

who are not—well, not on that footing with her. The effect of her own beauty would become a torment to her if she could not escape from it occasionally. You are probably on much more confidential terms with Kitty than I am. Surely you can ask her the question yourself.

CROFTS: *(Rising impatiently.)* I have asked her often enough. But she's so determined to keep the child all to herself that she would deny that it ever had a father if she could. No: There's nothing to be got out of her—nothing that one can believe, anyhow. I'm thoroughly uncomfortable about it, Praed.

PRAED: *(Rising also.)* Well, as you are, at all events, old enough to be her father, I don't mind agreeing that we both regard Miss Vivie in a parental way, as a young girl whom we are bound to protect and help. All the more, as the real father, whoever he was, was probably a blackguard. What do you say?

CROFTS: *(Aggressively.)* I'm no older than you, if you come to that.

PRAED: Yes, you are, my dear fellow: You were born old. I was born a boy: I've never been able to feel the assurance of a grown-up man in my life.

MRS. WARREN: *(Calling from within the cottage.)* Prad-dee! George! Tea-ee-ee-ee!

The City

Clyde Fitch
1090

Dramatic

Setting: The comfortable family home, Middleburg, New York.

Scene: The family is gathering for the return of daughter Teresa who has been in Europe. Mr. Rand receives a disturbing letter. The family does not know that he is being blackmailed for a past indiscretion years ago.

Mrs. Molly Rand: 50's, a housewife.

Mr. George D. Rand: 50's, a businessman and her husband.

Cicely: 17, their younger daughter.

George, Jr.: 27, their son.

RAND: *(Angry.)* Yes, still keeping it up, the young blackguard! *(He tears the letter in two, and throws it into the fire without reading it.)*

(He watches it burn a second, lighting a cigar; then takes his papers, makes himself comfortable in his chair before the fire, and starts to read. After a second, Mrs. Rand and Cicely, a very pretty girl of about seventeen, enter. Mrs. Rand carries a pitcher of water, scissors, and a newspaper. Cicely has her arms full of yellow tulips and a big bowl.)

MRS. RAND: Why, father! Aren't you home early? Teresa's train won't be in for an hour or so yet. *(Mrs. Rand, filling the bowl with water, spreads the newspaper on the table; then cuts off the stems, and hands the flowers one by one to Cicely, who arranges them.)*

RAND: I felt tired today, Molly. My head bothers me!

MRS. RAND: *(Going to him with affection and solicitude.)* Why don't you lie down? *(She lays her hand on his head.)* You haven't any fever. *(She kisses his forehead.)* You're just overtired! *(He pats her hand affectionately, and holds it.)* When are you going to give up business entirely, darling, and leave it all to George?

RAND: Never, I'm afraid, dear. *(Letting go her hand.)* I've tried to face the idea, but the idleness appalls me.

CICELY: Mother, have you the scissors?

MRS. RAND: Yes, dear. *(Joins her, and continues with the flowers.)*
RAND: Besides, George is too restless, too discontented yet, for me to trust him with my two banks! He's got the New York bee in his bonnet.

CICELY: *(Glances at her mother before she speaks.)* Oh! We all have that, father—except you.

RAND: And mother!

CICELY: Humpf! Mother's just as bad as the rest of us. Only she's afraid to say so. *(Smiling.)* Go on, mother, own up you've got villageitis and cityphobia!

MRS. RAND: *(Smiling.)* I dare, only I don't want to bother your father!
RAND: That's the effect of George—and Teresa. I've noticed all the innuendoes in her letters home. Europe's spoiled the girl! The New York school started the idea, but I hoped travel would cure her, and instead—!

MRS. RAND: Wait till you see her. Remember, in spite of letters, what a year may have done for her. Oh, I'm so eager to see her! What a long hour this is! *(The telephone bell rings out in the hall. Mrs. Rand goes out and is heard saying, "Hello! Yes, who is it? Oh, is it you, Katherine?")*

RAND: *(Reading his paper.)* Who's that talking to your mother?

CICELY: One of Middleburg's Social Queens, Mrs. Mulholland—known in our society as the lady who can wear a décolleté gown, cut in accordance with the Middleburg limit, and not look as if she'd dressed in a hurry and forgotten her collar!
(Rand laughs.)

MRS. RAND: *(Offstage.)* Really! I should think she was much too old to be so advanced in the styles as that!

CICELY: The flowers are lovely all over the house. Father, you ought to see them! They came from a New York florist. *(Mrs. Rand off stage "Good-bye. See you at five.")* Our man here hadn't anything but ferns and aniline-dyed pinks.

MRS. RAND: *(Re-enters.)* Kate Mulholland called up to tell me Mary Carterson's mother-in-law is visiting her from South Norwalk, and went down street this morning wearing one of those new washing tub hats—and she's sixty, if she isn't over! She was born in 1846—at least she used to be!

RAND: *(Still reading.)* When do you expect your crowd to come this afternoon?

CICELY: Crowd? *(She laughs derisively.)* The only thing that can get a crowd in Middleburg is a fire or funeral!

MRS. RAND: As we expect Teresa at four, I asked everybody to come in at five. But you know, father, "everybody" in Middleburg isn't many!

CICELY: Not many—nor much!

RAND: You have the best the town affords, and it's good old stock!

CICELY: I'm afraid Tess'll think it's rather tame for a girl who has been presented at two European courts!

MRS. RAND: Yes, I'm afraid she'll find it awfully dull. Don't you think, father, we could go to New York, if only for the winter months?

RAND: Don't tell me you're ambitious, too?

MRS. RAND: Well, I've done all, in a social way, a woman can in Middleburg, and I want to do more.

CICELY: You can't tell the difference in Middleburg between a smart afternoon tea and a Mother's Meeting, or a Sunday-school teacher's conclave, or a Lenten Sewing Circle, or a Fair for the Orphan Asylum, or any other like "Event"! It's always the same old people and the same old thing! Oh, Lord, we live in a cemetery!
RAND: Molly, wouldn't you rather be *in* Middleburg—than *nit* in the City?

MRS. RAND: But with our influence and our friends—we'd take letters—I would soon have the position your wife was entitled to in the City, too.

CICELY: I don't care a darn about the position, if I can only have something to do, and something to see! Who wants to smell new-mown hay if he can breathe in gasoline on Fifty Avenue instead! Think of the theaters! the crowds! Think of being able to go out on the street and see some one you *didn't* know even by sight!

RAND: *(Laughs, amused.)* Molly! How can you deceive yourself? A banker from a small country town would give you about as much position as he could afford to pay for on the West Side, above Fifty-ninth Street.

MRS. RAND: But George said you'd been asked to join a big corporation in New York, which would make the family's everlasting fortune, and social position beside.

RAND: *(Looks up, angry.)* George had no right telling you that. I told him only in confidence. What is this anyway—a family conspiracy?

CICELY: No, it is the American legation shut up in Peking, longing for a chance to escape from social starvation.

RAND: *(Thoroughly irritated.)* Now listen! This has got to stop, once and for all! So long as I'm the head of this family, it's going to keep its head and not lose it! And our home is here, and will be here, if to hold it I have to die in harness.

MRS. RAND: *(Going to him affectionately.)* Father, don't be angry! You know your will is law with all of us. And so long as you want it, we'll stay right here.

CICELY: Giving teas to the wallflower brigade, and dinners to the Bible class! And our cotillion favors will be articles appropriate for the missionaries' boxes! Oh, Lord!

RAND: Mother, Cicely has convinced me of one thing.

CICELY: *(Delighted.)* Not really! Good! What?

RAND: You go to no finishing school in New York! You get finished all you're going to, right here in Middleburg. New York would completely turn your head!

CICELY: Well, don't worry; Middleburg will "finish" me all right! Good and strong! Maybe New York would turn your head, but Middleburg turns my— *(She is going to say "Stomach," but her mother interrupts.)*

MRS. RAND: Cicely!
(Enter George. He is a handsome, clean-cut young American, of about twenty-seven.)

GEORGE: Hello, everybody!

RAND: *(Surprised.)* Hello, George! What's the matter? It's only half past four! Nothing happened in the office?

GEORGE: Nothing! All day! That's why I am here. I thought I'd be in good time for Tess; and, so far as missing anything really doing in the office is concerned, I could have left at ten this morning— *(Adds half aside.)* or almost any morning, in this—our city!

CICELY: Look out! The word city is a red rag to a bull with father, today! And it's for good in the graveyard! I'm going to dress. Thank the Lord, I've actually got somebody new to look smart for, if it's only my sister! *(Yawns and starts to go.)*

RAND: Who's coming to your tea party?

CICELY: *(As she goes out.)* All the names are on the tombstones in the two churchyards, plus Miss Carterson's mother-in-law from South Norwalk!

MRS. RAND: I must dress, too. *(Going over to Rand.)* Dear, aren't you going to change your coat, and help me?

RAND: Oh, Molly, don't ask me to bore myself with your old frumps!

MRS. RAND: *I have to!* And I don't know that I take any more interest than you do in what sort of a hat Mary Carterson's mother is wearing! But if it were in New York—

RAND: *(Sneers.)* Stop! I meant what I said—let's drop that!

MRS. RAND: All right—I didn't say anything!

GEORGE: Look here, father—mother's right.

RAND: *(Interrupting.)* No, you do the "looking," George, and straight in my eyes! *(He does so.)* Your mother's wrong, but it isn't her fault, it's you children.

MRS. RAND: *(Remonstrating.)* Now, father—

GEORGE: But we're not children, and that's the mistake you make! I'm twenty-seven.

MRS. RAND: Yes, father, you forget—George is twenty-seven!

GEORGE: I'm no long a boy!

RAND: Then why did you tell your mother about this offer I had from New York, when I told you it was absolutely confidential! And a man in business knows what the word "confidential" means.

MRS. RAND: It was my fault; I wormed it out of George!

GEORGE: Nonsense, mother! *(To his father.)* I told, because I thought you needed a good, big hump, and I believed, if all of us put our shoulders to it, we could move you.

RAND: Out of Middleburg?

GEORGE: Yes!

RAND: *Into New York?*

GEORGE: Yes!

RAND: Listen, George—

GEORGE: *(Going on.)* What position is there for a fellow like me in a hole like this?