

# BACK OF THE BALLOT .

A WOMAN SUFFRAGE FARCE IN ONE ACT.

BY

GEORGE MIDDLETON

Author of POSSESSION, EMBERS, TRADITION, NOWADAYS, Etc.

Samuel French: Publisher

28 -30 West Thirty-eighth Street : New York

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26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND

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The great number of requests which I have had from different suffrage groups has prompted me to write this little farce. Many of my other plays have dealt with various phases of the woman movement, but no one of them has been written for propaganda purposes, since they were, in the main, efforts to interpret the modern spirit rather than to convince as to its merits.

In BACK OF THE BALLOT, I have written a farce, frankly for propaganda and fun. It has been constructed with a consideration of the enforced limitations of non-professional production, in the hope that it may be found of value to various amateur groups throughout the country. I have had in mind the phrase that "when argument fails, try laughter," and so I dedicate this to my friends among the "Antis."

## BACK OF THE BALLOT

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### CAST.

JENNIE *Who wishes to be considered part of "the people"*  
MR. MARTIN *Her father, who is a "dominant male" but well intentioned and sentimental*  
BRUCE *His butler, who has too many domestic responsibilities to be burdened with voting*  
A POLICEMAN *Who was born in bonnie Ireland but now enforces the law of this country*  
A BURGLAR *Who is open to argument though frail*

SCENE:—JENNIE'S room, in her father's house late one night in Spring. During a Woman Suffrage Campaign.

## Back of The Ballot

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SCENE:—The scene is JENNIE MARTIN'S room. At the right is a window with a suggestion of trees outside. Near this is a screen half way up stage. A door from the hallway is in the back, slightly near the right; this opens in toward the window so that one entering would be facing the large couch, which is at the left of the door, extending down stage. By the head of the couch, on the wall, near the doorway, is an electric switch which lights the strong reading light over the couch as well as those over her desk against the wall down stage extreme left. This desk is littered with papers and above it are several rows of portentous books—probably on the "Woman question." In one of the drawers there are some "Votes for Women" buttons. Near the desk, on the wall, there is another push button connecting with the butler's pantry. In front of the window is a chair. Above the couch is a large "Votes for Women" pennant in yellow and black.

The curtain rises on the stage which is dark, save for the faint moonlight which comes in the window. There is quite a pause. Then the window is cautiously pushed open and THE BURGLAR is seen slowly stealing in. He leaves the window open and looks about as though in

search of the bureau. A noise is heard outside and he quickly conceals himself behind the screen.

MR. MARTIN, loudly opens the door in back. He pushes the electric switch and JENNIE is seen sleep, on the deep couch.

MR. MARTIN is dressed in his pajamas covered by his dressing gown. He wears slippers. He is a middle-aged, domineering man, used to having his own way. He wears glasses with a flowing black ribbon.

JENNIE is a very attractive girl about twenty-four, thoroughly "feminine"—whatever that means. She has on a beautiful negligée, and has apparently fallen asleep while reading the books which are by her side.

(NOTE: The farce must be played rapidly.)

MARTIN. (Loudly throughout) Jennie, are you asleep?

JENNIE. (Sitting up) I was. This book put me there.

MARTIN. But have I awakened you to the absurdity of your position?

JENNIE. I'm always comfortable when I'm asleep.

MARTIN. Well, I couldn't even get to sleep with your absurd arguments still ringing in my ears.

JENNIE. (Smiling sweetly throughout and not leaving the couch) I thought my facts would make an impression.

MARTIN. (Walking up and down throughout) Such "facts" never make any impression on me.

JENNIE. Then why did you keep awake?

MARTIN. I tell you, you shan't march to-morrow in that Woman Suffrage parade.

JENNIE. I won't march if you'll promise to vote for us.

MARTIN. I won't be bribed to change my convictions.

JENNIE. (Sweetly) But I must march to show that one of the family believes in Democracy.

MARTIN. (By the screen) Democracy be hanged!

JENNIE. (Quickly) It is.

MARTIN. (Going to her tolerantly, as THE BURGLAR, unseen by the others, sticks his head out curiously from behind the screen) But you women always get what is good for you without the vote—if you can convince us.

JENNIE. (Taking his hand affectionately) But that wastes so much of our time.

MARTIN. (Doggedly withdrawing it) Well, at any rate "Indirect Influence" doesn't take you out of the home.

JENNIE. Oh, yes, it does. It takes weeks and weeks at the Capitol.

MARTIN. But—

JENNIE. Now, if we had the ballot, it would only take us ten minutes at the polls to convince the legislators of what we want.

MARTIN. But—

JENNIE. Then we'd have so much more time to stay at home and bake your biscuits.

MARTIN. (Explosively, as he moves again toward the screen and THE BURGLAR withdraws from listening) I won't have my home broken up this way.

JENNIE. Daddy, dear, it's you who are disturbing the house.

MARTIN. (Strutting up and down again) It's my house. I'm your father.

JENNIE. I haven't disputed that, have I, Dad?

MARTIN. I tell you, you shan't make a fool of me by marching alone.

JENNIE. But I shan't be alone. (Smiling triumphantly) Mother will be with me.

MARTIN. (*Halted in astonishment*) Your mother!

JENNIE. Hasn't she broken the news to you?

MARTIN. What's the matter with her? Haven't I been a good husband?

JENNIE. And a darling Daddy. We both love you.

MARTIN. (*Pointing his finger at her emphatically*) If you both had the vote, you'd only vote like *me*.

JENNIE. But *you* said it would double the ignorant vote.

MARTIN. Do you want all the chivalry to die out?

JENNIE. Is it chivalry to refuse us what we want?

MARTIN. (*Pacing again*) I tell you, I shan't have you and your mother submitted to the insults of men along the sidewalks. I forbid it.

JENNIE. Then, father, if you want to protect us, won't you march along with us?

MARTIN. (*Staggered at the thought*) Me march for Woman Suffrage!

JENNIE. (*Simply*) Other men have.

MARTIN. You call them men!

JENNIE. No, heroes!

MARTIN. Heroes, nothing. They're all "hen-pecked." They can't run their own families.

JENNIE. Can you?

MARTIN. Yes. Somebody's got to be head of the house. The family unit is the political unit.

JENNIE. And you're *it*!

MARTIN. Yes. (*He sneezes violently*) I am perfectly qualified to represent you in the community.

JENNIE. But man and woman are different.

MARTIN. (*Emphatically*) That's the reason you're not qualified to vote.

JENNIE. Have you ever been a woman?

(THE BURGLAR looks out quickly in astonishment

and then starts back as MARTIN approaches the screen.)

MARTIN. No!

JENNIE. Well, since you can't possibly remember how it feels to be a woman, and since we're different; how *can* you represent me?

MARTIN. (*With assurance*) Your brother and I can represent you and your mother, all right.

JENNIE. But brother is already representing his two wives: (*Again THE BURGLAR looks out, not understanding what he has stolen into*) His new wife and his divorced wife. *She* hasn't married again, so she's still got to have *somebody* to represent her.

MARTIN. (*Naturally exasperated*) You argue just like a woman.

JENNIE. (*Confidentially*) Dad, I *am* a woman.

MARTIN. And it's woman's place to stay at home. You know nothing of politics.

JENNIE. Give us the vote and we'll learn.

MARTIN. (*Sarcastically*) And while you're experimenting the country will go to the bow-wows.

JENNIE. Oh, no, Dad, you men will not stop voting. *That* will save us!

MARTIN. It certainly will. I'm glad you've got some sense left. (*Loftily*) We're made by *nature* to protect our women. Back of the ballot lies the bullet! (*Arguing*) Could *you* enforce the law? Could *you* go to war for your country?

JENNIE. Could *you* go to war, Dad?

MARTIN. You know very well I couldn't: *I'm* near-sighted.

JENNIE. Yet you vote, Daddy. (*He is about to answer this—or at least try to—when THE BURGLAR sneezes*) Dad, you'd better close that window. You're getting cold.

MARTIN. I didn't sneeze. You did.

JENNIE. I didn't. You did.

MARTIN. You did, because *I* didn't.

JENNIE. That proves it.

MARTIN. (*Starting to argue again*) As I was saying——

JENNIE. (*Quickly*) Dad, if there were a burglar here, would you protect me?

(*A pistol is suddenly seen by the audience behind the screen, in THE BURGLAR'S hand, as though he were prepared for an emergency.*)

MARTIN. (*Proudly*) Of course, I would. (*Nervously*) But—but don't talk nonsense.

JENNIE. Wouldn't you call a policeman?

MARTIN. (*Consoling her*) Certainly. If there was time.

JENNIE. (*Laughing*) Then *he* enforces the law, not you.

MARTIN. (*Exploding again*) The city pays him to do that. I pay taxes to the city.

JENNIE. So do I pay taxes. But I have no say how they are to be spent.

MARTIN. (*Going to door*) There's no use trying to argue with a woman.

JENNIE. (*Nestling comfortably*) No, Daddy, you are always beaten.

MARTIN. (*Coming to her again very much excited*) Beaten, am I? If you keep on getting so excited and emotional about this Woman Suffrage—I'll—I'll stump against it myself.

JENNIE. (*Sitting up quickly and taking his hand*) Oh, Daddy, *will* you? (*He is flabbergasted*) That's what I've been praying for. You'd make us so many converts.

MARTIN. Now, you're getting impertinent.

JENNIE. (*Laughing, affectionately*) Oh, no, Daddy, dear. Really, I'm not. I love you; only I hate to see you back in Noah's Ark.

MARTIN. The Ark! If it hadn't been for the Ark where would you and I have been?

JENNIE. In the Dead Sea, I suppose. Come, Daddy, kiss me.

MARTIN. That's the way with women. You won't listen to reason. Then you want to kiss me. But your mother's different.

JENNIE. (*Quickly*) Oh, Daddy, please don't disturb her. I want her to be rested for the parade.

MARTIN. The parade? Ha! I'd like to see her march after *I* get through with her.

JENNIE. There'll be no charge for admission.

MARTIN. Good-night.

JENNIE. (*Taking his hand*) Won't you kiss me?

MARTIN. You can't get around me that way.

JENNIE. Kiss me, and I'll promise——

MARTIN. Not to march?

JENNIE. I'll promise to let you protect me when I'm in danger.

MARTIN. (*Not kissing her*) Yes; with all your freedom, you women have to call on the men when you're in danger. And in spite of what you say, I'll protect you. Thank God, chivalry isn't dead. Not while *I* live.

(*He goes out slamming the door after him.*)

JENNIE. Dear Daddy, and he means so well by us——

(*She yawns, picks up the book and starts to read, but she soon begins to nod. Finally she grows sleepy again, and apparently too tired to undress, she reaches to the switch, putting out the light. The room is in darkness, save for the moonlight as before. She yawns again and then nestles in the pillows. There is a pause.*)

THE BURGLAR now steps out cautiously as

*though tip-toeing to the window. He feels, somehow, this is no place for him. As he is half way, he sneezes.)*

JENNIE. (*Sitting up*) Daddy, you are getting cold.

*(Another suppressed sneeze follows instantly. She flashes on the light, sitting up. She sees THE BURGLAR, who turns and covers her with his revolver.*

*The BURGLAR has passed the voting age, but has not been unduly worn by that experience. In fact, though roughly clad, he has rather an attractive face, in spite of its needing a shave. But he has a sense of humor and speaks with a certain sarcastic emphasis which is not unattractive in appeal. His grammar is not accurate though his heart is good.)*

BURGLAR. Don't pipe or I'll shoot.

JENNIE. (*Eyes him a second, then smiles sweetly without any fear throughout*) Do you believe in "Votes for Women?"

BURGLAR. (*Staggering back*) Holy mackerel!

JENNIE. That's no answer.—Did you hear us just now?

BURGLAR. And me gettin' me death in de draft.

JENNIE. (*Naively*) Well, don't you think I out-argued him?

BURGLAR. (*Stepping back*) Say, don't pull any of dat stuff on me. I'm a poor guy!

JENNIE. (*Eagerly*) Are you in doubt, too?

BURGLAR. Not a bit. I want yer jewels, quick!

JENNIE. Now, if you're in the least doubt about Woman Suffrage—

BURGLAR. (*Defensively*) Can it!

JENNIE. But I simply can't let a chance like this escape.

BURGLAR. But—

JENNIE. When you've finished robbing the room and you've nothing else to do, we can talk Suffrage.

BURGLAR. Don't move, or I'll shoot.

JENNIE. Dear me, don't shout so! You'll disturb father. And I don't want him to interrupt us till I convert you. Don't point that thing at me. It might go off, you know. And if you killed me, you—you'd be tried for murder, wouldn't you?

BURGLAR. No—for playin' pinochle.

JENNIE. And if you were caught, you'd be tried by men.

BURGLAR. So dey tell me.

JENNIE. (*Quickly*) You see, if I committed a murder, I wouldn't be tried by my own sex, would I?

BURGLAR. Say, what's y'er handin' me?

JENNIE. (*Volubly*) Simply this. You men have some say in the law under which you are to be tried. I have also got to obey the law, and yet I have no say in making it. (*Smiling*) Don't you think that's a good argument?

BURGLAR. (*Nonplussed*) Say, lady, what difference does it make whether y'er sent up by skirts or by pants?

JENNIE. (*Sitting on foot of the couch*) All the difference in the world. For if a lot of men think any of the laws unjust, you can vote to have them changed. If we women don't like them, we can do nothing. See?

BURGLAR. Say, I—

JENNIE. (*Sweetly throughout*) You voted last election, didn't you?

BURGLAR. Sure. Twice.

JENNIE. You're a burglar, aren't you?

BURGLAR. No; I'm a manicurist.

JENNIE. Well, now, I'll leave it to you. Here we are. You and I. Am I not as well qualified to vote as you are?

BURGLAR. Y'er as cool as a new house. But if you tink yer can talk me out of robbin' you——

JENNIE. (*Sweetly*) But wouldn't you also like to take a few ideas with you?

BURGLAR. (*Roughly*) I didn't come here to get ideas.

JENNIE. (*Sympathetically*) Are you robbing me because you're poor?

BURGLAR. No. 'Cause I want to buy gasolene for me new motor.

JENNIE. I believe you're shy.

BURGLAR. Shy?

JENNIE. Yes, shy and timid. You're hungry. (*Rising*) I'll ring for chocolate.

BURGLAR. Chocolate! (*As she moves toward the pantry button*) Don't ring that bell or I'll beadyer! No monkey business, mind! (*She turns, looking at him*) Chocolate! Ugh! Why didn't yer make it *milk*?

JENNIE. We have milk, too. (*Abruptly*) Do you happen to have a cow?

BURGLAR. (*Again overcome*) Not wid me.

JENNIE. (*Sitting on couch and speaking with great rapidity as though making an address*) Well, you see, in the old days, women could look after their own cows. So they could see that the milk they gave their babies was pure and clean. Now, we get our milk from dairies and pure milk has become a matter of legislation. Women are concerned with milk; therefore women ought to have some say in the legislation that governs the milk that comes into the home.

BURGLAR. (*Swallowing hard*) But——

JENNIE. Ah, you agree with me, about the milk. (*Goes on quickly*) Well, it's the same with all the manufactured food products. The water we drink no longer comes from our own well. It's all a matter of legislation. Just like the milk.—But you look thirsty. I'll send for the milk. But there are

so many tubercular cows You won't mind taking a chance, like our babies?

BURGLAR. (*Who has sat on the chair by the window, overcome*) Phew!

JENNIE. (*Going towards bell*) I'll ring for Bruce.

BURGLAR. (*Feebly*) Is he another of you suffra-get-tees?

JENNIE. No, *he* votes. He's our butler. I'll see if he's up.

BURGLAR. (*Recovering and suspecting danger*) Don't touch dat button or I——

JENNIE. (*Pushing it coolly*) You're too chivalrous to shoot an unenfranchised female.

BURGLAR. Well, I'll be blowed (*Suddenly*) Say, I guess I got de wrong house.

JENNIE. You can't possibly escape Woman Suffrage.

BURGLAR. (*Going to window*) I can't? Watch me!

JENNIE. (*Following him and looking out window*) If you go that way, the policeman will arrest you.

BURGLAR. (*Stepping back from window, as he apparently sees a policeman below*) The Cop!

JENNIE. (*Purposely melodramatic*) Yes; he is watching this room.

BURGLAR. (*In the same tone*) He spotted me gettin' in?

JENNIE. He would, if you went out. (*Sweetly again*) But if I don't give the alarm, *he* can't do anything. And I shan't give the alarm unless you run away from me.

BURGLAR. (*Sinking back in the chair again*) Well, of all de——

JENNIE. Now, if you wish to be saved, sit right where you are and we'll have a nice little chat about Suffrage. (*She crosses to couch again and sits there as he follows her helplessly with his eyes, succumbing*

*to the inevitable*) You see, the Amendment comes up next Fall, and all you men are going to say whether you think we women are intelligent enough to vote. You see, it's entirely in *your* hands. We women have nothing to say about it. We can talk forever until you choose to give it to us—either through conviction or exhaustion. So long as we get it, it doesn't matter *which*.—Now, I want you to promise me, you'll vote for the Amendment.

BURGLAR. (*Venturing*) Eh?

JENNIE. We need every vote. By the way, as a well informed voter, do you know what an Amendment to the Constitution is?

BURGLAR. Say, I'm a burglar, not a college professor.

JENNIE. Exactly; yet you *both* have the vote! Ignorance and intelligence among men as well as women. So why keep it from *all* the women if *all* the men have it?

BURGLAR. (*Sadly*) And I thought dis job would be a cinch!

JENNIE. (*Suddenly rising*) You tore your coat getting in. Take it off and I'll mend it. It only needs a little stitch.

BURGLAR. (*Glancing toward window*) Say, I didn't come here to be tailored.

JENNIE. (*Getting needle and thread from desk*) But I like to be doing something while I'm talking, and I don't want you to be arrested. Hand it over. (*He hesitates*) Come! Haven't you anyone to take care of you? (*He looks at her, then at the window, while she threads the needle. He finally takes off his coat and hands it to her. She sits on the couch and deftly sews during the following*) Now, let me see, where was I?

BURGLAR. Page ten.

JENNIE. (*Looking up*) What a lovely sense of humor you have, for a burglar. Did you get that from your father?

BURGLAR. No, from me mudder. She married three times and had nine kids.

JENNIE. (*Casually*) How interesting! Did she work in addition?

BURGLAR. No. She *rested* between times in a factory.

JENNIE. Didn't she find factory conditions terrible?

BURGLAR. Ah, some women would rader work than live wid father.

JENNIE. I wish you'd give me her name and address. It's her fight we are waging, too.

BURGLAR. Her fight?

JENNIE. Yes. You see there are several million women in modern industry. Now the men who have the vote have the respect of the legislators. You know how careful they are of the labor vote—particularly before election. But the women, who are also doing the hard work of the country, have not the slightest say in the factory conditions under which they work. Don't you think they ought to have? (*He can't deny it, as she hands him back his coat*) There now! Put it on!—I wonder what can be keeping Bruce.

BURGLAR. (*Looking at the coat*) Say, if de ladies vote, dey won't stop sewin' for us, will dey?

JENNIE. Voting doesn't interfere with *your* profession, does it?

BURGLAR. And yer told yer father yer could cook biscuits, too.

JENNIE. Yes, lots of men who vote can cook and sew. You see dropping a ballot in the box, once a year, isn't going to destroy our charms either.

BURGLAR. (*Overcome*) Well, I'll be blowed!—Dey will still cook and sew!

JENNIE. (*Smiling*) I thought *that* argument would appeal to you. So many men will vote for us if they think we can still go on doing things for them.

BURGLAR. (*Sadly, putting on his coat*) I never t'ought I'd come to dis.

JENNIE. (*Matter of fact tone*) Now, when Bruce comes, I want you to help me.

BURGLAR. (*Resigned*) Go as far as you like. (*Awed*) Dey can cook and sew.

JENNIE. I want you to help me convert Bruce.

BURGLAR. Lady, if he don't vote for yer, I'll kill 'im.

JENNIE. (*Casually*) How nice of you!

BURGLAR. (*Eyeing her*) Say, do yer know yer've been riskin' yer life de last half hour?

JENNIE. Yes, but every vote is important.

BURGLAR. (*Taken back*) You tink dis votin' is mighty important?

JENNIE. Yes. Don't you?

BURGLAR. Naw! Take it from me, yer'll be disappointed. I never got anything out of votin' but de price of me winter shoes.

JENNIE. And yet you got the vote by Natural Law!

BURGLAR. I got it 'cause I registered.

JENNIE. You did nothing yourself to get the right to register.

BURGLAR. Sure, I did. I lived in de district fer a month. I thought yer knew somethin' about politics.

JENNIE. And I lived here for twenty-five years and I can vote.

BURGLAR. (*Combatively*) Who said yer can't?

JENNIE. You men.

BURGLAR. What's the matter wid 'em? Why are dey so selfish wantin' to hog de whole game?

JENNIE. That's what we women are wondering. Think of it. You can vote and I can't.

BURGLAR. Tough luck. Yer'll have me weepin' in a minute. (*A knock is heard on the door and THE BURGLAR instantly becomes alert again, drawing his revolver which he has placed in his hip pocket*) No double-crossin'.

JENNIE. You'll help me?

BURGLAR. I ain't anxious to be pinched by dat Cop.

JENNIE. Come in, Bruce.

(*BRUCE enters, leaving the door open. He is a fine, kind, looking negro about fifty, dressed in a butler's suit. THE BURGLAR covers him with his pistol.*)

BURGLAR. Hands up!

BRUCE. (*Doing so, with fright throughout*) Oh!

JENNIE. (*Calmly*) Now, Bruce, do you believe in "Votes for Women?"

BRUCE. (*Eyeing the pistol and shaking*) M-m-must I?—

JENNIE. Sooner or later. I've just converted this gentleman.

BRUCE. Y-y-y-as.

JENNIE. Then, Bruce, get this gentleman a glass of milk.

BRUCE. Eh?

BURGLAR. Yer stay here, see?

JENNIE. But aren't you thirsty?

BURGLAR. Not after hearin' about dem cows.

JENNIE. Then sit down, Bruce.

BURGLAR. (*As BRUCE hesitates*) Sit down!

JENNIE. (*To BURGLAR*) Won't you sit down, too?

BURGLAR. Say, if yer don't mind, lady, must I hear more?

JENNIE. We've scarcely covered the ground.

BURGLAR. (*Looking towards window*) I tink dat's what I'd better be doin'.

JENNIE. (*Pointing to BRUCE who has his hands still up*) But Bruce is praying for enlightenment. Aren't you, Bruce?

BRUCE. I'se—I'se—I'se mighty anxious to put my hands down.

BURGLAR. Well then, don't butt in.

BRUCE. (*Putting his hands down*) And I'se powerful anxious to keep out of this 'ere argument.

JENNIE. You're like lots of men, Bruce. But they can't till it's decided; so if they're tired of hearing about it, they can get a rest by giving it to us. (*To BURGLAR*) Don't you think so?

BURGLAR. Anything yer say, goes.

JENNIE. You vote, don't you, Bruce?

BRUCE. Vote?

BURGLAR. (*Gruffly*) Don't yer understand English? (*Spelling it*) V-o-t-t-e?

BRUCE. I ken—but I don't.

JENNIE. (*Dramatically*) You see. He can but he don't. (*Correcting herself*) Doesn't.

BURGLAR. I heard 'im.

JENNIE. Why don't you vote, Bruce?

BRUCE. 'Cause I can't neglect de house to vote. Dat's de gospel truf.

JENNIE. Don't you believe in "Votes for Women?"

BRUCE. (*Drawing himself up*) I'se perfectly neutral.

BURGLAR. Yer father must have been stuffing him.

JENNIE. You see what we're up against? The great government at Washington gave *him* the vote and now I've got to ask *him* whether I can have the vote.

BURGLAR. (*Indignantly to BRUCE*) Ain't yer ashamed of yerself?

BRUCE. (*Looking about for means of escape*) I'se perfectly neutral.

JENNIE. And yet by being indifferent to his own franchise, like thousands of other men, he won't even vote to give me the right to vote.

BURGLAR. (*Stepping nearer to BRUCE*) He won't, won't he? (*Pointing pistol at BRUCE*) Will yer give her her rights, eh?

BRUCE. (*Backing toward window*) I'se perfectly neutral.

BURGLAR. Won't yer vote for her?

BRUCE. I'se neutral.

BURGLAR. If yer don't vote fer her and show yer manhood, I'll kill yer.

BRUCE. (*Screaming*) Help!

BURGLAR. Shut up!

BRUCE. (*Shouts out window*) Help! Murder! Police! Police! (*THE BURGLAR pulls him away from window and presses the pistol against him. He falls on his knees quivering*) I'll vote for it! I'll vote for it!

JENNIE. (*Rushing across*) Stop!

BURGLAR. He called the Cop. I'll settle him.

JENNIE. (*Rushing between them*) No. Don't kill him *now*. He said he'd vote for us, and we need his vote. (*BURGLAR steps back. BRUCE continues to shout for help*) Hush! Bruce, you'll wake the dead! You see, here's father.

(*MARTIN comes rushing on excitedly.*)

MARTIN. What's all this noise?

BURGLAR. (*Covering him*) Throw up yer hands!

MARTIN. (*Almost collapsing with fright and tottering toward the couch*) Oh!

JENNIE. (*Quickly*) Don't try to protect me, Dad. (*To BURGLAR*) And don't kill father. I have no one else to represent me.

MARTIN. (*Sputtering with his hands up*) I—I—

BURGLAR. Why, he can't even speak for himself.

JENNIE. He gets so emotional at times, too. And you ought to see brother Tommy at a baseball game. Bruce, don't you think father's too emotional to vote?

BRUCE. (*As his hands go up again instantly*)

when THE BURGLAR *points pistol at him*) Yas'm yas'm.

MARTIN. I—I—take that pistol away——

BRUCE. He's just wedded to dat ere gun.

BURGLAR. (*To BRUCE*) Shut up.

BRUCE. For de Lawd's sake!

MARTIN. (*Pleading*) Jennie, tell him to take it away.

JENNIE. (*Gaily*) Daddy, isn't this a splendid argument against "Indirect Influence?"

MARTIN. Eh?

JENNIE. Yes. Now, if *I* had a pistol I should save you myself. It's the same with voting. If women had the vote they wouldn't have to ask anybody else to do it for them. That's all the ballot is—a pistol held over bad legislators.

MARTIN. Don't call me names—I'm helpless.

JENNIE. You see now what it feels like to be a woman.

MARTIN. (*Sputtering*) Who—who is this man?

JENNIE. He's my guest.

BRUCE. (*Nervously throughout*) Oh!

MARTIN. I told you what Woman Suffrage would do to woman.

JENNIE. But, father, his vote is as good as yours.

BURGLAR. Twice as good. (*To MARTIN*) Now don't git humorous.

JENNIE. Father can't help being funny. He doesn't *think* about Woman Suffrage like you. He just *feels*.

MARTIN. (*Sputtering*) Am I to keep my hands help up forever?

JENNIE. That's like the legislation we women want. Held up. (*Pointing to BURGLAR*) At the pleasure of those who have the power.

MARTIN. (*Blustering*) I protest.

JENNIE. That's all we women can do. Remember, Daddy,—(*Melodramatically*)—Back of his ballot lies his bullet.

BURGLAR. (*Timidly*) Now, if dere's anything else before I go, lady——

JENNIE. Don't you want that glass of milk?

BRUCE. (*Eagerly*) I'll get it.

BURGLAR. Yer stay here.

JENNIE. And you might ask father if I may parade.

BURGLAR. (*Flourishing his revolver*) Can she?

BRUCE. For de Lawd's sake, Mister Martin, let 'er.

BURGLAR. Eh?

MARTIN. Yes, yes. You can parade. (*Trying to save his face*) But I insist you march beside your mother!

BURGLAR. (*Quickly*) Now me mission in life is done, tanks fer de sewing and de ideas.

JENNIE. Don't forget to send your mother's name.

MARTIN. Don't let him go—Jennie! Jennie!

BRUCE. He's a sneak thief.

JENNIE. No, he's a very chivalrous gentleman. He's going to give me what I want.

(*As the BURGLAR goes toward the window, BRUCE, who is still beside it, calls out.*)

BRUCE. De police—t'ank de Lawd!

BURGLAR. Pinched!

JENNIE. (*Points to back door*) Go this way.

(*A fine looking, muscular Irish POLICEMAN with a broad smile and a rich brogue, puts his head in the window, and his hand, in which is a revolver, is leaning on the sill. He speaks with a rich Irish brogue.*)

POLICEMAN. What's all this row?

BURGLAR. (*Seeing he is caught, and covering with his pistol*) Drop dat gun!

POLICEMAN. Well, begorra, you've got the drop on me.

(*He throws his pistol to the ground and JENNIE picks it up and puts it on the chair by window. In this excitement BRUCE goes beside MARTIN by the couch. THE BURGLAR, with his back to the audience, can easily cover the three with his revolver.*)

JENNIE. Now let me help you in. (*She helps THE POLICEMAN in through the window*) Do you believe in "Votes for Women?"

POLICEMAN. (*Staggering back*) Holy smithering smokes!

MARTIN. (*Pompously again*) Do your duty and arrest that man!

JENNIE. Stop! I won't have him arrested. He's got a vote.

POLICEMAN. Shure, don't worry, Miss. If you put it that way, I'll respect your wishes.

MARTIN and BRUCE. Oh!

BURGLAR. Y're a sensible guy for a Cop.

POLICEMAN. Shure, I admit it.

MARTIN. (*Fuming*) But—but——

JENNIE. Yes—and father was just admitting that the police are our very *best* citizens.

POLICEMAN. Now wuz he?

MARTIN. I never said anything of the kind.

BURGLAR. Yer did. I heard yer.

JENNIE. Yes. You said the ballot means the power to enforce the law. Therefore our best citizens are policemen.

POLICEMAN. (*Laughing*) Ha! Ha! That's a foine joke!

JENNIE. That's just what I thought. Don't you, Bruce?

BRUCE. (*Seeing the revolver*) Yas'm.

POLICEMAN. (*Looks at them*) Say what is this?

JENNIE. It's a political meeting.

POLICEMAN. I thought it wuz a mad-house.

MARTIN. (*Groaning*) It is.

JENNIE. Father is head of the house. (*Pointing*) That's father.

POLICEMAN. I'm pleased to meet yer.

JENNIE. This is Bruce, our butler.

POLICEMAN. And who's the guy with the gun?

JENNIE. (*Smiling*) That's Mr. Direct Action!! (*To THE POLICEMAN, as they all stagger back at this*) Would you like a glass of milk?

POLICEMAN. Milk?

JENNIE. (*Anxious to start another argument*) You see the matter of pure milk is a matter of legislation and——

BURGLAR. (*Quickly*) I think I'll be on me way.

MARTIN. Officer, I insist you do your duty and arrest that man.

JENNIE. (*To POLICEMAN*) Stop!

POLICEMAN. (*Who has not moved*) Shure, if yer put it that way, I'll shtop!

MARTIN. Don't interfere with the law, daughter.

JENNIE. I will not have him arrested, so you can make a criminal out of him. I want to save him to have him make a citizen out of me. (*Abruptly to policeman*) By the way, how long have you been a citizen?

MARTIN. Don't answer her; she'll get you in an argument. (*He sneezes*)

JENNIE. When did you take out your papers?

POLICEMAN. (*With richest brogue*) I've bin a good American fur tin years.

JENNIE. Now think of that, Dad: and he and Bruce can vote.

POLICEMAN. Say, are you one of them Suf-fragettes?

ALL. (*Shouting*) Yes.

POLICEMAN. (*Moving back to the others by the*

*couch*) And I've got to march with them all tomorrow!!

JENNIE. (*Quickly*) You're not "henpecked" are you?

POLICEMAN. I ain't married.

JENNIE. Then you have the same vote as brother Tommy and he's got two wives.

POLICEMAN. Help!

JENNIE. (*Arguing again*) You see it's this way—

BURGLAR. Please may I go now. (*He sneezes as he goes toward the window*)

JENNIE. Bruce, put that window down. He's getting cold.

BURGLAR. (*As BRUCE starts toward the window*) Dat's me getaway. You line up wid de others.

MARTIN. Line us up together?!

JENNIE. (*As the three men are standing together in front of the couch*) Yes, Bruce. Take your place among the voters. I'm not a voter. But neither are the idiots nor criminals.

BURGLAR. Say, lady, yer don't mean anything personal by dat?

JENNIE. (*Standing between THE BURGLAR and the others*) Not at all. You can vote till you're convicted. I never can vote till they're convinced.

BURGLAR. (*By the window*) Say, ain't you guys ashamed of yerselves? Tink of de rotten injustice in dis world. You and me can vote 'cause we wear trousers. (*They look at each other*) Ain't yer ashamed? (*They look at each other but don't answer; then he shoots his pistol off at their feet*) Ain't yer?

ALL. Yes.

JENNIE. (*Sweetly*) I knew you'd make them see it. (*They look at one another, as she takes a button from dress and goes to BURGLAR*) Here's a medal for you.

BURGLAR. What's that?

JENNIE. (*Pinning it on*) A "Votes for Women" button.

BURGLAR. Sure, I'll vote fer yer, if dose are some of de guys dat are standin' in yer way.

MARTIN. (*Protesting*) See here!

BURGLAR. (*Threatening with gun*) What?

MARTIN. Don't shoot that off again.

BRUCE. (*Trembling*) No.

POLICEMAN. Yer might miss us.

JENNIE. (*Crossing to desk*) Wait! They are crying for buttons, too.

MARTIN. (*Furiously*) Never!

BURGLAR. (*Pointing gun*) Eh?

MARTIN. (*Meekly*) All right, Jennie.

BURGLAR. You ought to be proud to have a daughter like dat, what cares for a thing enough to fight fer it. What did yer guys ever do to have de vote?

JENNIE. (*As she pins button on*) You see, father, I *could* protect myself. (*To BRUCE*) And here's yours, Bruce.

BURGLAR. (*Threateningly*) Are yer neutral?

BRUCE. (*Emphatically*) No, sir!

POLICEMAN. (*To JENNIE*) Don't I get one? I'm chilly!

JENNIE. (*Sweetly*) Oh, and you're such a nice young man.

POLICEMAN. (*Smiling*) Gee! yer believe in Suffrage and you're a lady!

BURGLAR. (*Quickly*) And now good-bye. I'm off and thanks for de ideas and de stitches. (*To others as he pockets the policeman's revolver which he takes from the chair*) Don't follow me or I'll shoot.

JENNIE. (*Going to him and taking his left hand*) Good-bye. We've had such a nice chat and don't forget the Amendment.

BURGLAR. (*As he steps out the window back-*

ward) Say, haven't yer got a yell er something to cheer me on me way?

JENNIE. (*With an inspiration*) "Votes for Women."

BURGLAR. (*Pointing his revolver at the three*) Dat's it—now all together, boys. "Votes for Women!"

ALL. (*Timidly in different keys*) "Votes for Women!"

JENNIE. Louder.

BURGLAR. (*As he steps down lower, still pointing the pistol*) Louder!

ALL. "Votes for Women!"

JENNIE. Louder!

BURGLAR. (*Pistol just showing*) Louder!

ALL. (*Shouting*) "Votes for Women!!!"

(*The pistol disappears, the window shuts with a slam. JENNIE turns and laughs loudly at the three men who have now sunk back together in a heap upon the couch. Quick curtain.*)

CURTAIN.

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