

A Dramatic Evening

By John Kendrick Bangs

CHARACTERS:

MR. THADDEUS PERKINS, a victim. MR. EDWARD BRADLEY, a friend in disguise. MR. ROBERT YARDSLEY, an amiable villain. MR. JOHN BARLOW, the amiable villain's assistant. MRS. THADDEUS PERKINS, a martyr. MRS. EDWARD BRADLEY, a woman of executive ability. JENNIE, a housemaid.

The scene is placed in the drawing-room of Mr. and Mrs. Thaddeus Perkins, of New York. The time is a Saturday evening in the early spring, and the hour is approaching eight. The curtain, rising, discovers Perkins, in evening dress, reading a newspaper by the light of a lamp on the table. Mrs. Perkins is seated on the other side of the table, buttoning her gloves. Her wrap is on a chair near at hand. The room is gracefully over-furnished.

Mrs. Perkins. Where are the seats, Thaddeus?

Perkins. Third row; and, by Jove! Bess (looking at his watch), we must hurry. It is getting on towards eight now. The curtain rises at 8.15.

Mrs. Perkins. The carriage hasn't come yet. It isn't more than a ten minutes' drive to the theatre.

Perkins. That's true, but there are so many carriage-folk going to see Irving that if we don't start early we'll find ourselves on the end of the line, and the first act will be half over before we can reach our seats.

Mrs. Perkins. I'm so glad we've got good seats--down near the front. I despise opera-glasses, and seats under the galleries are so oppressive.

Perkins. Well, I don't know. For The Lyons Mail I think a seat in the front row of the top gallery, where you can cheer virtue and hiss villany without making yourself conspicuous, is the best.

Mrs. Perkins. You don't mean to say that you'd like to sit up with those odious gallery gods?

Perkins. For a melodrama, I do. What's the use of clapping your gloved hands together at a melodrama? That doesn't express your feelings. I always want to put two fingers in my mouth and pierce the atmosphere with a regular gallery-god whistle when I see the villain laid low by the tow-headed idiot in the last act--but it wouldn't do in the orchestra. You might as well expect the people in the boxes to eat peanuts as expect an orchestra-chair patron to whistle on his fingers.

Mrs. Perkins. I should die of mortification if you ever should do such a vulgar thing, Thaddeus.

Perkins. Then you needn't be afraid, my dear. I'm too fond of you to sacrifice you to my love for whistling. (The front-door bell rings.) Ah, there is the carriage at last. I'll go and get my coat.

[Mrs. Perkins rises, and is about to don her wrap as Mr. Perkins goes towards the door.

Enter Mr. and Mrs. Bradley. Perkins staggers backward in surprise. Mrs. Perkins lets her wrap fall to the floor, an expression of dismay on her face.

Mrs. Perkins (aside). Dear me! I'd forgotten all about it. This is the night the club is to meet here!

Bradley. Ah, Perkins, how d' y' do? Glad to see me? Gad! you don't look it.

Perkins. Glad is a word which scarcely expresses my feelings, Bradley. I--I'm simply de-lighted. (Aside to Mrs. Perkins, who has been greeting Mrs. Bradley.) Here's a kettle of fish. We must get rid of them, or we'll miss The Lyons Mail.

Mrs. Bradley. You two are always so formal. The idea of your putting on your dress suit, Thaddeus! It'll be ruined before we are half through this evening.

Bradley. Certainly, Perkins. Why, man, when you've been moving furniture and taking up carpets and ripping out fireplaces for an hour or two that coat of yours will be a rag--a veritable rag that the ragman himself would be dubious about buying.

Perkins (aside). Are these folk crazy? Or am I? (Aloud.) Pulling up fireplaces? Moving out furniture? Am I to be dispossessed?

Mrs. Bradley. Not by your landlord, but you know what amateur dramatics are.

Bradley. I doubt it. He wouldn't have let us have 'em here if he had known.

Perkins. Amateur--amateur dramatics?

Mrs. Perkins. Certainly, Thaddeus. You know we offered our parlor for the performance. The audience are to sit out in the hall.

Perkins. Oh--ah! Why, of course! Certainly! It had slipped my mind; and--ah--what else?

Bradley. Why, we're here to-night to arrange the scene. Don't tell us you didn't know it. Bob Yardsley's coming, and Barlow. Yardsley's a great man for amateur dramatics; he bosses things so pleasantly that you don't know you're being ordered about like a slave. I believe he could persuade a man to hammer nails into his piano-case if he wanted it done, he's so insinuatingly lovely about it all.

Perkins (absently). I'll get a hammer. [Exit.]

Mrs. Perkins (aside). I must explain to Thaddeus. He'll never forgive me. (Aloud.) Thaddeus is so forgetful that I don't believe he can find that hammer, so if you'll excuse me I'll go help him. [Exit.]

Bradley. Wonder what's up? They don't quarrel, do they?

Mrs. Bradley. I don't believe any one could quarrel with Bessie Perkins--not even a man.

Bradley. Well, they're queer. Acted as if they weren't glad to see us.

Mrs. Bradley. Oh, that's all your imagination. (Looks about the room.) That table will have to be taken out, and all these chairs and cabinets; and the rug will never do.

Bradley. Why not? I think the rug will look first-rate.

Mrs. Bradley. A rug like that in a conservatory? [A ring at the front-door bell is heard.

Bradley. Ah! maybe that's Yardsley. I hope so. If Perkins and his wife are out of sorts we want to hurry up and get through.

Mrs. Bradley. Oh, we'll be through by twelve o'clock.

Enter Yardsley and Barlow.

Yardsley. Ah! here we are at last. The wreckers have arrove. Where's Perkins?

Barlow. Taken to the woods, I fancy. I say, Bob, don't you think before we begin we'd better give Perkins ether? He'll suffer dreadful agony.

Enter Mrs. Perkins, wiping her eyes.

Mrs. Perkins. How do you do, Mr. Barlow? and you, Mr. Yardsley? So glad to see you. Thaddeus will be down in a minute. He--ah--he forgot about the--the meeting here to-night, and he--he put on his dress-coat.

Yardsley. Bad thing to lift a piano in. Better be without any coat. But I say we begin--eh? If you don't mind, Mrs. Perkins. We've got a great deal to do, and unfortunately hours are limited in length as well as in number. Ah! that fireplace must be covered up. Wouldn't do to have a fireplace in a conservatory. Wilt all the flowers in ten minutes.

Mrs. Perkins (meekly). You needn't have the fire lit, need you?

Barlow. No--but--a fireplace without fire in it seems sort of--of bald, don't you think?

Yardsley. Bald? Splendid word applied to a fireplace. So few fireplaces have hair.

Mrs. Bradley. Oh, it could be covered up without any trouble, Bessie. Can't we have those dining-room portieres to hang in front of it?

Yardsley. Just the thing. Dining-room portieres always look well, whether they're in a conservatory or a street scene. (Enter Perkins.) Hello, Thaddeus! How d' y'? Got your overalls on?

Perkins (trying to appear serene). Yes. I'm ready for anything. Anything I can do?

Bradley. Yes--look pleasant. You look as if you were going to have your picture taken, or a tooth pulled. Haven't you a smile you don't need that you can give us? This isn't a funeral.

Perkins (assuming a grin). How'll that do?

Barlow. First-rate. We'll have to make you act next. That's the most villanous grin I ever saw.

Yardsley. I'll write a tragedy to go with it. But I say, Thad, we want those dining-room portieres of yours. Get 'em down for us, will you?

Perkins. Dining-room portieres! What for?

Mrs. Perkins. They all think the fireplace would better be hid, Thaddeus, dear. It wouldn't look well in a conservatory.

Perkins. I suppose not. And the dining-room portieres are wanted to cover up the fireplace?

Yardsley. Precisely. You have a managerial brain, Thaddeus. You can see at once what a dining-room portiere is good for. If ever I am cast away on a desert island, with nothing but a dining-room portiere

for solace, I hope you'll be along to take charge of it. In your hands its possibilities are absolutely unlimited. Get them for us, old man; and while you are about it, bring a stepladder. (Exit Perkins, dejectedly.) Now, Barlow, you and Bradley help me with this piano. Pianos may do well enough in gardens or pirates' caves, but for conservatories they're not worth a rap.

Mrs. Bradley. Wait a moment. We must take the bric-a-brac from the top of it before you touch it. If there are two incompatible things in this world, they are men and bric-a-brac.

Mrs. Perkins. You are so thoughtful, though I am sure that Mr. Yardsley would not break anything willingly.

Barlow. Nothing but the ten commandments.

Yardsley. They aren't bric-a-brac; and I thank you, Mrs. Perkins, for your expression of confidence. I wouldn't intentionally go into the house of another man and toss his Sevres up in the air, or throw his Royal Worcester down-stairs, except under very great provocation. (Mrs. Perkins and Mrs. Bradley have by this time removed the bric-a-brac from the piano--an upright.) Now, boys, are you ready?

Bradley. Where is it to be moved to?

Yardsley. Where would you prefer to have it, Mrs. Perkins?

Mrs. Perkins. Oh, I have no preference in the matter. Put it where you please.

Yardsley. Suppose you carry it up into the attic, Barlow.

Barlow. Certainly. I'll be glad to if you'll carry the soft pedal. I'm always afraid when I'm carrying pianos up-stairs of breaking the soft pedal or dropping a few octaves.

Yardsley. I guess we'd better put it over in this corner, where the audience won't see it. If you are so careless that you can't move a piano without losing its tone, we'd better not have it moved too far. Now, then.

[Barlow, Yardsley, and Bradley endeavor to push the piano over the floor, but it doesn't move.

Enter Perkins with two portieres wrapped about him, and hugging a small stepladder in his arms.

Bradley. Hurry up, Perkins. Don't shirk so. Can't you see that we're trying to get this piano across the floor? Where are you at?

Perkins (meekly). I'm trying to make myself at home. Do you expect me to hang on to these things and move pianos at the same time?

Barlow. Let him alone, Bradley. He's doing the best he knows. I always say give a man credit for doing what he can, whether he is intelligent or not. Of course we don't expect you to hang on to the portieres and the stepladder while you are pushing the piano, Thad. That's too much to expect of any man of your size; some men might do it, but not all. Drop the portieres.

Perkins. Where'll I put 'em?

Yardsley. Put them on the stepladder.

Perkins (impatiently). And where shall I put the stepladder--on the piano?

Mrs. Perkins (coming to the rescue). I'll take care of these things, Thaddeus, dear.

Bradley. That's right; put everything off on your wife. What shirks some men are!

Yardsley. Now, then, Perkins, lend us your shoulder, and--one, two, three--push! Ah! She starts; she moves; she seems to feel the thrill of life along her keel. We must have gained an inch. Once more, now. My, but this is a heavy piano!

Bradley. Must be full of Wagnerian music. Why don't you get a piano of lighter quality, Perkins? This isn't any kind of an instrument for amateur stage-hands to manage.

Perkins. I'll know better next time. But is it where you want it now?

Yardsley. Not a bit of it. We need one more push. Get her rolling, and keep her rolling until she stands over there in that corner; and be careful to stop her in time, I should hate to push a piano through one of my host's parlor walls just for the want of a little care. (They push until the piano stands against the wall on the other side of the room, keyboard in.) There! That's first-rate. You can put a camp-chair on top of it for the prompter to sit on; there's nothing like having the prompter up high, because amateur actors when they forget their lines, always look up in the air. Perkins, go sit out in the hall and imagine yourself an enthusiastic audience--will you?-- and tell us if you can see the piano. If you can see it, we'll have to put it somewhere else.

Perkins. Do you mean it?

Mrs. Bradley. Of course he doesn't, Mr. Perkins. It's impossible to see it from the hall. Now, I think the rug ought to come up.

Mrs. Perkins. Dear me! what for?

Yardsley. Oh, it wouldn't do at all to have that rug in the conservatory, Mrs. Perkins. Besides, I should be afraid it would be spoiled.

Perkins. Spoiled? What would spoil it? Are you going to wear spiked shoes?

Barlow. Spiked shoes? Thaddeus, really you ought to have your mind examined. This scene is supposed to be just off the ballroom, and it is here that Gwendoline comes during the lancers and encounters Hartley, the villain. Do you suppose that even a villain in an amateur show would go to a ball with spiked shoes on?

Perkins (wearily). But I still fail to see what is to spoil the rug. Does the villain set fire to the conservatory in this play, or does he assassinate the virtuous hero here and spill his gore on the floor?

Bradley. What a blood-and-thunder idea of the drama you have! Of course he doesn't. There isn't a death in the whole play, and it's two hours long. One or two people in the audience may die while the play is going on, but people who haven't strong constitutions shouldn't attend amateur shows.

Mrs. Perkins. That's true, I fancy.

Mrs. Bradley. Very. It would be very rude for one of your invited guests to cast a gloom over your evening by dying.

Yardsley. It is seldom done among people who know what is what. But to explain the point you want explained, Thaddeus: the rug might be spoiled by a leak in the fountain.

Mrs. Perkins. The fountain?

Perkins. You don't mean to say you're going to have a fountain playing here?

Bradley. Certainly. A conservatory without a fountain would be like "Hamlet" with Yorick's skull left out. There's to be a fountain playing here, and a band playing in the next room--all in a green light, too. It'll be highly effective.

Perkins. But how--how are you going to make the fountain go? Is it to spurt real water?

Yardsley. Of course. Did you ever see a fountain spurt sawdust or lemonade? It's not a soda-water fountain either, but a straight temperance affair, such as you'll find in the homes of all truly good people. Now don't get excited and raise obstacles. The thing is simple enough if you know how to do it. Got one of those English bath-tubs in the house?

Perkins. No. But, of course, if you want a bath-tub, I'll have a regular porcelain one with running water, hot and cold, put in--two of 'em, if you wish. Anything to oblige.

Yardsley. No; stationary bath-tubs are useful, but not exactly adapted to a conservatory.

Barlow. I brought my tub with me. I knew Perkins hadn't one, and so I thought I'd better come provided. It's out in the hall. I'll get it. [Exit.

Mrs. Bradley (to Mrs. Perkins). He's just splendid! never forgets anything.

Mrs. Perkins. I should say not. But, Mr. Yardsley, a bath-tub, even an English one, will not look very well, will it?

Yardsley. Oh, very. You see, we'll put it in the centre of the room. Just move that table out into the hall, Thaddeus. (Enter Barlow with tub.) Ah! now I'll show you. (Perkins removes table.) You see, we put the tub here in the middle of the floor, then we surround it with potted plants. That conceals the tub, and there's your fountain.

Perkins. But the water--how do you get that?

Bradley. We buy it in bottles, of course, and hire a boy to come in and pour it out every two minutes. How dull you are, Perkins! I'm surprised at you.

Perkins. I'm not over-bright, I must confess, when it comes to building fountains in parlors, with no basis but an English bath-tub to work on.

Yardsley. Did you ever hear of such a thing as a length of hose with a nozzle on one end and a Croton-water pipe at the other, Thaddeus Perkins?

Mrs. Perkins. But where is the Croton-water pipe?

Mrs. Bradley. In the butler's pantry. The hose can be carried through the dining-room, across the hall into this room, and it will be dreadfully effective; and so safe, too, in case the curtain catches fire.

Mrs. Perkins. Oh, Emma! You don't think--

Perkins. Cheerful prospect. But I say, Yardsley, you have arranged for the water supply; how about its exit? How does the water get out of the tub?

Yardsley. It doesn't, unless you want to bore a hole in the floor, and let it flow into the billiard-room below. We've just got to hustle that scene along, so that the climax will be reached before the tub overflows.

Barlow. Perhaps we'd better test the thing now. Maybe my tub isn't large enough for the scene. It would be awkward if the heroine had to seize a dipper and bail the fountain out right in the middle of an impassioned rebuke to Hartley.

Perkins. All right--go ahead. Test it. Test anything. I'll supply the Croton pipes.

Yardsley. None of you fellows happen to have a length of hose with you, do you?

Bradley. I left mine in my other clothes.

Mrs. Bradley. That's just like you men. You grow flippant over very serious matters. For my part, if I am to play Gwendoline, I shall not bail out the fountain even to save poor dear Bessie's floor.

Yardsley. Oh, it'll be all right. Only, if you see the fountain getting too full, speak faster.

Barlow. We might announce a race between the heroine and the fountain. It would add to the interest of the play. This is an athletic age.

Perkins. I suppose it wouldn't do to turn the water off in case of danger.

Barlow. It could be done, but it wouldn't look well. The audience might think the fountain had had an attack of stage fright. Where is the entrance from the ballroom to be?

Yardsley. It ought to be where the fireplace is. That's one reason why I think the portieres will look well there.

Mrs. Perkins. But I don't see how that can be. Nobody could come in there. There wouldn't be room behind for any one to stand, would there?

Bradley. I don't know. That fireplace is large, and only two people have to come in that way. The rising curtain discloses Gwendoline just having come in. If Hartley, the villain, and Jack Pendleton, the manly young navy officer, who represents virtue, and dashes in at the right moment to save Gwendoline, could sit close and stand the discomfort of it, they might squeeze in there and await their cues.

Mrs. Perkins. Sit in the fireplace?

Yardsley. Yes. Why not?

Perkins. Don't you interfere, Bess, Yardsley is managing this show, and if he wants to keep the soubrette waiting on the mantel-piece it's his lookout, and not ours.

Yardsley. By-the-way, Thaddeus, Wilkins has backed out, and you are to play the villain.

Perkins. I? Never!

Barlow. Oh, but you must. All you have to do is frown and rant and look real bad.

Perkins. But I can't act.

Bradley. That doesn't make any difference. We don't want a villain that the audience will fall in love with. That would be immoral. The more you make them despise you, the better.

Perkins. Well--I positively decline to sit in the fireplace. I tell you that right now.

Mrs. Bradley. Don't waste time talking about petty details. Let the entrance be there. We can hang the curtain on a frame two feet out from the wall, so that there will be plenty of room behind for Hartley and Pendleton to stand. The frame can be fastened to the wood-work of the mantel-piece. It may take a screw or two to hold it, but they'll be high up, so nobody will notice the holes in the wood after it comes down. The point that bothers me is this wall- paper. People don't put wall-papers on their conservatories.

Perkins (sarcastically). I'll have the room repapered in sheet- glass. Or we might borrow a few hot-bed covers and hang them from the picture moulding, so that the place would look like a real greenhouse.

Yardsley. Napoleonic idea. Barlow, jot down among the properties ten hot-bed covers, twenty picture-hooks, and a coil of wire. You're developing, Perkins.

Mrs. Perkins (ruefully, aside). I wish Thaddeus's jokes weren't always taken seriously. The idea of my drawing-room walls being hung with hot-bed covers! Why, it's awful.

Yardsley. Well, now that that's settled, we'll have to dispose of the pictures. Thaddeus, I wish you'd take down the pictures on the east wall, so that we can put our mind's eye on just how we shall treat the background. The mere hanging of hot-bed covers there will not do. The audience could see directly through the glass, and the wall-paper would still destroy the illusion.

Perkins. Anything. Perhaps if you got a jack-plane and planed the walls off it would suffice.

Bradley. Don't be sarcastic, my boy. Remember we didn't let you into this. You volunteered.

Perkins. I know it, Bradley. The house is yours.

Barlow. I said you had paresis when you made the offer, Perkins. If you want to go to law about it, I think you could get an injunction against us--or, rather, Mrs. Perkins could--on the ground that you were non compos at the time.

Mrs. Perkins. Why, we're most happy to have you, I'm sure.

Perkins. So 'm I. (Aside.) Heaven forgive me that!

Yardsley. By-the-way, Thad, there's one thing I meant to have spoken about as soon as I got here. Er--is this your house, or do you rent it?

Perkins. I rent it. What has that to do with it?

Bradley. A great deal. You don't think we'd treat your house as we would a common landlord's, do you? You wouldn't yourself.

Yardsley. That's the point. If you own the house we want to be careful and consider your feelings. If you don't, we don't care what happens.

Perkins. I don't own the house. (Aside.) And under the circumstances I'm rather glad I don't.

Yardsley. Well, I'm glad you don't. My weak point is my conscience, and when it comes to destroying a friend's property, I don't exactly like to do it. But if this house belongs to a sordid person, who built it just to put money in his own pocket, I don't care. Barlow, you can nail those portieres up. It won't be necessary to build a frame for them. Bradley, carry the chairs and cabinets out.

[Bradley, assisted by Perkins, removes the remaining furniture, placing the bric-a-brac on the floor.

Barlow. All right. Where's that stepladder? Thaddeus, got any nails?

Mrs. Perkins. I--I think we'd rather have a frame, Mr. Yardsley. We can have one made, can't we, Thaddeus?

Perkins. Certainly. We can have anything made. (Aside.) I suppose I'd build a theatre for 'em if they asked me to, I'm such a confounded--

Yardsley. Oh no. Of course, if you'd prefer it, we'll send a frame. I don't think nails would look well in this ceiling, after all. Temporarily,

though, Barlow, you might hang those portieres from the picture-moulding.

Barlow. There isn't any.

Yardsley. Well, then, we'll have to imagine how it will look.

Mrs. Bradley. All the bric-a-brac will have to be taken from the room.

Yardsley. True. Perkins, you know the house better than we do. Suppose you take the bric-a-brac out and put it where it will be safe.

Perkins. Certainly.

[Begins to remove bric-a-brac.

Yardsley. Now let's count up. Here's the fountain.

Barlow. Yes; only we haven't the hose.

Bradley. Well, make a note of it.

Mrs. Perkins. Emma, can't we help Thaddeus?

Mrs. Bradley. Of course. I'll carry out the fender, and you take the andirons.

[They do so.

Yardsley. The entrance will be here, and here will be the curtain. How about footlights?

Bradley. This bracket will do for a connection. Any plumber can take this bracket off and fasten a rubber pipe to it.

Yardsley. First-rate. Barlow, make a note of one plumber, one length of rubber pipe, and foot-lights.

Bradley. And don't forget to have potted plants and palms, and so forth, galore.

Barlow. No. I'll make a note of that. Will this sofa do for a conservatory?

Yardsley. Jove! Glad you mentioned that. Won't do at all. Thaddeus! (No answer.) I hope we haven't driven him to drink.

Bradley. So do I. I'd rather he'd lead us to it.

Yardsley. Thaddeus!

Perkins (from without). Well?

Yardsley. Do you happen to have any conservatory benches in the house?

Mrs. Perkins (appearing in doorway). We have a patent laundry table.

Barlow. Just the thing.

Yardsley (calling). Bring up the patent laundry table, Thaddeus. (To Bradley.) What is a patent laundry table?

Bradley. It's what my wife calls the cook's delight. It's an ironing-board on wash-days, a supper table at supper-time, and on the cook's reception days it can be turned into a settee.

Yardsley. It describes well.

Perkins (from a distance). Hi! come down and help me with this thing. I can't carry it up alone.

Yardsley. All right, Perk. Bradley, you and Barlow help Thaddeus. I'll move these other chairs and tables out. It's getting late, and we'll have to hustle.

[Exit Barlow. Bradley meanwhile has been removing pictures from the walls, and, as Yardsley speaks, is standing on the stepladder reaching up for a painting.]

Bradley. What do you take me for--twins?

Yardsley. Don't get mad, now, Bradley. If there's anything that can add to the terror of amateur theatricals it's temper.

Mrs. Bradley (from without). Edward, come here right away. I want you to move the hat-stand, and see how many people can be seated in this hall.

Bradley. Oh yes, certainly, my dear--of course. Right away. My name is Legion--or Dennis.

Yardsley. That's the spirit. (A crash is heard without.) Great Scott! What's that?

Mrs. Perkins (without). Oh, Thaddeus!

Bradley. They've dropped the cook's delight.

[He comes down from the stepladder. He and Yardsley go out. The pictures are piled up on the floor, the furniture is topsy-turvy, and the portieres lie in a heap on the hearth.

Enter Mrs. Perkins.

Mrs. Perkins. Dear, dear, dear! What a mess! And poor Thaddeus! I'm glad he wasn't hurt; but I--I'm afraid I heard him say words I never heard him say before when Mr. Barlow let the table slip. Wish I hadn't said anything about the table.

Enter Mrs. Bradley.

Mrs. Bradley. These men will drive me crazy. They are making more fuss carrying that laundry table up-stairs than if it were a house; and the worst of it is our husbands are losing their tempers.

Mrs. Perkins. Well, I don't wonder. It must be awfully trying to have a laundry table fall on you.

Mrs. Bradley. Oh, Thaddeus is angelic, but Edward is absolutely inexcusable. He swore a minute ago, and it sounded particularly profane because he had a screw and a picture-hook in his mouth.

Yardsley (outside). It's almost as heavy as the piano. I don't see why, either.

[The four men appear at the door, staggering under the weight of the laundry table.

Perkins (as they set it down). Whew! That's what I call work. What makes this thing so heavy?

Mrs. Bradley (as she opens a drawer and takes out a half-dozen patent flat-irons and a handle). This has something to do with it. Why didn't you take out the drawer first?

Yardsley. It wasn't my fault. They'd started with it before I took hold. I didn't know it had a drawer, though I did wonder what it was that rattled around inside of it.

Bradley. It wasn't for me to suggest taking the drawer out. Thaddeus ought to have thought of that.

Perkins (angrily). Well, of all--

Mrs. Perkins. Never mind. It's here, and it's all right.

Yardsley. That's so. We musn't quarrel. If we get started, we'll never stop. Now, Perkins, roll up that rug, and we'll get things placed, and then we'll be through.

Barlow. Come on; I'll help. Bradley, get those pictures off the rug. Don't be so careless of Mrs. Perkins's property.

Bradley. Careless? See here now, Barlow--

Mrs. Bradley. Now, Edward--no temper. Take the pictures out.

Bradley. And where shall I take the pictures out to?

Yardsley. Put 'em on the dining-room table.

Perkins (aside). Throw 'em out the window, for all I care.

Bradley. Eh?

Perkins. Nothing. I--er--I only said to put 'em--er--to put 'em wherever you pleased.

Bradley. But I can't say where they're to go, Thaddeus. This isn't my house.

Perkins (aside). No--worse luck--it's mine.

Mrs. Perkins. Oh--put them in the dining-room; they'll be safe there.

Bradley. I will.

[He begins carrying the pictures out. Perkins, Barlow, and Yardsley roll up the rug.

Yardsley. There! You fellows might as well carry that out too; and then we'll be ready for the scene.

Barlow. Come along, Thaddeus. You're earning your pay to-night.

Perkins (desperately). May I take my coat off? I'm boiling.

Mrs. Bradley. Certainly. I wonder you didn't think of it before.

Perkins. Think? I never think.

Yardsley. Well, go ahead in your thoughtless way and get the rug out. You are delaying us.

Perkins. All right. Come on. Barlow, are you ready?

Barlow. I am. [They drag the rug out.

Yardsley. At last. (Replaces the tub.) There's the fountain. Now where shall we put the cook's delight?

Mrs. Perkins. Over here, I should say.

Mrs. Bradley. I think it would be better here.

Bradley (who has returned). Put it half-way between 'em, Yardsley. I say give in always to the ladies; and when they don't agree, compromise. It's a mighty poor woman that isn't half right occasionally.

Mrs. Bradley. Edward!

Yardsley (adopting the suggestion). There! How's that?

Perkins (returning). Perfect. I never saw such an original conservatory in my life.

Mrs. Perkins. I suppose it's all right. What do you think, Emma?

Mrs. Bradley. Why, it's simply fine. Of course it requires a little imagination to see it as it will be on the night of the performance; but in general I don't see how it could be better.

Barlow. No--nor I. It's great as it is, but when we get the hot-bed covers hung, and the fountain playing, and plants arranged gracefully all around, it will be ideal. I say we ought to give Yardsley a vote of thanks.

Perkins. That's so. We're very much indebted to Yardsley.

Yardsley. Never mind that. I enjoy the work very much.

Perkins. So glad. (Aside.) I wonder when we get a vote of thanks?

Bradley (looking at his watch). By Jove, Emma, it's after eleven!

Mrs. Bradley. After eleven? Dear me! I had no idea it was as late as that. How time flies when you are enjoying yourself! Really, Edward, you ought not to have overlooked the time. You know--

Bradley. I supposed you knew we couldn't pull a house down in five minutes.

Perkins. What's become of the clock?

Mrs. Perkins. I don't know. Who took the clock out?

Barlow. I did. It's under the dining-room table.

Mrs. Bradley. Well, we mustn't keep Bessie up another moment. Good-night, my dear. We have had a delightful time.

Mrs. Perkins. Good-night. I am sure we have enjoyed it.

Perkins (aside). Oh yes, indeed; we haven't had so much fun since the children had the mumps.

Yardsley. Well, so-long, Perkins. Thanks for your help.

Perkins. By-by.

Barlow. Good-night.

Yardsley. Don't bother about fixing up to-night, Perkins. I'll be around to-morrow evening and help put things in order again.

[They all go out. The good-nights are repeated, and finally the front door is closed.

Re-enter Perkins, who falls dejectedly on the settee, followed by Mrs. Perkins, who gives a rueful glance at the room.

Perkins. I'm glad Yardsley's coming to fix us up again. I never could do it.

Mrs. Perkins. Then I must. I can't ask Jennie to do it, she'd discharge us at once, and I can't have my drawing-room left this way over Sunday.

Perkins (wearily). Oh, well, shall we do it now?

Mrs. Perkins. No, you poor dear man; we'll stay home from church tomorrow morning and do it. It won't be any harder work than reading the Sunday newspapers. What have you there?

Perkins (looking at two tickets he has abstracted from his vest-pocket). Tickets for Irving--this evening--Lyons Mail--third row from the stage. I was just thinking--

Mrs. Perkins. Don't tell me what you were thinking, my dear. It can't be expressible in polite language.

Perkins. You are wrong there, my dear. I wasn't thinking cuss-words at all. I was only reflecting that we didn't miss much anyhow, under the circumstances.

Mrs. Perkins. Miss much? Why, Thaddeus, what do you mean?

Perkins. Nothing--only that for action continuous and situations overpowering The Lyons Mail isn't a marker to an evening of preparation for Amateur Dramatics.

Enter Jennie.

Jennie. Excuse me, mim, but the coachman says shall he wait any longer? He's been there three hours now.

[CURTAIN]