" with special lights and effects. Young Mr. Ford said everybody is going there.

LAURA KEENE. I hardly think *we* are going to Grover's, however special the effects!

PEANUTS JOHN. Everybody's already seen "Our American Cousin," it's been playing so long.

LAURA KEENE. But even after a thousand performances they still come.

PEANUTS JOHN. Not tonight. They're going to Grover's. Young Mr. Ford said so.

LAURA KEENE [*to the PROMPTER, in an effort to ignore PEANUTS JOHN*]. We'll begin, please! Everyone in place for the opening scene. [*The actors disperse, some taking places on stage, others retiring to the wings.*] Remember your positions and cues. Ask Mr. Prompter if you don't. Very well, the orchestra has stopped, the front scene opens, and Act One begins . . . in the drawing room of Trenchard Manor.

[*The lights change for the performance, coming up on the furniture and setting that has just been assembled. BUDDICOMBE sits reading a newspaper, SKILLET dusts as MR. BINNY arranges chairs.*]

SKILLET. What a strange house this is.

BUDDICOMBE. Very uncomfortable; I have no curtain to my bed.

SKILLET. And no wine at the second table.

BUDDICOMBE. I'm afraid Sir Edward is in dire straits.

MR. BINNY [*making BUDDICOMBE get up*]. Mind your h'own business instead h'of your betters'. I'm disgusted with you lower servants.

SKILLET. Last year's milliner's bills have not been paid.

BUDDICOMBE. Miss Florence has had no new dresses from London all winter.

MR. BINNY. That'll do; that'll do! Remember, to check h'idle

curiosity is the first duty of men in livery. Ha, here h'are the letters.

[*Enter JOHN WICKENS, the gardener, with green bag. MR. BINNY takes the bag, removes letters and reads addresses.*]

MR. BINNY. Miss Augusta, Mrs. Mountchessington, Lord Dundreary. Miss Georgina Mountchessington, Lieut. Vernon. Ah! that's from the admiralty. What's this? Miss Florence Trenchard via Brattleboro, Vermont.

BUDDICOMBE. Where's that, Mr. Binny?

JOHN. Why, that be h'in the United States of North H'america, and a good place for poor folks.

MR. BINNY. John Wickens, you forget yourself.

JOHN. Beg pardon, Mr. Binny.

MR. BINNY. John Wickens, leave the room!

JOHN. But I know where Vermont be, though. [*Making a face, he goes out.*]

BUDDICOMBE [*looking at letter in MR. BINNY'S hand*]. Why, that is Master Ned's hand, Mr. Binny. He must have been sporting in Vermont.

MR. BINNY. Yes, no doubt shooting the wild h'elephants and buffaloes what abound there.

BUDDICOMBE. The nasty beasts! [*Looking off.*] Hello, here comes Miss Florence tearing across the lane like a three-year-old colt.

[*FLORENCE (LAURA KEENE) enters running.*]

FLORENCE. Oh! I'm fairly out of breath! Good morning, Binny. I saw Wickens coming with the letter bag. I thought I could catch him before I reached the house. So off I started, but I forgot the pond, and it was in or over. I got over; but my hat got in. I wish you'd fish it out for me. You won't find the pond very deep.

MR. BINNY. Me fish for an 'at? Does she take me for an h'angler?

FLORENCE. Give me the letters. [*Looks through them.*] Bills! Blessed budget that descends upon Trenchard Manor like

rain on a duck pond. [*To MR. BINNY.*] Tell Papa and all, that the letters have come. You will find them on the terrace.

MR. BINNY. Yes, miss.

FLORENCE. And then go fish my hat out of the pond. It's not very deep.

MR. BINNY. Me fish for 'ats? She *does* take me for an h'angler. [*He exits, disgusted.*]

FLORENCE [*looking at letters again*]. "Lieut. Vernon. In Her Majesty's service. Admiralty, R.N." Ah, that's an answer to Harry's application for a ship. Papa promised to use his influence for him. I hope he has succeeded. But then he will have to leave us, and who knows if he ever comes back. What a foolish girl I am, when I know that his rise in the service will depend upon it. I do hope he'll get it, and if he must leave us, I'll bid him good-by as a lass who loves a sailor should.

[*SIR EDWARD, MRS. MOUNTCHESSINGTON, AUGUSTA, and VERNON enter, in conversation.*]

FLORENCE. Papa, dear, here are letters for you. One for you, Mrs. Mountchessington. And for you, Harry. [*She hides the letter behind her.*]

VERNON. Ah, one for me, Florence?

FLORENCE. Now what will you give me for one?

VERNON [*kissing her*]. Ah, then you have one?

FLORENCE. Yes, here, Harry.

VERNON. Ah, for a ship. [*Opens and reads the letter.*]

FLORENCE. Ah! *Mon ami*, you are to leave us? Good news, or bad?

VERNON. No ship yet. This promises another year of land-lubbery.

FLORENCE. I'm so sorry. [*To herself.*] I'm so glad he's not going away. But where's Dundreary? Has anybody seen Dundreary?

[*LORD DUNDREARY (MR. EMERSON) enters, walks about the room, employing his bop.*]

DUNDREARY. Good morning, Miss Florence.

FLORENCE. Good morning, my Lord Dundreary. Who do you think has been here? What does the postman bring?

DUNDREARY. Well, sometimes he brings a bag with a lock on it, sometimes newspapers, and sometimes letters, I suppothe.

FLORENCE. There. [*Gives DUNDREARY a letter, which he has difficulty in opening. FLORENCE helps him.*]

DUNDREARY. That's the idea! Thank you!

AUGUSTA. Florence, dear, here's a letter of yours got among mine. [*Gives it to her.*]

FLORENCE. Why, Papa, it's from dear brother Ned.

SIR EDWARD. From my boy! Where is he? How is he? Read it!

FLORENCE. He writes from Brattleboro, Vermont. [*Reads.*]

"Quite well, just come in from a shooting excursion. With a party of Crows, splendid fellows. Six feet high."

DUNDREARY. Birds six feet high—what tremendous animals they must be!

FLORENCE. Oh, I see what my brother means; a tribe of Indians called Crows. Not birds. [*Reads from letter.*] "By the bye, I have lately come quite haphazard upon the other branch of our family, which emigrated to America at the Restoration. They are now thriving in this state and, discovering our relationship, they received me most hospitably. I have cleared up the mysterious death of old Mark Trenchard."

SIR EDWARD. Of my uncle!

FLORENCE. "It appears that when he quarreled with his daughter on her marriage with poor Meredith, he came here in search of this stray shoot of the family tree, found them and died in their house, leaving Asa, one of the sons, heir to his personal property in England, which ought to belong to poor Mary Meredith. Asa is about to sail for the old country, to take possession. I gave him directions to seek you out, and he should arrive almost as soon as this letter. Receive him kindly for the sake of the kindness he has shown to me, and let him see some of our shooting. Your affectionate brother, Ned."

SIR EDWARD. An American branch of the family?

MRS. MOUNTCHESSINGTON. Oh, how interesting!

AUGUSTA. How delightfully romantic! I can imagine the wild young hunter. An Apollo of the prairie.

FLORENCE. An Apollo of the prairie? Yes, with a strong nasal twang, and a decided taste for tobacco and cobblers.

DUNDREARY. Florence, you forget that he is a Trenchard, and no true Trenchard would have a liking for cobblers or low people of that kind.

FLORENCE. I hate him, whatever he is. Coming here to rob poor cousin Mary of her grandmother's guineas.

SIR EDWARD. Florence, how often must I request you not to speak of Mary Meredith as your cousin?

FLORENCE. Why, she is my cousin, is she not? Besides, she presides over her milk pail like a duchess playing dairymaid. And I am so fond of my cousin's sillabubs. Dundreary, do you know what sillabubs are?

DUNDREARY. Oh, yeth, I know what a sillabub is. Yeth! Yeth!

FLORENCE. Why, I don't believe you do know what it is.

DUNDREARY. Not know what sillabubs are? That's a good idea.

Why, they are—sillabubs are—they are silly babies, idiotic children. That's a good idea, that's good. [*Bumps his head against FLORENCE.*]

FLORENCE. No, it's not a bit like the idea. What you mean are called cherubims.

DUNDREARY. What, those things that look like oranges, with wings on them?

FLORENCE. Not a bit like it. Well, after luncheon you must go with me and I'll introduce you to my cousin Mary and sillabubs.

DUNDREARY. I never saw Mr. Sillabubs, I am sure.

FLORENCE. Sillabubs, dear sir, is a dish made of wine and cream! You shall see. Well, now, don't forget.

DUNDREARY. I never forget—when I can recollect.

FLORENCE. Then recollect that you have an appointment with me after luncheon.

DUNDREARY. Yeth, yeth.

FLORENCE. Well, what have you after luncheon?

DUNDREARY. Well, sometimes I have a glass of brandy with an egg in it, sometimes a run around the duck pond, sometimes a game of checkers—that's for exercise, and sometimes a game of billiards.

FLORENCE. No, no! You have with me after luncheon, an ap—an ap——

DUNDREARY. An ap—an ap——

FLORENCE. An ap—an appoint—appointment.

DUNDREARY. An ointment, that's the idea!

MRS. MOUNTCHESSINGTON [*whispering to AUGUSTA*]. That artful girl has designs upon Lord Dundreary. Augusta, dear, go and see how your poor, dear sister, Georgina, is this morning.

AUGUSTA. Yes, Mamma. [*Goes out.*]

MRS. MOUNTCHESSINGTON. Georgina is a great sufferer, my dear.

DUNDREARY. Yeth, but a lonely one.

FLORENCE. What sort of night had she?

MRS. MOUNTCHESSINGTON. Oh, a very refreshing one, thanks to the draught you were kind enough to prescribe for her, Lord Dundreary.

FLORENCE. What! Has Lord Dundreary been prescribing for Georgina?

DUNDREARY. Yeth, you see I gave her a draught that cured the effect of the draught, and that draught was a draught that didn't pay the doctor's bill. Didn't that draught——

FLORENCE. Good gracious! What a number of draughts. You have almost a game of draughts.

DUNDREARY. Ha! Ha! Ha! [*Doubles over in laughter.*]

FLORENCE. What's the matter?

DUNDREARY. That wath a joke, that wath!

FLORENCE. Where's the joke?

DUNDREARY. She don't see it. Don't you see—a game of draughts—pieces of wound wood on square pieces of leather. That's the idea! Now, I want to ask you a *whime*?

FLORENCE. A *whime*, what's that?