



Scene from "Gammer" Gurton's, the first entirely original English Farce Comedy presented  
by the Stuart Walker Company in Mr. Walker's Portmanteau Theatre Setting

# PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

*By*

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# INTRODUCTION

## I

“What’s in a name?” asked Juliet, and truly the reader of this book may well make the same query, for of the four plays contained in it only two can be considered in any wise as adaptations, and about one of those I am rather doubtful. However, the plan for the Portmanteau series, made three years ago, included this title, and as the book has been announced for many months past as Portmanteau Adaptations it was thought unwise to make a change at the last moment. Therefore, the book and I who named it, both ask forgiveness if we have deceived. Our intent was innocent, and, to complete the quotation with which we began this apologia, “That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”

The Portmanteau Theater with its plays was born in New York City, and in the past I have usually spoken of it largely in connection with New York. This I can no longer do, for Mr. Walker’s great success in repertory in Indianapolis has meant in effect a change in headquarters. It was inevitable that this should be so. Broadway is a good thing to come back to, but to remain there means either surrender, bankruptcy, or stagnation. Repertory on Broad-

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way died with Augustin Daly, and though the Portmanteau, like a raider on the flanks of an army, has more than once dashed in and given a telling blow in the shape of a success it would be unwise to invite a pitched battle. There would be nothing to gain and everything to lose. Personally I have for years looked toward the middle west, or as Indianapolis would doubtless say, the middle east, for that revitalization in point of view which we all realize is so essential to the success of any art in America. And this in spite of Main Street. For Main Street is really no more typical of America than a sore toe is typical of the man who happens to have one. The Earth was born of Chaos; Christ came out of Nazareth; and there are more things in Main Street than are dreamt of in the philosophy of Mr. Sinclair Lewis. For five summer seasons the Stuart Walker Company has proved that Indianapolis has a large and appreciative theater going population, a population that likes new things done in a new way as well as old things.

During the season of 1921 the Stuart Walker Company passed its six-hundredth performance in Indianapolis. There are several unique points about this company which should be noted. It is the only company of the kind that has ever gone intact from its home city (Indianapolis) into New York and Chicago using the same actors, lighting, and scenery. The company does not depend upon the personality of one or two people for its success. It is well rounded.

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The productions are immensely even; one does not find a star supported by a dummy caste. If there is no one in the company who fits exactly into a part, some one is brought in from outside, but this happens very rarely. In its first five years the company has given over seventy-one plays of which about thirty-four were seen for the first time in the home city, and of which fifteen were premieres. This is truly a remarkable record; six hundred performances, seventy-one plays, fifteen premieres. I do not know of a single company in America to-day that can equal it. Also, and this is of no small importance, the prices of the company this last season were exactly half those of the regular winter prices. Here then is a company, well balanced, well trained, adequate in every way, and playing excellent repertory at half-price, and at a profit. And they tell us that repertory will not pay in America! Truly it will not pay when it is so calculated as to please only one type of person, and that one the smallest part of the public. The partial repertory of the Stuart Walker Company is listed in the appendix to this volume, and the attention of the reader is particularly invited to it, for it is deftly composed. It is psychologically sound. It ranges from Dunsany to Harry James Smith, and from Echegaray to Eugene Walter. Very evidently there is something here to please every one. And too there is an obvious effort to choose the best in each type of play. There is nothing haphazard, nothing left to chance.

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Likewise a repertory company will not succeed when it is made up either of a collection of stars with whatever-can-be-dragged-in for support or when there is one star and the rest of the company is composed of odds and ends. Both of these things have happened, and both of them have failed. There is no Duse or Coquelin in the Stuart Walker Company, and it is not even desirable that there should be. The balance would be destroyed at once. But, instead of this, there are, to mention only a few, Blanche Yurka, Elizabeth Patterson, Beatrice Maude, McKay Morris, Regina Wallace, George Gaul, Tom Powers, Margaret Mower, and Peggy Wood. When we speak of *evenness* on the American stage we are more than apt to mean mediocrity, but in this instance we have an evenness of excellence, a company perfectly able to handle the romantic play, the realistic, the poetic drama or anything indeed that it is called upon to do, and handle it proficiently. There can be nothing slipshod here. The result is the most successful repertory company in the country. When the lesson has been thoroughly learned and digested we may have more of them. In my opinion, however, two unusual attributes possessed by Mr. Walker himself have strongly militated toward his success.

He can see potentialities which are buried, and he can bring them out and develop them. In *Portmanteau Plays* I spoke of one of Mr. Walker's first productions at the end of which a Broadway manager asked him where on earth he had been



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able to get his company, so many comparatively unknown actors doing such unusually good work. Mr. Walker's reply, "I got six of them out of your companies," tells the story. He saw, where the other manager could not, that here were six people who could really act if they were given the chance instead of being buried in walking parts. He took them, trained them or rather helped them to train themselves, gave them the opportunity to develop their capacities, and they are unknown no longer. If Mr. Walker ever decides to start a school of acting it will be well worth going to. Naturally all this has helped. The work has been done by a man who has a great instinct for the stage, not by one who regards the stage merely as a means of making money, as one might think of a fish market for instance. It is vitally necessary that a producer, a director, a regisseur have this instinct. It does not require a *flair* to sell fish, but to put on plays does require a certain intuitive knowledge of the theater. A great deal can be learned, but the most important thing of all cannot be. Taste is inbred or else merely superficial. The fact that Mr. Walker has both this instinctive taste and knowledge has not only helped very largely toward his success, but has likewise saved him some thousands of dollars in the doing. I can recall especially three plays, one of which cost \$1,500 to stage, one \$52, and one nothing at all. They all succeeded. But this sort of thing cannot be indulged in indiscriminately; one must



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know absolutely when to spend money and when not to.

From the foregoing it will be plain, if it is not so already, that the repertory theater will not only result in raising the standard of plays produced, but will also raise the standard of production. Perhaps the most important single factor in repertory is the amount of experimental work that is possible. A play intended for a long run can seldom afford to be an experiment: the financial risk is too great. But in the repertory theater all things are possible. It becomes at once the place where plays, actors, scenery, new modes of staging and whatever is likely to be of interest is tried out. By its very nature it can afford to be progressive; the ordinary theater cannot in most instances. It has all it can do to hold its own without taking unnecessary chances. The "little theater" has done much for us along these lines, but its public is small for the most part, and the range of its activity strictly limited. There is one more possibility likewise that I should like to recall now that we are on the subject both of the Portmanteau and of repertory, to which I referred in my introduction to *More Portmanteau Plays*. The Stuart Walker Company is safely established in a large city situated geographically in a more or less central position where the company has met with emphatic success. Why not make the portable Portmanteau Theater correlative to this repertory company? In this event any play which had

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made a decided hit in the home city could be added to the repertory of the Portmanteau which could then be sent out in flying tours throughout the country. All the old arguments in favor of the Portmanteau would be just as pertinent as ever. It could go anywhere and play anywhere. For the small towns throughout the rural districts it would be a god-send. These places cannot afford to support a theater of their own; in many instances they have not even a town hall in which to house the itinerant company. But the Portmanteau can be set up in a barn or a ball room, in anything in fact big enough to hold it. I know that this idea has occurred to Mr. Walker. In fact I believe that it was his original suggestion. There are certain practical difficulties that stand in the way of its accomplishment, however, that must be cleared up first. I note it as a suggestion, and I have no doubt that if the time ever does come when it is a practical possibility it will become a fact. Mr. Walker is not apt to hand back when opportunity offers.

Both the theater and the drama, as all other arts, need room for growth, for expansion, for development. Art forms are constantly changing and growing, indeed if they do not they deteriorate and die. I do not mean that the old forms must be discarded, but simply that the current must be refreshed with new life from time to time. With the ordinary theater and with the ordinary company this is hardly possible. They are in a rut and their only salvation lies in not

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being tempted out of it. But the possibilities opened up by a good repertory company, and by a practicable, portable theater are tremendous. The rigid, confining lines fade at once, and the whole structure becomes flexible and revitalized. With these one can branch out in any direction without fear of ultimate calamity. With every year that has passed since that first production of the *Portmanteau* at the Christodora House the signs have ripened, and the indications have become more evident. Progress has been at least normal, and at times more than normal. It is for the future to show the completed task.

### II

The first play in this volume, *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, is a real adaptation, which is fortunate if only for the sake of the title of the book. Most readers will probably know the play in its original form, but until Mr. Walker adapted it for his own use I doubt if it had been played for many years except perhaps by English classes and dramatic clubs in the universities. Certainly it was not available to the public. The form of the play is antiquated, and the use of rhymed verse makes its production doubly difficult. It is full of action, however, and of that robust English humor which culminated in Falstaff. Having these, it has never actually lost its appeal, and with certain slight changes and modifications its audiences find it as popular to-day as it was in the 16th century.

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*Gammer Gurton's Needle* was acted sixteen years after the even more famous *Ralph Roister Doister* at Christ's College, Cambridge. Though the authorship is somewhat uncertain it is generally attributed to John Still, who, born in 1543, became Master of Christ's College, and finally Vice-Chancellor of the University. If Still really wrote *Gammer Gurton's Needle* it must have been in his youth while still an undergraduate at the University, for in his later days as Vice-Chancellor he held out strongly for the Latin drama as against the English, maintaining that the first was the more intellectual. To a certain extent he was right, but nevertheless, there is a certain flavor of the middle ages about *Gammer* that strongly recalls the Latin comedies. In the later years of his life, Still became a Bishop, and he must have looked back with something of regret to the bustling days when he wrote *A Ryght Pithy Pleasaunt and Merie Comedie: Intytuled Gammer Gurton's Nedle*. It is the second extant English comedy properly so-called, and as such has been handed over to students for far too long. About the only actual evidence of authorship lies in the fact that the title page of the edition of 1575 states that the play was "made by Mr. S Mr. of Art." As Still was the only Master in Cambridge at the time the play was probably acted whose name began with S, he has, justly enough in all probability, been given credit. At any rate, taken in connection with his later dignities his authorship is piquante. Indeed



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it no longer matters, for there are no more royalties to pay, and the play itself is here for all who may enjoy it. It is written in rhyming lines of from fourteen to sixteen feet, and, as anyone will see who reads it aloud and rather rapidly, this verse form is far more difficult for the actor than blank verse even.

Diccon was more or less of a stock figure of the period. In *Gammer* he is certainly human enough, but in other plays we find him sometimes invested with Puckish qualities that rise even to the height of *Devildom* on occasion. The play is broad, as broad as it is long in fact, but even so it has required little enough change and excision by the deft touch of Mr. Walker to make it perfectly actable even in a young ladies' seminary, though hearsay informs me that this particular criterion of delicacy holds good no longer.

### III

*The Birthday of the Infanta* is a wholly charming conceit so well suited to dramatic purposes that one is rather inclined to wonder why Oscar Wilde as author of the story did not stage it himself. Wilde's fairy tales stand quite apart from the rest of his work, however. His plays are best when they are most artificial. *The Importance of Being Earnest* which hasn't a serious line or situation in it is far finer than *Lady Windermere's Fan*, for instance, in which the pathos nearly approaches bathos, and the tragedy of which rings utterly false. The fairy tales have

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more sincerity than all of the rest of Wilde's work put together, even and including *De Profundis*. There is a very fine pathos in *The Birthday of the Infanta*: there is tragedy even, but so delicate is the touch that the shadows are never permitted to assume a deeper tone than grey. There is an air of unreality that echoes an emotion that is not actually there, but the echo itself is poignantly lovely. The theme has been used several times since it was first written, and I do not know, I confess, whether the story was original with Wilde or not. Alfred Noyes adapted it for pure poetic form under the title of *The Dwarf's Tragedy* without giving credit either to Wilde or anyone else. His verses, however, were thoroughly delightful, and he missed none of the many opportunities for voluptuous color the tale presents. The reader may remember Noyes' description of the Princess when the Dwarf is sent to her at the feast. I quote from memory, and not quite accurately I fear, but I am without present access to the poem in question.

“Roses, roses all around her, roses in her laughing face,  
Roses where the glistening wine cup glowed  
in honor of the chase;  
Roses where the rosey jewels burned on snowy  
breast and brow  
Roses . . . and he burst out blindly through  
the feast of rose and snow.”

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It is certainly colorful, but though Mr. Walker's dramatic version may be somewhat less rosey it is none the less faithful to the original in atmosphere, and in effect.

I recall vividly Mr. Walker's original production of the *Infanta* with Gregory Kelly as the Dwarf. I cannot remember who did the scenery, but I have no difficulty in remembering its beauty as well as that of the costumes. *The Birthday of the Infanta* leaves an impression as of music; it is as though some lovely, melancholy strain had drifted through the air and lingered there to haunt one. The subtle fragrance and charm which are so entirely characteristic of these enchanting tales of Wilde's are not absent from the play. Nothing is lost, and there is nothing added that is alien.

### IV

The last two plays of the volume show Stuart Walker in his most typical and successful vein as a playwright. They are children's plays; that is, they are plays of children, but, as the author himself says, they are for children from "seven to seventy." That they are not only well liked, but even eagerly looked forward to by audiences ranging between these ages is proof positive that there is nothing spurious about them. "You can fool a man with a stuffed dog, but you can't fool a dog." By the same token you can trick an audience of adults, some adults, with a carefully prepared product that they take to be an

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echo from childhood. But it isn't. It is simply what some clever writer knows that the average unclever audience thinks it remembers of its childhood. It isn't authentic in the least, and viewed with the cold eyes of truth is more apt to be childish than childlike. This is where Mr. Walker's plays are different. The children like them too. They recognize them. They know that they were written by a child.

*Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil* was, and is, one of the most successful plays for children of all ages that has been written in many years. Even the critics liked it; it even entertained the managers. This is because it is real. It is as real as *Puss in Boots*, or *Little Red Riding Hood*, or *Cinderella*. *Sir David Wears a Crown* is the sequel to *Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil*. Few plays have sequels; few could stand them. But you can pick a fairy story up almost where you dropped it, for the break automatically repairs itself through the sheer creative force of imagination.

*Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil* is set outside the palace not far from the square where the Queen is to be beheaded for stepping on the ring-toe of the King's Great Aunt. The play ends with the Queen saved by David, thereupon created on the spot Sir David Little Boy. The scene of *Sir David Wears a Crown* is at one of the Gateways of the King's palace, and the action begins while the search for the Queen is still going on. Thus this play begins not where the



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other left off, but just enough before to knit the two plays together. *Six Who Pass* was a wholly delightful fancy, but I confess that I like *Sir David* even better. The slight undercurrent of satiric comedy perceptible in the first play is even more evident in the second. Mr. Walker uses again the Prologue, the Device Bearer, and *You in the Audience*, thus at the very outset striking the key note of the performance. This play has a bit more substance than the other. The gentle and very pointed fun that is poked at etiquette, at convention, at law and order never goes so far that one feels the onus of a preaching, and yet goes far enough so that no shade of natural absurdity is missed. The *Soldiery* and the *Population*, and the rope that *Sir David* finally removes by the simple expedient of coiling it up are all simply, skillfully, and successfully done. Many fairy tales have or have had a tinge of satire, and in none of them does it seem to belong more naturally than here. Quite aside from this vein is that human emotion which reaches its culmination in the last scene of the play between *Sir David*, now a prince, and his Mother. It would have been very easy to have been maudlin here, but the author has not for an instant fallen into the pit temptation dug for him. The sentiment is true, simple and convincing. It is born of that same tenderness that finds its outlet at one time in gently mocking the conventionalized inhibitions of society as it is constituted, and at another in the direct expression of that sym-

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pathetic understanding with which the final scene of the play is treated.

To my mind *Sir David Wears a Crown* is an excellent example of Mr. Walker at his best as a playwright. His insistence on the fact that a play is something to be played, and something to play with; not a preachment, a symbol, an allegory or whatnot. A child's ball is a symbol of the globe if you choose, but most important of all it is a ball that can be thrown and caught again: toy ships, soldiers, houses, forts, castles and all the other equipment of the miniature world of childhood are, if you like, symbols of the greater world into which children must one day grow, but this is a detail, a perversion even, for the prime purpose of these things is play. Without them one can still make believe, but with them one can believe more easily. The whole idea behind the best of Mr. Walker's plays is, I think, let's pretend. And if one can pretend all is well; but if one cannot, one's money should be given back to one at the box-office for that one has been lured into the theater under false pretences. After all, what is any art and all art but an exemplification and a natural expansion of Let's Pretend? Sophistication is only the elaborate mummery the juggler makes to distract our attention from his real purpose. *The Doll's House*, for instance, would be characterized by the careless as an intellectual play. Tut, tut, and fie for shame! That is only the mask. It might as easily and with greater art be written as poeti-

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cally as *Peer Gynt* in which one must pretend continually. There is that unfortunate type of person who regards the theater as a natural adjunct to the church, the law court, and to the soap box of the propagandist on the street corner. Sadly enough, some of these persons even write plays, and more sadly still get them produced. But here the pretense is still more flagrant, for they only pretend to be plays. There is no play in them really. This constant chase after hidden meanings, symbols and the like is only the incessant demand of the futile for futility. It is as though one could not take pleasure in the perfume of a flower or in the colors of a sunset without straightway becoming wordy and discursive about perfumes and colors in general. We know that the wag of a dog's tail expresses pleasure; we do not demand that the dog wag his tail according to a signal code like a Boy Scout. And so if we demand that the *Soldiery* in *Sir David Wears a Crown* stand for Militarism, the *Population for the Masses*, the coil of rope for Law and Convention, and so on and on, we do no more than to limit and define the straw with which we are tickled. If the play is really to give us pleasure, however, if it is to awaken in us any sense of beauty, we must take it as it is, as a play.

### V

Comes *Nellijumbo*. This is not a sequel, but it is reminiscent of another play of Mr. Walker's which for some time has been one of the most

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popular in his repertory, that is *Jonathan Makes a Wish*. *Nellijumbo* is of the same genre, in fact it is not unlike a tabloid version of the earlier and longer play. It too is of a child, and for children. It is quite unlike *Sir David Wears a Crown*, however, and to mind it is a less successful bit of work, though I am quite prepared to find that most audiences disagree with me. The trouble that I find with it is that it is too obvious. It is the story of a little blind boy, brought up, so far as he has been brought up at all, by a stiff and conventional aunt and uncle whose lives are engulfed and encircled by Yeas and Nays, and who regard an imaginative flight as merely a more elaborate method of lying. The boy is very sensitive, and under the circumstances equally repressed. To him comes his father—his mother is dead—an explorer, an adventurer in the Elizabethan sense, from whom Richard has inherited all that has become perforce quiescent under the disciplinary regime of the aunt and uncle. The story of how the boy and his father find each other is the story of the play. It is done sympathetically and deftly, but it is done too obviously and directly for my own taste. I feel as though a somewhat sentimental sermonette had been hurled at me. As usual, Mr. Walker's stage directions are simply asides in characterization. This I believe is as it should be if a play is to be printed. It has been wisely remarked that actually to succeed a play must be a success first on the stage and second in the



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library. Of course this is true enough. Otherwise it cannot pass into literature, and if it cannot pass into literature it cannot endure for long. Look back over the centuries, and it will be evident enough that the plays that have come down to us, that have lasted, are the plays which are not only successful dramatically, but which are true literature in the bargain. Either this or they are historical curiosities, and are generally unknown to the public. If only for this reason it seems to me that the method, actually inaugurated by Barrie on the modern English speaking stage, of elaborating the old conventional stage directions until they have an interpretative value, a literary quality, is a step in the right direction. It has been said in criticism of this that it makes a play less like a play and infringes on the privileges of the novelist. Absurd. It does not in the least make a play less like a play, but it does make it less like a prompt copy. Go back to the old editions of the plays published by French, and observe the O. P.s and the R. U. E.s and the R. L. E.s and S. C.s and all the other abbreviations of that technical jargon which has no value except for the technical director of the play in question. And having rid ourselves of that why not go a step further and polish what is left to a semblance of brilliancy at least? There is a danger in this, of course: danger lest the unwary leave too much to the stage direction, and include too little in the

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dialogue, but Mr. Walker is far too old a hand to be trapped into such a fault.

*Nellijumbo* is a small tract in a dramatic form. One cannot criticise it because it is a tract. Criticism rests in the fact that it is so plainly a tract that, in the reading version, at any rate, one loses its illusion as a play. It is my belief that material of this nature can be treated much more successfully after the manner of *Sir David Wears a Crown*. Either that or let the dramatic action be pitched in so high a key that the sermon rises to the point of a diatribe by Saint Paul. And somehow that seems unlikely. To make a bad pun, and most puns are bad, the play as it stands at present is too much like a curtain-lecture. It should be entirely superfluous to point out that this is simply a personal opinion. I have no doubt that this play is successful in production: for, good or bad, it is possessed amply of the qualifications which usually spell success in America. Mix pathos with humor, and the average American audience will succumb to the spell for three years running whether the pathos is spurious or not, and even though the humor is of the sentimental variety. There is a play of this type on Broadway now. It has been there for three solid years, and ten years from now it will be forgotten forever and deservedly so. America is probably the most sentimental nation on earth. It likes to think it is moral. It isn't particularly, but the illusion is dear to it. Hence the Rollo books and the

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Elsie stories. We show it in our politics; we display it in our social, and in our industrial relations, and our more popular art reeks with it. It is all that explains Harold Bell Wright, and that insufferably nasty little prig Pollyanna. A nation that will take such an author and such a book to its bosom, and make seven days wonders of them both cannot deny that it is sentimental. We do deny it, of course, which simply proves our sentimentality. We haven't even the courage of our lack of convictions. To me *Nellijumbo* is possessed of a certain portion of this sentimentality, and it spoils the play for me. Parenthetically be it remarked that I can only afford to be thus outspoken because Mr. Walker has the ability of the true artist to take adverse criticism without spleen. It is another factor, and no small one, in making his career constructive from start to finish; he will listen to any suggestion, any criticism, and if he is convinced that he is wrong he will admit it. In the present instance it is a matter of different points of view, divergent temperaments. And so far as *Nellijumbo* is concerned one thing at any rate is sure: the play is sincere, it is skillful, it is deft. One may not like vanilla ice-cream, but that does not in the least prevent a given sample of it from being excellent of its kind. And too, if I have been justified in what I have said of *Nellijumbo* it is only fair to add that Mr. Walker's other play which is somewhat like it in type, *Jonathan Makes a Wish*, is by no means charac-

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terized by the same faults, if faults they are. Jonathan has more plot, more direct action, less time and opportunity for moralizing, so that the lesson is indirect, and secondary to the actual play. In *Nellijumbo* one cannot but feel that the play is only an excuse for the lesson. And most of us stopped liking lessons on the same day and in the same hour when we began to realize that we had to learn them.

### VI

Let Mr. Walker speak for himself as to this matter of plays, play-writing, and production. Here is a bit from a letter he wrote to Lord Dunsany just five years ago when he was first putting on the Dunsany plays.

“I am going to tell you a few of my ideas about play producing because I feel at ease after reading your statements about our uncivilized musical comedies and our absurd toys for children. To my mind the play is the most important consideration. The author must know what he is talking about, and why he says what he does in the way he says it. There is a story to tell and I try to tell it in the author’s way. I don’t like symbolism as such, and I make no effort to foist upon an audience a hidden meaning. There is always some deep hidden meaning. There is a story to tell and that story must always have a certain effect upon the audience, and that effect is gained primarily through the actor’s ability to translate the author’s meaning into mental and physical action. The scenery must never be obtrusive; it is not and cannot be an end in



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itself; but to me lights come next to the actor in importance. With lights of various colors and intensity, vast changes in space, and time, and thought can be suggested."

I think that most readers will agree with me that this exposition is not only interesting in itself, but that it is so sane and balanced that we are better able to understand Mr. Walker's success. He is entirely consistent, though consistency is not always the virtue we are led to believe, and if he has either erred or departed momentarily from the dogmas he has laid down it is no more than the best have done before him.

Both in his writing and in his producing, Mr. Walker has been positive and constructive where too many have been content to be negative and destructive. He has preferred the virtues rather than the defects of life; he has felt that there was more inspiration in beauty than in the many antitheses of beauty with which the modern stage is encumbered. He is a romanticist always, for he sees that the hidden things are the truest, that there is less real significance in a soiled collar than in a soiled heart. There is the writer who uses the camera and who shows pictures of the outside of things; and there is the writer who, equipped with an X-Ray machine, shows pictures of the inside of things, and the only thing that these two have in common is their mutual hatred of each other, and the fact that they are both unpleasant, unbeautiful, and unnecessary. Then, heaven be thanked, there is that writer who is not

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interested in things at all, and who regards the camera as an uncreative medium, and the X-Ray as merely a scientific instrument, who knows that since he cannot capture the illusive and pin it to a printed page he must deal largely in suggestion. I do not mean symbolism, and I do not mean mysticism, but I do mean, to deal myself in symbols, that the inspiration which is drawn from the eternal current of life itself is far more sure, more satisfying, and more lasting than that which is taken from any one of the bits of refuse that the current casts on the bank as it hurries past.

The same qualities that are in his plays are to be seen likewise in Mr. Walker's staging, in his use of scenery and lighting, and indeed in the acting that one usually sees in his productions. It is creative, imaginative, synthetic. The nearest Walker has ever come, to my knowledge, to naturalism in his work is in his play *The Medicine Show* printed in the first volume of this series, *Portmanteau Plays*. *The Medicine Show* may appear naturalistic to the unwary, but actually it is as little so as a Japanese print. There is the same economy, the same sureness, and the same strength. I do not think that I can recall offhand another play of the same length, as few characters, and totally devoid of mise-en-scene, as this play is, which is so full of sharply defined characterization. Each stroke tells, and at the end of a quarter hour in which nothing has happened you not only know intimately the three persons on the stage but you know their life, their environ-

## INTRODUCTION

---

ment, and their entire background. Very recently there has been a full length play in New York which tried to do the same thing through two hours of agony, and then failed to be anything but maudlin. It was a success, however, for it was "strong" drama. I remember when I was serving with the British troops during the "recent unpleasantness" that the Tommys got so accustomed to strong eggs that fresh laid ones were actually distasteful to them. They had too little kick. That is so often the case with American art.

Nevertheless if the American public has permitted itself to buy much worthless stock it has invested in some sound securities. The Portmanteau Plays, the Portmanteau theatre, and the Stuart Walker Company have been accepted, and are now established institutions. Mr. Walker is in a position to take the next step. What it will be no one knows; perhaps he does not even know himself. The last few years have seen much accomplished, and it would be unjust to think that Mr. Walker would rest in his present status even if he could. And he cannot. He must either go on or go back according to that eternal law which denies our right to take dynamic energy and to preserve it in a static form.

EDWARD HALE BIERSTADT.

Castle Hill, August 15, 1921

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

(First performance in America at Jordan Hall, Boston, February 14, 1916; first performance in New York City at the Princess Theatre, December 11, 1916.)

|                  | BOSTON                 | NEW YORK            |
|------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| PROLOGUE.....    | Harrie Fumade.....     | Gitrude Tristjanski |
| DICCON.....      | Edgar Stehli.....      | Edgar Stehli        |
| HODGE.....       | McKay Morris.....      | McKay Morris        |
| TYB.....         | Nancy Winston.....     | Nancy Winston       |
| GAMMER GURTON... | Judith Lowry.....      | Judith Lowry        |
| COCKE.....       | Wilmot Heitland.....   | Robert Cook         |
| DAME CHATTE..... | Florence Wollersen.... | Florence Wollersen  |
| DOCTOR RAT.....  | Gregory Kelly.....     | Gregory Kelly       |
| DOLL.....        | Harrie Fumade.....     | Agnes Rogers        |
| MASTER BAYLYE... | Lew Medbury.....       | Lew Medbury         |
| SCAPETHRIFT..... | John Hawkins.....      | John Hawkins        |

Scenery and costumes designed by Wilmot Heitland.

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"GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE" was produced originally in the Portmanteau Theatre without cuts. After several performances it was considered advisable to use the version which is printed in this volume. The lines within brackets ( [ ] ) may also be cut to good effect unless the actors are especially proficient and deft in the speaking of rhymed verse. The intermissions ought to be very short.

# GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

A FARCE IN FIVE ACTS<sup>1</sup>

THE NAMES OF THE SPEAKERS IN THIS COMEDY:

DICCON, *the Bedlam*

HODGE, *Gammer Gurton's servant*

TYB, *Gammer Gurton's maid*

GAMMER GURTON

COCKE, *Gammer Gurton's boy*

DAME CHATTE

DOCTOR RAT, *the Curate*

MASTER BAYLYE

DOLL, *Dame Chatte's maid*

SCAPETHRIFT, *Master Baylye's servant*

SCENE: A VILLAGE IN ENGLAND<sup>2</sup>

*(God Save the Queen!)*

<sup>1</sup> Possible cuts are indicated by brackets ([ ]).

<sup>2</sup> It is advisable to let the one scene stand throughout the play.



## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

*The Prologue enters before the curtains and, after a deep curtsy, begins to speak:*

### PROLOGUE

We are now in the sixteenth century, when needles were very scarce. If one had one, one was very lucky; if one lost one—(*The Prologue points to the curtains*).

We have here for you a right pithy, pleasant, and merry comedy entitled GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE, made by Mr. S, Master of Arts, who asks us not to *discover* his name, and played at Christ's College, Cambridge, not so very long ago.

*The Prologue now takes a more professional attitude and begins to speak with marked and rapid rhythm*<sup>1</sup>

As Gammer Gurton, with many wide stitches,  
Sat piecing and patching of Hodge her man's  
breeches,

By chance or misfortune, as she her gear tossed  
In Hodge's leather breeches, her needle she lost.  
When Diccon, the bedlam, had heard by report  
That good Gammer Gurton was robbed in this  
sort

He quickly persuaded with her in that 'stound

---

<sup>1</sup> All the lines of the play should be spoken as rapidly as possible, with rhythm *and* variety. The more spontaneous the reading of the lines the fewer the cuts necessary.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

Dame Chatte, her dear gossip, this needle had  
found,  
Yet knew she no more of this matter, alas!  
Than knoweth Tom, our clerk, what the priest  
saith at mass.  
Hereof there ensued so fearful a fray  
Master Doctor was sent for, these gossips to  
stay,  
Because he was Curate, and esteemed full wise:  
Who found that he sought not, by Diccon's  
device.  
When all things were tumbled and clean out of  
fashion,  
Whether it were by fortune, or some other  
constellation,  
Suddenly the needle Hodge found by the  
pricking,  
And drew it out of his *breeches* where he felt it  
sticking.  
Their hearts then at rest with perfect security,  
With a pot of good ale, they struck up their  
plaudity.

(THE PROLOGUE EXITS.)

(THE CURTAINS OPEN.)

# GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

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---

## ACT I

*The scene represents a street in an English village.  
At the right is Gammer Gurton's house; at the  
left, Dame Chatte's Inn.*

*Loud voices off stage R. of Gammer, Tyb, and  
Cocke.*

*Enter Diccon precipitately from Gammer's house R.  
He carries a side of bacon under his arm.*

DICCON

[Many a mile have I walked, divers and sundry  
ways,  
And many a good man's house have I been at  
in my days;  
Many a piece of bacon have I had from out of  
their balks,  
With running over the country with long and  
weary walks;  
Yet came my foot never within those door-  
cheeks,  
To seek flesh or fish, garlic, onions, or leeks,  
That ever I saw a sort in such a plight  
As here within this house appeareth to my  
sight.]

The old trot sits groaning, with alas! and alas!  
And Tyb wrings her hands, and takes on in  
worse pass

[With poor Cocke, their boy. They be driven  
in such fits

I fear me the folks be not well in their wits.]



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

Ask them what they ail, or who brought them  
in this stay,  
They answer not at all or but "alack! and  
wellaway!"  
[When I saw it booted not, out at doors I hied  
me,  
And caught me a slip of bacon, when I saw that  
no one spied me,  
Which I intend not far hence, unless my pur-  
pose fail,  
Shall serve for a shoinghorn to draw on two  
pots of ale.]  
(Starts into Dame Chatte's Inn l., but stops at  
door and listens to Hodge, who enters from a lane.)

HODGE

See! Thus come I arrayed with dabbling in  
the dirt.  
She that set me to ditching, I'd like to splash  
her skirt!  
'Od's soul, see how this stuff tears!  
(Examining the rents in his breeches.)  
I were better to be a bear-ward and set to keep  
bears!  
By the mass, here's a gash! a shameful hole  
indeed!  
And one stitch tear further, a man may thrust  
in his head.

DICCON

[But Hodge, the next remedy in such a case  
and hap  
Is to patch on a piece as broad as thy cap.]

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

HODGE

['Od's soul, man, 'tis not yet two days fully  
ended  
Since my dame Gurton, I am sure, these  
breeches mended!  
But I am made such a drudge, to trudge at  
every need,  
I would rend it though it were stitched with  
sturdy pack thread.]

DICCON

Hodge, let thy breeches go, and speak and tell  
me soon  
What devil maketh Gammer Gurton and Tyb,  
her maid, to frown.

HODGE

Tush, man, thou art deceived! 'Tis their daily  
look;  
They cower so over the coals their eyes be  
bleared with smoke.

DICCON

[Nay, by the mass, I perfectly perceived, as I  
came hither,  
That either Tyb and her dame had been by the  
ears together,  
Or else as great a matter, as thou shalt shortly  
see.

HODGE

Now I beseech our Lord, they never better  
agree!]

DICCON

By Gog's soul, there they sit as still as stones  
in the street,

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

As though they had been taken with fairies or  
with some evil spreet.

HODGE

But canst thou not tell, in faith, Diccon, why  
she frowns, or whereat?

Hath no man stolen her ducks or hens or  
scalded Gyb, her cat?

DICCON

What the devil can I tell, man? I could not  
have one word;

They gave no more heed to my talk than thou  
wouldst to a lord.

HODGE

Still I cannot but muse what marvelous thing  
it is!

I shall go in and know myself what matters  
are amiss.

DICCON

Then farewell, Hodge, a-while, since thou dost  
inward haste,

For I will in to the good-wife Chatte, to feel how  
the ale doth taste.

*(Exit Diccon into the Inn.)*

HODGE

I am aghast, by the mass! I know not what  
to do.

I'd better bless myself well before I go thereto!  
Perchance some felon sprite may haunt our  
house indeed,

And then I were but a noddy to venture where  
I have no need!

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

GAMMER (*off-stage*)

Tyb, thou lazy lout! Get out! get out!  
(*Tyb is pushed out through Gammer's door R,  
and her besom is thrown out after her.*)

TYB

I am worse than mad, by the mass, to be at  
this stay!  
I am chided, I am blamed and beaten, all the  
hours of the day.

HODGE

I say, Tyb—if thou be Tyb, as I trow sure  
thou be—  
What devilish make-a-do is this between our  
dame and thee?

TYB

If she hear not of some comfort, she sayeth she  
is but dead,  
Shall never come within her lips one inch of  
meat nor bread!

HODGE

By our lady, I am not glad to see her in this  
dump.  
I wonder if her stool has fallen and she had a  
mighty bump!

TYB

Nay, if that were but the worst!—we would not  
greatly care  
For bursting of her ankle-bone or breaking of  
her chair;  
But greater, greater, is her grief as, Hodge, we  
shall all feel!

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

HODGE

'Od's wounds, Tyb! My Gammer has never lost  
her needle?<sup>1</sup>

TYB

Her needle.

HODGE

Her needle?

TYB

Her needle!

My Gammer sat her down to rest, and had me  
reach thy breeches,

And by and by—a vengeance in it!—before she  
had ta'en two stitches

To clap a clout upon thy seat, by chance aside  
she leers;

And Gyb, our cat, in the milk-pan she spied  
overhead and ears.

“Out, cat! Out, thief!” she cried aloud, and  
cast the breeches down.

Up went her staff, and out leapt Gyb—out-  
doors, into the town.

And since that time was never wight could set  
their eyes upon it.

Cocke and I bid twenty times Gog's curses light  
upon it.

HODGE

And is not, then, my breeches sewed up, to-  
morrow that I should wear?

---

<sup>1</sup>The word needle must be frequently slurred in pronun-  
ciation to make a monosyllable.

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

TYB

No, in faith, Hodge, thy breeches lie with the same great tear.

HODGE

[Now a vengeance light on all the sort, that better should have kept it—

The cat, the house, and Tyb, our maid, that better should have swept it!]

*(Enter Gammer from her house.)*

GAMMER

Alas, Hodge, alas! I may well curse and ban  
This day, that ever I saw it, with Gyb and the  
milk-pan!

For these and ill-luck together, as knoweth  
Cocke, my boy,

Have took away my dear needle, and robbed  
me of my joy;

My fair, easy, straight needle that was my only  
treasure—

The first day of my sorrow is and last end of  
my pleasure!

HODGE

[Might have kept it when ye had it! But fools  
will be fools still!

Lose what is fast in your hands? Ye need not;  
but ye will!]

GAMMER

Go, hie thee, Tyb, and *run*, thou jade, to the  
end here of the town!

Didst carry dust out in thy lap; seek where  
thou pouredst it down,

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

And, as thou saw me raking in the ashes where  
I mourned,  
So see in all the heaps of dust thou leave no  
straw unturned.

TYB

That I shall, Gammer, fast and soon, and then  
be here again!

*(Exit Tyb through opening just below house R.)*

GAMMER *(calling after her)*

Tyb, stoop, and look down to the ground! Do  
it! And take some pain!

HODGE

Your needle lost? It is a pity you should lack  
care and—endless sorrow!

'Od's death, how shall my breeches be sewed?  
Shall I go thus to-morrow!

GAMMER

Ah, Hodge, Hodge! If I could find my needle,  
by the reed,

I should sew thy breeches, I promise that, with  
full good double thread.

And set a patch on either knee should last these  
spring months twain.

Now Gog and good Saint Swithin, I pray to  
send it home again!

HODGE

One hundred things that be abroad, I am set to  
watch their weal;

And four of you sit idle at home and cannot  
keep a needle!



## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

GAMMER

My needle, alas! I lost it, Hodge, what time  
I me up-hasted  
To save the milk set up for thee, which Gyb,  
our cat, hath wasted.

HODGE

The devil, he burst both Gyb and Tyb, with  
all the rest!  
I am always sure of the worst end, whoever  
have the best!  
Where have you been fidging abroad since you  
your needle lost?

GAMMER

Within the house, and at the door, sitting by  
this same post,  
[Where I was looking a long hour, before these  
folks came here;  
But welaway! all was in vain, my needle is  
nowhere near!]

HODGE

Get me a candle; let me seek and grope wherever  
it be.  
[Od's heart, ye be so foolish, I think you know  
it not when you it see!]

GAMMER

Come hither, Cocke! what, Cocke, I say!  
*(Enter Cocke from House.)*

COCKE

How, Gammer!

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

GAMMER

Go hie thee, son,  
And grope behind the old brass pan, which  
thing when thou hast done,  
There shalt thou find an old shoe, wherein, if  
thou look well,  
Thou shalt find lying an inch of a white tallow  
candle;  
Light it and bring it right away.

COCKE

That shall be done anon.  
*(Goes into the house.)*

GAMMER

Nay, tarry, Hodge, till thou hast light, and then  
we'll seek, each one.

HODGE *(crossing to house and calling to Cocke)*

Come away, ye worthless boy, are ye asleep?  
Must you have a crier!

COCKE *(off-stage)*

I cannot get the candle light: there is almost  
no fire.

HODGE *(picks up a stick and starts threateningly  
into the house)*

[I'll hold thee a penny I'll make thee come if I  
maybe catch thine ear!

Art deaf, thou stupid boy? Cocke, I say, why  
canst not hear?]

GAMMER

Beat him not, Hodge, but help the boy, and  
come you two together.

*(Hodge goes into the house.)*

*(Enter Tyb.)*

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

GAMMER

How now, Tyb? Quick, let's hear what news  
thou hast brought hither!

TYB

I have tossed and tumbled yonder heap [o'er  
and o'er again.

And winnowed it through my fingers, as men  
would winnow grain—

Looking within, and else without,] to find your  
needle, alas!

But all in vain and without help, your needle  
is—where it was.

GAMMER

Alas, my needle! We shall never meet! Adieu!  
adieu, for aye!

TYB

Not so, Gammer, we might find it—if we knew  
where it lay.

*(Enter Cocke, with a candle, from the house.)*

COCKE *(choked with laughter!)*

'Od's cross, Gammer, if ye will laugh, look in  
but at the door,

And see how Hodge lieth tumbling and tossing  
around the floor,

Raking there some fire to find among the  
ashes dead,

Where there is not one spark so big as a pin's  
head.

At last in a dark corner two sparks he thinks  
he spies

Which were indeed naught else but Gyb, our  
cat's, two eyes.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

“Puff,” quoth Hodge, thinking thereby to have  
fire without doubt;

With that Gyb shut her two eyes, and so the  
fire was out.

[And by-and-by they opened, even as they were  
before;

With that the sparks appeared, even as they  
had done of yore.]

And e’en as Hodge blew the fire, as he did  
think,

Gyb, as she felt the blast, straightway began  
to wink,

[Till Hodge fell to swearing, as come best to his  
turn,

The fire was sure bewitched, and therefore  
would not burn.]

At last Gyb hopped upstairs among the old  
posts and pins

And Hodge he hied him after till broke were  
both his shins.

*(Cocke and Tyb are convulsed with laughter.)*

GAMMER *(after them with her stick)*

See, here is all the thought that the foolish  
urchin taketh!

And Tyb, methinks, at his elbow almost as  
merry maketh!

HODGE *(from upper window)*

’Od’s heart, help and come up! Gyb in her tail  
hath fire

And is like to burn all if she get a little higher!

*(Pointing to the thatch.)*

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

GAMMER

This is all the wit ye have where others make  
their moan.

Come down, Hodge! Where art thou? And let  
the cat alone!

HODGE

Come down, quoth you? Very, then you might  
count me a patch!

The house cometh down on your heads if it  
takes on the thatch.

GAMMER

It is the cat's eyes, fool, that shineth in the  
dark!

HODGE

Hath the cat, do you think, in every eye a  
spark?

GAMMER

No, but they shine as like fire as ever man may  
see.

HODGE (*closes window*)

By the mass, and she burn all, you'll bear the  
blame on me!

GAMMER

Come down, and help to see that our needle  
here is found.

Down, Tyb; on thy knees, I say! Down, Cocke,  
to the ground!

To God I make a vow, and so to Good Saint  
Anne

A candle shall they have apiece, get it where  
I can,

If I may my needle find in one place or another.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

HODGE (*entering*)

Now a vengeance on Gyb light, on Gyb, and  
on Gyb's mother

[And all the generation of cats both far and near!

GAMMER (*as Cocke looks on her dress*)

Look on the ground, noddy? Thinks thou the  
needle is here?

COCKE

By my troth, Gammer, methought your needle  
here I saw

But when my fingers touched it, I felt it was  
a straw.]

TYB

See, Hodge! What 'tis? 'Tis it. By the mass!  
(*They look at what she's found, take it to pieces,  
and throw it away.*)

GAMMER

This matter amendeth not; my needle is still  
where it was.

Our candle is at an end; it's black as night.

Let's come another time, when we have more  
light.

THE CURTAINS CLOSE





Hodge and Diccon



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SONG<sup>1</sup>

Back and side, go bare, go bare;  
Both foot and hand, go cold:  
But, belly, Gog send thee good ale enough  
Whether it be new or old!

I can not eat but little meat,  
My stomach is not good;  
But, sure I think that I can drink  
With him that wears a hood.  
Though I go bare, take ye no care,  
I am nothing a-cold—  
I stuff my skin so full within  
Of jolly good ale and old.

Back and side, go bare, go bare, etc.

I love no roast, but a nut-brown toast  
And a crab laid in the fire;  
A little bread shall do me stead—  
Much bread I don't desire.  
No frost nor snow, no wind, I trow,  
Can hurt me if I would,  
I am so wrapt and thoroughly lapt  
Of jolly good ale and old.

Back and side, go bare, go bare, etc.

---

<sup>1</sup>To be sung behind the scenes by Diccon and chorus. One version of the music may be found in Cecil Sharp's *Folk Songs from Somerset*, Fourth Series, LXXXII, The Beggar, published by Simplen & Co., London. Wessex Press.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

And Tyb, my wife, that as her life  
Loveth well good ale to seek;  
Full oft drinks she till ye may see  
The tears run down her cheek;  
Then doth she troll to me the bowl  
E'en as a malt-worm should,  
And saith, "Sweetheart, I took my part  
Of this jolly good ale and old."

Back and side, go bare, go bare, etc.

Now let them drink till they nod and wink  
E'en as good fellows should do;  
They shall not miss to have the bliss  
Good ale doth bring men to.  
And all poor souls that have scoured bowls  
Or have them lustily trolled—  
God save the lives of them and their wives  
Whether they be young or old!

Back and side, go bare, go bare, etc.

# GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

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## ACT II

*(Enter Diccon from Dame Chatte's house.)*

DICCON

Well done, by Gog's malt! Well sung, and well  
said!

Come on, Mother Chatte, as thou art true  
maid!

*(Ribald laughter from Inn.)*

[This gear it warms the soul! Now, wind, blow  
on thy worst,

And let us drink and swill till that our bellies  
burst.]

Now a truly wise man by magic could divine  
Which way my journey lieth or where will  
Diccon dine!

But one good turn I have: be it by night or day,  
South, east, north, or west, I am never out of  
my way.

*(Enter Hodge from house R., carrying a chunk  
of dry bread.)*

HODGE

[I am goodly rewarded, am I not, do you think?  
I had a goodly dinner for all my sweat and  
swink!

DICCON

Hail, fellow Hodge, and well mayst fare with  
thy meat, if thou have any!

But, by thy words, as I them smelled, thy  
dainties be not many.]

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

HODGE

[Dainties,] Diccon? Od's soul, man, save this  
piece of dry horsebread,  
I have bit no bite this livelong day; no crumb  
came in my head.

DICCON

Why, Hodge, was there none at home thy din-  
ner for to set?

HODGE

'Od's bread, Diccon, I came too late, was noth-  
ing there to get!  
Gyb—a foul fiend light on her!—licked the  
milk pan clean—  
See, Diccon, 'twas not so well washed this  
seven year, I ween!  
A pestilence light on all ill luck! I had thought  
yet, for all this,  
Of a morsel of bacon behind the door, at worst,  
I should not miss;  
But when I sought a slip to cut, as I was wont  
to do,  
'Od's soul, Diccon, Gyb, our cat, had eat the  
bacon, too!

*(Which bacon Diccon stole, as is declared before.)*

DICCON

Ill luck, [marry, swear it, Hodge! This day the  
truth to tell,  
Thou rose not on thy right side, or else blest  
thee not well—  
Thy milk slopt up,] thy bacon filched—that  
was too bad luck, Hodge!



## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

HODGE

Nay, nay, there was a fouler fault: my Gammer  
gave me the dodge!

[Seest not how I am rent and torn, my heels,  
my knees, and my breech?

I had thought as I sat by the fire to have here  
and there a stitch;

But here I was wrong indeed.]

DICCON

Why, Hodge?

HODGE

Boots not, man, to tell. [I am so dressed  
amongst a sort of fools I had better be in  
hell!]

My Gammer, I am ashamed to say, by Gog,  
served me not well!

DICCON

How so, Hodge?

HODGE

Has she not gone, trowest now, and lost her  
needle?

DICCON

Her eel, Hodge? Who fished of late? That  
were a dainty dish!

HODGE

Tush, tush, her needle! her needle! her needle,  
man! 'Tis neither flesh nor fish.

[A little thing with a hole in the end as bright  
as any silver,

Small, long, sharp at the point, and straight as  
any pillar.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

DICCON

I know not what in devil thou meanest; thou  
bringest me more in doubt!

HODGE

Knowest not with what Tom Tailer's man sits  
sewing through a clout?]  
(*Crescendo*) A needle, needle, a needle! My  
Gammer's needle is gone!

DICCON

Her needle, Hodge? Now I smell thee! That  
was a chance alone!  
By the mass, thou hadst a shameful loss if it  
were but for thy breeches!

HODGE

'Od's soul, man, I should give a crown if it  
only had three stitches!

DICCON

How sayest thou, Hodge? What should he  
have who found thy needle again?

HODGE

Bym' father's soul, if I had it, I should give  
him a silver chain.

DICCON

Canst thou keep council in this case?

HODGE

Else I would my tongue were out.

DICCON

Follow thou then but my advice, and I will  
fetch it without doubt.

HODGE

I'll run, I'll ride, I'll dig, I'll delve, I'll toil, I'll  
trudge, shalt see;

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

I'll hold, I'll draw, I'll pull, I'll pinch, I'll kneel  
on my bare knee;  
I'll scrape, I'll scratch, I'll sift, I'll sweat, I'll  
bow, I'll bend, I'll seek,  
I'll stoop, I'll stir, I'll cap, I'll kneel, I'll creep  
on hands and feet;  
I'll be thy bondman, Diccon, I swear by moon  
and sun.

And have I not something to stop this gap, I  
am utterly undone.

*(Pointing behind to his torn breeches.)*

DICCON

Why is there any special cause thou takest  
thereat such sorrow?

HODGE

Kristian Clack, Tom Simson's maid, by the  
mass, comes hither to-morrow!

I am not able to say, between us what may  
hap,—

She smiled on me last Sunday when I did off  
my cap.

DICCON

[Well, Hodge, this is a weighty matter and  
must be kept close;

It might else turn to both our costs, as the  
world now goes—]

Shalt swear to be no blab, Hodge!

HODGE

I shall, Diccon!

DICCON *(placing his left hand on his heart.)*

Then go to! Lay thine hand here; say after  
me as thou shall hear me do. Hast no book?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

HODGE

I have no book, I!

DICCON

Then needs must force us both to lay thine hand  
upon my heart and there to take thine oath.

*(He recites the oath line by line, and Hodge speaks it after him, his left hand on his own heart, his right hand on Diccon's.)*

DICCON

I, Hodge, breechless,  
Swear to Diccon, richless,  
By the hand that I shall kiss,  
To keep his council close  
And always me to dispose  
To work what his pleasure is.

*(Diccon puts his hand in Hodge's face to be kissed.)*

DICCON

Now, Hodge, see thou take heed  
And do as I thee bid,  
For so I judge it meet;  
This needle again to win,  
There is no shift therein,  
But conjure up a sprite.

HODGE

What, the great devil? Diccon, I say!

DICCON

Yea, in good faith, that is the way—  
Fet' with some pretty charm.

HODGE

Soft, Diccon, be not too hasty yet,  
By the mass, for I begin to sweat!  
I am afraid of some harm!

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

*(Diccon draws a magic circle, making a mysterious buzzing sound as he does so.)*

DICCON

Come hither, then, and stir thee not  
One inch out of this circle plot,  
But stand as I thee teach.

HODGE

And shall I be here safe from their claws?  
*(He seeks a safe place in the circle.)*

DICCON

The master devil with his long paws  
Here to thee cannot reach.  
Now will I settle me to this gear.

HODGE *(His fear amounts almost to panic.)*

I say, Diccon, hear me, hear!  
Go softly to this matter!

DICCON

What the devil, man? Art afraid of naught?

HODGE

Canst not tarry a little thought  
Till I drink a draft of water? *(Starts off.)*

DICCON *(stopping him with a shout)*

Stand still to it! Why shouldest thou fear him?

HODGE

'Od's sides, Diccon, methinks I hear him!  
Tarry, I shall mar all!

DICCON

The matter is no worse than I told.

HODGE

By the mass, I am able no longer to hold.  
Too bad! I must run or I fall!



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

DICCON (*supporting him*)

Stand to it, Hodge! Stir not, you curst thing!  
What the devil? Be thine heart-strings burst-  
ing?

Thyself awhile but stay;  
The devil—I smell him—will be here anon.

HODGE

Hold him fast, Diccon, I am gone! I am gone!  
I'll not be at that fray.

(*Hodge breaks away from Diccon and flees into  
Gammer's house.*)

DICCON

Soft, leave me alone and I'll take charge  
This matter further to enlarge  
Within a time quite short.

If ye will mark my toes, and note,  
I will give ye leave to cut my throat  
If I make not good sport.

(*Approaches Dame Chatte's door.*)

Dame Chatte, I say! Where be ye? Within?

CHATTE (*entering, she holds some cards in her  
hand*)

Who have we there maketh such a din?

DICCON

Here is a good fellow, maketh no great danger.

CHATTE

What, Diccon? Come near, ye be no stranger!

DICCON

Nay, nay, there is no tarrying, I must be gone  
again;

But first, for you in council I have a word or  
twain.

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

CHATTE

Come hither, Doll!

*(Doll enters, partly sober. Dame Chatte hands her the cards with which she has been playing.)*

Doll, sit down and play this game,

And, as thou sawest me do, see thou do e'en  
the same.

There is five trumps beside the queen, the  
hindmost thou shalt find her.

*(As Doll is picking her unsteady way into house, Chatte calls after her.)*

"Take heed of Sim Glover's wife, she hath an  
eye behind her!"

Now, Diccon, say your will.

DICCON

Nay, soft a little yet!

I would not tell it my sister, the matter is so  
great.

There I will have you swear by our dear Lady  
of Bullaine,

S. Dunstone and S. Donnyke, with the three  
Kings of Kullaine,

That ye shall keep it secret.

CHATTE

'Od's bread, that will I do!

As secret as mine own thought, by Gog, and the  
devil, too!

DICCON

Here is Gammer Gurton, your neighbor, a sad  
and heavy wight,

Her goodly fair red cock at home was stolen  
this last night.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

CHATTE

'Od's soul, her cock with the yellow legs, that  
nightly crowed so just?

DICCON

That cock is stolen!

CHATTE

What! Was he taken out of the hens' roost?

DICCON

I cannot tell where the devil he was kept under  
key or lock;

But Tyb hath ticked in Gammer's ear that you  
should steal the cock.

CHATTE

Have I? Fat jade! By bread and salt—

DICCON

What, soft, I say! Be still!

Say not one word for all this gear—

CHATTE

By the mass, that I will!

I will have the young wench by the head, and  
the old trot by the throat!

DICCON

Not one word, Dame Chatte, I say, not one  
word, for my coat!

CHATTE

Shall such a beggar's brawl as that, thinkest  
thou make me a thief?

The blight light on the jade's sides, a pestilence  
and mischief;

*(Crossing to Gammer's house.)*

Come out, thou hungry, needy witch! O, that  
my nails be short!

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

DICCON

'Od's bread, woman, hold your peace, this gear  
will else pass sport!

[Did ye not swear ye would be ruled, before the  
tale I told?

I said ye must all secrets keep and ye said sure  
ye would.]

CHATTE

Would you allow yourself, Diccon, such a sort  
to revile you,

With slanderous words to blot your name, and  
so to defile you?

DICCON

No, Goodwife Chatte, I would be loth such  
drabs should blot my name;

But ye must so order all that Diccon bear no  
blame.

CHATTE

Go to, then! Say on your mind, ye shall me  
rule therein.

DICCON

['Od's mercy, Dame Chatte! In faith thou must  
the gear begin.]

It is twenty pound to a hen's tooth, my Gammer  
will not tarry;

But hitherward she comes as fast as her legs  
can carry,

To brawl with you about her cock; for well I  
heard Tyb say

The cock was roasted in your house for break-  
fast yesterday.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

[And, when ye had the carcass eaten, the feathers  
ye out flung,  
And Doll, your maid, the legs she hid a foot  
deep in the dung.]

CHATTE

Oh, gracious Gog! my heart it bursts!

DICCON

Tell her your mind and spare not,  
So shall Diccon blameless be, and then, go to,  
I care not!

CHATTE

Then, drab, beware her throat! I can abide no  
longer!

In faith, old witch, it shall be seen, which of  
us two be stronger!

*(Crossing to the left of Diccon.)*

DICCON

[In the meanwhile get you in, and make no  
words of this,

More of this matter within this hour to hear,  
you shall not miss.

Now fare ye well!

CHATTE

Nay, soft, Diccon, and drink! What, Doll,  
I say!

Bring here a cup of the best ale;

*(Doll brings mug of ale; Chatte takes it from her  
and gives it to Diccon.)*

Let's see, come quickly away!

*(Doll goes into the Inn.)*] *(Dame Chatte goes into  
the Inn.)*

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

DICCON (*to the audience*)

Ye see, masters, that one end tapt of this my  
short device;

Now must we broach t' other to, before the  
smoke arise.

HODGE (*poking head out of door of Gammer's house*)

Tush, man, is Gammer's needle found? That  
I should gladly know?

DICCON

She may thank thee, it is not found, for if thou  
had kept thy standing,

The devil he'd have fetched it out e'en at thy  
commanding.

HODGE (*entering*)

'Od's heart! and could he tell nothing where  
the needle might be found?

DICCON

Ye foolish dolt, ye were to seek, here had we  
got our ground;

Therefore his tale so doubtful was that I could  
not perceive it.

HODGE

Then I see where something was said, I hope  
one day yet to have it.

But Diccon, Diccon, did not the devil cry  
"Ho! ho! ho!"?

DICCON

If thou hadst tarried where thou stoodst, thou  
wouldst have said so.

HODGE

Durst swear of a book, I heard him roar, straight  
after I was gone;



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

But tell me Diccon, what said the knave? Let  
me hear't anon!

DICCON

The varlet talked to me I know not well of  
what;  
One while his tongue it ran and paltered of a cat;  
Another while he stammered still upon a rat;  
Last of all, there was nothing but every word  
"Chatte! Chatte!"  
Now, whether Gyb, our cat has eaten it in her  
maw,  
Or Doctor Rat, our curate, has found it in the  
straw,  
Or this Dame Chatte, your neighbor, has stolen  
it, Gog he knows,  
But by the morrow at this time we shall learn  
how the matter goes.

HODGE

Can you not learn to-night, man? Don't you  
see what is here?  
(*Pointing to his torn breeches*)

DICCON

'Tis not possible to make it sooner appear.

HODGE

Alas, Diccon, then I have no shift, but—lest I  
tarry too long—  
I'll hie me to Sim Glover's shop, there to seek  
for a thong,  
Wherewith this breech to fasten and tie up as  
I may.

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

DICCON

To-morrow, Hodge, if we chance to meet, you'll  
see what I will say.

*(Exit Hodge below the Inn.)*

DICCON

Now this gear must forward go, for here my  
Gammer comes.

*(Enter Gammer Gurton.)*

GAMMER *(Looking for needle)*

Good Lord, shal't never be my luck my needle  
again to spy?

[Alas, the while, 'tis past my help! Where 'tis,  
still it must lie!

DICCON

Now, Swithin, Gammer Gurton, what drives  
you to this sadness?

I fear me, by my conscience, you will surely  
fall to *madness*.]

GAMMER *(startled—sees Diccon)*

What is that? What, Diccon? I am lost, man,  
Fy! fy!

DICCON

Marry, fie on them that be worthy! But what  
should be your trouble?

GAMMER

Alas, the more I think on it, my sorrow it  
waxes double!

My goodly tossing treasured needle I have lost:  
I wot not where.

DICCON

[Your needle when?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

GAMMER

My needle, alas, I might not well spare  
As Gog himself he knows, ne'er another one I  
have.]

DICCON

If this be all, good Gammer, I warrant you all  
is safe.

GAMMER

Why, know you any tidings which way my  
needle has gone?

DICCON

Yea, that I do, doubtless as ye shall hear anon.  
A deal o' things this matter toucheth, within  
these twenty hours—

Even at this gate before my face, by a neighbor  
of yours.

She stooped her down, and up she took a needle  
or a pin.

[I durst be sworn it was even yours, by all my  
mother's kin.]

GAMMER

It was my needle, Diccon, I wot, for here even  
by this post,

[I sat, what time as I up-start, and so my  
needle is lost.]

Who was it, dear son? Speak, I pray thee, and  
quickly tell me that!

DICCON

A subtle queen as any in this town, your neigh-  
bor here—

GAMMER

Dame Chatte!

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

DICCON

And when she took it up, even here before your  
doors,

“What, soft, Dame Chatte,” quoth I, “that  
same is none of yours?”

“Avant,” quoth she, “Sir knave! What pratest  
thou of that I find?”

She walked straight into her house and I was  
close behind.

*(Crossing to Inn in imitation of Dame Chatte.)*

[She screamed I was a knave, and you a bore  
of bores,

Because I spoke in your behalf and said the  
needle was yours.]

GAMMER

'Od's bread, and thinks the callet to keep my  
needle so?

DICCON

Leave her alone, and she minds none other but  
even to dress you so!

GAMMER

By the mass, I'll rather spend the coat that is  
on my back!

Thinks the false trot by such a slight that I'll  
my needle lack?

DICCON

Do not delay, I council you; but of this take  
good heed:

Let it not be known I told you of it, how well-  
soever ye speed!

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

GAMMER

I'll in, Diccon, a clean apron to take and set  
before me;

And may my needle I once see, I'll sure re-  
member thee!

*(Exit Gammer Gurton into her house.)*

DICCON

My Gammer sure intends to be upon her bones  
*(Indicating Dame Chatte)*

With staffs or clubs or else with cobblestones.  
Dame Chatte, on the other side, if she be far  
behind,

I am right far deceived, she is given to it of  
kind.

*(To musicians, off-stage.)*

In the meantime, fellows, tune up your strings!

A tune, I say,

And let your friends hear such songs as ye can  
play!

THE CURTAINS CLOSE.

### ACT III

*(Enter Hodge, returning from Sim Glover's.)*

HODGE

Sim Glover, yet Gramercy! I am mighty well-  
sped now.

Thou art even as good a fellow as ever kissed a  
cow!

Here is a thong indeed; as strong as any steel—

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

And here a nail Sim Glover gave—I'll use it  
for a needle.

*(Enter Gammer.)*

GAMMER

How Hodge! Mayst now be glad I have news  
to tell thee.

I know who has my needle; I trust soon shalt  
it see.

HODGE

The devil thou dost! Hast heard, Gammer,  
indeed: or dost but jest?

GAMMER

[ 'Tis as true as steel, Hodge.

HODGE

Why, knowest well where didst lose it?]

GAMMER

I know who found it and took it up, shalt see  
ere it be long.

HODGE

'Od's mother dear, if that be true, farewell  
both nail and thong!

*(He throws them away.)*

But who has it, Gammer? Say on! I would  
fain hear it disclosed.

GAMMER

That false vixen, that same Dame Chatte that  
counts herself so honest!

HODGE

Who told you so?

GAMMER

That same did Diccon the bedlam who saw it  
done.



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

HODGE

Diccon? He is a vengeful knave, [Gammer;  
'tis a dirty jade's son!

Can do more things than that, else I am ill  
deceived.

By the mass,] I saw him of late call up a great  
black devil!

O, the knave cried, "Ho! ho!" He roared and  
he thundered,

[And if ye 'ad been here I am sure ye would  
surely have wondered.]

GAMMER

Were not thou afraid, Hodge, to see him in  
this place?

HODGE

No; and had he come to me, I should have laid  
him on the face,

I should have promised him!

GAMMER

But, Hodge, had he no horns to push?

HODGE

As long as your two arms! Saw ye never  
Friar Bush,

Painted as a cloth, with a great long cow's tail,  
And crooked cloven feet, and many a hooked  
nail?

For all the world, if I should judge, I should  
reckon him his brother.

Look, even what face Friar Bush had, the devil  
had such another!

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

GAMMER

Now, Gogamercy, Hodge! Did Diccon bring him in?

HODGE

Nay, Gammer, hear me speak; I'll tell you a greater thing.

The devil, when Diccon bade him—I heard him wondrous well—

Said plainly here before us that Dame Chatte had your needle.

GAMMER

Then let us go and ask her wherefore she means to keep it;

Seeing we know so much, 'twere a madness now to sleep it.

HODGE

Go to her, Gammer, see ye not where she sits indoors?

Bid her give you the needle—'tis none of hers, but yours!

*(Gammer goes to Dame Chatte's. Hodge follows.)*

GAMMER *(calling.)*

Dame Chatte, I would pray thee fair, let me have what is mine!

I have not this twenty years taken one breath that is thine.

Therefore give me mine own and let me live beside thee!

CHATTE *(entering)*

Why hast thou crept from home hither to mine own doors to chide me?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

Hence, doting drab, avant, or I shall set thee further!

Intendst thou and that knave me in my house to murder?

GAMMER

Tush, gape not so on me, woman! Shalt not yet eat me!

Nor all the friends thou hast in this shall not intreat me!

Mine own goods, I will have, and ask thee not by leave.

What woman! Poor folks must have rights, though the thing you aggrieve.

CHATTE

Give thee thy rights and hang thee up with all thy beggar's broods!

What, wilt thou make me a thief and say I stole thy goods?

GAMMER

I'll say nothing, I warrant thee, but that I can prove it well—

Thou tookst my goods e'en from my door, I am able this to tell!

CHATTE

Did I, old witch, steal what was thine? How should that thing be known?

GAMMER

I cannot tell; but up thou took it, as though it had been thine own.

CHATTE

Marry, fie on thee, thou old gib, with all my very heart!

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

GAMMER

Nay, fie on thee, thou ramp, thou rig, with all  
that take thy part!

CHATTE

A vengeance on those lips that layeth such  
things to my charge!

GAMMER

A vengeance? A vengeance on those callet's  
hips whose conscience is so large!

CHATTE

Come here, dog!

GAMMER

Come out, hog, and let me have a right.

CHATTE

Thou arrant witch!

GAMMER

Thou bawdy witch, I'll make thee curse this  
night!

CHATTE

You bag, you wallet!

GAMMER

A cart for a callet!

CHATTE

Why, thinkest thou thus to prevail?  
I hold thee a groat I shall patch thy coat!

GAMMER

Thou wilt as soon steal my pail!  
Thou blab, thou drab, thou rake, thou jade,  
will not shame make thee bide!

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

CHATTE

Thou scold, thou bold, thou rotten, thou glutton!  
I will no longer chide!  
But I will teach thee to keep home.

GAMMER

Wilt thou, drunken beast?  
*(They clinch.)*

HODGE *(dancing around)*

Stick to her, Gammer, take her by the head,  
I'll warrant you this feast!  
Smite, I say, Gammer! Bite, I say, Gammer!  
I trow ye will be keen!  
Where be your nails? Claw her jaw! Pummel  
her red face green!  
'Od's bones, Gammer, hold up your head!

CHATTE

I trow, drab, I shall dress thee.  
*(Chases Hodge.)*  
Tarry, thou knave, I hold thee a groat; I shall  
make these hands bless thee!  
*(Smites Gammer effectively.)*  
Take thou this, old trot, for amends, and learn  
thy tongue well to tame,  
And say thou met at this bickering, not thy  
fellow, but thy dame!  
*(Gammer falls down.)*

HODGE *(keeping well out of reach)*

Where is the strong-armed drab? I'll give her  
a horse's mark!  
Stand out o' my way, so that I'll kill none in  
the dark!

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

Up, Gammer, if ye be alive! I'll fight now for us both.

Come not near me, thou scold-callet, to kill thee I were loath.

CHATTE

Art here again, thou hoddy-pike? What, Doll, bring me out my spit.

HODGE (*with Gammer's staff*)

I'll break thee with this, by our father's soul, I'll conjure that foul spirit—

(*Doll brings spit to Chatte, who sweeps at Hodge.*)

Hold the door, Cocke! Keep door, thou lazy boy!

CHATTE

Stand to it, thou dastard, for thine ears! I'll teach thee with me to toy!

HODGE (*threatening*)

'Od's wounds, trot, I'll make thee avaunt!

(*Chatte concentrates attack on seat of Hodge's trousers, bringing him to earth.*)

HODGE (*scrambling into the house "on all-fours"*)

Take heed, Cocke, pull in the latch!

CHATTE

I, faith, sir Loose-Breech, had ye tarried, ye should have found your match!

GAMMER (*having risen unnoticed, attacks*)

Now, 'ware thy throat, varlet, you'll pay for all.

(*Dame Chatte falls flat, face-down.*)

HODGE (*from window*)

Well said, Gammer, by my soul.

(*Gammer catches Chatte by the belt and beats her up and down.*)



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

Rouse her, souse her, bounce her, trounce her,  
pull out her throat whole!

CHATTE (*slowly rising on hands and knees with  
arched back*)

Camest behind me, thou withered witch? When  
I get up on foot

(*Hodge, at window, hurls a cabbage with deadly  
accuracy, bringing Chatte to earth.*)

Thou'll pay for all, thou old tarlether, I'll teach  
thee what b'longs to it!

(*Gammer is so completely lost in admiration for  
Hodge that she is unprepared for Chatte's attack.*)

Take thou this to make up thy mouth till time  
thou come by more!

(*Gammer falls. Exit Dame Chatte.*)

HODGE (*entering from house*)

Up, Gammer, stand on your feet; where is the  
old bore?

Faith, would I had her by the face, I would  
crack her bawdy crown!

GAMMER

Ho, Hodge, Hodge, where was thy help, when  
the vixen had me down?

HODGE (*attempts to lift Gammer through this  
speech*)

By the mass, Gammer, but for my staff, Chatte  
had gone nigh to spill you!

I think the varlet had not cared—if I had not  
come—to kill you.

But shall we lose our needle thus?

GAMMER

No, Hodge, I were loath to do so.

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

Thinkest thou I'll take that at her hand? No,  
Hodge, I tell thee, no.

*(Hodge has practically succeeded in standing Gammer up, but she declaims so vigorously she upsets them both.)*

HODGE

I wish this fray were over and done,  
And our own needle at home.

*(Both are up now.)*

Else 'twill be my chance some one to kill,  
wherever it be, or whom!

GAMMER

We have a parson, Hodge, thou knowest, a  
man esteemed wise,

Master Doctor Rat, I'll send for him and ask  
him his advice.

HODGE

Yes, marry, Gammer, that I think best. Will  
you now for him send?

The sooner Doctor Rat is here, the sooner we'll  
have an end.

GAMMER

He will shrive her for all this gear and give her  
penance straight,

We'll have our needle, else Dame Chatte comes  
ne'er in heaven's gate!

HODGE

And hear, Gammer? Diccon's devil, as I re-  
member well,

Of cat, and Chatte and Doctor Rat a felonious  
tale did tell.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

GAMMER

I'll have him straight! Call out the boy; we'll  
make him take the pain.

HODGE

I hold you forty pounds that is the way your  
needle to get again!

What, Cocke, I say! Come out! What the  
devil! Canst not hear?

COCKE (*appearing*)

How now, Hodge? How does, Gammer? Is  
yet the weather clear?

(*Enter Cocke*)

What would you have me do?

GAMMER

Come hither, Cocke, anon!

Hence swift to Doctor Rat, hie thee that thou  
were gone! (*Cocke starts off L.*)

And pray him come speak with me; I am not  
well at ease.

Shalt find him at his chamber, or else at Mother  
Bee's!

Else seek him at Hob Fylcher's shop, for as I  
heard it reported,

There is the best ale in all the town, and now is  
most resorted.

COCKE

And shall I bring him with me, Gammer?

GAMMER

Yea, by-and-by, good Cocke.

COCKE

Shalt see that he'll be here anon, else crack me  
on the dock!

(*Exit Cocke below the Inn.*)

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

HODGE

Now, Gammer, shall we two go in and tarry  
for his coming?

What the devil, woman? Pluck up your heart,  
and leave off all this glumming!

Though she were stronger at the first, as I  
think ye did find her,

Yet there ye drest the drunken drab each time  
ye came behind her.

GAMMER

Nay, nay, I am sure she'll not forget, for, set  
ending to beginning,

And I doubt not but she will make small boast  
of herself winning.

*(They go toward Gammer's house.)*

TYB *(enters, running)*

See, Gammer, Gammer, Gyb, our cat. I'm  
afraid that she's ailing!

She's gasping there behind the door, as though  
her wind were failing.

Now I doubt what Gyb should mean that she  
doth now so dote!

HODGE *(running off and getting cat and returning)*

Hold hither! I bet twenty pounds your needle  
is in her throat!

Grab her, I say! Methinks I feel it. Dost  
prick your hand?

GAMMER

I cannot feel it.

HODGE *(feeling from head to tail)*

No. I know there's not within this land

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

A better cat than Gyb, betwixt the Thames and  
Tyne;  
She has so much wit in her head almost as I  
have in mine!

TYB

Faith, she has eaten something that will not  
easily down.  
I cannot tell whether she got it at home or  
abroad in the town.

GAMMER

Alas, I fear it be some crooked pin!  
And then farewell, Gyb; she's undone, and lost  
all save the skin.

HODGE

'Tis your needle, woman, I say! 'Od's soul,  
give me a knife.  
And I'll have it out of her maw, or else I'll lose  
my life!

GAMMER

What! Nay! Hodge, fie! Kill not our cat;  
'tis all the cats we have now!

HODGE

By the mass, Dame Chatte has me so moved  
I care not what I kill now!  
Go to, then, Tyb, to this gear (*giving the cat to  
Tyb*). Hold up her head and take her.  
I'll see what the devil is in her throat, [I'll take  
the pains to rake her!

GAMMER

Rake a cat, Hodge? What wouldst thou do?

HODGE

What, thinkest that I am not able?

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

Did not Tom Tankard rake his cow a-standing  
in the stable?]

*(Enter Cocke, running; gets almost to house  
before turning.)*

GAMMER

Soft, be content; let's hear what news Cocke  
brings from Master Rat.

COCKE *(breathlessly)*

Gammer, I asked the Master to come.

GAMMER

And what said he, Cocke, to that?

COCKE

A cup of ale was in his hand and a crab lay in  
the fire.

He sent me forth and said he'd come trudging  
through the mire.

I bet a penny he'll something say your needle  
to get again.

GAMMER

I am glad to hear so much, Cocke; and until he  
come, within.

THE CURTAINS CLOSE

### ACT IV

*(Enter Doctor Rat below the Inn.)*

RAT

A man were better twenty times be a watch-  
dog and bark

Than here among such a sort be parish priest  
or clerk!



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

I had not sit the space to drink two pots of ale  
But Gammer Gurton's sorry boy was straight-  
way on my trail.

And she was sick, and I must come, to do I  
know not what!

If once her finger's end but ache, trudge!  
call for Doctor Rat!

And when I come not at their call, I only  
thereby lose;

For I am sure to lack thereby a tithe-pig or a  
goose.

[I warrant you when truth is known, and they  
have told their tale.

The matter whereabout I come is not worth a  
pot of ale.

Yet must I talk so sage and smooth as though  
I were delighted,

Else, or the year come to an end, I shall be  
surely blighted.]

*(He sees Gammer entering from house.)*

What! work ye, Gammer Gurton? Here's  
your friend the curate, Master Rat!

GAMMER

Oh, good Master Doctor, I have troubled you,  
I know well that!

RAT

How do you know, woman? Be ye lusty or be  
ye not well at ease?

GAMMER

By Gab, Master, I am not sick, but yet I have  
disease.

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

RAT

What is the matter?

GAMMER

I've lost my needle! A drab came by and spied  
it.

And, when I asked her for the same, the filth  
flatly denied it.

RAT

What was she that—?

GAMMER

She began to scold and brawl—

Alas, alas! Come hither, Hodge! This wretch  
can tell you all.

*(Enter Hodge.)*

HODGE

Good morrow, Gaffer Vicar!

RAT

Come on, fellow, let us hear.

Thy dame hath said to me thou knowest of all  
this gear.

HODGE

My Gammer Gurton here, see now,  
Sat her down at this door, see now,  
And as she began to bestir her, see now  
Her needle fell on the floor, see now;  
Then came the queen, Dame Chatte, see now,  
To ask for her black cup, see now;  
And even here at this gate, see now,  
She took that needle up, see now.  
My Gammer then she said, see now,  
Her needle back to bring, see now,  
And Chatte beat Gammer's head, see now,

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

Is not this a wondrous thing, see now?  
When I saw this, I was wroth, see now,  
And started between the twain, see now;  
Else, I durst take an oath, see now,  
My Gammer had been slain, see now.

GAMMER

Help, good Master, else shall we both be beaten  
and lose our needle too.

RAT

Tell me, that ere I be gone. What would ye  
have me to do?  
Now be ye sure Dame Chatte hath your good  
needle found?

GAMMER

Here comes the man that saw her take it off  
the ground;  
Ask him yourself, Master Rat, if ye believe  
not me,  
And help me to my needle, for Gog's sake and  
Saint Charity.  
(*Enter Diccon below the Inn.*)

RAT

Come here, Diccon.  
Wilt thou swear Dame Chatte this woman's  
needle had?

DICCON

Nay, by S. Benit, will I not; then might ye  
think me mad!

GAMMER

Why didst thou not tell me so for true? Canst  
thou for shame deny it?

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

DICCON

Aye, marry, Gammer; but I said I'd abide not by it.

RAT

[Will you say a thing and not stick to it to try it?

DICCON

"Stick to it," quoth you, Master Rat? Marry, sir, I defy it!]

RAT

Then we be never the nearer for all that you can tell!

DICCON

[Yes, marry, sir, will you do by my advice and council!]

If mother Chatte see us all here she knoweth how the matter goes;

Therefore I say you three go hence and within the house keep close,

And I will into Dame Chatte's house and see the needle with these two eyes—

Whoever says the contrary, I'll swear he lies.

GAMMER

Now, gentle Diccon, do so; and, good sir, let us trudge.

RAT

By the mass, I may not tarry long to be your judge.

DICCON

[Tis but a little while, man. What! Take so much pain!

If I hear no news of it, I'll come soon again.]

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

HODGE

Tarry so much, good Master Doctor, of your gentleness!

RAT

Then let us hie us inward; and, Diccon, speed thy business!

*(Exeunt into Gammer's house.)*

*(Diccon approaches Dame Chatte's.)*

DICCON

But, Mother Chatte, my gossip, talk first withal I must;

For she must be chief captain to lay the Rat in the dust.

*(Enter Dame Chatte.)*

Good day, Dame Chatte, in faith, and well met in this place!

CHATTE

Good day, my friend Diccon. Whither walk ye this space?

DICCON

E'en to you, Dame Chatte. Why's Hodge so offended?

CHATTE

Oh, in faith, I would thou hadst seen—O Lord, I both upended!

DICCON

He swore by heaven and hell he would wreak his sorrow

And leave you never a hen alive by eight of the clock to-morrow.

CHATTE

The knave as well dare hang himself.

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

DICCON

Behind your furnace or lead  
Is there a hole where a crafty knave may creep  
in if he need?

CHATTE

Yes, by the mass, a hole broke down in these  
two days.

DICCON

Hodge he intends this same night to slip in  
there-a-ways.

CHATTE

[O Gog, that I were sure of it! In faith, he should  
have his need!

DICCON

Watch well, for the knave will be there as sure  
as is your creed.]

CHATTE

By Gog's bones when he cometh, now that I  
know the matter,  
He shall sure at the first skip to leap in scalding  
water—  
With a worse turn besides! When he will, let  
him come!

DICCON

I tell you as my sister. You know what meaneth  
"mum!"

*(Exit Dame Chatte.)*

Now lack I but my doctor to play his part  
again.

And lo, there he cometh, peradventure, to his  
pain.

*(Enter Doctor Rat.)*



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

RAT

What good news, Diccon, fellow? Is Mother Chatte at home?

DICCON

She is, sir, and she is not, but it please her to whom.

[I have done that I have done, be it worse, be it better!

And Dame Chatte at her wits end I have almost set her.

RAT

How so, I pray thee, Diccon?

DICCON

There she sat sewing a halter or a band,  
With no other thing save Gammer's needle in  
her hand.

As soon as any knock, if the filth be in doubt,  
She needs but one puff and her candle is out.

Now I, sir, knowing of every door the pin,  
Came nicely, and said no word till time I was  
within;

And then—saw the needle, even with these two  
eyes;

Whoever says the contrary, I will swear he lies.]

RAT

Do you bring me to a place, as the house  
stands—

DICCON

Where ye shall take the drab with the needle  
in her hands?

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

RAT

For Gog's sake, do so, Diccon, and I will 'gage  
my gown  
To give thee a full pot of the best ale in the  
town!

DICCON

See ye not what is here?—a hole wherein ye  
may creep—  
Into the house, and suddenly unawares among  
them leap.

RAT

Art thou sure, Diccon, the swill-tub stands not  
hereabout?

DICCON

I was within myself, man, even now. There is  
no doubt.  
Go softly, make no noise, give me your foot,  
Sir John!  
Here will I wait upon you till you come out  
anon.

*(Doctor Rat climbs into the house.)*

*(Cries off-stage.)*

RAT

Help, Diccon! out, alas!

DICCON

How, my wenches! Have ye caught the fox?  
That used to make revel among your hens  
and cocks? *(Exit Diccon.)*

*(Hodge comes from Gammer's house, hears the  
yells from the Inn, and runs back.)*

*(Doctor Rat comes out in disarray.)*

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

RAT

Woe worth the hour that I came here!  
And woe worth him that wrought this gear!  
[Whoever it wrought and first did invent it,  
He shall, I warrant him, ere long repent it!]  
Master Baylye, I trow, and he be worth his ears,  
Will snaffle these murderers and all that them  
bears.

I will surely neither bite nor sup  
Till I fetch him hither, this matter to take up.  
(*He exits below the Inn.*)

THE CURTAINS CLOSE

### ACT V

(*Stools are arranged in a semicircle between the two houses. Master Baylye, Doctor Rat, and Scapethrift are seated.*)

BAYLYE (*center*)

I can perceive none other. I speak it from my  
heart  
But either ye are in all the fault or else in the  
greatest part.

RAT (*L. center*)

Must it be counted his fault, beside all his  
griefs,  
When a poor man is spoiled and beaten among  
thiefs?

BAYLYE

And methinks, by your own tale, of all that ye  
name,

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

If any played the thief, you were the very same.  
[The women they did nothing, as your words  
make probation,  
But stoutly withstood your forcible invasion.]  
If that a thief at your window to enter should  
begin,  
Would you hold forth your hand and help to  
pull him in?

RAT

But I am no thief, sir, but an honest learned  
clerk.

BAYLYE

Yea, but who knoweth that, when he meets you  
in the dark?

RAT

[Is not this evil enough, to have a clout upon  
the brain?  
(*Showing his broken head.*)

BAYLYE

Might it not have been your luck with a spit to  
'ave been slain?]

RAT

Now, will you be so good, sir, as to talk with  
Dame Chatte,  
And know what she intended? I ask no more  
but that.

BAYLYE (*going to Scapethrift.*)

Let her be called, fellow.  
(*Exit Scapethrift into the Inn.*)  
She'll plead in metre or in prose,

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

And bid you seek your remedy; and so go wipe  
your nose!

*(Enter Chatte from the Inn, followed by Scape-  
thrift.)*

BAYLYE

Dame Chatte, Master Doctor said you showed  
him much disorder,  
Laying to your charge that you tried him to  
murder;  
To hear you answer hereto we have now for  
you sent.

CHATTE

I'll swear he's a liar, by word and intent.  
For this seven weeks with me, I am sure, he  
sat not down.  
Nay, ye have other missions, in the other end  
of the town,  
Where ye were liker to catch such a blow  
Than anywhere else, as far as I know!

BAYLYE

Belike then, Master Doctor, no stripe from her  
ye got!

RAT

Think you I am so mad that where I was beat  
I know not?  
[Will you believe this queen before you have  
tried it?  
It's not the first deed she hath done and after-  
ward denied it.]

CHATTE

What, man, will you say I broke your head?

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

RAT

How canst thou prove the contrary?

CHATTE

Nay, how provest thou that I did the deed?

RAT

Too plainly, by St. Mary!

This proof, I trow, may serve though I no word  
spoke!

*(Showing his broken head.)*

CHATTE

Because thy head is broken, was it I that it  
broke?

I saw thee, Rat, I tell thee, not once within  
this fortnight.

RAT

No, marry, thou sawest me not, but because  
thou hadst no light.

BAYLYE

Answer me this, Master Rat: When caught  
you this harm of yours?

RAT

Awhile ago, sir, Gog he knoweth, within less  
than these two hours.

BAYLYE

Dame Chatte, was there none with you—con-  
fess, in faith—about that season?

[What, woman! Let it be what it will, 'tis  
neither felony nor treason.]

CHATTE

Yes, by my faith, Master Baylye, there was a  
k.nave not far



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

Who caught one good flip on the brow with a  
door-bar—

And well was he worthy, as it seemed to me;  
But what is that to this man, since this was  
not he?

BAYLYE

Who was it, then? Let's hear!

RAT

Alas! sir, ask you that?  
Is it not plain enough by the own mouth of  
Dame Chatte?  
The time agreeth, my head is broken, her tongue  
does not lie;  
Only upon a bare nay, she saith it was not I.

CHATTE

No, marry, was it not indeed; ye shall hear by  
this one thing:  
This afternoon a friend of mine for goodwill  
gave me a warning.  
And bade me well look to my roost and all my  
capon pens,  
For, if I took not better heed, a knave would  
have my hens;  
[Then I, to save my goods, took so much pains  
as him to watch,  
And, as good fortune served me, it was my  
chance him for to catch.  
What strokes he bore away, or what other his  
gains,  
I know not, but sure I am he had something  
for his pains!]

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

BAYLYE

But knowest thou not his name?

CHATTE

I know it, but what then?

It was that crafty scullion, Hodge, my Gammer  
Gurton's man.

BAYLYE

Call me the knave hither; he shall sure kiss the  
stocks—

I shall teach him a lesson for filching hens or  
cocks!

*(Exit Scapethrift into Gammer's house.)*

RAT

I marvel, Master Baylye, so bleared be your  
eyes;

An egg is not so full of meat as she is full of lies.

CHATTE *(chasing Rat around to R.)*

Was Hodge not there? Look on his pate, that  
shall be his witness!

RAT *(right)*

I would my head were half so whole, I would  
seek no redress!

*(Enter Gammer Gurton.)*

BAYLYE

God bless you, Gammer Gurton.

GAMMER

God 'ild you, master mine!

BAYLYE

Thou hast a knave within thy house—Hodge,  
a servant of thine.

They tell me that busy knave is such a filching  
one

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

That hen, pig, goods, or capon thy neighbor  
can have none.

GAMMER

By Gog, I am much amazed to hear any such  
report!

Hodge was not wont, I trow, to have him in  
that sort.

CHATTE

A thieving knave is not alive, more filching nor  
more false;

Many a truer man than he has hanged up by  
the halse!

[And thou, his dame, of all his theft thou art  
the sole receiver,

For Hodge to catch and thou to keep, I know,  
thou base deceiver.]

GAMMER

[Sir reverence of your masterdom, if you could  
hear me not

I would be so bold, for all her brags, to call her  
arrant trot.]

If I knew Hodge as base as thou, I wish me  
endless sorrow

If I took not the pains to hang him up before  
to-morrow!

CHATTE

What have I stolen from thee or thine, thou  
ill-favored old trot?

GAMMER

A good deal more, by Gog's blest, than ever by  
thee got!

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

BAYLYE

How chance Hodge is not here? Him would I  
fain have had!

GAMMER

Alas, sir, he'll be here anon; he be handled  
too bad!

CHATTE

[Master Baylye, sir, ye be not such a fool, well  
I know,  
But ye perceive by this lingering there is a pod  
in the straw.]

*(Thinking that Hodge's head was broken, and  
that Gammer would not let him come before them.)*

Ah!

GAMMER

But I'll show you his face, I warrant thee.—Lo,  
now where he is!

*(Enter Hodge, wearing his torn breeches, and  
covering the rent with his hands.)*

BAYLYE

Come on, fellow! It is told me thou art a fox,  
I wis.

HODGE

I defy them all that dare it say; I am as true  
as the best!

BAYLYE

Were not thou taken within this hour in Dame  
Chatte's hens' nest?

HODGE

Taken there? No, master, I would not do't for  
a houseful of gold!

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

CHATTE

Thou or the devil in thy coat, swear this I dare  
be bold.

RAT

Swear me no swearing, queen, the devil he give  
thee sorrow!

All is not worth a gnat thou canst swear till  
to-morrow.

Where is the harm *he* hath? Show it, by 'Od's  
bread!

Ye beat him, with a witness; but the stripes  
light on *my* head!

HODGE

Beat me? 'Od's blessed body, I would first, I  
trow, have pushed thee

And had my hands both been loose, callet, I  
should have crushed thee!

CHATTE

Thou arrant knave, I trow thou knowest the  
full weight of my fist;

I am foully deceived unless thy head and my  
door-bar kissed.

HODGE

Hold thy chat, drab, thou criest so loud can no  
man else be heard.

CHATTE

Well, knave, had I thee alone, I would surely  
rap thy costard.

BAYLYE

Sir, answer me this: Is thy head whole or  
broken?

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

CHATTE

Yea, Master Baylye, blest be every good token!

BAYLYE

Come nearer here!

HODGE (*going to Baylye and kneeling*)

Yea, that I dare.

BAYLYE

By our Lady, here is no harm.

Hodge's head is whole enough, for all Dame Chatte's charm.

CHATTE (*after feeling Hodge's head*)

[By Gog's blest, however the thing he cloaks or smoulders,

I know the blows he bore away either with head or shoulders.]

Camest thou not, knave, within this hour creeping into my pens,

And there was caught within my house groping among my hens?

HODGE

Give my Gammer again her washical thou stole away in thy lap!

GAMMER

Yea, Master Baylye, here is a thing you know not of, mayhap.

This drab she keeps away my goods. The devil he might her snare!

I pray you that I might have a right action on her.



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

BAYLYE

Why, what can ye charge her withal? To say  
so ye do not well.

GAMMER

Marry, a vengeance to her heart, the trot has  
stolen my needle!

CHATTE (*crescendo*)

Thy needle, old witch? How so? It were alms  
thy skull to knock!

So didst thou say the other day that I had  
stolen thy cock.

[And roasted him for my breakfast,—which  
shall not be forgotten,

The devil pull out thy lying tongue and teeth  
that be so rotten!]

GAMMER (*shouting*)

Give me my needle!

BAYLYE (*yells "Silence!" stopping them.*)

Silence! How knowest thou, Gammer, Dame  
Chatte thy needle had?

(*Chatte brings stool to front, sitting with her  
back to the lot of them.*)

GAMMER

To name you, sir, the party, I should not be  
very glad.

BAYLYE

[Yea, but we must needs hear it, and therefore  
say it boldly.

GAMMER

Such one as told the tale full soberly and coldly,  
Diccon, Master, the bedlam, I am very sure ye  
know him.

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

BAYLYE

A false knave, by 'Od's pity! Ye were but a  
fool to trow him.

Told he not you that she stole your cock that  
tide?

GAMMER

No, master, no indeed; for then he should have  
lied!

CHATTE

Thy wench Tyb said thy cock was stolen, and  
in my house was eaten.

That lying cat, alas that she is not swunged  
and beaten,

[And yet for all my good name, it were a small  
amends!

I pick not this gear, hearest thou, out of my  
fingers' ends;]

But he that heard it, told me, whom thou of  
late didst name,—

Diccon, whom all men know,—it was the very  
same.

BAYLYE

This is the case: You lost your needle about  
the doors,

And she answers again she has no cock of yours;  
Will you say she hath your cock?

GAMMER

No, marry, sir, that I'll not!

BAYLYE

Will you confess her needle?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

CHATTE (*picking up stool aggressively*)

Will I? No, sir, will I not!

(*Swings stool around and the others topple over, but Chatte only sits.*)

BAYLYE (*on floor*)

Then there lieth all the matter—

GAMMER

Soft, master, by the way!

Ye know she would do little, and she could not say nay.

BAYLYE (*sitting again*)

[Yea, but he that made one lie about your cock stealing

Will not stick to make another, when lies be in dealing,]

I ween the end will prove this brawl did first arise

Upon no other ground but only Diccon's lies.

CHATTE

Though some be lies, as you belike have spied them,

Yet other some be true; by the proof I have well tried them.

He told me Hodge would come, and in Hodge came indeed;

But, as the matter chanced, with greater haste than speed—

This truth was said, and true was found, as truly I report.

BAYLYE

If Doctor Rat be not deceived, it was of another sort.

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

RAT

Did not Diccon appoint the place where thou shouldst stand to meet him?

CHATTE

Yes, by the mass, and, if he came, bade me not stick to spit him.

RAT

He is the cause of all this brawl, the dirty, lying lout!

He said you had the needle, as I could well find out,

[And set me through the back-hole creeping upon my knees,

And I found the weight of your door-bar for my reward and fees.]<sup>1</sup>

BAYLYE

Sir knave, make haste, Diccon were here; fetch him wherever he be!

*(Exit Scapethrift below Gammer's house.)*

CHATTE

Fie on the villain! Fie! fie! That makes us then agree.

GAMMER

Fie on him, knave, with all my heart! Now fie! and fie again!

RAT

Now "fie on him," may I best say, whom he hath almost slain.

---

<sup>1</sup>If this cut is used reverse the first two lines of the speech.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

BAYLYE

Lo, where he cometh at hand; belike he was  
not far!

*(Enter Diccon.)*

Diccon, here be two or three thy company  
cannot spare.

DICCON *(just escaping Hodge's kick by leaping  
to L.)*

God bless you, and you may be blest, so many  
all at once!

CHATTE

[Come, knave, it were good to beat thee, by  
cock's bones.

Seest not thy handiwork? Sir Rat, can ye  
forbear him?

DICCON

A vengeance on those hands light! For my  
hands came not near him.]

BAYLYE

Hast thou not made a lie or two to set these  
two by the ears?

DICCON

What if I have? Five hundred such have I  
seen within these seven years.

[I am sorry for nothing else but that I saw not  
the sport

Which was between them when they met, as  
they themselves report.]

RAT

[In the king's name, Master Baylye, I charge  
you set him fast!

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

DICCON

What, fast at cards, or fast asleep? It is the thing that I did last.

RAT

Nay, fast in fetters, false varlet, according to thy deeds.

BAYLYE

Master doctor, *there* is no remedy; I must in-treat your needs  
Some other kind of punishment.]

RAT

Master Baylye, I charge you [nay,] by all hallows!  
His punishment, if I may judge shall be naught else but the gallows.

BAYLYE

I grant him worthy punishment, but in no wise so great.

GAMMER

It is a shame, I tell you plain, with such false knaves to treat!  
He has almost undone us all—that is as true as steel.  
And yet for all this great ado, I am never the nearer my needle!

BAYLYE

Canst thou not say anything to that, Diccon, with least or most?

DICCON

Yea, marry, sir, this much I can say! Well, the needle is—lost.

*(Chatte swings at Diccon, who dodges and Baylye gets clipped instead.)*



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

BAYLYE

Nay, canst not thou tell which way that needle  
may be found?

DICCON

No, by my fay, sir, though I might have an  
hundred pound.

BAYLYE

Well, Master Rat, you must both learn, and  
teach us, to forgive,  
Since Diccon hath confession made and is so  
cleanly shrive  
If ye to me consent, to amend this heavy  
chance,  
I will ensign him here some open kind of  
penance,—  
[On this condition: Where ye know my fee is  
twenty pence;  
For the bloodshed, I am agreed with you here  
to dispense],  
Ye shall go quite, so that ye grant the matter  
now to run  
To end with mirth among us all, even as it was  
begun.

CHATTE

Say yea, Master Vicar.

RAT

My part is the worse; but since you all agree,  
Go even to, Master Baylye—let it be so for me!

BAYLYE

How sayest thou, Diccon, art content this  
shall on me depend?

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

DICCON

Go to, Master Baylye. Say on your mind. I  
know ye are my friend.

BAYLYE

[Then mark ye well: to recompense this thy  
former action,

Because thou hast offended all, to make them  
satisfaction,]

Before their faces here kneel down, and as I  
shall thee teach—

For thou shalt take an oath on Hodge's leather  
breech:

*(Diccon kneels.)*

First, for Master Doctor, upon pain of his  
curse—

Where he will pay for all, thou never draw thy  
purse

*(Diccon laughs.)*

And, when ye meet at one pot, he shall have  
first pull,

And thou shalt never offer him the cup but it  
be full.

*(Rat laughs gleefully.)*

To Goodwife Chatte, thou shalt be sworn, even  
in the same wise.

If she refuse thy money once, never to offer  
it twice,—

For Gammer Gurton's sake again, sworn shalt  
thou be

To help her to her needle again, if it do lie in  
thee.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

Last of all, for Hodge, the oath to scan,  
Thou shalt never take him for fine gentleman.

HODGE

Come on, fellow Diccon, I shall be even with  
thee now!

BAYLYE

Thou wilt not stick to do this, Diccon, I trow?

DICCON

No, by my father's skin, my hand down I lay it!  
Look, as I have promised, I will not deny it.  
*(He gives Hodge a blow on the seat of the torn  
breeches.)*

HODGE *(yells)*

Gog's heart!

BAYLYE

What, Hodge, doth he hurt thee or ever he  
begin?

HODGE

He thrust me in the breeches with a bodkin or  
a pin!

*(He finds the needle.)*

I say, Gammer, Gammer!

GAMMER

How now, Hodge, how now?

HODGE

'Od's malt, Gammer Gurton!

GAMMER

Thou art mad, I trow!

HODGE

[Will you see! The devil, Gammer!

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

GAMMER

The devil, son? God bless us!

HODGE

I would I were hanged, Gammer!

GAMMER

Marry, see ye might dress us.]

HODGE

I have it, by the mass, Gammer.

GAMMER

What? Not my needle, Hodge?

HODGE

Your needle, Gammer! Your needle!

GAMMER

No, fie, dost but dodge!

HODGE

I have found your needle, Gammer, here in  
my hand be it!

GAMMER

For all the loves on earth, Hodge, let me see it!

HODGE

I am sure of it, I warrant you, it goes no more  
astray.

GAMMER

Hodge, when I speak so fair, wilt still say me  
nay?

*(Hodge gives her the needle.)*

'Tis mine own dear needle, Hodge, truly I wot.

HODGE

Am I not a good son, Gammer? Am I not?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

GAMMER (*embracing Hodge*)

Gog's blessing light on thee, hast made me  
forever!

HODGE

I knew that I must find it else I would have  
had it never.

CHATTE

By my troth, Gossip Gurton, I am glad as  
though myself a good turn had.

(*Embracing Gammer.*)

BAYLYE

And I, in faith, am happy to see it so come forth.

RAT

I rejoice so much at it as three needles' worth!

DICCON

Gammer, say, "Gramercy, Diccon," for spring-  
ing of the game.

GAMMER (*patting him*)

Gramercy, Diccon, twenty times! O how glad  
I am.

(*She has an idea and begins to fumble in her  
petticoat.*)

I have but a halfpenny, as far as I know,

(*All cluster around her.*)

And I'll not rest this night till I it bestow;

If ever ye love me, let us go in and drink!

BAYLYE (*starting into the Inn, R., followed by Rat*)

I am content, if the rest think as I think.

DICCON (*arm about Hodge*)

Soft, sirs, take us with you; the company shall  
be the more!

## GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE

---

*(Spanking Hodge, who leaps into the air.)*

As proud comes behind, they say, as any goes  
before!

*(All but Diccon go into the Inn.)*

*(Turning to the audience)*

But now, my good masters, since we must be  
gone

And leave you behind us here all alone—

Since at our last ending thus merry we be,

For Gammer Gurton's needle sake, let us have  
a plaudity!

*(He goes into the Inn.)*

THE CURTAINS CLOSE



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## THE BIRTHDAY OF INFANTA

(First performance in Binghamton, New York, November 4, 1916; first time in New York City at the Princess Theatre, December 11, 1916.)

|                                 |                 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| A PAGE .....                    | Edgar Stehli    |
| THE INFANTA OF SPAIN.....       | Nancy Winston   |
| THE DUCHESS ON ALBUQUERQUE..... | Judith Lowry    |
| AN ATTENDANT.....               | Edmond Crenshaw |
| THE FANTASTIC .....             | Gregory Kelly   |
| THE CHAMBERLAIN .....           | McKay Morris    |
| THE COUNT OF TIERRA NUEVA.....  | Robert Cook     |

Scenery designed by Frank J. Zimmerer. Costumes and properties by Mrs. John W. Alexander, executed by the Arden Galleries. Music by Harry Gilbert.

# THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

(Founded on Oscar Wilde's Story)

## CHARACTERS

THE INFANTA OF SPAIN

THE DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE

THE COUNT OF TIERRA-NUEVA

THE CHAMBERLAIN

THE FANTASTIC

A MOORISH PAGE

ANOTHER PAGE

*The scene is the royal balcony overlooking a garden.*

*The time is the sixteenth century.*

## THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

*The opening of the curtains discloses a balcony overlooking a garden. The grim stone arch frames a brilliant sky. Gay flowers and a few white roses cover the railing. A bit of gaudy awning which can be lowered over the arch flutters in the breeze. At the right is a large mirror so draped that the dull, black hangings can be lowered to cover the mirror entirely. The hangings are of velvet, powdered with suns and stars. At the left similar hangings adorn a doorway. There are rich floor coverings and several formal chairs.*

*A moorish attendant in black and yellow livery enters and arranges the chairs, and stands at attention.*

*The Infanta enters, followed by the Duchess of Albuquerque. The Infanta is dressed in gray brocade, very, very stiff and stately. She is small, with reddish hair and a settled air of self-possession and formality. Occasionally her eyes twinkle and her feet suggest her childishness, but she soon recovers herself under the watchful eye of the Camerera, and she never really forgets that she is the Infanta of Spain.*

*The Infanta bows, if the slight inclination of her head can be called bowing, to the Moorish attendant. The Duchess also inclines her head and stands in the doorway.*

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

INFANTA

I would be alone.

DUCHESS

Your Highness—

INFANTA

I would be alone.

*(The Duchess turns in the doorway and speaks to those behind her)*

DUCHESS

Her Highness would be alone.

*(Then to the Infanta)*

This is unheard of.

INFANTA

My birthday is rare enough to be almost unheard of, your Grace of Albuquerque. I would be alone on my birthday—and I'm going to be alone!

*(Then to the attendant)*

You may go! . . . But wait . . .

*(She stands admiringly before the mirror.)*

Hold back the curtain.

*(The attendant lifts the curtain.)*

*(She preens herself.)*

Why do I not look so well in my own suite? See how wonderful this is here. Look at the gold in my hair.

DUCHESS

That is vanity, your Highness.

INFANTA

Can I not admire myself on my birthday? Have I so many birthdays that I must live them as I live every other day?

## THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

DUCHESS

What is wickedness on other days is also wickedness on your birthday.

INFANTA

*(Taking a white rose from the balustrade and trying it in her hair and at her waist.)*

See—see—I like it here.

*(The Duchess, outraged, speaks to the attendant.)*

DUCHESS

You may go.

INFANTA

No, no—stay—draw the curtains across the mirror!

DUCHESS

What will your father say?

*(The Infanta is quite beside her little self.)*

INFANTA

Draw the curtains across the mirror and hide me from myself as those curtains hide my dead mother's room!

DUCHESS

Please—

INFANTA

I have spoken, your Grace. The curtains are to be drawn. We shall have no mirror to-day.  
*(The attendant closes the curtain.)*

INFANTA

You may go!

*(The attendant exits.)*

*(The Infanta goes to the balustrade and looks into the gardens below.)*



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

*(The Duchess, quite at a loss what to do, finally crosses to the Infanta.)*

DUCHESS

Your Highness, I am compelled to remonstrate with you. What will his Majesty, your father, say?

INFANTA

My father will say nothing. He does not seem to care.

DUCHESS

Oh—Oh—Oh—

INFANTA

And my uncle wishes that I were dead. . . .  
No one cares. I have to be a queen all the time, and I can never be a little girl like the little girl I saw in Valladolid. She just played . . . and no one corrected her every moment.

DUCHESS

You play with the finest dolls in the world.

INFANTA

But I do not have mud like hers!

DUCHESS

Mud!

INFANTA

I'd like to smear my face!

DUCHESS

Oh!

INFANTA

And I'd like to climb a tree!

DUCHESS

Oh, your Highness, you fill me with horror!  
You forget that you are the daughter of a king!

## THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

INFANTA

Well, it's my birthday—and I'm tired of being a wooden body.

*(She seats herself most unmaiestically on the footstool.)*

DUCHESS

Such wickedness! I shall have to call the Grand Inquisitor. There is a devil in you!

INFANTA

Call him! I'll rumple my hair at him.

DUCHESS

He'll forbid you to enjoy your birthday.

INFANTA

What is it for my birthday—the same old story.

DUCHESS *(mysteriously)*

Who knows?

INFANTA *(not so surely)*

When I was ten, they had dancing in the garden, but I could not go amongst the little girls. They played and I looked on.

DUCHESS

An Infanta of the house of Aragon must not play with children.

INFANTA

And when I was eleven they had dancing in the garden and a shaggy bear and some Barbary apes; but I could only sit here. I couldn't touch the bear, even when he smiled at me. And when one of the apes climbed to this balustrade, you drew me away.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

DUCHESS

Such animals are very dangerous, your Highness.

INFANTA

And here I am—twelve years old to-day—and still I must stay up here like a prisoner.

DUCHESS

Your Highness is very ill-tempered to-day.

INFANTA

I do not care. I do not want to be an Infanta.

DUCHESS

You are the daughter of Ferdinand, by grace of God, King of Spain!

INFANTA

Will my father come to me to-day? And will he smile?

DUCHESS

This is all for you alone.

INFANTA

Will not my sad father then come to me to-day? And will he not smile?

DUCHESS

He will see you after the surprise.

INFANTA

A surprise?

DUCHESS

Yes, your Highness.

INFANTA

What is it?

DUCHESS

I can not tell.



The Infanta of Spain, the Chamberlain, and the Duchess

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## THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

INFANTA

If I guess?

DUCHESS

Perhaps.

INFANTA

It's hobby horses!

DUCHESS

No.

*(They almost forget their royalty.)*

INFANTA

It's an African juggler with two green and gold snakes in a red basket.

DUCHESS

No.

INFANTA

In a blue basket?

DUCHESS

No.

INFANTA *(ecstatically)*

Three snakes?

DUCHESS

Not at all.

INFANTA *(dully)*

Is it a sermon by the Grand Inquisitor?

DUCHESS

No.

INFANTA *(with new hope)*

Is it a troupe of Egyptians with tambourines and zithers?

DUCHESS

No.



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

INFANTA

Is it something I've never seen before?

DUCHESS

Never in the palace.

INFANTA (*screaming*)

It's a fantastic!

DUCHESS

Who knows?

INFANTA

Oh, it's a fantastic. It's a fantastic!  
(*She dances about.*)

DUCHESS

Your Highness forgets herself.

INFANTA

It's a fantastic! It's a fantastic!  
(*She suddenly regains her poise.*)

Where is my cousin, the Count of Tierra-Nueva? I shall tell him that I am to be entertained on my birthday by a fantastic. And I shall let him come here to see it.

(*The Moorish attendant steps inside the door and holds the curtain aside.*)

INFANTA

Your Grace, inform the Chamberlain that I shall have the fantastic dance for me in my balcony. The sun in the garden hurts my eyes. Besides, I want to touch his back.

(*She goes out, every inch a queen.*)

DUCHESS

She has guessed. Tell the Chamberlain to send the fantastic here.

## THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

ATTENDANT

The fantastic is waiting in the ante-chamber,  
your Grace.

*(The Duchess exits after the Infanta.)*

*(The Attendant crosses to ante-chamber.)*

ATTENDANT

Her Grace, the Duchess of Albuquerque, bids  
you enter. Inform the Chamberlain that her  
Highness, the Infanta, is ready for the dance.

*(The Fantastic and an Attendant enter. The  
Fantastic is a hunch-back, with a huge mane of  
black hair and a bright face that shows no trace  
of beauty, but great light and wonder.)*

*(The Fantastic looks about the balcony. It is all  
so strange to him. As he goes about touching the  
things in the place the Attendant follows him  
closely, watching him with eagle eyes. As the  
boy nears the mirror and lays his hand upon the  
black velvet hangings the Attendant steps in front  
of him and prevents his opening the curtains.  
The little boy then sits—a very small, misshapen  
little creature—on the steps of the balcony.*

*(The Chamberlain enters. He is a middle-aged  
man, with some tenderness left in his somewhat  
immobile face, and when he addresses the little  
boy there is a note of pathos that is almost in-  
definable.)*

CHAMBERLAIN

Little grotesque, you are to see the King's  
daughter!

FANTASTIC *(almost overcome)*

Where is she?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

CHAMBERLAIN

Come now, you must not be afraid.

FANTASTIC

I have never seen a king's daughter.

CHAMBERLAIN

You must smile.

FANTASTIC

Is she very big—and all bright and shiny?

CHAMBERLAIN

Smile! You did not have such a long face yesterday. That is why we bought you.

FANTASTIC

Will she smile upon me?

CHAMBERLAIN

You must make her smile.

FANTASTIC

Will she beat me if I do not make her smile?

CHAMBERLAIN

You shall be beaten if you displease her. This is her Highness's birthday. And you are to dance for her to make her happy.

FANTASTIC

I have never danced for a king's daughter before.

CHAMBERLAIN

You must dance bravely before her as you danced when we found you in the woods yesterday.

FANTASTIC

I am afraid of the king's daughter.

## THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

CHAMBERLAIN

We cannot have fear on the Infanta's birthday.  
We must have happiness.

FANTASTIC

I wish my father had not sold me.

CHAMBERLAIN

Your father was very poor, and he wanted you  
to make the Infanta happy.

FANTASTIC

My father did not care for me.

CHAMBERLAIN

You shall make the Infanta happy.

FANTASTIC

If you had a son would you sell him?

CHAMBERLAIN

You were sold to the Infanta.

FANTASTIC

Have you a son?

CHAMBERLAIN

No.

FANTASTIC

My father had seven sons.

CHAMBERLAIN

I had a little boy once.

FANTASTIC

And did you sell him?

CHAMBERLAIN

No. He went away. . . . He died.

FANTASTIC

Could he make the Infanta smile?

CHAMBERLAIN

I think he could.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

FANTASTIC

Did he dance for her?

CHAMBERLAIN

No, he rode a hobby-horse in the mock bull fight.

FANTASTIC

What is a hobby-horse?

CHAMBERLAIN

A hobby-horse is a make-believe horse—like the stick that you ride through the woods.

FANTASTIC

Oh, can't I ride a hobby-horse in a bull fight?

CHAMBERLAIN

Some time. . . . If you make the Infanta happy on her birthday I'll give you a hobby-horse.

FANTASTIC

Can I ride it to-day—for her?

CHAMBERLAIN

No. You'll have to dance for her.

FANTASTIC

Is she terrible?

CHAMBERLAIN

Not if you are good.

FANTASTIC

I think—I'm afraid.

CHAMBERLAIN

Afraid? You were not afraid of the woods.

FANTASTIC

They would not hurt me. I did not have to make them smile.

## THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

CHAMBERLAIN

What will you do when you see the Infanta?

FANTASTIC

I don't know. That man who dressed me up said I must smile and bow. My smile was very funny, he said, and my bow was funnier. I didn't try to be funny.

CHAMBERLAIN

Some boys are funny even when they don't try to be.

FANTASTIC

I don't feel funny. I just feel happy, and when I am happy people laugh. . . . Did she smile upon your son when he rode the hobby-horse?

CHAMBERLAIN

She threw a rose to him.

FANTASTIC

Do you think she'll throw a rose to me? I like roses. . . . Am I like your son?

CHAMBERLAIN

My son was tall.

FANTASTIC

I would be tall and strong, too; but I broke my back, and my brothers say I am very crooked. . . . I do not know. . . . I am not as strong as they are, but I can dance and sometimes I sing, too. . . . I make up my songs as I go along. And they are good songs, too, I know, because I've heard them.

CHAMBERLAIN

How did you hear them, Señor Merry-Face?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

FANTASTIC

Someone sang them back to me.

CHAMBERLAIN

A little girl, perhaps?

FANTASTIC

Someone. . . . When I sang in the valley  
she would mock me.

CHAMBERLAIN

Who was it? . . . Tell me.

FANTASTIC

It was Echo.

CHAMBERLAIN

Echo? And does she live near your house?

FANTASTIC

She lives in the hills—and sometimes she used  
to come into the woods when it was very still.

CHAMBERLAIN

Did you ever see Echo?

FANTASTIC

No. You can't see her. . . . You can only  
hear her.

CHAMBERLAIN

Would you like to see her?

FANTASTIC

I always wonder if Echo might not mock my  
face as she mocks my voice?

CHAMBERLAIN

Who knows?

FANTASTIC

I go into the hills and I sing a song and then  
Echo sings back to me—just as I sing. . . .



## THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

---

But when I go into the woods Echo doesn't stand in front of me—just as I look.

CHAMBERLAIN

Haven't you ever seen yourself?

FANTASTIC

No, but I would like to. I always make people happy when they look at me. They always laugh. Would I laugh if Echo mocked my face?

CHAMBERLAIN

I do not know.

FANTASTIC

Am I really happy looking?

CHAMBERLAIN

You are a fantastic.

FANTASTIC

That sounds happy.

CHAMBERLAIN

I hope it always will be.

FANTASTIC

Have you ever seen yourself?

CHAMBERLAIN

Yes.

FANTASTIC

Did your son see himself?

CHAMBERLAIN

Yes.

FANTASTIC

Where?

CHAMBERLAIN

In a mirror.

FANTASTIC

Is that Echo's other name?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

CHAMBERLAIN

Yes.

FANTASTIC

Can I see myself sometime?

CHAMBERLAIN

Yes.

FANTASTIC

I'll sing, too.

*(The Attendant enters.)*

ATTENDANT

Her Royal Highness, the Infanta of Spain!

*(The Fantastic is very much frightened.)*

CHAMBERLAIN

Go behind the door there. . . . Wait. . . .

Be brave. . . . Smile. . . . And do not speak until you are asked to.

*(The Infanta enters sedately, followed by the Duchess and the Count of Tierra-Nueva, an unpleasant-looking boy of sixteen.)*

*(The Chamberlain bows very low and kisses the Infanta's stiffly proffered hand.)*

INFANTA (*regally*)

My lord Chamberlain, this is our royal birthday, and in accord with the wish of our father, the King of Spain, we are to be entertained with some mirthful sport (*Suddenly a little girl.*)—and I know what it is. It's a fantastic.

CHAMBERLAIN

Your Highness, it is the pleasure of the Chamberlain to His Majesty, your father, the King of Spain, to offer my felicitations this day on which God has deigned to send happiness and good

## THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

fortune to Spain in your royal person. His Majesty the King through me desired to surprise you with mirth this day.

INFANTA

Is our royal father well? And does he smile to-day?

CHAMBERLAIN

His Majesty does not smile, your Highness. He cannot smile in his great grief.

INFANTA

Let the surprise be brought to us. But I guessed what it was! . . . It must be very ugly and very crooked and very, very funny to look at—or we shall be highly displeased.

*(She settles into her royal place and takes on a manner.)*

*(The Fantastic, having been summoned by the page, barely enters the door.)*

*(The Infanta, looking royally straight before her, does not turn her head.)*

*(After a moment.)*

INFANTA

Well?

CHAMBERLAIN

Here is the surprise, your Highness.

*(The Fantastic is the picture of grotesque misery. He looks first at the Chamberlain and then at the Infanta. Finally she turns to him, and he tries a timid smile and an awkward bow.)*

*(The Infanta claps her little hands and laughs in sheer delight.)*

*(The Fantastic looks desperately at the Chamberlain.)*

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

INFANTA

Go on. . . . Isn't he funny!

CHAMBERLAIN (*to Fantastic*)

Bow again and then begin to dance.

FANTASTIC (*joyfully*)

She is only a little girl, and I've made her happy!

CHAMBERLAIN

What will you dance, Señor Merry-Face?

FANTASTIC

I'll dance the one I made up and no one ever saw or heard it except Echo. It's the dance of the autumn leaf. I'll show you what the autumn leaves do and I'll tell you what they say.

INFANTA

How do you know, you comic little beast?

FANTASTIC

I know because I live in the woods, up in the hills, and I dance with the leaves—and I have two pet wood-pigeons.

INFANTA

Where is the music?

FANTASTIC

I sing—it's happier that way.

INFANTA

Dance! Dance!

(*The Fantastic bows in an absurdly grotesque way—his idea of stateliness and grace.*)

INFANTA

I've never seen such a monstrous fantastic.

## THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

---

COUNT

We must touch his back before he goes—for good luck.

*(The Fantastic begins to sing and dance The Song of the Autumn Leaf.)*

FANTASTIC (*singing*)

All summer long  
I cling to the tree,  
Merrily, merrily!  
The winds play and play,  
But I cling to the tree,  
Merrily, merrily!  
The summer sun  
Is hot and gold,  
Cheerily, cheerily.  
But I hang on  
In the August heat,  
Wearily, wearily!  
I am not free,  
For I have to hang  
Wearily, wearily!  
Until autumn frosts  
Release my grasp,  
Cheerily, cheerily!  
Then I'm free,  
All crumpled and brown  
Merrily, merrily!  
I roll and I blow  
Up and around,  
Merrily, merrily!  
All crumpled and brown  
In my autumn coat,

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

I dance in the wind,  
I hide in the rain,  
Dancing and blowing  
And waiting for winter,  
Cheerily, cheerily,  
Merrily, merrily,  
Wearily, wearily.

*(He falls like a dead leaf onto the floor.)*  
*(The Infanta is delighted.)*

INFANTA

I'm going to throw him a rose!

DUCHESS

Your Highness!

INFANTA

See—like the court ladies to Caffarelli, the  
treble.

*(The Fantastic has risen and bowed in his grotesque way.)*

*(The Infanta tosses the rose to him.)*

*(He takes it up and, bowing absurdly, presses it to his lips.)*

DUCHESS *(who has never smiled)*

Your Highness, you must prepare for your birthday feast.

INFANTA

Oh, let him dance again! The same dance!

DUCHESS

Think of the birthday feast, your Highness.  
Your father, the King of Spain; your uncle, the  
Grand Inquisitor; the noble children.

INFANTA

Once more!

## THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

---

DUCHESS

Your Highness, you must see the huge birthday cake with your initials on it in painted sugar—and a silver flag. . . .

INFANTA

Very well. He can dance again after my siesta. . . . My cousin, I trust that you will see the next dance.

COUNT

I'll ride a hobby-horse and he'll be the bull.  
It will be very funny with such a funny bull.

*(He kisses her hand and exits the opposite way.)*

*(The Infanta, followed by the Duchess, exits, and as she goes she looks once more at the Fantastic and breaks into a laugh.)*

*(The Fantastic is delighted and stands looking after her.)*

CHAMBERLAIN

Come!

FANTASTIC *(putting out his hand)*

I think she liked me.

CHAMBERLAIN

The Infanta of Spain is the daughter of the King of Spain. You have made her smile.  
Come!

*(They go out.)*

*(The Attendant crosses and closes the awning. He draws the curtains from the mirror and preens himself a bit, looking now and then until he disappears.)*

*(A sunbeam coming through the fluttering awning,*



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

*strikes the mirror, and reflects onto the tessellated floor.)*

*(There is a short intermezzo. Far-a-way harps and violins echo the Fantastic's little song.)*

*(The Fantastic enters furtively, looking about. He takes the rose from his bosom.)*

### FANTASTIC

I think I'll ask her to come away with me when I've finished my dance.

*(He crosses to her door and listens. Then smiles and skips a step or two. He sees the sunbeam through the awning and goes to it. He again takes the rose from his coat and holds it in the sunlight. Again he dances to the door and listens, then he turns facing the mirror for the first time. He breaks into a smile, but first hides the rose hastily. He waves his hand.)*

### FANTASTIC

Good morrow! . . . You are very funny!  
. . . You are very crooked! . . . Don't  
look that way! . . . Why do you frown at  
me? . . . Can't you talk? . . . You only  
move your lips. . . . Oh, you funny little  
boy!

*(He puts his hands on his sides and breaks into a great laugh.)*

### FANTASTIC

If you could see yourself, you'd laugh still more.  
*(He makes a mocking bow and breaks into shouts. He plays before the mirror. The mockery is too clever.)*



The Duchess of Albuquerque

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## THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

---

FANTASTIC

You mock me, you little beast! . . . Stop it!  
Speak to me. . . . You make me afraid.  
. . . Like night in the forest.

*(He has never known anything like this. He is in turn enraged, terrified.)*

*(He runs forward and puts out his hand. He rubs his hand over the face of the mirror and the cold, hard surface mystifies him. He brushes the hair from his eyes. He makes faces. He retreats. He looks about the room. He sees everything repeated in the mirror—the awning, the chairs, the sunbeam on the floor.)*

FANTASTIC (*calling*)

Echo!

*(He strains for an answer. He hides behind a chair. He makes a plan.)*

FANTASTIC

I know, miserable little monster. You shan't mock me.

*(He takes the rose from his coat.)*

FANTASTIC

She gave me this rose. It is the only one in the world. . . . She gave it to me—to me.

*(He emerges from behind the chair and holds out the rose. With a dry sob he shrinks away and, fascinated, stares at the mirror. He compares the rose, petal by petal, terror and rage rising in him. He kisses it and presses it to his heart. Suddenly he rushes to the mirror with a cry. He touches the glass again, then with a cry of despair he hurls himself sobbing on the floor. Once more*

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

*he looks upon the picture and then, covering his face with his hands, he crawls away like a wounded animal lies moaning in the shadow and beating the ground with his impotent hands.)*

*(The Infanta enters, followed by the Count. At the sight of the Fantastic the Infanta stops and breaks into a laugh.)*

INFANTA

His dancing was funny, but his acting is funnier still. Indeed he is almost as good as the puppets.

*(His sobs grow fainter and fainter. He drags himself toward the door, trying to hide his face. Then with a sudden gasp he clutches his side and falls back across the step and lies quite still.)*

*(The Infanta waits a moment.)*

INFANTA

That is capital; it would make even my father, the King of Spain, smile. . . . But now you must dance for me:

Cheerily, cheerily!

Merrily, merrily!

Wearily, wearily!

COUNT

Yes, you must get up and dance and then we'll have a bull fight and I'll kill you.

*(The Fantastic does not answer.)*

INFANTA *(stamping her foot)*

My funny little fantastic is sulking. You must wake him up and tell him to dance for me.

COUNT

You must dance, little monster, you must dance.

## THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA

---

The Infanta of Spain and the Indies wishes to be amused.

*(Then to a page)*

A whipping master should be sent for.

*(The page goes out.)*

COUNT

Let's touch his back *(as the children touch his hump)* and make a wish.

INFANTA

I wish he would dance.

*(Enter the Chamberlain and the Duchess.)*

DUCHESS

Your Highness!

INFANTA

Make him dance or I shall have him flogged.

*(The Chamberlain rushes to the body. He kneels. Feels the heart—sees the sunbeam and the exposed mirror—shrugs his shoulders—rises.)*

CHAMBERLAIN

Mi bella Princess, your funny little fantastic will never dance again.

INFANTA *(laughing)*

But why will he not dance again?

CHAMBERLAIN

Because his heart is broken.

INFANTA *(thinks a moment, then frowns)*

For the future let those who come to play with me have no hearts.

*(She passes out, not deigning to look back, every inch the queen—the disappointed, lonely, shut-in little queen.)*

*(The others follow her properly according to rank;*



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

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*but the Chamberlain, remembering a little boy who would ride hobby-horses no more in mock bull fights, returns and throws the Infanta's mantilla over the little warped body. It is a moment of glory. The Chamberlain again starts to follow his Mistress; but memory is stronger than etiquette. He goes to the Fantastic and takes up the little hand which clutches something precious. He opens the fingers and finds the rose. He holds it out and lets the petals flutter to the floor. That is all.)*

THE CURTAINS CLOSE



SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

MURAT THEATRE, INDIANAPOLIS, JUNE 24

THE FIRST PERFORMANCE OF

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

A Play in One Act

(A Sequel to SIX WHO PASS WHILE THE LENTILS BOIL)

---

|                                   |                |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| PROLOGUE TO THE PERFORMANCE . . . | Tom Powers     |
| THE PROLOGUE . . . . .            | Edwin Noel     |
| THE DEVICE-BEARER . . . . .       | James Morgan   |
| YOU-IN-THE-AUDIENCE . . . . .     | You and Others |

---

|                                  |                     |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| THE POPULATION . . . . .         | Aldrich Bowker      |
| THE SOLDIERY . . . . .           | John Wray           |
| THE MIME . . . . .               | Oscar Davisson      |
| THE MILKMAID . . . . .           | Helen Burch         |
| THE BLINDMAN . . . . .           | Walter Vonnegut     |
| THE BALLAD-SINGER . . . . .      | Stuart Walker       |
| THE KING'S TRUMPETER . . . . .   | Oakley Richey       |
| HIS MAJESTY, THE KING . . . . .  | George Somnes       |
| THE KING'S COUNCILLOR . . . . .  | Robert McGroarty    |
| THE KING'S GREAT AUNT . . . . .  | Elizabeth Patterson |
| THE HEADSMAN . . . . .           | McKay Morris        |
| HER MAJESTY, THE QUEEN . . . . . | Judith Lowry        |
| SIR DAVID LITTLE-BOY . . . . .   | Robert Masters      |
| HIS MOTHER . . . . .             | Blanche Yurka       |

Scenery designed by Stuart Walker and Oakley Richey. Costumes by Frank J. Zimmerer and Wilmot Heitland. Properties by Frank J. Zimmerer.

# SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

A SEQUEL TO SIX WHO PASS WHILE THE  
LENTILS BOIL

AN OUTLINE OF SIX WHO PASS WHILE THE  
LENTILS BOIL

*While the Boy watches boiling lentils for his Mother, six people pass: The condemned Queen, whom he promises to hide until after the hour set for her decapitation; the Mime, who tempts him to leave his duty; the Milkmaid, who tells him of the reward offered for the Queen and makes him wish he had not made a promise; the Blindman, who shows him why it is best to keep a promise; the Ballad Singer, who would rather wander all his life than break a promise, and the dreadful Headsman who, outwitted by the Boy, finds the Queen too late. Her Majesty gratefully knights Sir David Little-Boy and takes him in state to the King's castle. He is free to go, because by this time the lentils have boiled. He has done his duty and he has kept his promise.*

## CHARACTERS

THE PROLOGUE

THE DEVICE-BEARER

YOU IN THE AUDIENCE

THE POPULATION

THE SOLDIERY

THE MIME

THE MILKMAID

THE BLINDMAN

THE BALLAD-SINGER

THE KING'S TRUMPETER

HIS MAJESTY, THE KING

THE KING'S COUNCILLOR

HER HIGHNESS, THE KING'S GREAT-  
AUNT

THE HEADSMAN

HER MAJESTY, THE QUEEN

SIR DAVID LITTLE-BOY

HIS MOTHER

*The scene is a gateway to the King's Castle.  
The time is when you will.*

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

*(The Prologue and the Device-Bearer enter.)*

PROLOGUE

I am the Prologue. He is the Device-Bearer. I am here to tell you about the play that hides behind these curtains. He serves the simple purpose of balancing me as a decoration.

*(The Prologue claps his hands and the Device-Bearer sits at the side of the stage and henceforth is nothing more than a small part of the picture.)*

It is possible that something difficult may creep into this simple play. If there is anything you do not understand I shall be glad to explain it to you.

YOU *(in audience)*

While the play is going on?

PROLOGUE

Of course.

YOU

That will be disturbing.

PROLOGUE

Why? If one *must* talk in the theater everybody ought to be allowed to hear.

Now the interesting thing about this play is that it isn't true at all. It is all make-believe. Nobody in it *ever was*, and, unless you do your part, no one in it ever will be.

YOU

What can we do?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

PROLOGUE

Believe.

YOU

I can't believe what isn't real.

PROLOGUE

Then make it real. . . . Here are the curtains. They divide you and them. . . . You are real, perhaps, and they are make-believe, surely. When these curtains open will you come here, shall they go there, or will you, both you and they, forget everything except the play?

So, remove your hats, dear ladies, fix your hair once and for all. Clear your throats, you husky men, and cough now, for the play begins. Amongst you there are some so young, so eternally young, that they will soon be lost in the story. Do not disturb them if you have forgotten how to play. So, remove your hats, dear ladies, fix your hair for good and all. Clear your throats, you husky men, and cough now. See, the play begins.

*(He claps his hands and the curtains open, disclosing the scene.)*

This play is the story of what happens when one is guilty of a breach of etiquette.

YOU

What is etiquette?

PROLOGUE

Etiquette? Why, etiquette is living according to rules made by people who have never smiled.

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

. . . We are now outside the King's Palace.  
. . . This is a gate. Through this the King  
and the King's Great-Aunt will come. The  
King will sit here, and the King's Great-Aunt  
will sit here. . . . This is the Headsman's  
block, and here the lovely Queen is to be be-  
headed before the clocks strike twelve at mid-  
day, a half an hour from now.

YOU

Where is it?

PROLOGUE

Who can tell what country? I wish I knew.  
. . . Are you ready? . . . Quiet, then.  
. . . Here comes the Population; and here  
the Soldiery.

*(The Prologue sits at the side of the curtains oppo-  
site the Device-Bearer.)*

*(The Population enters from one side of the  
stage, the Soldiery from the other; the former  
carries a bit of bread; the latter a lance and a  
silken cord.)*

POPULATION

Good-morning, Soldiery.

SOLDIERY

Good-morning, Population.

POPULATION

I've come to see the beheading.

SOLDIERY

You're early.

POPULATION

I brought my lunch. I want to see it all.



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

SOLDIERY

That's good. Now help me stretch the ropes to keep the Population back.

POPULATION

Why stretch the ropes to keep the Population back?

SOLDIERY

It is the law.

POPULATION

I'm the Population, and I promise that I'll stay back.

SOLDIERY

The Soldiery has *always* stretched the ropes to hold the Population back. I shan't stop it now, whether you number one or thousands. Here, take this end and stretch the rope.

*(He sets his lance against the block, and he and the Population stretch the rope, laying it very carefully on the ground in a half-circle.)*

SOLDIERY *(taking up his lance and assuming a professional pose, bellows)*

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of death. Do you hear?

POPULATION *(obsequiously, kneeling)*

Yes, sir.

SOLDIERY *(setting down his lance and assuming a human tone)*

Thank you for your help.

POPULATION

That's all right.

*(He offers the Soldiery a crust of bread, which is gratefully accepted.)*

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

*(Indeed, the Soldiery is a very excellent and human person, and his fierce attitude with the lance and his bellowing are merely official, like a uniform, and as easily removed. But the Soldiery has associated bellowing with taking up his lance so long that he is wholly automatic now, as he should be.)*

POPULATION

Who are they beheading?

SOLDIERY

What did you say?

POPULATION

I said, "Who are they beheading?"

SOLDIERY

Whom?

POPULATION

Yes, who?

SOLDIERY

You mustn't say "Who are they beheading?"  
You must say "Whom are they beheading?"

POPULATION

Nonsense. You don't say "Whom are you,"  
do you?

SOLDIERY

Certainly not, but you ought to say "Whom  
are they beheading?"

POPULATION

Well, you can—

SOLDIERY (*taking up his lance, bellows*)

You say "Whom are they beheading!"

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

POPULATION

All right, if you are going to resort to force:  
Whom are they beheading?

SOLDIERY (*putting his lance down*)

I don't know. That's the Headsman's business.

POPULATION

I heard it was the Queen.

SOLDIERY

Maybe. I wish it was the King's Great-Aunt.  
(*The Mime and the Milkmaid enter.*)

POPULATION

Is the King's Great-Aunt very old?

SOLDIERY

She's very old and very meddlesome. She's  
into everything, and she knows every law that's  
ever passed, and she holds us to them.  
(*The Mime steps forward.*)

MIME

Is this—

SOLDIERY (*seeing him and the Milkmaid for the first  
time, leaps for his lance and, assuming his pro-  
fessional pose, bellows*)

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of  
death! Do you hear?

(*There is no answer.*)

(*Bellows again*)

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of  
death! Do you hear?

(*There is no answer. The Soldiery looks appeal-  
ingly at the Population*)

Do you hear?

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

*(Again no answer, and again an appeal to the Population)*

Do you hear?

POPULATION *(to the Milkmaid)*

Say "Yes, sir."

MIME AND MILKMAID

Yes, sir.

SOLDIERY *(putting down his lance)*

Why didn't you answer me the first time?

MILKMAID

I didn't know you wanted me to.

SOLDIERY

Well, I did.

MILKMAID

But you shouted so loud I thought you weren't talking to anybody in particular.

SOLDIERY

It's the law.

MIME *(to the Population)*

Some laws are funny, don't you think?

POPULATION

I don't know. A law's a law, and I'm the Population, and a law is for the Population.

MIME

And now we know!

SOLDIERY

Who are you?

MIME

I'm a mime.

POPULATION

What's a mime?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

---

MIME

A mime's a mime.

SOLDIERY

What's a mime?

MIME

A mime's a mountebank.

MILKMAID

And what's a mountebank?

MIME

A mountebank's a strolling player.

SOLDIERY

Are you going to perform for us?

MIME

After the decapitation.

POPULATION

What's your name?

MIME (*in action*)

Ho, for Jack the Juggler! Would you miss him?

SOLDIERY

We know all the rest of that.

MILKMAID

You must let him finish.

SOLDIERY

What's the use?

POPULATION

Let's have it, Jack.

MIME

How can I when you do not let me make my speech?

MILKMAID

Go on, we'll let you finish.



Sir David and His Mother



The King, the Queen, and Sir David

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## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

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MIME

Oh, no. I'll wait until the crowd is here.

POPULATION

I'm the crowd.

MILKMAID

Come on! Come on!

MIME

All right. . . . Ho, for Jack the Juggler!  
Would you miss him—

*(A cry is heard, "Help the blind! Help the blind!" and on top of it just the refrain "Old King Cole was a merry old soul.")*

*(The Soldiery is on his guard immediately with his lance as the Blindman and the Ballad-Singer enter.)*

SOLDIERY (*bellowing*)

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of death. Do you hear?

MILKMAID

You'd better say, "Yes, sir," or he'll yell it again.

SOLDIERY (*begins to bellow again*)

You can't—

BALLAD-SINGER AND BLINDMAN

Yes, sir.

SOLDIERY (*normally*)

I've got to finish it—(*and again starts*) come inside—

MIME

We know the rest of it.

SOLDIERY

Don't interfere with the law. (*Continues bellow-*

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

*ing*) The ropes on pain of death. Do you hear?

ALL (*eagerly*)

Yes, sir!

SOLDIERY (*putting down his lance*)

Thank you. . . . What are you doing here?

MILKMAID

I came to see the beheading.

BLINDMAN

And I, that I might tell about it.

SINGER

And I, that I might sing to the crowd.

MIME

And I, that I might dazzle you.

POPULATION

Everybody's here—except the Queen. Why not begin?

MILKMAID

They can't find the Queen.

POPULATION

Where is she?

MILKMAID

They've offered a reward for her—

POPULATION

A reward?

MIME

How much?

MILKMAID

A pail of gold and a pair of finger-rings.

POPULATION

Why don't you find her, Soldiery?

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

SOLDIERY

No one told me to.

BLINDMAN

You say the reward is a pail of gold and a pair of finger-rings?

SINGER

That's what she said. I know—

SOLDIERY (*taking up his lance*)

What do you know?

BLINDMAN

Nothing.

SINGER

Nothing.

SOLDIERY

But you said "*I know.*" Is it about the Queen?  
What do you know about the Queen?

SINGER

Shall I sing you a ballad?

POPULATION

Yes, sing a ballad.

SOLDIERY

What do you know about the Queen?

MILKMAID

Oh, let him sing a ballad.

SOLDIERY

I must do my duty. What do you know about the Queen?

*(The King's Trumpeter enters and stands at the center of the gate. He blows a noble blast on his trumpet.)*

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

TRUMPETER

His Majesty, the King!

*(All kneel except the Trumpeter as the King enters, followed by his Councillor.)*

*(The Trumpeter blows a lesser blast.)*

Her Highness, the King's Great-Aunt.

*(The King's Great-Aunt enters.)*

*(She and the King seat themselves ceremoniously.)*

*(The Councillor bows between the King and the King's Great-Aunt.)*

*(A mechanical chant is the official way of conducting cases here, and a man must learn by rote what he must say at trials, be he King or Councillor.)*

COUNCILLOR *(in a stiff, mechanical chant)*

Your Majesty, it is our duty to inform you that your wife, the Queen, is to be beheaded, in compliance with the law, while your Majesty's four clocks are striking twelve.

KING *(chanting)*

Who is the aggrieved person?

COUNCILLOR *(chanting)*

The aggrieved sits on your left.

MILKMAID *(whispering)*

Doesn't the King know his wife is to be beheaded?

POPULATION *(whispering)*

Of course he does.

MILKMAID

Then why do they tell him here?

POPULATION

It is the law.

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

SOLDIERY (*bellowing, after he is quite sure he has heard the entire conversation*)

Silence!

KING (*chanting*)

Then let the aggrieved speak.

COUNCILLOR (*chanting*)

His Majesty the King bids you speak your grievance which is just cause for the Queen's beheading.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT (*chanting*)

Last night we were celebrating the second year of peace with the neighboring kingdom. We were dancing the minuet after the banquet—

MILKMAID (*whispering*)

Does the old lady dance?

POPULATION (*whispering*)

She tries to.

SOLDIERY (*bellowing*)

Silence!

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

When the Queen—(*forgetting to chant*) your wife—

(*The Councillor coughs and she chants again*)

stepped on the ring-toe of the King's Great-Aunt.

KING (*chanting*)

What is your demand?

KING'S GREAT-AUNT (*chanting*)

I demand that the aforesaid Queen be beheaded.

KING

By what authority?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

According to the law.

KING

Is there such a law?

COUNCILLOR

There is.

KING

Read the law.

COUNCILLOR (*unrolling a parchment, reads*)

Whereas, if a Queen step on the ring-toe of the King's Great-Aunt, or any member of her family; Be it resolved, the aforesaid Queen must be beheaded while the King's four clocks are striking twelve at mid-day.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

I demand the execution of the law.

KING

We, the King, decree that our wife the Queen be beheaded to-day while our four clocks are striking twelve at mid-day.

COUNCILLOR

The culprit will kneel.

MILKMAID (*whispering*)

Where is the culprit?

SOLDIERY (*bellowing*)

Silence!

(*Naturally*) She isn't here.

KING (*rising*)

It is not in our power to pardon you, oh, guilty Queen. Gracefulness is a royal possession, and when a Queen is no longer graceful she can no longer live.

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

KING'S GREAT-AUNT (*naturally*)

The Queen isn't here.

KING

The law will take its course.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Where is the Queen?

COUNCILLOR

I've offered a pail of gold and a pair of finger-rings for her apprehension.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Two pails of gold if she is found!

BLINDMAN

Is that a promise, your Highness?

SOLDIERY (*bellows*)

Silence!

(*Normal*) Royalty can't take back any statements.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

I mean—

KING

We heard what you *said*. We shall judge what you *meant*.

COUNCILLOR

It is on the stroke of twelve, your Majesty, and there is no Queen, no culprit.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Are the laws of our country to be held up to ridicule? Find the Queen! Four pails of gold if she be found!

(*The kneeling commoners are excited.*)

Six pails of gold and six pairs of finger-rings!

(*The King's clocks begin to strike, but not in*



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

*unison. First there is one large one, then two smaller ones, and finally a tiny one.)*

*(During the striking of the clocks there is great excitement. The spectators almost forget their manners before royalty. The Councillor buzzes around. The King's Great-Aunt cries out again and again, "Where is the Queen?" "Where is the culprit?" The Soldiery, lance in hand, bellows his familiar call, "You can't come inside the ropes." The Trumpeter blows his trumpet. The King stands up and counts the strokes of the clocks.)*

KING *(at the twelfth stroke of the tiny clock)*

The Queen is free! I now decree a holiday to all the land. And everybody can go to hunt the Queen.

SINGER

And if I find the Queen I shall get six pails of gold and six pairs of finger-rings?

MILKMAID

That was the promise of the King's Great-Aunt.

SOLDIERY

Silence!

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

I said—

KING

You said just that. The King's Great-Aunt will give six pails of gold and six pairs of finger-rings to the one who finds the Queen.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

I refuse—

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

---

KING

Royalty cannot refuse to fulfill a promise!  
And to the offer of my aunt I shall add six  
more pails of gold.

BLINDMAN

Can they behead the Queen now if they find  
her?

KING

They can not.

BLINDMAN

Then I can find her, your Majesty.

KING

Where is she? Come here and tell me.  
*(As the Blindman steps forward the Soldiery  
bellows "You can't come inside the ropes.")*

KING

Come here!

COUNCILLOR

He cannot approach your Majesty. . . . It  
is the *law*.

SINGER

I can find the Queen, your Majesty!

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Off with their worthless heads! They have  
aided the escape of the culprit!

KING

No, I decree—

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

The law! The law!

COUNCILLOR

Her Highness is right, your Majesty. The law

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

states that anyone guilty of aiding a culprit to escape must be beheaded.

SINGER

We did not *aid*.

BLINDMAN

No, we did not.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

The word of a commoner cannot stand.

COUNCILLOR

Soldiery, do your duty!

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Now, we shall have a beheading after all!

SOLDIERY (*to Singer and Blindman*)

Come on, step up!

MILKMAID

Mercy, have mercy!

SOLDIERY

Step up.

*(The Ballad-Singer and the Blindman walk to the side of the block and there the Soldiery binds them together, all the while they protest their innocence.)*

*(At this moment the Headsman is heard, "Her Majesty the Queen and Sir David Little-Boy; Her Majesty the Queen and Sir David Little-Boy.")*

*(The Headsman, bearing his ax, enters in his own stately way, and with the utmost dignity starts to approach the King, but as he nears the rope, the Soldiery bellows his command, "You can't come inside the ropes." The Headsman stops short, but slays the Soldiery with a glance.)*

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

HEADSMAN

The King's Headsman, the Winder of the King's  
Four Clocks—

SOLDIERY

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of  
death. Do you hear?

HEADSMAN

Yes, I hear. (*Then he calls with refined dignity*)  
Her Majesty the Queen and Sir David Little-  
Boy!

(*The Queen and the Boy enter. The boy suddenly  
becomes very conscious of being in the presence of  
the King.*)

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Oh, there you are!

KING

My Queen!

COUNCILLOR

It is not etiquette, your Majesty.

KING (*recalling the proper procedure, chants*)

Who is this before us?

QUEEN (*chanting*)

It is your wife, the Queen.

KING

And who stands beside our Queen?

BOY

I'm—

SOLDIERY

Silence!

QUEEN

This is Sir David Little-Boy.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

COUNCILLOR

There is no Sir David Little-Boy in the royal almanac, your Majesty.

KING

Who is this Sir David Little-Boy, Sir Headsman?

HEADSMAN

He helped the Queen to escape.

BLINDMAN

Is that the little boy who gave me the lentils when I was hungry, and who would not break a promise?

SINGER

It's the little boy to whom I sang two ballads.

BOY

Queen, why are my two friends bound together?

QUEEN

Sir David, first we must tell them who you are.

BOY (*stepping forward*)

I—

HEADSMAN

Address the King.

BOY

King—

HEADSMAN

That's not the way.

BOY

What do I do?

HEADSMAN

Watch me. (*He struts forward and kneels.*)

Your Majesty—see, that way.

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

BOY (*imitating the Headsman as only a little boy can imitate his elders*)

Your Majesty, I am the little boy who lives in the yellow cottage on the short-cut to the headsman's block.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

How does it happen that you are called Sir David, upstart?

BOY

I'm not an upstart. The Queen called me Sir David Little-Boy.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

What right has the Queen to create a knight? Well?

QUEEN

By the law passed by my great-great-grandfather.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

There is no such law.

QUEEN

Oh, yes, there is, Aunt.

COUNCILLOR

I think your Majesty's memory fails.

QUEEN

It does not fail.

BOY

Queen, I won't be Sir David if it will cause you trouble.

QUEEN

A Queen has one trouble or another, but this will be my last.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Will you permit this insolence, your Majesty?

KING

Her Majesty the Queen claims a law. Can she produce the law?

QUEEN

I can, your Majesty.

KING

Where is it?

QUEEN

Here (*she takes a scroll from her dress*). I found it in the room of the King's Great-Aunt.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

By what right does a Queen steal into my apartment? Seize her!

(*The Soldiery starts to take the Queen.*)

KING

Hands off the Queen!

(*The Queen takes a step to cross the ropes.*)

SOLDIERY (*bellows*)

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of death. Do you hear?

QUEEN

But I'm the Queen.

SOLDIERY (*normally*)

Duty is duty, your Majesty, law is law. (*Bel-  
lowing*) You can't come inside the ropes, on  
pain of death. Do you hear?

QUEEN

Yes, I hear.



## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

KING

Sir Headsman, bring me the law.  
(*The Headsman is about to obey.*)

SOLDIERY (*bellows*)

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of death. Do you hear?

KING

Then I shall go to the Queen.

COUNCILLOR

Your Majesty, it is not fitting.

BLINDMAN

I am about to die, oh, Queen; let me give the law.

QUEEN

About to die?

BOY

He is my friend! . . . If the ropes weren't there could I take the law to the King?

QUEEN

Surely.

BOY

Let's take the ropes away.

QUEEN

Alas, it can't be done.

BOY

Let's coil the ropes.

QUEEN

How?

BOY

So. (*He quickly coils the ropes.*)

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

SOLDIERY (*bellows*)

You can't come inside the ropes, on pain of death. Do you hear?

BOY

You can't get inside the ropes? There isn't any inside.

QUEEN (*going to the king*)

Here is the law, your Majesty.

KING (*about to embrace her*)

My Queen!

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

I protest.

COUNCILLOR

It is not seemly, your Majesty. . . . I'll take the law.

KING

Read the law.

COUNCILLOR

It may be better to discuss it first.

KING

Read the law!

COUNCILLOR (*reading*)

Whereas, all relatives have had an upper hand in my kingdom for three generations and have passed laws that make it difficult for our Queens; Be it resolved, that all such laws shall stand, because etiquette and discipline are good for all mankind, *but* should there ever be a Queen who can escape the punishments devised by relatives she shall be absolute, and thereafter her word will be the law, for any woman

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

who can outwit her husband's relatives is worthy to rule a nation.

QUEEN

I have escaped. I claim the reward of the law.

KING

Your word is absolute. Henceforth you are the law.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT (*feathering her nest*)

Dearest, mount the throne.

QUEEN

Nay, I shall mount the Headman's block. (*She mounts the Headman's block, and she is very beautiful.*)

I, the Queen—

COUNCILLOR

Your Majesty, it is proper to say "We, the Queen"—

I, the Queen, do first hereby reiterate that this brave knight is Sir David Little-Boy. Second, that—

COUNCILLOR

You should chant it, your Majesty.

QUEEN (*still in normal tones*)

Second, that the office of King's Councillor be vacant; third, that the King's Great-Aunt give up her ring or her ring-toe—

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

Mercy! I am too old to lose my ring! I should die without my ring-toe!

QUEEN

Very well, you shall keep your ring and your toe; but when we dance the minuet you must

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

sit on your foot, for in future I shall step when  
and where I please. . . . Sit on your foot!  
(*The King's Great-Aunt sits on her foot and  
wails.*)

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

What is the country coming to! (*But she is  
very glad to save her toe.*)

YOU (*in the audience*)

Pshaw! this play is just like every other one.

PROLOGUE

It isn't over yet. You just wait.

QUEEN

Fourth, the Soldiery must lay down his arms.

SOLDIERY (*bellows*)

You can't come—

QUEEN

Lay down your arms!

SOLDIERY

Pardon me, your Majesty, it was habit. (*He  
lays down his lance.*)

QUEEN

Loose the bonds from the Blindman and the  
Ballad-Singer.

(*The Soldiery does so.*)

Sir David, your hand.

(*The Boy, in a glow of wonder, steps forward.*)

Here are your friends.

KING'S GREAT-AUNT

A noble cannot have friends among the com-  
moners!

QUEEN

Quite true. Quite true. . . . Mime, step

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

forward. . . . Kneel. . . . Arise, Sir Mime. Every Friday afternoon you shall have an hour's sport with Sir David Little-Boy.

MIME

Please, your Majesty, I must wander far away in search of farthings from the crowds of all the world.

QUEEN

You make men happy with your play. We give you farthings. You will not want.

*(As she speaks to each of the others, she makes the gesture of knighting him.)*

*(They kneel together.)*

QUEEN

To you, sweet Lady Milkmaid, I give a spotted cow; to you, Sir Blindman, a cushion and a canopy at the castle gate; to you, Sir Ballad Singer, a vermilion cloak. Arise. And now, Sir Little-Boy—*(She leans over him)* to you who saved my life, to you who kept your promise, for your mother I give a velvet gown, a silken kerchief, and a cloth-of-gold bonnet, and for yourself I give a milk-white palfrey, two pails of gold, two finger-rings, a castle, and a sword. Sir Councillor—

*(The Councillor comes forward and she whispers in his ear.)*

COUNCILLOR

The little one, your Majesty?

QUEEN

The best one, Sir Councillor!

*(The Councillor goes into the Castle.)*

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

QUEEN

Court is dismissed! Your Highness, my husband's Great-Aunt, you may go to your room. You have caused us years of anguish; but I forgive you. Trumpeter, lead her Highness away in state.

*(The Trumpeter blows a little blast and exits, shouting "Make way for her Highness, the King's Great-Aunt!")*

*(The King's Great-Aunt rises with difficulty and waddles away in defeat.)*

KING'S GREAT-AUNT *(mumbling)*

I never thought I'd live to see the day—but times have changed. *(Exits into the Castle.)*

QUEEN

The Population may go into the gardens. The Soldiery may take a holiday.

*(The Population and the Soldiery go out arm in arm.)*

Sir Headsman, you may take your axe to the museum.

BOY

Queen, can he come back and tell me stories?

QUEEN

Whenever you may wish. . . .

BOY

Sir Headsman—

HEADSMAN *(magnificent to the end)*

Sir Headsman—

BOY

Sir Headsman—

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

HEADSMAN

Alas, no more. My axe goes to the museum—  
and I become merely Sir Headsman Emeritus.

BOY

Well, Sir—Sir—

QUEEN

Sir Winder of the King's Four Clocks.

BOY

Sir Winder of the King's Four Clocks, I—

HEADSMAN (*smiling for the whole wide world*)

That is the longest title in the kingdom. . . .  
Yes?

BOY (*looking at the Queen's neck*)

You said the Queen's neck wasn't much bigger  
than a hair.

HEADSMAN

I did.

BOY

You said your axe would cut a hair in two.

HEADSMAN

Did I?

BOY

You did.

HEADSMAN

It will.

BOY

How could it?

HEADSMAN

Easily. This way. (*He swings it downward  
with all the grace of achieving his swan's song  
with it.*) See?



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

BOY

How do you spell hair?

HEADSMAN

H-A-R-E. How else?

BOY

H-A-I-R.

HEADSMAN

I never quibble.

*(He bows to the Queen, the crowd, and You superbly; and he departs.)*

*(The Queen takes her place where the King's Great-Aunt had sat.)*

And now my friends and friends of Sir David, you may say good-bye. In an hour we shall meet in the banqueting hall for pies and cherry tarts and cakes and things.

*(The Mime steps forward.)*

MIME

Sir David Little-Boy, I am your slave.

*(He bows very deeply and lays his hand in the Boy's. When he has gone Sir David finds that he is clasping a golden ball.)*

*(The Milkmaid comes to Sir David.)*

MILKMAID

Isn't it wonderful!

*(And before he knows it she has thrown her arms around his neck and kissed him and passed on.)*

*(He doesn't know whether to smile or blush, but he does hang his head.)*

*(The Blindman shuffles up to him.)*

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

BLINDMAN

You only have to close your eyes to make things true. (*And passes on.*)  
(*The Ballad-Singer comes.*)

SINGER

Hello!

BOY

Sing me a ballad.

SINGER

Later—perhaps.

BOY

No, now.

QUEEN

Just for us.

(*The Boy sits between her and the King on the step at their feet. The Ballad-Singer sits close beside him.*)

SINGER

This is the Ballad of the Silver Star and the Crescent Moon.  
(*Sings to the wondering Boy.*)

Oh, a silver star and a crescent moon  
Afloat in the sunset sky  
Can make a smile on a scowling face,  
Tho' the face be you or I.

For the silver star and the crescent moon  
Are like memories afar—  
We always dream at the guarded gate  
And pass the gate ajar.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

There's a moral to my little song,  
For hearts bowed down and hearts in tune—  
The silver star is a distant dream  
And a waxing hope is the crescent moon.

Good-bye. And don't forget that the King's  
Great-Aunt owes you six pails of gold. Good-  
bye.

*(He dashes off.)*

*(The Boy sits in wonder a moment and then looks first at the smiling Queen, then at the pleasant King. He takes the knife from his pouch and shows it to the King.)*

BOY

Have you seen my knife?

*(The King slips down beside him, which makes the Boy gasp. It isn't everybody who sits beside a King.)*

KING

We had a little boy like you, and he loved his  
knife. . . . He was a Prince. . . . How  
would you like to be a Prince?

BOY

I think—I'd like it.

*(He is almost breathless, talking to a King!)*

*(The Councillor enters and hands something to the Queen.)*

KING

And would you like to be my son?

BOY

Yes, sir.



The Soldiery and the Population



The King's Great Aunt and the King's Councillor

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## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

QUEEN

And mine?

*(As she sits beside him. Now they are not like King and Queen and a little Knight. They are just three people sitting together.)*

BOY *(to the lovely Queen)*

Next to my mother I like you.

KING

If you were our little boy, some day you would be a King.

BOY

Oh—I couldn't be a King.

QUEEN

Why not?

BOY

I wouldn't know what to do.

KING

There are many kings who do not know what to do.

QUEEN

And think of all the happiness you could make.

BOY

Could I do whatever I wanted to do?

KING

If you were wise.

BOY

Could I give a ring to the Blindman?

KING

Oh, yes.

BOY

And ask him in?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

QUEEN

Surely.

BOY

Then—would I have to have a Great-Aunt?

KING

Not now.

BOY

Or a Councillor?

QUEEN

All that is abolished now.

BOY

Then—you're sure I wouldn't have a Great-Aunt?

QUEEN

Quite sure.

BOY

Then—I'd like to be a king!

QUEEN

All right. Shut your eyes.

BOY

Oh, I know—the Blindman told me to shut my eyes to make things come true.

*(He shuts his eyes very tight. The Queen unwraps the something which the Councillor brought. It is a beautiful crown. She places it on the boy's head.)*

QUEEN

Open your eyes!

*(He opens his eyes and his hands steal up to the crown. He can't believe his touch.)*

BOY

Oh!



## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

QUEEN

How do you feel?

BOY (*gasping*)

All right.

KING

You are a Prince now.

*(He takes a cape from his shoulder and throws it about the Boy's shoulders.)*

Arise, my Son and Prince.

*(The Boy stands up, and he looks every inch a little king in his crown and robe.)*

BOY

Am I a real prince?

QUEEN

As real as the King or I.

*(The Boy walks a princely step or two, when a voice is heard calling "David! David!" It is the sweetest voice in the world, and it is sad and troubled now. The Boy stops short.)*

BOY

My mother!

VOICE

David!

BOY

I am here, Mother.

*(The mother enters. She is the most beautiful woman in the world—like your mother and mine, but her eyes are wide with fear.)*

MOTHER

David! Oh, I thought I had lost you! My boy! my boy!

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

BOY

Mother, I am a Prince.

MOTHER

Oh, my little dream-boy, you are always my Prince. Why did you run away?

BOY

I didn't run away. I came to save the Queen. And now I am a Prince.

MOTHER

The Queen? A Prince!

*(She sees the King and Queen.)*

Oh, your Majesties! *(And bows very low.)*

QUEEN

Arise, Lady Little-Boy. We have made your boy our son and heir.

MOTHER

Does that mean—I must—he must go from—me?

KING

When his country calls he must go.

BOY

You mean I must leave my mother?

KING

Some day you must leave her.

BOY *(to his mother)*

But don't you need me now?

MOTHER

David, if you are meant to be a king, I want you to be a king.

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

QUEEN

We'll leave you here together. You can tell him what you know.

*(She understands what all women understand.)*

KING

Farewell, my Prince.

QUEEN

My little boy!

*(They leave the mother and the boy together.)*

MOTHER

David, isn't it wonderful!

BOY

Mother, did they mean I had to leave you?

MOTHER

You will be a king.

BOY

I can't leave you.

*(He sits disconsolately on the step of the King's seat.)*

MOTHER *(sitting beside him)*

You are going to grow up to be a great, fine man, my David-Boy, and you will be a king. Some day you would have to leave me anyway—to go out into the world and seek your fortune.

BOY

But not so soon.

MOTHER

I'll be near, and I'll see you every day. You will be a king, my boy!

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

BOY

You'll be all alone.

MOTHER

Oh, no, my boy, never alone. For every hour of every day I'll think of you and dream of you.

BOY

Who'll help you work?

MOTHER

There'll be no work. It will all be play, for my boy is going to be a king.

BOY (*as he leans his head against her shoulder*)

Oh, Mother, I'm so tired!

MOTHER (*placing her arm about him*)

I know. Do you remember how I used to sing a little lullaby to you when you were tired?

BOY (*his eyes are heavy with sleep*)

Uh-huh.

(*The mother hums softly as she places her cheek against his head, but the crown interferes somewhat.*)

BOY

Sing it out. I like the words.

MOTHER (*singing*)

Sleep, Davie, sleep—

BOY

No, I like the old words—the ones when I was a little boy.

MOTHER

Sleep, baby, sleep—  
Close your tired eyes;  
Here's a kiss from father,  
To make you wealthy;

## SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN

---

Here's a kiss from mother,  
To make you healthy;  
And God the Father blows a kiss  
To make you wise.  
Sleep, baby, sleep.  
Close your tired eyes.

*(The Boy snuggles against his mother and then reaches up and takes off the crown. She carefully places it beside her and continues her lullaby as the curtains close.)*

YOU *(in the audience)*

Well, will he be a king or not?

PROLOGUE

His mother knows.

*(The Prologue and the Device-Bearer bow and disappear.)*

*(The ladies may arrange their hair and the gentlemen may cough to their throat's content.)*

THE CURTAINS CLOSE

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NELLIJUMBO'



THE PROLOGUE  
YOU IN THE AUDIENCE  
.....  
AUNT FLORA  
UNCLE GEORGE  
ELLEN  
RICHARD ADAMS COLE  
JASPER COLE

<sup>1</sup>The spelling used is NELLIJUMBO, but Richard probably thought of him as NELLIE-JUMBO, and that spelling is used in Richard's speeches.

## NELLIJUMBO

(*The PROLOGUE enters.*)

### PROLOGUE

I am the prologue. . . . Experience has taught me that most of the people about us do not see or hear, and that many hear but do not see. . . . You, dear ladies, have programmes in your hands—or perhaps they have fallen on the floor with your handkerchiefs; but I dare say you have not read them. You, brave men, being tired and prescient, do not need programmes; because plays are only plays, after all is said and done, and the only thing in life is business and the after-hours' fatigue. BUT that the fault of your not understanding may not be mine, I am going to tell you enough to make your programmes really superfluous. . . . When these curtains open a little play will begin. I call it a little play because it is short and because it is only about a little boy who knows nothing of business. His business is growing up in what you and I might call eternal darkness. Perhaps he will show you how light is something that is seen without eyes, heard without ears, told without tongue; something that is THERE, though the sun be obscured in everlasting eclipse, though the moons and stars beyond the orbit of revolving space be falling cinders. . . . I beg your pardon, sirs, for my

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

flight into rhetoric. The play will not offend in kind. Before I stumble toward grandiloquence again I shall open the curtains.

*(He claps his hands and the curtains open, disclosing a room.)*

The scene is a room in Aunt Flora's home. Uncle George is her husband, but the house is in her name. It would be her house even if it were not in her name. It is very early on Christmas morning. . . . There is Aunt Flora putting the last touches on the Christmas tree.

*(Aunt Flora is a tall, gaunt, unapproachable but not unkindly woman. She may be fifty; but then she has been fifty for thirty years. She may have been young once—in the well-clothed and modest nineties.)*

Perhaps your Aunt Flora used to sing or smile as she saw her plans for Christmas turn real; but this Aunt Flora does not sing. She is serious-minded, this Aunt Flora. Life is her business. She has gone through the years of her life seriously unbendingly. If she has done wrong it is because to her the wrong way seemed the right way. The trouble with Aunt Flora is that in her business of living she never stopped to make a frank inventory.

YOU *(in the audience)*

Is the Christmas tree for Aunt Flora—or for Uncle George?

*(At this moment Aunt Flora has arranged something "exactly right," and Uncle George enters,*

## NELLIJUMBO

---

*carrying some strange-looking books and some ordinary books.)*

*(Uncle George is quite as gaunt, quite as unapproachable, quite as predestined fifty as Aunt Flora. They are colder than the brown-and-gray wallpaper and the deplorably spick-and-span furnishings of the room. They do not greet each other.)*

PROLOGUE *(laughing as he looks at the brown-and-gray couple)*

What do you think? . . . Uncle George does not greet Aunt Flora. They have met earlier this morning, and words are used only under pressure of necessity.

*(Uncle George places the books on the white muslin that surrounds the tree. He places them carefully.)*

*(Aunt Flora puts a last touch to the tree, which is oh, so painfully orthodox.)*

PROLOGUE

Aunt Flora likes the tree. She—

*(Aunt Flora has stood off, taking in her work with a critical eye.)*

She—

*(Aunt Flora is about to speak.)*

I bow. . . . Aunt Flora has somewhat to say.

*(The Prologue goes out. You see this is a modern play, and Prologues do not stay in view during modern plays.)*

AUNT FLORA

H—m!

*(She sits in HER chair by the table and takes up the morning paper.)*

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

*(Uncle George scans the tree without emotion, and then sits in HIS chair.)*

UNCLE GEORGE *(after a moment)*

Is that the Ledger, Flora?

AUNT FLORA

Yes.

UNCLE GEORGE

Is Jasper's picture in it?

AUNT FLORA

Yes—with quite an article.

UNCLE GEORGE

What does it say?

AUNT FLORA

I have only seen the captions, George; but I judge it is the usual newspaper matter. *(Reading)* "Intrepid explorer," "Distinguished scientist," "Four hazardous years in unknown lands." H—m. We must see that no one reads this to Richard.

UNCLE GEORGE

Superlatives?

AUNT FLORA

Yes—superlatives and some of Jasper's incurable childishness.

UNCLE GEORGE

What is it?

AUNT FLORA *(reading)*

Jasper Cole, the intrepid explorer, returned yesterday from his hazardous journey of four years through the unknown heart of South America. Mr. Cole, when seen in his rooms at the Beauvais-Sheffield, seemed much more in-

## NELLIJUMBO

---

terested in his ten-year-old son, Richard Adams Cole, who lives with Mr. and Mrs. George Carlton Adams, 2719 Franklin Boulevard, than he did in his own work. "I have not seen him," said Mr. Cole, "since he was six, and I am waiting for Christmas morning to surprise him—"

UNCLE GEORGE

I do not approve. I think the boy should have been told.

AUNT FLORA

We are not Richard's parents.

UNCLE GEORGE

No, we are not, Flora; but I think we should have exercised our judgment in this matter as we have in the matter of his education.

AUNT FLORA

Jasper was not here to supervise the education and his letters came two years after Mary's death. He couldn't "supervise" then.

UNCLE GEORGE

He trusted in our judgment.

AUNT FLORA

But he asked us to be particularly careful to tell Richard that there would be a surprise for him on the tree this morning.

UNCLE GEORGE

Utterly childish!

AUNT FLORA

Utterly.

*(She sees the books at the foot of the tree.)*

I think, George, we had better put Richard's books on a table.



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

UNCLE GEORGE

Quite right. Richard is ten years old—too old to play on the floor.

AUNT FLORA

He wouldn't want to be treated like a baby.  
*(Uncle George places the books on a table.)*

AUNT FLORA

What time is it, George?

UNCLE GEORGE *(looking at his watch)*

6:45.

AUNT FLORA

Jasper said he would be here at seven this morning.

UNCLE GEORGE

We have always set nine as the hour for the child to see the tree.

AUNT FLORA

I think we can indulge Jasper this time. He will recognize his error when he sees how much Richard has grown, how much dignity and reserve the boy has developed.

*(A maid enters. She, too, is gaunt, unapproachable, not unkindly, yet a predestined fifty.)*

AUNT FLORA

What is it, Ellen?

ELLEN

Mr. Richard, ma'am.

AUNT FLORA

Yes?

UNCLE GEORGE

Is he—

*(He controls his excitement. Uncle George and*



## NELLIJUMBO

---

*Aunt Flora love Richard, but their love has a crust that even the anxiety of love cannot wholly penetrate.)*

ELLEN

He seems excited, ma'am. He says something is going to happen—and he wants to come down.

AUNT FLORA

Tell him that he is not to come down until seven o'clock.

ELLEN

Yes, Ma'am. I told him that, and he—  
*(The hall clock begins to strike. Uncle George takes out his watch.)*

UNCLE GEORGE

Fast. Strange.

*(A boy calls out: "It's seven o'clock! It's seven o'clock!" and his feet are heard rushing through the hall.)*

*(Richard Adams Cole enters. He is a boy of ten, gentle and restrained, but he is quivering with excitement. At first he seems to be a normal youngster, except for the fact that he carries his head as though he were listening intently, and he uses his hands as though he were "understanding" with them. His swiftness of movement and alertness do not betray his "misfortune.")*

UNCLE GEORGE

Richard!

RICHARD

It's seven o'clock! Where's the surprise?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

UNCLE GEORGE

It isn't seven yet.

RICHARD (*strangely*)

The hall clock struck seven.

UNCLE GEORGE

The hall clock is wrong.

RICHARD

You said the hall clock was just right—always.

AUNT FLORA

Ellen, who has been tampering with the hall clock?

ELLEN

Indeed, ma'am, I don't know. No one except Mr. Adams ever touches it.

UNCLE GEORGE

It was on the dot when I came downstairs this morning.

RICHARD

Can't I see the surprise?

AUNT FLORA

Richard, one moment. Do you know anything about the hall clock?

RICHARD (*evasively*)

Uncle George said it was always right.

AUNT FLORA

Have you been out of your room in the past half hour?

(*Richard does not answer.*)

UNCLE GEORGE

Richard, your Aunt Flora is speaking to you.

RICHARD

What, ma'am?

## NELLIJUMBO

---

AUNT FLORA (*looking at Uncle George*)

Richard, are you inattentive or are you evading?

RICHARD

No, ma'am.

AUNT FLORA

Richard, I am going to be annoyed. Ellen, watch the front door, and if anyone comes—*anyone*—ask him to wait in the reception-room.

ELLEN

Yes, ma'am.

(*She goes out.*)

(*Richard is alert and "watches" Ellen go.*)

UNCLE GEORGE

Now, do you know anything about the hall clock?

RICHARD

I wanted to see the surprise.

AUNT FLORA

I have never known you to lose your poise so completely, Richard.

RICHARD (*passionately*)

I know, Aunt Flora, but this is Christmas Day. Something is happening. What is it?

UNCLE GEORGE

Control yourself, Richard, and tell me what you know about the hall clock.

RICHARD

Yes, sir . . .

AUNT FLORA

Well?

RICHARD

I set it ahead

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

UNCLE GEORGE

Richard Adams Cole!—

AUNT FLORA

Richard!

UNCLE GEORGE

That clock belonged to my grandfather, and in my lifetime no hands have ever touched it except mine and my father's. It has been a sacred trust handed down from father to son.

RICHARD

I couldn't help it, Uncle George.

UNCLE GEORGE

I have no son; and some day I should pass the trust on to you.

RICHARD

I couldn't wait!

AUNT FLORA

And so you betrayed your trust.

RICHARD

No! I didn't mean it that way. I—I—  
(*Overwhelmed by his guilt, his words stop.*)

UNCLE GEORGE

Flora.

RICHARD

I'm sorry. (*Almost in a whisper*) I wanted to see the surprise.

AUNT FLORA

Very well, Richard, then it is our duty to teach you to control yourself. We can't always have what we want in this life, and the sooner you learn this lesson the better.

## NELLIJUMBO

---

RICHARD

Yes, ma'am.

*(Several clocks in the house, including the one on the mantel, begin to strike.)*

UNCLE GEORGE

See what you have done!

RICHARD

I didn't mean to—*(no words come.)*

UNCLE GEORGE

Then why did you do it?

*(Richard has been taught to answer, and he tries, but words won't come now without tears; and Richard will not weep on Christmas Day.)*

AUNT FLORA

Why, Richard?

RICHARD

I—

*(He turns to the door with a strange "understanding" movement of the hands.)*

UNCLE GEORGE

Richard!

*(Richard stops.)*

AUNT FLORA

If you *will* disobey me you must go to your room and remain *until* we send for you.

*(Richard mumbles "I'm sorry" inarticulately and leaves the room.)*

UNCLE GEORGE

Well!

AUNT FLORA

I am sorry we have to punish the child on

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

Christmas Day, George, but we surely cannot overlook this breach of discipline.

UNCLE GEORGE

My grandfather's clock!

*(Jasper Cole enters on tiptoe. He is an eternally young man, like the father of any boy's dreams. He is tall, slender, active, ruddy, with a smile that Richard "sees" in spite of everything.)*

*(Uncle George and Aunt Flora do not see him.)*

JASPER

P-s-t!

AUNT FLORA *(turning)*

Jasper!

UNCLE GEORGE

My boy!

*(They greet Jasper with a brown-and-gray warmth—their best. Aunt Flora even grants her cheek to him.)*

JASPER

And the boy. Where is my boy?

AUNT FLORA *(with constraint)*

He is in his room.

JASPER

I must go to him.

UNCLE GEORGE

Just one moment, Jasper.

JASPER

Is he—is he—ill?

UNCLE GEORGE

No—no—

AUNT FLORA

But we must talk to you before you see him.

## NELLIJUMBO

---

JASPER

Will he know me? Does he guess? Is he tall?  
And strong?

UNCLE GEORGE

We speak often of you to him, and he seems to  
remember you very well.

AUNT FLORA

Your few letters have interested him very  
much.

JASPER

And his mother? Mary? How *did* he get along  
*without* her?

AUNT FLORA

We have done our best, Jasper.

JASPER

You blessed woman, I know you have—you and  
Uncle George. How can I thank you?

UNCLE GEORGE

You need not thank us, my boy. It was our  
duty.

AUNT FLORA

It wasn't easy for us, Jasper. We have never  
had any children, and their ways are strange to  
us. This child, with his misfortune, was, for a  
long time, beyond my comprehension. I under-  
stand him now. He was so fantastic, so ex-  
citable, and unapproachable at first—even friv-  
olous, and he was always wanting to do what a  
child in his condition could not possibly do.  
But we have worked with him and watched him,  
and got him under control—until to-day. I am



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

sorry that you will see him for the first time as he is at this moment. The excitement of Christmas and a breach of discipline have perhaps made him nervous.

JASPER

I should think so.

AUNT FLORA

At the reading hour he will read to you.

JASPER

The reading hour?

AUNT FLORA

Yes. We always read for an hour after breakfast.

JASPER

Oh—yes. . . . I have had my breakfast.

UNCLE GEORGE

So have we. We ate very early to-day, so that we could finish the tree; but we shall read from eight until nine, as usual.

AUNT FLORA

Jasper, Richard has just been guilty of subterfuge.

JASPER

Subter—

AUNT FLORA

Yes. He pushed George's clock forward so that it would strike ahead of time.

JASPER (*laughing*)

Did he now?

(*He sees that he should not laugh.*)

Why?

## NELLIJUMBO

---

AUNT FLORA

In order to find out the sooner what his surprise was to be.

JASPER

Oh!

UNCLE GEORGE

We hope you will not condone his offense.

AUNT FLORA

Do you wish to have us here when you meet him, or shall we leave?

JASPER

Wait a moment. I brought him some presents. I'll arrange them and then I'll—

*(He gets the packages of presents outside the door, looks a moment at the stiff, prim tree.)*

I think I'll see him alone.

*(He begins to open the packages, removing several interesting toys and games—no books. One package he does not open. He arranges the lot of them about the foot of the tree.)*

I thought he would like this ship. It's a model of the *Roosevelt*. See, here's the name in raised letters.

UNCLE GEORGE

We couldn't let him go near the water, Jasper!

JASPER

When he's alone he can sail it in his room.

. . . Here's a set of soldiers and cannon.

Properly arranged, they can fight the battle of Waterloo.

AUNT FLORA

Isn't that a little blood-thirsty?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

JASPER

Their hearts are only lead, Aunt Flora. . . .  
Here's a magic tower. See, you can make all  
sorts of things out of it,—and here is—

UNCLE GEORGE

I am sorry, Jasper, but I'm afraid Richard  
doesn't care for toys.

JASPER

Then we shall make him care.

AUNT FLORA

What is in that box? (*She indicates the un-  
opened package.*)

JASPER

That? Oh, that is a package of romance, of  
history, of adventure, of—

AUNT FLORA

Jasper, will you never grow up?

UNCLE GEORGE

Your son is older than you are. Why, you've  
laid out toys for him as if he were a baby! He  
hasn't played on the floor for three years.

JASPER

Then we shall make him young again. . . .  
Send him in. . . . I am ready for him.

AUNT FLORA

Our presents are on the table. (*She goes to the  
door and calls*) Ellen!

ELLEN (*off*)

Yes, Ma'am.

AUNT FLORA

Send Richard here.  
(*She closes the door.*)

## NELLIJUMBO

---

JASPER (*fixes his tie and smooths his hair*)

I am facing an ordeal. I wonder how I'll stand the test.

UNCLE GEORGE

Remember, he isn't a baby now.

JASPER

Ah, no. He's a little man.

AUNT FLORA (*at the door*)

He's coming, and he's bringing that dog! Jasper, if Richard is reticent or constrained you must not let it hurt you. His misfortune has made him shy. He doesn't take even me into his confidence. As an example: he has a name for that dog that he won't tell to anyone. (*There is a knock on the door.*)

Come in.

(*Jasper stands at the far side of the tree.*)

(*Richard comes into the room, carrying an ungraceful seal-brown pup. It has long ears and tail which hang as limply as its disproportionate paws. In spite of the recent reprimand, Richard shows traces of excitement and anticipation. He hesitates at the door.*)

RICHARD

Aunt Flora—Uncle George?

AUNT FLORA AND UNCLE GEORGE

Yes, Richard.

RICHARD

Ellen said you wanted me.

AUNT FLORA

Yes, Richard, the tree is ready, and we wish you a merry Christmas.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

RICHARD

Thank you, Ma'am—and is the surprise ready?

AUNT FLORA

The surprise is here.

*(Richard starts into the room, then he turns, reaching out one hand.)*

RICHARD

Uncle George?

UNCLE GEORGE

Yes, Richard?

RICHARD *(turning toward his uncle)*

I'm sorry I set the clock ahead. It was very wrong of me.

*(Jasper has been watching his boy with ill-restrained eagerness; but he means to play the game, although in the halting little apology he reads the history of the motherless-fatherless years of the boy.)*

UNCLE GEORGE

Very well, Richard. I trust it will not happen again.

RICHARD

No, sir. *(He turns his head, listening.)* Dr. White—is that you?

*(Now we know that Richard is blind, for he is facing his father. Jasper places his finger on his lips to enjoin Aunt Flora and Uncle George to silence.)*

AUNT FLORA

Come, George. Richard, we'll leave you to your tree and your surprise.

*(She goes to Richard and puts her hand on his*

## NELLIJUMBO

---

*shoulder. He turns his cheek and she kisses it in her way, then leaves the room.)*

UNCLE GEORGE

There are some books on the small table and some toys at the foot of the tree.

RICHARD

Thank you, Uncle George. . . . I've brought the dog with me. Can he stay?

UNCLE GEORGE

He *may* stay—to-day, Richard, but to-day only. I hope you will have a merry Christmas, my boy.

*(He shakes hands with Richard and goes out, closing the door after him, at a signal from Jasper.)*

*(Richard stands a moment; then, putting his "understanding" hand before him, goes forward. He touches the tree. He half turns to listen, and Jasper feels his own heartbeats pounding a tocsin. But Richard, not hearing any one, gets on his knees and, releasing the dog, begins to feel along the floor. His fingers meet a toy soldier. He hesitates, then lifts the toy as he eagerly "sees" it with his hands.)*

RICHARD

Look, look, Nellie-Jumbo—a soldier! And here's another!

*(His hands "see" the group very rapidly now.)*

Here's one on horseback!—A cannon!—two—three—Boom!

*(He touches the ship. At first he can't believe his trusty fingers until he runs them across the name-plate.)*



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

R-O-O-S-E-V-E-L-T! Roosevelt. We'll sail the seas and find polar bears! They're all white, Nellie-Jumbo. That's different from you. You're seal-brown. Poof! Poof!

*(One can see the noble adventure begin as Richard imitates the engines.)*

*(He touches the unopened package next, and with lightning speed his fingers read what is impressed on the package.)*

"To Snoodles." My father used to call me Snoodles when I was a little chap. "This—is—a — secret — between — you — and — capital Y-A-A- capital U-R-D" — Y-A-A-U-R-D! Oh, I guess that is a name—"and me."

"This is a secret between you and Yaa-Urd and me. You — will — find — me — if — you go — to — the — big — pine-tree — in — the — green — forest. Do — not — open — this — until — you — find — me. P. S. Be — sure — to — bring — a — bodyguard with — you."

I know! It's a game. Come on, soldiers; come on, Nellie-Jumbo! I know where the big pine tree is!

*(He gathers Nellijumbo under his arm and takes two soldiers in his hand. With his free hand he "sees" his way toward his father, who plays the game with gleaming eyes. He has brought adventure into Richard's life again, and the glow of wonder on the boy's face is ample reward for the hours of waiting for this moment. Richard touches his father.)*



## NELLIJUMBO

---

RICHARD (*dauntlessly*)

Here I am!

JASPER (*deeply*)

Who art thou?

RICHARD (*tremulously, uncertainly, but valiantly none the less*)

I am Richard; Richard, the Lion-hearted.

*(It is the first time in four years that any ear except Nellijumbo's has ever heard this secret wish of Richard's heart—to be the Lion-hearted.)*

JASPER

Greetings, sire.

RICHARD

And who are you—art thou?

*(He is less certain in the game now, for, remember, play is new to him.)*

JASPER

I am Yaa-Urd.

*(He speaks the word with a delightful mystery, pronouncing every letter with loving care.)*

Thy servant, sire. Wilt thou not greet me?

RICHARD

Whence art thou from, Ya-Urd?

JASPER

May it please thee, sire, thou deprivest me of an "A." My name is Yaa-Urd, unless thou wishest to have the other "A."

*(Richard actually giggles in a room where giggles have always frozen.)*

RICHARD

Whence art thou from, Yaa-Urd?

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

JASPER

I am from a country—beyond the seas—beyond the clouds, sire.

RICHARD

What art its name, Ya-u—Yaa-Urd?

JASPER

Its name is Abaa-Ar.

RICHARD

Good, my man. I always wanted to go to—to— This is Nellie-Jumbo.

JASPER

How dost thou do?

RICHARD (*quite matter of fact*)

What's your real name?

JASPER

I know *your* real name.

(*When his father no longer speaks with an assumed voice, Richard loses his glamor, becomes restrained and shy.*)

RICHARD

It's Richard Adams Cole, sir.

JASPER

It's Snoodles!

RICHARD

How did you know, sir?

JASPER

Don't you know me, Snoodles?

RICHARD

No, sir— (*It hurts deeply, but Jasper must face it.*) Oh, yes, sir. I think you are my father, sir.

JASPER

I am. I am.

## NELLIJUMBO

---

*(He takes Richard in his arms.)*

*(The boy is mute. Remember, he has not had much demonstrative affection since his mother died, and when a boy is ten, and he has learned to hide his dreams, he does not know how to speak. It is Jasper's problem to open his boy's shut-in world.)*

JASPER *(quite shyly)*

Would you rather I had been Yaa-Urd, really?

RICHARD

No, sir.

*(Jasper smiles as he had often smiled in order to win savages whose trust he had to win. Then he thinks that his smile cannot carry. But smiles have sound and lovely words have wings. Richard had "heard" the smile; and the strange names spoken so beautifully by his father had made another breach in the wall of his secret world.)*

JASPER

Will you shake hands now?

RICHARD

Yes, sir.

JASPER

Shall I call you Snoodles?

RICHARD

Aunt Flora doesn't like nicknames.

JASPER

Doesn't she? Do you?

RICHARD

Yes, sir.

JASPER *(dutifully, but without conviction)*

Well, I suppose Aunt Flora is right.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

RICHARD

Yes, sir.

*(Jasper sees that the advantage gained by Yaa-Urd has gone. But long association with elemental people keeps him from being discouraged. After all, Aunt Flora and Uncle George are merely like a paternal government that means well and tries to put all its subjects into one mold.)*

JASPER

But, I suppose, sometimes it is necessary to give people two names. Here's Nellijumbo, for instance—

*(Richard "gives" never so little when the story comes so close to home.)*

She must have a company name.

RICHARD

He's a he.

JASPER

Oh! . . . What's his out-loud name?

RICHARD *(takes a deep breath)*

Aunt Flora and Uncle George wanted me to call him Prince.

JASPER

Why didn't you?

RICHARD

I like Nellijumbo better.

JASPER

What does Nellijumbo mean?

RICHARD

It doesn't mean anything.

JASPER

I like it.

## NELLIJUMBO

---

RICHARD

So do I.

JASPER

It's a wonderful name.

*(Richard reaches out his hand and shyly touches Jasper's sleeve. Jasper's impulse is to take the boy in his arms, but he waits.)*

Did you make it up?

RICHARD

No, sir. I heard it.

JASPER

Who said it?

RICHARD

Aunt Flora, sir.

JASPER

Did she make it up?

RICHARD

Oh, no, sir. She heard it, and she thought it was a very silly name.

JASPER

It *is* funny, isn't it?

RICHARD

I like it.

JASPER

So do I. . . . And I like Nellijumbo, too. It sounds just like—him.

RICHARD

All brown and soft and shaky.

JASPER

Yes. . . . Hello, Nellijumbo.

*(Jasper sits on the floor beside the dog. Richard "sees" this, but he can't believe it. To Nelli-*

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

*jumbo Christmas has meant nothing more than sleep. He suffers Jasper to take him up, however, and snuggles comfortably in his lap.)*

You are going to be like the dogs of Abaa-Ar when you grow up.

*(He speaks the strange word for Richard's benefit.)*

RICHARD

Did you make up A-bar? *(He sits in a chair.)*

JASPER

Some of it.

RICHARD

Who was Yaa-Urd? I like him.

JASPER

He was an Indian prince who lived hundreds of years ago in South America.

RICHARD

That's on the other side of the Panama Canal. I know. It's shaped this way. *(He outlines South America in the air.)* And it has a lot of high mountains here. *(He makes the Andes mountains in the air.)*

JASPER

Yaa-Urd lived in those mountains.

RICHARD

Where?

JASPER

Here—

*(Fortunately, he remembers the map in the air, and he places his forefinger where Richard can "see" it.)*

RICHARD *(as his hand touches Jasper's finger)*

Half-way.

## NELLIJUMBO

---

JASPER

Yes, in a fertile valley between two high ranges  
in a land called Peru.

RICHARD (*slipping to the floor beside his father*)

I like you.

JASPER

And I—like you. I like you as much as Yaa-  
Urd liked the little Indian prince.

RICHARD

Will you tell me all about it?

JASPER

I'll play it with you.

RICHARD

How?

JASPER

You be the prince and I'll be Yaa-Urd.

RICHARD

I don't know it.

JASPER

That doesn't make any difference. We'll make  
it up as we go along.

RICHARD

What will Nellie-Jumbo be?

JASPER

He'll be your faithful pony.

RICHARD

He isn't big enough.

JASPER

Then I'll be your faithful pony.

RICHARD

But you're Yaa-Urd.



## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

JASPER

I'll be both.

RICHARD

Go on. (*He laughs out of sheer joy.*) Where are we?

JASPER

We're in South America.

RICHARD

This room is South America!

JASPER

And under the tree is the city of Abaa-Ar.

RICHARD

Which side?

JASPER

All around.

RICHARD

And here are the soldiers—and the cannons.

JASPER

They didn't have cannon in those days.

RICHARD (*disappointed*)

Didn't they?

JASPER

All right, we'll give them cannon, anyway.  
(*Richard places the three cannon and says "boom!" for each of them.*)

Now these two chairs are two low mountains and between them is a mountain pass.

RICHARD (*going to the chairs that Jasper has placed*)

Is there snow on them?

JASPER

Deep.

## NELLIJUMBO

---

RICHARD

What's their name?

JASPER

This one is Ixu, and this one is Zanthu.

RICHARD (*touching the chairs as he speaks*)

Uncle George's chair is Ixu and Aunt Flora's chair is Zanthu!—and here's the mountain pass. Where are we going?

JASPER

Well, this piano is the high mountain—named Zabu.

(*Richard goes to the piano.*)

RICHARD

Snow from here up. O-o-h, it looks cold. Zabu!

JASPER

Now on these two mountains live hostile tribes.

RICHARD

Host'l. (*This name pleases him less than the others, but he accepts it.*)

JASPER

On Zabu lives the common enemy—named Taru. (*Richard places soldiers on Ixu and Zanthu.*)

RICHARD

These are the Host'ls. They haven't any cannons. You see they couldn't get them up the mountain sides.

JASPER

No, of course not.

(*He sees that the cannon of Abaa-Ar will subdue the "Host'ls."*)

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

RICHARD

And here is Taru. (*Placing a soldier on horseback on the piano.*)

JASPER (*foolishly, with delight*)

Taru's on his high horse, isn't he?

(*Richard giggles, principally because his father smiles.*)

RICHARD

Now, what's the matter with them?

(*Jasper sees the forgotten unopened package.*)

JASPER

Here is a chest of jewels that belongs to the Prince, and until he gets it he cannot be Emperor. Taru had taken it and fled to Zabu long years ago with twenty faithful followers.

RICHARD

I haven't twenty soldiers.

JASPER

All right.

All of them died—except Taru. They died of cold.

RICHARD

How did he pass Ixu?

JASPER

In a fog.

RICHARD

Oh!

JASPER

Shall we begin?

RICHARD

Yes.

## NELLIJUMBO

---

JASPER

All right. Into the palace.

RICHARD (*turning and threading his way to the tree without touching the cannon*)

Here's the palace.

JASPER

How did you find the palace so easily?

RICHARD

Why, it's *there*. . . . You wouldn't know I was blind, would you?

JASPER

No.

RICHARD

I see a lot of things—but I wish I could see color.

JASPER

Yes.

RICHARD

I know seal-brown. I can *feel* it.

JASPER (*falling into the game*)

Majesty, thou shalt see gold in the chest that Taru stole from thee.

RICHARD

What is my name?

JASPER

It's—

RICHARD

Do you care if I am Richard the Lion-hearted?

JASPER

Well, Richard was never in Peru; but we'll put him there. Majesty, thou canst not be Emperor unless thou winnest thy crown again.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

RICHARD

Yaa-Urd, arise. We shall go in search of my crown.

JASPER

Robbers and Host'ls infest the way.

RICHARD

At Ixu and Zanthu?

JASPER

Aye, aye, sire.

RICHARD

Set the cannons on them.

JASPER

They will not shoot so far.

RICHARD

Then take them with us.

JASPER

The roads are impassable.

RICHARD (*stumped for a moment*)

Then we'll pass Ixu in a fog.

JASPER (*delighted out of his character*)

Bully!—I mean *forward!*

RICHARD

Come on, we go out of the city gates.

JASPER

Wilt thou ride, Sire?

RICHARD

I have no horse.

JASPER

I'll be the horse.

RICHARD

You can't be Yaa-Urd *and* the horse both.

## NELLIJUMBO

---

JASPER

That's true. . . . I think thou hadst better go disguised, sire, and while thou art robing I'll find thee a horse.

RICHARD

What shall I wear?

JASPER

Here.

RICHARD

Oh, that's Aunt Flora's piano-cover—I can't.

JASPER

It is thy robe, sire. . . . And here—this is thy mantle. Put them on.

*(By this time Aunt Flora's room is very much changed in appearance.)*

I go for thy horse.

*(He strides a pace or two, then returns.)*

If I should not come back, sire, you may know I have been killed. *(In an every-day tone)* Then I can be the horse.

*(Richard arrays himself in the piano-cover and scarf.)*

*(Jasper gets down on his hands and knees, neighs and prances as well as he can. As he comes to Richard he neighs again.)*

RICHARD

Ho, a horse.

JASPER

I'm a talking steed, sire. . . . Mount.

RICHARD

Really.

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

JASPER (*On his knees*)

Really.

(*Again on all fours.*) (*Richard mounts.*)

RICHARD

Get up!

JASPER

Aren't you going to take Nellijumbo?

RICHARD

No, I must go alone. Nellie-Jumbo, you stay home and watch the palace. . . . Get up!

(*Jasper turns away from Ixu and Zanthu.*)

Gee!—That means go right.—It's this way.

JASPER (*himself*)

How did you know?

RICHARD

Why, they're *there*—just *there*. That's all I know.

JASPER (*as he nears the "pass"*)

There's a heavy fog, sire.

RICHARD

Get up! . . . (*whispering*) We're through the pass. B-r-r-r! it's cold. On to Zabu!

(*Jasper nears piano.*)

Whoa! I'll hitch you.

JASPER

Can't I go with you?

RICHARD

I'll climb alone. . . . I'm afraid I'll scratch the piano.



## NELLIJUMBO

---

JASPER

Take off thy shoes, sire, and he won't hear thee coming.

*(Off go Richard's shoes and up on the piano goes Richard, Jasper watching in adoration.)*

*(In a moment Richard is in a loud and terrifying altercation with the air above the leaden soldier.)*

RICHARD

Ah, villain, give me back my jewels. Biff! Bang! Zip! Ah!

*(He takes up the box, jumps from the piano, mounts his steed, and yells) Get up! Victory!*

*(As Jasper trots through the pass, the door opens and Aunt Flora enters.)*

AUNT FLORA

Goodness! What is the matter?

*(Uncle George is on her heels.)*

UNCLE GEORGE

Is he hurt? . . . Why, what's the matter?

RICHARD

Oh, Aunt Flora, we've found the jewels!

AUNT FLORA

What on earth? Jasper! Richard! What is this nonsense?

*(Jasper and Richard have reached the pass and the palace. Aunt Flora and Uncle George are straightening the furniture.)*

*(Richard dismounts.)*

JASPER *(rising)*

It isn't nonsense, Aunt Flora. We've really got

## PORTMANTEAU ADAPTATIONS

---

the jewels. . . . Open the box, Snoodles.  
*(Richard begins to open the box.)*

AUNT FLORA

How could you humiliate the child by such nonsense!

JASPER

Aunt Flora, dearest, it isn't nonsense.

RICHARD *(taking a wonderful Inca ornament from the box)*

Oh, what is it? What color is it?

JASPER

It's gold, real yellow gold, and hundreds of years ago it belonged to a little Inca prince.  
*(The clock strikes eight.)*

UNCLE GEORGE

It's the reading hour.  
*(Richard dutifully takes up a book.)*

JASPER

Do you care if Richard tells you the story of the jewels instead of reading?

AUNT FLORA

As you wish, Jasper.

UNCLE GEORGE

How does he know about it?

JASPER

He's just lived it. Tell them, Snoodles.  
*(He takes Nellijumbo in his lap. Richard goes to him and climbs onto his knee.)*

AUNT FLORA

I cannot understand it. Richard never climbs into my lap.

## NELLIJUMBO

---

JASPER

Well, you see, Aunt Flora, we are both of us incurably romantic, incurably frivolous, and incurably—fond of you.

*(He just hugs Richard.)*

Tell them the story, Richard.

RICHARD *(with an arm around his father's neck)*

Well, once—upon—a time—

*(But his mind and his heart are elsewhere as the curtains close. He has found his comrade.)*

THE END.

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## APPENDIX

PERSONNEL OF THE STUART WALKER  
COMPANY

1921

|                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| ALDRICH BOWKER     | HELEN BURCH         |
| OSCAR DAVISSON     | MURIEL BROWN        |
| ROBERT FISKE       | EUGENIE CHAPEL      |
| GEORGE GAUL        | MARGARET DALRYMPLE  |
| ROBERT MCGROARTY   | LAEL DAVIS          |
| ROBERT MASTERS     | AGNES HORTON        |
| L'ESTRANGE MILLMAN | GRACE KIECHLE       |
| JAMES MORGAN       | JUDITH LOWRY        |
| MCKAY MORRIS       | DOROTHY McDONALD    |
| ARVID PAULSON      | BEATRICE MAUDE      |
| EDWIN NOEL         | JULIA McMAHON       |
| TOM POWERS         | MARGARET MOWER      |
| GEORGE SOMNES      | LUCILLE NIKOLAS     |
| STUART WALKER      | ELIZABETH PATTERSON |
| WALTER VONNEGUT    | MARJORIE VONNEGUT   |
| JAMES P. WEBBER    | REGINA WALLACE      |
| JOHN WRAY          | PEGGY WOOD          |

BLANCHE YURKA

FRANK J. ZIMMERER, - - - - *Art Director*  
ROBERT MCGROARTY, - - - - *Stage Director*

THE MURAT THEATRE, INDIANAPOLIS

## APPENDIX

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### REPERTORY OF THE STUART WALKER COMPANY

1921

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| THE WOLF                 | Eugene Walter   |
| MAMMA'S AFFAIR           | Rachael Barton Butler<br>(First time here)              |
| CIVILIAN CLOTHES         | Thompson Buchanan<br>(First time here)                  |
| DADDIES                  | John Hobble   |
| SMILIN' THROUGH          | Allan Langdon Martin<br>(First time here)               |
| THE GREAT GALEOTO        | Jose Echegaray  |
| THE BOOK OF JOB          |   |
| TEA FOR THREE            | Roi Cooper Megrue                                       |
| COME SEVEN               | Octavus Cohen (First<br>time here)                      |
| THREE CHILDREN'S PLAYS   | Stuart Walker (One a<br>premier)                        |
| MY LADY FRIENDS          | Frank Mandel and<br>Emil Nyitray                        |
| ARTISTS' LIFE            | Peggy Wood and Sam-<br>uel Merwin (Premier)             |
| A PAIR OF SILK STOCKINGS | Cyril Harcourt (600th<br>performance)                   |
| MAIN STREET              | Harvey O'Higgins and<br>Harriet Ford (Premier)          |
| MONNA VANNA              | Maurice Maeterlinck                                     |
| TRILBY                   | George de Maurier                                       |
| WEDDING BELLS            | Salisbury Field (First<br>time here)                    |
| THE LOTTERY MAN          | Rita Johnson Young                                      |
| HONOR BRIGHT             | Meredith Nicholson and<br>Kenyon Nicholson<br>(Premier) |



## APPENDIX

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|   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| THE BEAUTIFUL ADVENTURE, de Flers and Caillavet |                         |
| NEVERTHELESS                                    | Stuart Walker           |
| SIS WHO PASS WHILE THE                          |                         |
| LENTILS BOIL                                    | Stuart Walker           |
| SIR DAVID WEARS A CROWN                         | Stuart Walker (Premier) |
| TWO KISSES                                      | Harry James Smith       |

### LAST FIVE PLAYS SEASON 1919

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| KICK IN               | Willard Mack                            |
| NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH | James Montgomery                        |
| FAIR AND WARMER       | Avery Hopwood                           |
| THE FORTUNE HUNTER    | Winchell-Smith                          |
| PICCADILLY JIM        | Guy Bolton and P. G.<br>Wodehouse (New) |

### SEASON 1920

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| TWO KISSES          | Harry James Smith (Pre-<br>mier)                         |
| THE MIRACLE MAN     | George M. Cohan (First<br>time in Indianapolis)          |
| POLLY WITH A PAST   | George Middleton and<br>Guy Bolton                       |
| THE STORM BIRD      | Dion Clayton Calthrop<br>and Roland Pertwee<br>(Premier) |
| THE SHOW SHOP       | James Forbes   |
| THE GYPSY TRAIL     | Robert Housum  |
| TEMPERAMENTAL HENRY | Samuel Merwin (Pre-<br>mier)                             |
| THE LODGER          | Horace Annesley Vachell<br>(First time here)             |
| BABY MINE           | Margaret Mayo  |
| A LITTLE JOURNEY    | Rachel Crothers (First<br>time here)                     |

## APPENDIX

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|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| A VERY GOOD YOUNG MAN      | Martin Brown (First time here)                          |
| TOO MANY HUSBANDS          | Somerset Maugham (First time here)                      |
| PEG O' MY HEART<br>39 EAST | J. Hartley Manners<br>Rachel Crothers (First time here) |

*Gammer Gurton's Needle* was first produced by Mr. Walker at Boston, Massachusetts, on February 14, 1916. The first New York production was at the Princess Theatre in December of 1916.

### CAST

(See page 31)

*The Birthday of the Infanta* was first produced at Binghamton, New York, in November of 1916. The first New York production was at the Princess Theatre in December of 1916.

### CAST

(See page 113)

*Sir David Wears a Crown* was first produced at the Murat Theatre, Indianapolis, Indiana on June 24, 1921. It has not yet had a New York production.

### CAST

(See page 142)

*Nellijumbo* has not yet been played.

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