



More Concert Items for Scouts and Cubs

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Editor's Note:

The reader is reminded that these texts have been written a long time ago. Consequently, they may use some terms or use expressions which were current at the time, regardless of what we may think of them at the beginning of the 21st century. For reasons of historical accuracy they have been preserved in their original form.

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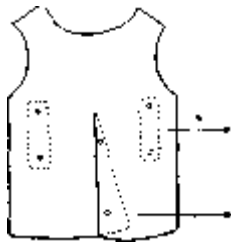
More Concert Items for Scouts and Cubs

The Making of Stage Props.

In the main, there is very little need to spend money hiring costumes. The dresses of all characters in this book can be made quite simply. The following detailed hints are given in connection with some of the more difficult costumes.

Armour. – There are four things required: cardboard, aluminium paint, bifurcated rivets or paper fasteners and tape.

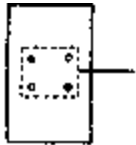
The illustration here given shows the various pieces to be made; and is more or less self-explanatory. The tabs at the back are held by the bifurcated rivets (the head pointing outwards) – they give a very realistic appearance when painted aluminium colour with the rest of the “armour.”



Characters dressed in armour cannot move too freely (probably very life-like in consequence), but if fair room is allowed in the knee pieces and these are held loosely, normal movement has been found easily possible.

1. Make one of these for each suit of armour required.

Cardboard tab at the back. Tape is run through them and tied at the back.



3. Thigh



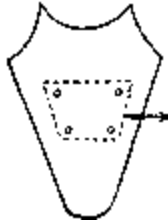
Cut and fold underneath to prevent bulging.

2. Four of these will be necessary, two for the thighs, two for the legs.

Cardboard tab for tape.

3. Two of these knee covers will be necessary.

Fasten at the back with a safety pin. Put these on last moment.



4. Two of these foot covers will be necessary.

Cardboard tab for tapes.

The helmet is made with three strips of cardboard. One encircles the head, one piece passes from back to front (over the top of the head), the end being continued down on to the nose and pointed.



The third piece crosses over the head from side to side. Tissue or light paper should be pushed beneath the cardboard strips to cover the head and then the whole article painted with aluminium paint.

Note: – The arms should be covered with grey artificial silk stockings from which the feet have been removed. Quite an old cheap pair will suit admirably: they give the appearance of mail armour.

Mediaeval Dress. – Excellent mediaeval dress can be arranged in the following manner.

An ordinary woollen pullover and a belt. Light textured knics. with elastic in the bottom of the legs and then pulled fairly high up the thigh. Silk stockings (quite old ones will suit), taped from the foot upwards in criss-cross. Rubber-soled shoes or daps should cover the feet, or, better still, make pointed toed, fairly high legged, footwear out of cheap material, stiffening the soles with cardboard. The tops (front and back) of the leg pieces should be pointed. If these are fairly high no criss-cross taping is necessary.

Dress for the “Beast,” in “The Fairy Comes.”

Make an ordinary loose fitting suit out of cheap brown material. A couple of old brown army blankets are excellent for the purpose if they can be obtained. If possible, make the whole dress (including head) in one piece, leaving long opening down the back for the boy to enter.

The head is the only difficult part but is really quite simple to make. Make a head shape out of a fairly stiff wire and cover with the same material as the body. Leave a large opening for the mouth (to be used as a “spyhole” for the boy inside). Line the mouth with red coloured material, holding it in place with wire, and make large cardboard teeth. Arrange wire crossing the head so that the top of the animal’s head is higher than that of the boy wearing the costume – he wants to be able to see through the mouth. Eyes can be made from lighter material blackening the centres. Don’t forget the ears and the tail and the job is complete.

THE VENTRILOQUIST.

Three boys will be required for this little scena. The VENTRILOQUIST should be an older boy and fairly tall. He should speak with a slightly foreign accent and should be dressed to look as much like a fully grown man as possible. If possible, he should wear a dress suit. If this is not obtainable an ordinary black suit would be suitable; the vest should not be worn but he should have a stiff white shirt front.

The DOLL should be a very young boy. Make him look like a doll by reddening the cheeks and make his mouth larger in appearance by adding red grease paint to the end of the lips.

The third boy is required as a “VOICE.”

Arrange a table in the centre of the stage with a table cover hanging over the sides and reaching the ground in the front. When the curtain is raised the VENTRILOQUIST should be seated on one end of the table (one foot on the ground) and he should support the DOLL on the leg which is fully on the table. The “VOICE” must be under the table (before the curtain goes up, of course).

When the DOLL is supposed to reply, it is in reality the “VOICE” who does so. Careful practice will be necessary to ensure accuracy. When the “VOICE” is speaking, the DOLL mechanically opens and shuts his mouth, making no attempt to make his lips form the words spoken. Throughout the parts supposed spoken by the DOLL the VENTRILOQUIST should keep his mouth partly open as if a genuine performer.

VENT. Hello, Jimmy, and how are you to-night?

VOICE. Quite well, thank you; how are you?

VENT. I’m quite well, thank you.

VOICE. Who is that funny looking women over there – the one with a hat like a bran poultice?

VENT. Don’t be rude – you musn’t say things like that.

VOICE. But it is a funny hat, isn’t it?

VENT. Don’t be rude.

VOICE. But just have one peep. It is a funny hat.

VENT. Do you mean the lady with the brown coat?

VOICE. Yes; isn’t it an awful hat?

VENT. Just over on the left?

VOICE. That's right; the one with the funny hat.
VENT. That's my wife. She's come to see the show.
VOICE. Oh! Did you buy that hat for her?
VENT. I did. I think it a very nice hat.
VOICE. Did you choose it or did she?
VENT. She did, of course; a married man doesn't really choose anything.
VOICE. She chose it?
VENT. Of course she chose it.
VOICE. She chooses some very funny things, doesn't she?
VENT. How do you make that out?
VOICE. I only know two things she has chosen.
VENT. Two things?
VOICE. Yes. One is that hat.
VENT. And the other?
VOICE. You, of course.

VENT. Come, Jimmy, that's going a bit far. Surely we are pals, aren't we? What about a song? Ladies and Gentlemen, with your kind permission I shall be pleased to give a demonstration of my Doll singing while I drink a glass of water. Thank you. A glass of water, please. *(An attendant brings on a glass of water, standing by to take it from the VENTRILOQUIST when he has finished.)* Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, I propose drinking this water and while so doing I shall make my Doll sing. *(This is done.)*

VENT. Very good, Jimmy – you sang that well.
VOICE. I always sing well, don't I?
VENT. Sometimes.
VOICE. Sometimes – you've got a nerve. I always sing well.
VENT. *(Slapping him on the cheek.)* Now, cheeky.

DOLL. *(Jumping down and punching the VENTRILOQUIST.)* Aye – that's too hard. *(The VENTRILOQUIST attempts to catch the DOLL and in so doing upturns the table and exposes the "VOICE." He sits there in ignorance with a paper in front of him. The DOLL and the VENTRILOQUIST run off the stage. The VOICE looks up suddenly and then darts after them.)*

A MONOLOGUE.

*(A boy enters the stage with his head bandaged,
his arm in a sling and supported on a crutch.)*

My word – we have had a bit of trouble. Of course, you would like to know how it happened. It was all quite simple – but it was awful – just awful. It was all through father. He said he he would buy a car with some money he won. We searched town for a car. Father saw one going for £10 – cash, mind you, none of your 6d. down and 6d. a week for life. £10 cash down and the car was ours. It looked to me something in the line of a cross between a chariot and a Sedan chair. The agent said it was a wonderful car and the most marvellous value in cars that he had ever sold.

To cut a long story short, we started. Pa said he'd drive – I don't think he had ever driven anything more furious than a perambulator before – but Pa is game, give him his due.

Pa grabbed that winder thing in front and swung it violently – the car back-fired and Pa back-answered. After furious swings the engine began to hiccough and there was a gentle undulating motion in the car, you know, one of those up and down, see-saw motions. We jumped in afraid the engine might stop at any moment. Pa played about with a few levers. Oh! the things that gear box said! It sounded like a ton of screws falling down a stone staircase.

We were away – backwards – through the window of the showroom. The window cost more than I thought possible and the cash value of the car went up considerably.

Oh! that journey through the town! Shall I ever forget it?

We went straight for a corner where a policeman stood directing traffic. He was most inconsiderate. As we were approaching he held out his hand to us and directed the cross traffic forward. Pa got excited. He stepped on a few things – his hardest step was on the accelerator. It did its job manfully – we simply shot forward – met a milk cart . . . we won. After a long and uninteresting conversation with the policeman we proceeded on our journey.

Horrors! What's that? A woman with a pram was crossing our path. Pa yelled – I yelled – everybody yelled – Pa swerved – the car swerved – we took the perambulator midships. We simply whipped it out of the woman's hands and poured the contents of the pram on to the road.

Horrors! What was that little bundle of white lying so still in the roadway? I jumped out of the car and ran forwards. The little white bundle was perfectly still – not a cry – not a sound. The woman – she had missed being hit – the woman came running up. I felt like nothing on earth. She bent down and grabbed at the prostrate form, then she shrieked in my ear:

“All those sheets will have to be washed again – and you'll pay for it – you – you – you!”

(He looks very tragically and limps off.)

THUMBS DOWN.

(A small variety show can easily be arranged on the following lines. Arrange the scene as an office with a table in the centre or to one side. As the curtain is raised a lad dressed to represent a theatrical agent is seated at the table. After a pause there is a knock, and two roughly dressed youths enter.)

AGENT. Come in. *(The TOUGHS enter.)*

1st T. We 'ave called about that there job.

2nd T. That which we sor in the papers.

AGENT. Ah! *(Looking at them intently.)* I think you will suit admirably. I have been sent here to try to find some local talent good enough for the stage or the films. The trouble with these people is that they will not realise how hopeless they are. It is no use to tell them they are not up to standard: they will not believe me. I have advertised for two men used to dirty work to assist me. I want you to help me.

1st T. Worrer we gorrer do?

AGENT. Let these people in, one at a time. If I don't think much of them I shall point my thumbs down and then your job is to remove them.

2nd T. That's the job for me. Any mallets about?

1st T. What about our life preservers? (*Each has a roll of paper under his coat.*)

2nd T. We're on, Boss. Let's 'ave 'em as soon as you like.

AGENT. You understand quite clearly – if I point my thumbs down like this (*demonstrating*) –

1st T. Chuck 'em out.

(Then arrange for individual items. Some can be quite good turns but let each terminate with "Thumbs Down" the TOUGHS hitting them on the head, shinning them and carrying them off.)

The following are some suggested items: –

Girl singer.

Boy mouth organ soloist.

Acrobats.

Gymnasts,

A would-be actor (to say a short piece of Shakespeare or poetry.)

A party of nigger singers in top-hats and frock-coats.

Violinist or 'cellist. Pianist.

There is no reason why the items given should not be good of their class. If they are farcically arranged in parts it breaks the monotony of the serious items. In one of these farcical turns let the TOUGHS plead with the AGENT to point his thumbs down.

To terminate: –

After the last item has been given –

AGENT. Thank you. You have done quite well.

1st T. What about our pay?

AGENT. We didn't arrange any pay.

2nd T. That's no good to us.

1st T. Pay up.

AGENT. (*Going out.*) We'll see about that again.

1st T. Oh no we shan't. (*He cracks the AGENT on the head and they carry him out.*)

KING WINTER.

A Playlet for Young Boys 6-8 Years of Age.

Characters.

KING WINTER, Mediaeval King in red, lined with white.

KING COAL, a collier with pick and Davy lamp.

SNOWBALL, dressed in spherical frame of wire covered with cotton wool. SANTA CLAUS, traditional.

FOOTBALL, either similar to SNOWBALL, but brown coloured or as a FOOTBALLER.

HERALD, usual dress.

DARK NIGHTS, long black cloak reaching the ground and tall top hat.
JACK FROST, a white suit, dusted with tinsel "frost."

SCENE.

(Stage to be suitably decorated with winter emblems. A dais to be arranged at the back with a throne upon it. As the curtain is raised KING WINTER is seated lip on the throne.)

KING WINTER. I am King Winter, now ruling this land,
I coat your windows with icicles grand.
Many friends I have whom you shall see,
Come hither, my Herald, and call them to me.
(Enter HERALD R.)

First let us see our old friend King Coal,
The fairy books say he is a merry old soul.

HERALD. *(Blows upon his trumpet and proclaims.)* King Coal.

(KING COAL enters R. He kneels to the throne and then stands in his position and faces the audience.)

KING COAL. I am King Coal, a friend very old,
I give you warmth when you are cold.
I get in the fireplace and crackle and burn,
I roast the turkey till it's done to a turn.
I warm cold hands, cold feet as well,
I am a friend of the poor and of the swell.
All people use me, both early and late,
And sit and watch when ! burn red in the grate.

KING WINTER. Yes, King Coal, you are a rare old friend.
Now, Herald, Jack Frost to my land send.

HERALD. *(Blowing on trumpet and announcing.)* Jack Frost.

(JACK FROST enters on the opposite side to KING COAL. JACK FROST kneels to the KING and then stands in his place?)

JACK FROST. I am Jack Frost, who might make you shiver,
But, good friends all, please note I am the giver,
Of ponds frozen over for skating and sliding,
And bringing the snowflake from out of his hiding.

KING COAL. He's a very good friend I am sure we agree,
But it is also plain he's afraid of me.

(JACK FROST cowers.)

KING WINTER. Now, please, good friends, to quarrel be loth,
I am sure in my land there is room for you both.

JACK FROST. 'Tis true, O King! Now all please know,
When I'm about the snowflakes will shew.

KING COAL. Ah yes – here comes Snowball; my! isn't he fat?

JACK FROST. He's rolled down a hill to get like that.

HERALD. Snowball.

*(Enter SNOWBALL same side as JACK FROST.
He bows, then stands near JACK FROST.)*

KING WINTER. Welcome, friend Snowball; you are rather stout,
Still boys are glad when you are about.

SNOWBALL. I am the Snowball – a game full of fun,
Boys pick me up and away they run,
To throw me at someone and shout and cheer,
But they mostly miss so there's no need to fear.
Boys battle with me and love it well,
And look very sad when they hear the school bell.

KING WINTER. As we speak of games let's see our friend,
Old Football. Please, Herald, just call, he'll attend.

HERALD. (*Blowing trumpet.*) Football.
(*FOOTBALL enters, bows, and stands near KING COAL.*)

FOOTBALL. You all know me – I'm the game of the land,
Whether you play or watch from a seat in the stand,
I'm a game loved by all it is very clear –
Look! He's shooting! A goal! What a cheer!

KING WINTER. But my Court's not complete, there's another guest,
He's the one, I'm sure, the boys love best.
Who is he, my subjects? Don't stand there and pause, Do you know?

ALL. Yes, good Santa Claus.

HERALD. (*Blowing trumpet.*) Santa Claus.
(*Enter SANTA CLAUS, he bows, and stands near JACK FROST.*)

SANTA CLAUS. I'm Santa Claus, who comes to your house,
I creep down the chimney as quiet as a mouse.
When all are asleep, and of that I am sure,
I fill up your stockings till they can hold no more.

ALL. Hail, Santa Claus! Good Santa Claus!

Dear friend of our land,
You're ever so grand,
Your bag full of toys,
For good girls and boys,
We greet thee.
Hail, Santa Claus! Good Santa Claus!
A friend to us all,
With reindeer so tall,
And sledge made of wood,
Bring toys for the good,
We greet thee!

SANTA CLAUS. Thank you, my friends, for that jolly song,
I am sure you are glad it will not be long,
Before I come back with plenty of toys,
On Christmas Eve for good girls and boys.

KING WINTER. Now, friends, you're all gathered to welcome me here,
We'll all join together in a time of good cheer, (*With horror*)
But look! Who is this so gaunt and thin?
(*Enter DARK NIGHTS.*)

KING COAL. Old Dark Nights, but we're not afraid of him.

DARK NIGHTS. (*Dismally.*) I'm called Dark Nights – I like people sad.

KING COAL. Go away. When you're out I make people glad.

Dark Nights are quite nice when a fire we light,

And listen to stories till well in the night.

DARK NIGHTS. No! No! I want you unhappy.

ALL. Do you? Then clear out of here, old chappy.

(KING COAL *chases him off.*)

KING WINTER. Now he is gone let us sing of our joys,

Winter's the time for all healthy boys.

ALL. (*Say or Sing.*) Winter is the time of gladness,

Away dull care and hours of sadness.

Winter is the time for fun,

Let us shout, and jump, and run.

SNOWBALL. Play with snowballs – throw them hard,

KING COAL. Bring the coal in from the yard,

ALL. Build the fire and gather near,

Winter's here – King Winter's here.

Winter is the time of gladness,

Away dull care and hours of sadness.

Winter's here, no need to fret,

Have all the fun that you can get,

FOOTBALL. Play at football – score a goal.

JACK FROST. Slide and skate, you merry soul.

ALL. Build the fire and gather near,

Winter's here – King Winter's here.

HERALD. (*Blowing trumpet.*) Let us all proclaim our King,

Let your shouts the rafters ring.

ALL. Hurrah for Winter, hurrah! Hurrah!

Let nothing come our joys to mar.

(*Three cheers are then given for KING WINTER, the HERALD saying Hip! Hip! And all join in the hurrahs except KING WINTER.*)

CURTAIN.

Positions.

KING WINTER.

HERALD

KING COAL

FOOTBALL

DARK NIGHTS

SNOWBALL

JACK FROST

SANTA CLAUS

Note: – DARK NIGHTS enters and leaves from the position stated above.

THE PRINCE'S QUEST.

A Playlet for Young Boys or Girls in One Act.

Characters.

| | |
|---|---|
| THE PRINCE | KING OF THE ELVES |
| THE OGRE | 1 st And 2 nd ELF |
| 1 st 2 nd And 3 rd Witches | Party Elves |

SCENE.

(A country glade. As the curtain is raised a company of ELVES gambol about the stage; after a short period the 1ST ELF stops, looks off the stage and then puts his fingers to his lips.)

1st ELF. Hush! Silence, brothers all.

2nd ELF. What is the matter, brother?

1st ELF. I can hear the Witches approaching. Their presence here bodes ill for some mortal and I should like to know what evil task now occupies their attention. I should like to hear what passes between them.

2nd ELF. Young brothers – what our brother says is true. The Witches approach and we should try to seek the object of their visit. Our play to-day must cease – you will return home while we remain in hiding here to keep the Witches under careful eye.

1st ELF. Creep quietly from this spot and leave us to our self-appointed task. Run to our King and tell him where we are. Tell him to return with help as it may be needed. *(The company of ELVES – except 1st AND 2nd ELF – creep out R.)*

2nd ELF. I shall hide here. You hide there, good brother. Quick! The evil ones approach – if they catch us we know too well what will happen. *(They both hide.)*

(There is a short pause during which the ELVES peep out and put their fingers to their lips?) (The 1ST, 2nd and 3rd WITCHES enter L.)

1st WITCH. When did the Prince commence his journey?

2nd WITCH. This morning at sunrise.

1st W. Then he will be here in a very short time.

3rd W. He cannot be far.

1st W. And he is seeking the Mystic Jewel?

3rd W. Hush! Even the trees have ears. *(She peeps around and then whispers?)* Yes. He seeks the precious gem which we have given to the Ogre for safe keeping.

2nd W. Why does he seek the gem?

3rd W. The Princess he is to wed lies grievously ill and no doctor can save her. But, as you know, one look at this most precious gem will restore to health any who is sick,

1st W. But the Prince will not find the jewel.

2nd W. No! No! How can he? The Ogre has it in his keeping.

1st W. Are you sure the Prince will come this way?

- 3rd W. I am certain. I cast a spell upon him with my magic dust; I blew some in his eyes and he thought I was a fairy. (*She laughs?*)
- 1st W. Fairy Goldilocks! (*She laughs?*)
- 3rd W. The King had told the Prince to take a party of soldiers with him but, when he thought I was a fairy, I told him to visit the land alone. I told him to come to this glen where he would find three fairies.
- 1st W. Three fairies?
- 2nd W. Fairies! Here!
- 3rd W. Yes, sisters. (*She screams.*) Us. We shall be fairies.
- 1st W. (*Preening herself?*) Say, sister, am I like a fairy?
- 2nd W. (*Doing the same and strutting around.*) Am I? (*This carries on for some time, the WITCHES endeavouring to dance like FAIRIES.*)
- 3rd W. Listen, sisters! (*They huddle together?*) When the Prince approaches I shall blow some magic dust into his eyes and he will think us fairies. (*They all shriek?*) When he is in our power I will root him to a spot. He will be able to see.
- 1st & 2nd W. (*Hoarsely.*) He can see!
- 3rd W. See – but not move from the place.
- 1st & 2nd W. But not move!
- 3rd W. Nor speak!
- 1st & 2nd W. Nor speak!
- 3rd W. Then, sisters, we shall send the Ogre. (*They scream and dance.*) The Ogre will show him the jewel, for he always carries it in a pouch which he hangs around his neck. (*They scream and dance*) The Ogre will taunt him.
- 1st & 2nd W. Taunt him.
- 3rd W. Play with him.
- 1st & 2nd W. Play with him.
- 3rd W. (*Hissing.*) Then kill him!
- 1st & 2nd W. Then kill him! (*They all scream*)
- 3rd W. But, sisters, there is one danger.
- 2nd W. A danger?
- 3rd W. There is. The Prince carries a magic sword. While he holds this sword no harm can befall him. We must get this magic sword. (*Pause*) Say, sisters, what shall we do? (*They think.*)
- 2nd W. I have an idea.
- 3rd W. Speak on, sister.
- 2nd W. We two (*pointing to 1st W.*) will hide. Then you, sister (*pointing to 3rd W.*), will lay aside your hat and pretend to be an old woman who has lost her purse down a well which you can say lies yonder.
- 3rd W. The plan is a good one, sister. I seek the Prince's aid and refuse to let him risk his life down the well –
- 1st W. Which, of course, is not there.
- 3rd W. Quite so, sister.
- 2nd W. Then when he has discarded the sword to descend the well, blow your dust into his eyes and he will think you a fairy.

1st W. (*Listening.*) Hush! Someone approaches.

3rd W. (*Looking off R.*) 'Tis he, the Prince. Quick sisters, hide. (1st & 2nd W. go off L.) (*The 3rd W. removes her hat, which, with her besom, she hides and then sits on a log and appears to be crying. After a short pause the PRINCE enters R.*)

PRINCE. Well, old woman, why do you cry on so sweet a day?

3rd W. (*Looking up.*) 'Tis easy for you to say it is a sweet day, sir, but it is a sad one for me.

PRINCE. (*Coming to the WITCH and raising her gently by the arm.*) Why is it a sad one for you? Can I help you?

3rd W. You can, noble sir, if you will.

PRINCE. And, indeed, I will. I shall do all in my power to aid you. I, too, am in trouble, and those in trouble are always most ready to help others conquer their difficulties.

3rd W. I thank you, sir, for those very kind words. In truth I have lost my all. I have saved my money for many years and then put all in a bag, which I carried with me, and was journeying to the city to see my only son. I thirsted and sought water. I passed yonder well (*she points behind her*) and in gazing down into the well my little bag fell from my hands and dropped into the water. (*She sobs again.*)

PRINCE. Shew me the well. I will go down to rescue your money.

3rd W. Will you indeed, sir?

PRINCE. In truth I will. Where is the well?

3rd W. (*Looking at the PRINCE.*) I cannot let you, sir.

PRINCE. And, pray, why not? Do you think I am afraid?

3rd W. Oh, no, good sir. But the well is steep and with that sword you would be in great danger. The sword will catch in the side and you will be thrown to the bottom.

PRINCE. (*Laughingly*) Of course it will not. Show me the well.

3rd W. That I will not do. I do not wish to be the cause of the death of so brave a youth who so reminds me of my own son.

PRINCE. Since you are so kind in thought for me – I will remove my sword and leave it here.

(*He takes off the sword and leaves it on the ground?*) Now, show me the well. But, when I am gone guard that sword as you would guard your life. (*The WITCH blows powder into his face and stands before him.*) A fairy!

3rd W. Yes, noble Prince! I did it but to try you.

PRINCE. Prince? How did you know that I was a Prince?

3rd W. I know all. I know you seek the Magic Jewel. Do you not remember seeing me before?

PRINCE. Of course, sweet fairy.

3rd W. Sisters! Sisters! (*Enter 1st & 2nd W. from L.*)

PRINCE. Welcome, fairies.

2nd W. Noble Prince, you did well to help the old lady you met. It was our Fairy Queen.

1st W. ‘Tis true, noble Prince. Now we are willing to help you.

PRINCE. Your words are very kind, I am truly glad I have won your aid. Your Queen knows my quest. I am seeking the Mystic Jewel which was stolen.

ALL. Stolen?

PRINCE. Yes, stolen from the King, my father. A witch stole it.

ALL. A witch?

PRINCE. I seek this Mystic Jewel, for by it and it alone can I restore to health the sweet Princess who is to be my bride.

3rd W. We shall help you. You must obey our commands.

PRINCE. That I shall most willingly do.

3rd W. You must suffer.

PRINCE. That I do not mind as long as I succeed in my quest.

3rd W. You will see the Mystic Jewel, and that quite soon, if you will obey my commands.

PRINCE. (*Bowing tow.*) Noble Fairy Queen, your words are sweet to my ears. Shall I need my sword? (*He sloops to pick up the sword.*)

3rd W. (*With horror.*) No! No! That sword is of no value.

PRINCE. It was given me by my father’s Wizard. He told me no harm could befall me while I kept it upon me. (*The WITCHES laugh.*)

2nd W. What a silly story. Do not listen to that.

3rd W. That story is but childish folly. Now, noble Prince, you must stand there. (*She points to the centre of the stage.*) I shall cast a spell upon you which will make you appear as stone. You will not be able to move or speak. You will appear as stone but you will be able to see and hear everything.

PRINCE. I am willing and ready to follow your wishes, (*He goes to the spot where the WITCH pointed.*)

3rd W. Now I shall cast my spell. (*She makes weird passes.*) (*Deliberately.*)

From that spot you cannot move,
My wondrous power, you soon shall prove
You can see – but cannot talk,
You can hear – but cannot walk,
And now, Ha! Ha! You’re in my power
(*Screaming.*)

You thought us fairies in their bower.
The dust I move from out your eyes,
You’ll see the Jewel you greatly prize,
You’ll see it in the Ogre’s care,
You’ll see this wondrous gem most rare.
He’ll put the Jewel before your eye,
He’ll torment you – and you shall – die!! (*She howls the last word.*)
(*The PRINCE puts his hand before his eyes – the WITCHES caper around screaming wildly.*)

- 1st W. Ha! Ha! He thought us fairies. *(They all laugh.)*
- 2nd W. Fairies! Ha! Ha!
- 3rd W. Now, sisters – let us hasten to the Ogre, to tell him what has passed. He will return and make short work of this Prince.
- 2nd W. Farewell, noble Prince. *(Mockingly.)*
(The WITCHES make grimaces at the PRINCE and go out chattering. The ELVES creep from their hiding place.)
- 1st ELF. Noble Prince, we have heard all. The King of Elfland will soon be here. By this time our younger brothers will have borne our message summoning him to our aid.
- 2nd ELF. But, I think we are too late, brother. The poor Prince is as stone. He can move his arms but is rooted to the spot.
- 1st ELF. What shall we do. We must move him before the Ogre comes.
- 2nd ELF. Perhaps we can carry him, good brother. *(They endeavour to do so but fail.)* It is of no use. We cannot move him.
- 1st ELF. Hark! Here comes the King and our brothers. *(The KING OF THE ELVES and the party of ELVES enter. The 1st and 2nd ELF kneel)*
Oh! King of Elfland! I am afraid you are too late. The magic of the Witches has rooted the noble Prince to that spot.
- KING. Alas! We are indeed too late. This is a grievous day. Noble Prince, can you move? *(The PRINCE moves his arms and points to his feet.)*
Then I am afraid we are powerless to overcome this mighty magic of the Witches. *(The PRINCE tries to speak and fails. He reaches out and finally points to his sword.)*
- 1st ELF. *(Getting the sword.)* Mighty King! The Prince points to this. We heard him say that it had magic power.
- KING. Perhaps it has. Hand it to him, my son.
(The ELF hands the PRINCE the sword and he is restored to normal. The ELVES crowd around and cheer.)
- PRINCE. *(Kneeling?)* I thank you, King of Elfland. Those foul Witches forgot my sword. I am saved through the good services of your subjects.
- KING. I thank you, noble Prince, but it is always our duty to do what we can to help others. I thought we were too late but I am glad to see that the magic power of your sword is greater than the power of the Witches.
- PRINCE. They cast a spell upon me when I had dropped my sword to help one of them. I thought they were fairies.
- 1st ELF. And now they have gone to the Ogre.
- 2nd ELF. He has the Jewel you seek.
- KING. Does the Ogre carry the Jewel?
- 1st ELF. Yes, oh King! We heard the Witches say that he carried it in a pouch he wears around his neck.
- KING. And he is returning here?
- 2nd ELF. Yes, your Majesty.
- KING. Then I have a very good plan. Noble Prince, when we hear the Ogre approach you must return to the spot upon which you were standing just

now. One of my Elves will stand behind you. When the Ogre comes upon you, my Elf will hand you your sword.

PRINCE. Well spoken, great King of Elfland. The Ogre is not long for this world.

KING. And it will be good for us all. Once he is killed the three Witches will lose their power and the world will be peaceful once more.

1st ELF. The plan of our gracious King is a wise one.

2nd ELF. As indeed are all his plans.

KING. Listen! (*A roaring is heard.* We need not say who approaches. (*The ELVES all quail. To 1st ELF.*) Now, my son, get behind the Prince with the sword. Others, out of sight

PRINCE. I thank you, Oh, King! You have indeed saved my life.

KING. Quick to your places of hiding. (*Another roar is heard and the PRINCE returns to the spot upon which he previously stood. The ELVES all go out R., except 1st ELF who creeps behind the PRINCE.*)

OGRE. (*Rolling in.*) Ha! Ha! A Prince! (*He laughs.*) He seeks my Jewel. (*He laughs again.*) Here it is, most mighty Prince! (*He takes the Jewel from the bag which hangs around his neck and holds it before the PRINCE.*) Look at it – look at it. It will be your last look. (*He goes near and tantalizes the PRINCE.*) Most mighty Prince, I will cut off your head for supper. (*He laughs wildly.*) A Prince's head for supper. Come hither, Witches. (*The WITCHES enter.*) Come – look, I will cut off his head. (*He holds the hair of the PRINCE in the left hand and raises his sword with the other.*)

1st W. Horrors! Look! (*She points to the ELF who is handing the sword to the PRINCE. She rushes forward, but is too late and the PRINCE plunges his sword into the OGRE.*)

OGRE. (*Staggering wildly around and finally collapsing.*) I am done.

PRINCE. King of the Elves – quick – Victory! (*He stands with his sword aloft and with his foot on the OGRE's head. The KING and the ELVES enter.*)

KING. Bind those Witches fast. Their power is gone because the Ogre is dead. (*The ELVES crowd around the WITCHES.*)

KING. Away with them to the dungeons. (*Some ELVES take them out.*)

PRINCE. King of Elfland, I thank you. (*He takes the Jewel from the Ogre.*) I have succeeded in my task, thanks to the aid of you and your good subjects.

KING. It is our duty to help others, but to-day, in doing a deed of kindness to you, we have gained ourselves. The woodland is now rid of a vile monster and his evil Witches.

PRINCE. (*Addressing the ELVES.*) And now, friends all, I thank you. Through my own stupidity I was very close to being as that Ogre now is. You and your King saved me. I will now take this precious Jewel to the castle of my father. There my Princess lies dying. If I but shew her the Jewel she will recover. (*He kneels before the KING.*) Most gracious King, I thank you.

KING. Rise, mighty Prince. You should not kneel to me. Elves, let us

cheer him on his way. (*They all cheer and gambol around.*)

PRINCE. Farewell, little Elves.

KING. Not farewell – come to see us again.

PRINCE. I will. (*He waves his hand and walks off – The ELVES cheer.*)

THE END.

CLEVER OBSERVATION.

A Play Suitable for Scouts.

Characters.

A SCOUTMASTER

A MAN

P. L. FRED JACKSON

PARTY OF SCOUTS UP TO 10

P. L. ARTHUR WATSON

SCENE.

(A camp fire in a country glade. The fire should be in the centre of the stage, and logs placed around the fire. The two PATROL LEADERS and the SCOUTS are sitting around the stage.

The scene should be made perfectly natural, as if the boys were preparing for the camp fire. One or two should be busy preparing the wood for the fire, and others chatting in little groups.

If desired a little impromptu singsong can be arranged.)
(There is a lull in the proceedings.)

A. WATSON. What time did the Scoutmaster say he would be back?

F. JACKSON. He wasn't quite sure. He said not to expect him until after dark, and if he wasn't here by half-past nine to carry on with the camp fire.

1ST SCOUT. He has gone up to the village Police Station, hasn't he?

A. W. Yes.

2ND SCOUT. (*Laughing.*) They don't suspect him of being the burglar, do they?

F. J. Hardly, but I think the Police Sergeant wanted to see him about the Manor House burglary.

3RD SCOUT. I wonder what has happened to the thief?

A. W. He's miles from here by this time, I reckon.

F. J. The police don't seem to think so. They have the idea he is hanging around.

1ST SCOUT. Do they want us to help to find him.

F. J. No such luck so far as I know. (*He looks at his watch.*) It is nearly half-past nine. If the S.M. is not here in five minutes I propose we start as

he told us.

3rd SCOUT. Here he is, I think.

1ST SCOUT. Yes. I can hear him whistling.

A. W. I wonder what news he has.

2nd SCOUT. I hope we have to go burglar hunting.

Quite an exciting experience for us.

(The SCOUTMASTER enters)

S.M. Well, boys, I am just before half-past nine, but I am afraid there is a disappointment.

F. J. In what way, sir?

S.M. No camp fire to-night. There's a big task for us.

F. J. We don't mind losing camp fire for something big.

A. W. Something to do with the burglar?

S. M. It is, Arthur. *(The SCOUTS surge forward with questions.)*

1st S. Are we to join in a search?

2nd S. Have they found him?

3rd S. What's the latest news, sir?

4th S. Do the Police know where he is?

5TH S. Are we to start at once?

S.M. A regular catechism. If you will all give me a chance I shall be pleased to give you all the latest news. Let us make ourselves comfortable. *(They sit down, the boys chatting amongst themselves.)*

F. J. Now, sir, we are all ears.

S.M. The 1st Bradleighs have a real call to duty.

A. W. About the Manor burglary, of course.

S.M. Yes, Arthur. The marauder, apparently, was almost captured by one of the men of the house and used brute force to get away. He appears to have aimed a savage blow at the man's head. The man was rendered unconscious and the burglar got away. The servant was not discovered for some little time, and when he was found he was in a serious state – it is doubtful whether he will live.

F. J. That's very serious, sir.

S.M. It is. It is obvious the man at large is dangerous.

A. W. I suppose he is a long way from here by this time.

S.M. Naturally we should think so, but the Police have a very strong idea that he is still in the neighbourhood. Some of the goods he had stolen were found in the Manor grounds, and it is thought he will probably try to return to get them.

F. J. It doesn't seem very likely, does it, sir?

S.M. In crime, it is nearly always the unexpected that wins. The Police think he is lying in Leecombe Woods. The Police Sergeant knows we use this wood for our Scouting, and, naturally, we know it very well. He has asked me to assist in the search. There is a strong body of Police being sent up and each Scout is to act as a guide. We must be getting ready at once. Remember, there is a dangerous man at bay. Will you help?

ALL. *(Jumping up.)* I should say so.

No need to ask twice. We are with you Sir. Of course, Sir. (*similar replies.*)

S.M. All honour to the 1st Bradleights. (*To FRED JACKSON.*) I am sorry for you, Fred, you must be disappointed.

F. J. In what way, sir?

S.M. You must guard camp. If the burglar is not in the woods it is possible he will come around here to try to get some food. I must leave a guard. Is it too disappointing?

F. J. It is disappointing, of course, sir, but there's no need to say I'll do it.

S.M. I know that, Fred. Your task will be a lonely one and I should not like to leave it to anyone else. Do you want a companion?

F. J. No thanks; I don't want to spoil anyone else.

S.M. I don't think there is any real need to give you an assistant. However, in case the very unexpected happens we must arrange a signal. Should you need my assistance blow a long blast on your whistle.

F. J. Right oh, sir!

S.M. (*To ALL.*) If you hear a long blast it has nothing to do with you. If I want all Scouts to return to camp, I shall blow a series of short blasts. Is that clear?

ALL. Yes, sir.

S.M. Then away we go. (*They troop off.*)
Good-bye, Fred, a nasty but essential duty.

F. J. Good-bye and good luck, sir. I hope you succeed.

S.M. Good-bye. (*He goes out.*)
(*FRED JACKSON sits disconsolately on a log. His eyes follow the Troop and then he stares into the fire. After a pause he picks up a thin rope which is lying on one of the logs, and ties a few knots semi-mechanically. Finally, he throws the rope on the ground in front of him. A MAN, who is rough and unshaven-looking, enters. He is dressed as a farm labourer.*)

MAN. (*Talking with a broad accent.*) Be you all on your own, matey?

F. J. (*Taken unawares, jumping up.*) Yes – eh; I am.

MAN. I saw t'others going down the road, or some of em. Can I zit by your fire?

F. J. Certainly. (*The MAN sits on a log opposite F.J.*)

MAN. A great life a camping.

F. J. Yes, it is great fun.

MAN. There seems to have been a bit o' excitement up at the Manor. I 'ear as 'ow that there burglar killed one of squire's men.

F. J. Is that so. I hadn't heard. (*A pause.*) Do you live around here?

MAN. Yez. I be workin up at Farmer Grayling's. Over top yonder.

F. J. How long have you been with him?

MAN. Two years come next month.

F. J. (*Looking at him intently.*) Do you like farm labouring?

MAN. Well, I can't say as 'ow I likes it but I 'ave allers done it and s'pose I allers shall. Farmer Grayling's not a bad zort.

F. J. You saw us in this part last year, I expect.

MAN. Oh yez. I meant to a come over before to see you but we are very busy these summer nights.

F. J. You can hear us singing, I suppose?

MAN. Oh aye. I 'ear a lot of your zongs when the wind is right. Will the others be long?

F. J. I don't know.

MAN. It's a wonder they 'aven't 'ad you looking for this 'ere burglar. I 'ear as 'ow 'e's a 'anging round. I thought as 'ow you would be asked to join in the search. I 'ear as they are searching for 'im.

F. J. Oh the police wouldn't want to be bothered with us. *(There is a pause and FRED JACKSON leisurely picks up the piece of rope and begins toying with it.)*

MAN. What are you a tying?

F. J. Just passing the time away. A Scout has to learn to tie various knots. We learn them when we join. I suppose you use some different kinds of knots in your job.

MAN. Just a few. I don't know their names, we just ties 'em.

F. J. What do you call this one? *(F. J. makes a a large loop through a small bowline. The MAN leans forward towards F. J. with his elbows on his knees and his arms pointing towards the Patrol Leader. F. J. suddenly jumps up and throws the loop over his head and pushes him off the log with his foot. He whips out his whistle and blows a long blast)*

MAN. Very smart young feller, ha! ha! But what's the whistle vor? *(An answering whistle is heard "off" as if some little distance away.)*

F. J. All in good time.

MAN. A little joke – I 'eard as 'ow you boys were fond of a lark. Take this rope off now – you've 'ad your little joke.

F. J. Not for a bit.

MAN. *(He struggles to get up. F. J. tangles the rope around his legs and trips him up.)* This is no joke, young feller. Let me go!

F. J. In a minute.

MAN. *(Dropping accent.)* Enough of this, you cheeky young coxcomb. *(He gets violent and F. J. has trouble in keeping him entangled.)* Get this off at once or I'll give you a darned good thrashing. Do you hear?

F. J. No – I'll not untie you. I think the Police would like to see you.

MAN. Me? Enough of this nonsense. *(He struggles up and although F. J. does all in his power to keep the MAN entangled he is too outweighed. Finally the MAN forces the end of the rope from F. J.'s hand and is just loosening the knot around his arms and body when the S. M. and ARTHUR WATSON enter breathlessly. The S.M. flings his arms around him, and after a struggle the S.M. and Patrol Leaders overcome the MAN and he is trussed up.) (The S.M. blows a series of short blasts on his whistle.)*

S.M. Is this our man?

F. J. Yes.

A. W. Well done, Fred.

MAN. The kid's balmy.

F. J. Well, sir, this man says he is a labourer at Farmer Grayling's.

MAN. (*Falling into accent.*) Zo I be.
F. J. He says he is a farm labourer.
MAN. Zo I be at Farmer Grayling's.
S.M. Well-----
F. J. Look at his hands. (*S.M. does so.*)
S.M. Not much farm labouring done with those.
F. J. That's what I say, sir. (*A few SCOUTS come in.*)
A SCOUT. What's the matter?
ANOTHER S. Have they caught the burglar?
MAN. They be mad – I'm no burglar.
S.M. Do you still say you are a labourer at Farmer Grayling's?
MAN. Of course I be.
F. J. Drop that accent the same as you did when you saw I had caught you.
S.M. Another one for you, Fred.
MAN. Do you think I am the man who robbed the Manor?
F. J. Of course we don't know, but you are a very suspicious character and we are not taking chances.
S.M. I congratulate you, Fred, on using your eyes in any case.
F. J. There's another point, sir. When I first suspected this man of not being a farm labourer on account of his hands, I asked him how long he had been at Farmer Grayling's. He told me two years. So I said: "Then you remember us camping here last year?"
S.M. We camped nowhere near here.
F. J. Exactly – but he remembered us.
A. W. Well done, Fred.
S.M. (*To MAN.*) I have every reason to believe you are a doubtful character, and in all probability the man who robbed the Manor. Why say you are a labourer when this lad can see by your hands that you are not?
MAN. Well, if you must have it, I am not. I am a detective down on this case. I was just looking around when I saw this lad.
S.M. If the whole affair was not so serious that would be funny.
MAN. (*Making a terrific struggle but fails.*) I give in.
F. J. Then you are the man.
MAN. I did not mean to kill that servant.
S.M. It will be better to say nothing about it. (*Approaching F. J.*) Well done, Fred. (*He shakes his hand.*) Your keen observation has brought a criminal to justice. Arthur, hasten to Leecombe Woods, find the Police Sergeant and break the news. 6 Now, boys, three cheers for the lad who took the unpleasant job without a murmur and in the end won all the glory. Hip! Hip!
(*Three cheers are given and FRED JACKSON stands in the centre looking very uncomfortable^*)

SIR CLEGES AND THE MYSTIC FRUIT.

A Play for Boys, based on an Arthurian Legend.

Characters.

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|-------------|
| THE WARDEN OF CARDIFF CASTLE | | SIR CLEGES |
| THE STEWARD | ” | KING ARTHUR |
| THE PORTER | ” | Two KNIGHTS |

DRESS.

(The THREE SERVANTS are in ordinary mediaeval dress. SIR CLEGES is similarly dressed but wears a long black cloak and has a false beard.

The STEWARD should be large and stout. KING ARTHUR either as a Knight or as medieval King. The KNIGHTS in armour.)

(In all the above see the chapter on improvising dress.)

SCENE.

(A plain stage representing the main hall of Cardiff Castle.)

STEWARD. *(Running in a little out of breath?)* My noble Warden.

WARDEN. Well, swift and sure – what’s the matter now?

STEWARD. There is a beggar at the gates.

WARDEN. And where else should he be?

STEWARD. I agree most beggars should be at the gates, but this one – he’s different.
He has the most wonderful fruit that ever . . .

WARDEN. If you listen to the voice of every wandering beggar you will buy water for milk.

STEWARD. But, I have tasted.

WARDEN. You would have. I have told you often that it would not take a very clever person to bribe you with food.

STEWARD. But this is the most wonderful fruit that has ever passed my lips and that is saying something.

WARDEN. It is saying a lot.

STEWARD. It is fresh grown too-----

WARDEN. At Yuletide! Fresh grown at Yuletide!

STEWARD. It is. It is as fresh as the rosebud in summer.

WARDEN. I have known you see some things which no one else can see. Do you remember when you said you saw green mice? But, until now, I have never known you see food that was not there. Food is your life’s desire.

STEWARD. *(Dreamily.)* It is. But we waste words; will you see this fruit? May I bring in this beggar?

WARDEN. If you wish – it seems just waste of time.

STEWARD. *(Going to the door and calling?)* Ho there! Porter! Bring in that beggar. The one with the basket of fruit. *(To WARDEN.)* It is in truth the most luscious fruit I have ever tasted. *(The PORTER comes in, bringing*

with him SIR CLEGES *who is in the guise of a beggar.*) Here he is, noble Warden. Look! Look at the fruit.

SIR C. Master Warden, I would give these to the . . .

WARDEN. Give! A beggar give! By all that's holy we have all gone mad.

SIR C. I wish to give these to the most worthy Lord and King Arthur, whom I . . .

WARDEN. Not so fast. Pull at the bridle. The King will not take any gift a chance beggar cares to bring. Who knows but that this fruit is poisoned?

STEWARD. Poisoned! Poisoned! Is this fruit poisoned?

WARDEN. I am sure it must be poisoned. Who has ever heard of a beggar giving?

STEWARD. Hey, old wanderer! Is this fruit poisoned?

WARDEN. (*To STEWARD.*) I told you food would be your end.

STEWARD. Speak ! Speak! Is this fruit poisoned?

SIR C. Noble Steward and Warden, pick any one of these and I will eat it in proof that there is no poison in the fruit.

WARDEN. We shall make him prove his words.
(*Picking a fruit and giving it to SIR C.*)
Eat this one. (*SIR C. does so.*)

STEWARD. (*Watching him intently?*) Thank heaven. I thought no evil could lurk in such wonderful fruit. I will take another. (*He does so.*)

WARDEN. Now, wanderer, what do you wish me to do?

SIR C. I have already told you, noble Warden. I wish to give these as a present to the King.

WARDEN. And you wish for no payment?

SIR C. None whatever. I should like to present them to the King myself.

PORTER. I don't think this wandering beggar is such a fool as we would think, my masters. He will tell the King they are a gift, well knowing that the King will give him more than if he asked a price.

WARDEN. Master Porter, being under my care for so many years has made you wise.

PORTER. Before we allow him to see the King, why not ask him a price?

SIR C. Then you have not the interest of the King at heart.

WARDEN. He plays his part well. What shall we ask him, Master Porter?

STEWARD. A share of the fruit.

WARDEN. There speaks the Knight of the Beefsteak.

PORTER. I should ask him a share of all our King gives him.

WARDEN. Very good. Let me see; one-third to me; one-third to the Steward; one-third to you, Master Porter; he can keep the rest.

PORTER. (*Rubbing his hands.*) A very good plan, Sir Warden.

STEWARD. An excellent plan – unless we took the fruit.

WARDEN. Now, beggar, you have heard our plan. You will pledge yourself to give us a portion of what you receive from the King. You will give one-third to me, one-third to the Steward and one-third to the Porter. You can keep the rest.

SIR C. I readily agree to your plan.

WARDEN. (*Chuckling aside to the PORTER.*) He doesn't see he will get nothing.
(*To SIR C.*) You promise --

SIR C. I promise.

WARDEN. Then we will permit you to remain here -- the King will pass by shortly.
Remember what you have promised us. If you try to break your word --
we shall break your neck. (*They go off talking in great glee. SIR C.
wanders around for a short time when 1st KNIGHT enters.*)

1ST KNIGHT. Who are you who has entered this Castle of Cardiff?

SIR C. I crave audience with the King, most noble Knight.

1ST K. A beggar to have audience with the King!

SIR C. I carry a gift. I know that the mighty Arthur is willing to see his humblest
subject. Is he passing this way?

1ST K. He is coming this way in a few moments. What gift have you for the King. SIR
C. I have brought this fruit. (*He shows the KNIGHT his basket of fruit.*)

1ST K. It looks wonderfully fresh and sweet.

SIR C. It is, Sir Knight.

1ST K. (*Looking off.*) The King approaches.
(*The KING enters with the 2nd KNIGHT.*)

KING. Who is this?

1ST K. A wandering beggar, my Lord. He has brought you a gift and has craved
audience with you.

2ND K. A beggar bring a gift. Are you sure this gift is honest?

SIR C. The Warden and the Steward who saw me before I entered here said the
same thing, and told me that the fruit was poisoned. The Warden made me eat
one he chose himself so as to prove there was no danger in the fruit. He then
gave me permission to remain here to present my gift to our King.

KING. You seem to be of honest mien. This fruit seems beautifully fresh and sweet -- it
will serve our banquet to-night. Why did you wish to see me to sell the fruit?

SIR C. I do not wish to sell the fruit -- I wish to give it to my Lord and King.

2ND K. You ask for no repayment.

SIR C. None whatever --

KING. Wanderer, I do not know who you are, but, never let it be said that
Arthur, King of Britain, accepted a gift and gave not greater in return.

SIR C. I ask for no return. I wish to pay my tribute to the greatest King in all
Christendom.

KING. My man, I feel I am not worthy of your very kind words. Tell me, can you
afford to do without such gifts?

SIR C. I cannot, your Majesty.

KING. Then tell me what gift you wish and it shall be yours.

SIR C. May I, in all humility, ask you whether you will give aught I ask?

KING. I have given my word.

SIR C. You will give me any gift I ask?

KING. I have promised.

2ND K. Your Majesty, such a promise to a wandering beggar may be a rash one.

KING. I think I am safe with this one -- yes, I will pledge my word.

SIR C. Then, your Majesty, I ask a curious gift. Further, I should like the gift handed

to me in the presence of the Warden, Steward and Porter.

1st K. This is a curious request.

SIR C. I have a reason for my request, Sir Knight.

KING. What is my gift to be?

SIR C. May I be permitted to ask the gift when the Warden, Steward and Porter come?

KING. There is an air of mystery in this.

SIR C. Your Majesty, when I craved an audience with you and showed my gift to these servants of yours they permitted me to see you on one condition.

KING. And that was?

SIR C. That I should share my gift with them.

KING. Oh! It takes a beggar to show me how faithless my servants are. But why should you wish them to be present when I make the gift?

SIR C. Your Majesty, I have a plan to make their greed fall upon their own heads. I would have you not show that you know what has passed between me and them. May I crave this boon?

KING. I see method in this wanderer and there is a spice of adventure in this. (*To 1st KNIGHT.*) Call hither the Warden, Steward and Porter. (*1st KNIGHT does the KING'S bidding.*) Wanderer, I am afraid you are not all that meets the eye.

SIR C. I will tell all in good time, your Majesty. (*The KNIGHT returns with WARDEN, STEWARD and PORTER.*)

1ST K. Here are the Warden, Steward and Porter, your Majesty.

KING. Let them remain there one moment. Continue, wanderer.

SIR C. Your Majesty, I thank you for your promise of any gift I ask. I wish you to give me (*The WARDEN and the others peer forward*) a very curious present. It may seem absurd in your eyes.

KING. Ask anything.

SIR C. I ask for twelve lashes with the stick.

KING. (*Smiling.*) A very curious gift indeed – but I have pledged my word. A stick. (*The 2nd KNIGHT obtains a stick*) Come, wanderer, take from Arthur the most curious gift he has ever given. (*The KING gives SIR C. twelve light strokes with the stick.*)

SIR C. I thank your Majesty for his kindness. Now, I have pledged to share my gift with these faithless servants of yours. (*He catches hold of the PORTER and gives him four good strokes, saying.*) Here Master Porter, is your third. *He repeats with the STEWARD, saying similar words.* And you, Most Honest Warden, here is your share. (*He gives him four good strokes.*) I must not miss you. (*As each one is beaten he rushes off the stage.*)

KING. So you had to promise to share my gift with these very faithless servants of mine?

SIR C. I did, your Majesty. The Porter demanded one-third, the Steward one-third and the Warden one-third. They thought I was a fool – they told me I could keep the rest.

KING. You seem to have a good store of wisdom for a beggar. Come tell me your secret.

SIR C. My Lord, I am one of your Knights who has fallen upon hard times.
1ST K. One of the King's Knights?
2ND K. Who can it be? (SIR C. *removes his false beard.*) Sir Cleges.
KING. Worthy Cleges – you, to crave admission to my Castle?
SIR C. My Lord, I have fallen upon hard times. I wished to attend your gathering of the Round Table this day but had no gift. I did not wish to show my great poverty before the world. While I was musing I heard voices and a withered tree in my grounds had burst into this most wonderful fruit although it is Yuletide. I felt it was a divine message.
KING. It was indeed a message from Him. (*Pointing upwards.*) I am truly glad you have come to me. Now, I am going to present the beggar with a further gift but he must make me a promise. Will you promise me anything?
SIR C. I have already sworn to follow you in all things. All my goods I hold as from you.
KING. I present this beggar with the Castle of Cardiff and its grounds on one condition.
SIR C. And the condition is, your Majesty?
KING. You shall not share it with the Warden, the Steward and the Porter. (SIR C. *falls to his knees before the KING. The KING gently puts his hands upon his head.*)

THE FAIRY COMES.

A Farce.

Characters.

JOHN BRANSON, an Artisan
SARAH BRANSON, his Wife
THE FAIRY
THE KING

PRINCESS GOLDENLOCKS
THE BEAST
Two SLAVES

Remarks about Dress and Scene.

The scene should represent a room in an ordinary artisan type of dwelling.

JOHN BRANSON and his wife should be dressed as of their type but rather on the slovenly side.

The FAIRY should be a large boy – the bigger the better – and he should be dressed as a fairy.

The KING should be as the King in a fairy story but made absurd in every feature.

The PRINCESS should be as daintily attired in Eastern dress as is possible and should be veiled so that only the eyes show. Make the face under the veil as hideous as possible; this can be done quite easily by badly shaped cardboard teeth

protruding from the mouth. The lips should be made to look very thick and the mouth large, by means of paint.

The SLAVES should appear as if they are naked blacks except for hanging raffia. A close fitting black tunic, black knics and stockings will prevent having to put too much black paint upon the boys,

The BEAST. See notes on making "props".

(As the curtain is raised JOHN BRANSON is seated on a chair in the centre of the stage. He is reading a book and anxiously looks off the stage at intervals. After this has continued for a short time SARAH BRANSON, his wife, is heard calling "John! John!")

J. B. *(Waving his arm in the direction of his wife and speaking to the audience.)* My wife.

MRS B. *(Off)* John! John!

J. B. *(Again pointing off.)* My beloved wife. *(MRS. BRANSON comes in.)*

MRS B. Where's that good-for-nothing lout of a husband of mine?

MR. B *(Whispering to the audience.)* All peace has departed from me.

MRS. B. There you are, you lazy good-for-nothing vagabond. You are too tired to do a day's work and too lazy to help me in my daily toil. Why don't you be a man and go to find work?

J. B. Look for trouble – never! They might give me a job.

MRS. B. You go skulking around the house – reading and wasting your time. *(She snatches his book.)* What's this you are reading? A book of kid's fairy tales? *(She flings it across the room.)* You read all the rot you can find but, as for a day's work, never! I am sick and tired of the very sight of you. Here am I working from morning to night while you hang around waiting for your next meal – you are too tired to wash.

J. B. All right, dear; don't cry.

MRS. B. Cry! I'm not going to cry just to please you, although I often feel like it when I think of the things you used to say to me before we were married. You promised me everything – that you would die without me . . .

J. B. Well, that's why I don't like going out to look for work.

MRS. B. A pretty tale indeed – you told me my eyes glistened like stars, and that my face shone like the moon in all its glory.

J. B. Perhaps I did but there has been an eclipse since then.

MRS. B. And now you do nothing but insult me.

J. B. Why is it a married man is never allowed to read in his own home?

MRS. B. Read! Kid's fairy tales!

J. B. You may laugh but I was just reading, when you came in, that if . . .

MRS. B. I don't want to listen to that tosh.

J. B. Don't be in such a hurry. You haven't heard what I was going to say.

MRS. B. I know you, you great clown, you believe in fairies.

J. B. Of course I do.

MRS. B. You hope they will come and make you rich. I wish one of them would

come and help me with my daily round of toil.

J. B. Just listen a minute, we can have our own little fairy.

MRS. B. A pretty tale that.

J. B. Well, that book says that all you have to do is to turn to the East and say that magic word “Abracadabra.”

MRS. B. And a fairy comes . . .

J. B. Exactly.

MRS. B. You great blockhead.

J. B. Please don’t say that. Do you remember the day I rested my head on your knees and you ruffled my hair with your hands? You said I had the most beautiful head in the world.

MRS. B. There you go – talking sentiment.

J. B. You started it. You said that I said your eyes were like stars.

MRS. B. Do you really mean to tell me that you believe what that book says that if you turn to the East and say . . . er . . . that funny word, a fairy will come?

J. B. We’ll try it. Let me see. North, South, East (*East should be supposed to be towards the audience*) yes – this is the East. Now – ready?

MRS. B. (*With withering contempt.*) You great big baboon.

J. B. Ready? Abra – abra – Ready! Abracad . . . Abracadabra. (*There is a noise and a FAIRY appears.*)

J. B. Hail! Fairy Queen!

MRS. B. The brazen hussy! It would be better if you went home and put some clothes on, a girl your size.

FAIRY. You summoned me, my master. What would you have me do?

MRS. B. Get him a good day’s work. Any job with long hours.

FAIRY. What! A noble Prince do menial tasks?

J. B. She recognises a gent when she sees one. (*To FAIRY.*) Sweet Fairy.

MRS. B. There you go, John, always making a fuss of any other woman but your own wife.

FAIRY. Noble master, heed not her utterances. What would you have me do?

J. B. I would do great deeds. Show me a king who desires his daughter to be wedded to a mighty knight.

MRS. B. Excuse me – he’s a married man.

FAIRY. (*Ignoring MRS. B.*) It shall be done. I will send you a King to seek your aid. (*She bows and vanishes.*)

MRS. B. Am I dreaming?

J. B. Not a bit of it. A real, live fairy has come to me.

MRS. B. And a fat lot of good that will do. You have got into a nice mess now. Fancy a King coming here and I haven’t even dusted the place.

J. B. King’s don’t mind that. It’s only you women who go into other people’s houses to find fault.

MRS. B. There you go again. Always arguing. And what are we going to do about it – we can’t ask a King in here?

J. B. Perhaps he’ll just come as the fairy did. (*Knock.*) What’s that?

MRS. B. It must be the King. (*All in a flutter.*) I ought not to answer the door really;

he'll think we ought to keep servants. I know, I'll say they are down with the 'flu.

J. B. Oh! Would you tell a lie?

MRS. B. (*Going out.*) It isn't a lie. We have to say things that are not truthful at times. (*She goes off. There is a pause. J.B. goes to the door and peeps out. MRS. B. returns in great haste.*)

MRS. B. I don't know what the neighbours will say but I don't call it proper.

J. B. What's the matter?

MRS. B. Look! (*The SLAVES enter and stand one each side of the door. The KING struts between them and goes straight towards J. B.*)

J. B. Hail, O King!

KING. Most mighty Knight; a good fairy has sent me to seek your aid. I am in dire trouble.

J. B. Trouble, most mighty King?

KING. My daughter is to be sacrificed to the monster of the woods at sunrise tomorrow. (*He breaks into hysterical sobs.*) I should do battle with the monster myself but I am a little inclined to rheumatism. (*He limps about.*)

MRS. B. I had a lot of trouble that way myself, your Majesty.

1st SLAVE. Silence! The King has not addressed himself to you.

MRS. B. Indeed!

J. B. Quite right, O King! Besides, Kings mustn't fight. They ought to stop behind the scenes. Tell me where this monster is to be found and I – I – John Bransom will kill him.

MRS. B. Don't be ridiculous, John, You know you are delicate and afraid of spiders!

J. B. (*Dramatically.*) Afraid of spiders! Let me just see a spider.

KING. What, the noble Knight afraid?

J. B. Never! Let me see this monster.

KING. If you slay him, one-half of my kingdom shall be thine and you shall have my daughter's hand in marriage.

MRS. B. Indeed! He's my husband.

SLAVES Silence!

MRS. B. I will not keep silent. I will not have my husband gallivanting about saving women from stray animals. I can't get him to kill a mouse.

1st SLAVE. Silence, woman!

MRS. B. Besides, he is delicate. The doctor said he must not get excited.

SLAVES. Silence, woman!

MRS. B. You, you dirty half-dressed niggers, who spoke to you?

SLAVES. Silence.

MRS. B. I will not hold my tongue for you or anyone else for that matter. Get out of my house the lot of you.

KING. Take her away and put her in chains. (*The SLAVES hold her. She struggles fiercely, but is finally led away.*)

MRS. B. John! Help! John, save me from these niggers.

J. B. (*Giggling.*) I can't. I'm delicate. (*She is led off*)

KING. Now, Sir Knight, that prating woman having been removed we can talk the matter over.

J. B. I am to kill the beast – then I get half of your kingdom and the Princess?
KING. That is correct.
J. B. I should like to see the Princess, and what is the size of your kingdom?
KING. ‘Tis wondrous large. It stretches from yon mighty hill of *(naming a local place)* to *(naming another local place)*.
J. B. Very good. That part of the show seems O.K. Now where’s the Princess?
KING. *(Clapping his hands)* I shall summon a slave. *(A SLAVE enters.)* Bring hither the Princess Goldenlocks. *(The SLAVE bows and retires)*
J. B. Is the Princess fair to gaze upon?
KING. Fairer than the roses of summer.
J. B. *(Looking at the KING.)* Then she must take after her mother.
KING. *(Dreamily)* Her mother is indeed wondrous fair. *(The SLAVE returns with the PRINCESS. Her face is hidden from the eyes downwards, by a veil.)*
J. B. A comely wench, withal, gadzooks! May she remove the drapery?
KING. Noble Knight, she is under vow never to remove that veil until the hideous monster of the woods is slain.
J. B. Well, how do I know what I am going to win? I ought to be entitled to a peep. *(He goes towards the PRINCESS.)* But her eyes are wonderful. *(They make a little side-play, the PRINCESS looking coyly and J. B. giggling)* Most gracious King, I’ll do the job. Leave me to my task.
KING. My slaves will arm thee for the fray.
J. B. Leave me one moment, noble King, I would make my will.
KING. Thy will shall be granted.
J. B. Verily, I hope not. *(The KING claps his hands and the other SLAVE appears)*
KING. We leave the Knight to prepare for the combat. Come, let us away. *(They go out in procession. The two SLAVES lead the way, the PRINCESS next and the KING brings up the rear in mock dignity)*
J. B. *(Facing East.)* Ab ra cad abr a. *(The FAIRY enters)* I’m in a mess. I’ve got to fight a tiger or something.
FAIRY. The hideous monster of the woods?
J. B. That’s his name, I think. Have you met him?
FAIRY. He is indeed very fierce but against this magic salt he has no power. *(She hands a salt sprinkler to J. B.)* All you have to do is to sprinkle some of this on his tail and he will become as stone.
J. B. Now, that’s what I call a very fine gift.
FAIRY. But, remember – you must not say the word “Princess” or he will recover. You must remember that he wishes to kill the Princess and merely to hear the word will be enough to rouse him again.
J. B. I see, sprinkle some salt-----
FAIRY. Yes, on his tail.
J. B. Beast – stone.
FAIRY. Yes.
J. B. And I mustn’t say “Princess” or he will recover.
FAIRY. Quite right.
J. B. Just what I have been looking for. I thank you, sweet Fairy. Just

- one more point! Can you get the beast to come here—I'd rather play on home ground? Home teams win most as you would probably know if you had football competitions in fairyland.
- FAIRY. I think I can arrange it, most noble Knight.
- J. B. Once more, I thank you.
- FAIRY. I shall summon him hence with my power and remember, after he has been rendered unconscious by the magic salt, don't say the word "Princess."
- J. B. It shall not be said. Farewell, sweet Fairy. (*The FAIRY trips around and out.*) Your Majesty, come hither. (*The KING, SLAVES and PRINCESS return.*)
- KING. Arm him for the fray. My charger awaits without.
- J. B. There's no need to bother about armour. All I want is a good sword.
- KING. What! No armour!
- J. B. No thanks, just a good sharp-edged sword, I couldn't move in those coal scuttle arrangements.
- KING. (*To SLAVE.*) Bring my famous sword. (*SLAVE bows and retires.*) I wish thee good fortune, brave Knight. May you be successful in your venture.
- PRINCESS. And I wish thee good fortune, good Knight.
(*The SLAVE returns with a huge sword which he hands to the KING, who, in turn, hands it to J. B.*)
- KING. All is now ready. Come, we will leave the goodly Knight to his task.
(*They go out in procession as previously.*)
The PRINCESS turns and kisses her hand to J. B. He waves his sword.
When he is alone he struts around making passes with his sword, getting considerably entangled. He is feeling desperately proud of himself when a terrific roar is heard. He quakes and prepares to run. Then he looks at his magic salt and is reassured.
The BEAST enters. A fight ensues in which J. B. frantically endeavours to put some salt on its tail. He fails, and finally the BEAST falls upon him but he manages to crawl between its legs, grab its tail and sprinkle salt upon it. The BEAST falls.)
- J. B. (*Standing with sword raised and with his foot upon the BEAST'S head.*) I have done the deed and the Princess is mine. (*The BEAST revives and the struggle is continued. The BEAST is vanquished again by means of the salt.*)
Fool that I am, I forgot what the Fairy told me, I must not say the word Princess. (*Further struggle. After the BEAST is vanquished again a SLAVE comes in.*)
- SLAVE. Noble Knight, I bear a message from the Princess. (*Another struggle. The SLAVE bolts. The BEAST is again vanquished by the salt.*)
- J. B. Abracadabra. (*The FAIRY appears?*)
- FAIRY. Most worthy Knight.
- J. B. This is a bit of a pickle. I get as far as this and then some clown shouts the word "Princess." (*The BEAST arouses himself, the FAIRY vanishes and the struggle ensues to be terminated as in the past.*)
- J. B. Abracadabra. (*The FAIRY appears.*)
- FAIRY. Foolish sire.
- J. B. I agree – I'm always saying – ah! not that time. (*A SLAVE appears*

- again.) Now if you say Princess I'll . . . (Another struggle. The SLAVE and the FAIRY vanish.)
- J. B. (*On the termination of the conflict and very hot and troubled.*)
Abracadabra. (*The FAIRY comes.*)
- FAIRY. Why don't you kill the monster?
- J. B. Look at the mess it will make. My wife will kick up an awful row.
- FAIRY. Come! Be a man! Kill him!
- J. B. I will, but it is hardly a sight for your fair eyes. I thank thee, sweet Fairy, but stay not to see the dirty work. (*The FAIRY vanishes.*) Ah! one dig and the Princess is mine. (*The struggle ensues. J. B. fatally gets the BEAST under control and out of sheer exhaustion falls upon him with his sword and kills him. He rises slowly and gazes down upon the BEAST.*) Now to remove the carcass. (*He drags the BEAST off the stage with great difficulty.*) Victory! Victory! (*The KING and the others return*) Go out there, O King! There lies the body of the hideous monster of the woods. (*They hasten off leaving J. B. and the PRINCESS.*) And now, sweet Princess, let me see your face. The hideous monster is dead. (*She removes her veil and shows her face. J. B. falls into a chair.*) Golly' W hat a face ! W hat a face ! (*He murmurs this a few times; the PRINCESS retires and his wife enters. MRS. B. shakes him. He looks up slowly still murmuring "What a face"*) Oh it's you!
- MRS. B. Of course it is. Who did you think it was? I have been calling you for some time – your tea is ready.
- (*They are going off as the curtain falls.*)

GONE EAST.

A Farce for Boys.

Characters.

JAMES JACKSON, A Solicitor.
CHARLES, His Servant.
BILL, A Youth, a Friend of Charles
PERCIVAL SPAT, A Fop.
AHMED ALI, An Eastern Wizard.
JOAN SINCLAIR, Jackson's Fiancee.
AN ERRAND BOY.

Dresses to suit the parts as described. AHMED ALI should be in Eastern robes and head-dress.

SCENE.

The office of JAMES JACKSON, Solicitor. It is plainly furnished with a desk (or table) over which are strewn papers; there are a few chairs in the office. As the curtain is raised, JACKSON, a youngish man, rather well dressed, sits reading a letter. Completing it he flings it across the table. As he does so, CHARLES, his servant, enters. CHARLES is a youth of unkempt appearance.

JACKSON Charles, my lad, things are looking none too well for me. There is another piece of excellent business lost and I am afraid I shall be ruined unless something turns up very shortly.

CHARLES I expect something will turn up soon, sir.

JACKSON There is just one ray of hope; a brother solicitor has promised me he would probably be able to send along a few clients. He has more business than he can deal with.

CHARLES That's sounds the goods, sir.

JACKSON If anyone comes, Charles, make a brave show; make it appear we are deluged with work.

CHARLES Very good, sir. *(A knock.)* There's a beginning. Things are looking up. *(He goes to the door, tidying himself as he goes. JACKSON fumbles with some papers to make it appear as if he is very busy.)*

CHARLES *(Returning hastily.)* Oh! Lumme! He's following me.

JACKSON Who is? *(He looks towards the door and AHMED ALI is standing in the doorway. He is tall and of commanding appearance.)*

CHARLES There he is.

JACKSON *(Rising.)* Oh! Please come in.

AHMED *(Approaching CHARLES.)* Worthless creature! wouldst have me, the Prince of Wizards, announce himself. *(He raises his hand above CHARLES.)* Kneel! *(CHARLES does so and similarly obeys all the commands.)* Rise! Kneel! Rise! Lie down! Crawl like the worm thou art!

CHARLES Stop him, sir.

JACKSON *(Approaching.)* Excuse me, but I should like to know . . .

AHMED *(Moving suddenly.)* You! What would you know? *(Menacingly.)* Would'st save a curse?

JACKSON A curse?

CHARLES He means will you give up. . .

AHMED *(Savagely.)* Hold! base son of darkness. *(To Jackson.)* Would'st save a curse from falling on this household?

JACKSON My dear fellow, what do you mean?

CHARLES What about me? Can I get up?

AHMED *(To CHARLES.)* Rise! Sit! *(To JACKSON.)* Be seated. Listen! Great powers are mine. I can call the mighty stars to aid me. Would you have me show my powers? *(To CHARLES.)* Here you – see my great power. *(To JACKSON.)* I show my great power. I shall cause this son of Belial to be smitten with great pains – great pains shall enter his vitals.

CHARLES Try it on the boss. He'll believe it better,

AHMED Thou art a slave – hold thy peace. *(To JACKSON.)* Behold the powers of Ahmed Ali. *(He waves his hand over CHARLES who doubles in pain and rolls about, shouting.)* There, see my great power – the great magic of the East.

CHARLES *(Shouting)*. Oh! Oh! Take it off – tell him to, sir. Stop! Stop! I feel as if

AHMED *(Taking a box of pills from his clothing.)* Take one of these pills. One will suffice, you will be restored. *(CHARLES takes one and puts the box on the table.)* CHARLES *(Collapsing into a chair)*. You're right. Great pains did enter.

AHMED Enough. *(To JACKSON.)* Do you see my power?

JACKSON Unquestionably. But what has it to do with me?

AHMED Listen! I will unfold my story. I am poor and the stars have led me to your tent.

CHARLES Then the stars have messed it. There's no money here, the boss owes me six weeks' wages.

JACKSON *(Jumping up.)* This is blackmail. I shall ring for the police.

AHMED It will be of no use – I will make my curse fall upon them.

CHARLES Have the whole force up and make them go through what I had.

AHMED Enough! Great pains will return.

CHARLES Anything to oblige.

AHMED At once, I demand money! Money! Money, I demand!

JACKSON I have stood quite sufficient of this— get outside my house.

CHARLES *(Darting behind JACKSON.)* 'Op it.

AHMED You refuse. Then I will act. Every one who enters this house and sits in that chair *(pointing to a definite chair)* shall be smitten with great pains and shall crawl as the beast of the field. *(He waves his hand over the chair and goes out.)* You will see me again.

JACKSON *(Excitedly.)* This is preposterous! I'm going to inform the police at once. This is like the middle ages. Twentieth century! I must be dreaming.

CHARLES Sit in that chair, sir, and you'll soon find you are awake.

JACKSON I shall go to the police at once – the man is a danger, a positive danger. *(He goes out excitedly. CHARLES looks at the chair and then notices the pills on the desk, he picks them up.)*

CHARLES The pills. *(He dashes after the master, sees he has gone and returns. He looks at the pills and at the chair. He feigns to sit down and then jumps hastily away. He does this again when BILL pushes his head through the door.)*

BILL Boss out?

CHARLES *(Startled.)* Oh! *(Seeing BILL.)* It's only you. Come in and sit down. *(BILL sits in the bewitched chair, collapses, shouts and crawls about.)* What's the matter?

BILL Oh! Oh! My inside is like a furnace.

CHARLES Then it works!

BILL What works? Oh! Oh! I'm burning.

CHARLES *(Bringing a pill.)* Take this.

BILL *(Swallowing a pill and is returned to normal.)* What on earth happened?

CHARLES Magic. You've been magickised, or whatever you call it.

BILL Magic?

CHARLES A wizard came in and put a curse on that chair and said that anyone who sits in it will be inflicted with great pain and crawl about.

BILL (*Rubbing his stomach.*) He did his job well. But what made me better?

CHARLES The old chap had some pills which cure the magic; he forgot them.

BILL Lorks! Everyone who sits in that chair goes through what I went through?

CHARLES Yes.

BILL And if he takes a pill, he is all right?

CHARLES That's it.

BILL (*Mysteriously.*) What a great scheme for making a bit of money.

CHARLES Money? How?

BILL Get some toffs in – sit 'em in the chair and then sell the pills.

CHARLES Bill, you are a hero. (*Shakes his hand.*) If anyone comes, bring them in and say that I am Mr. Jackson. I'll do the rest. (*A knock.*) Go to the door, Bill. (*BILL does so and CHARLES goes to the table apparently writing.*)

BILL (*Returning with PERCIVAL SPAT, an elaborately dressed fop with white spats, monocle, etc.*) Mr. Percival Spat.

CHARLES (*Talking affectedly.*) Ah! Good morning Mr. er-Spat, take a seat.

P. SPAT (*In drawling and affected voice.*) Thanks awfully, but I much prefer to stand; sitting bags the knees of one's trousers.

BILL No business with this chap.

CHARLES Shut up! (*To P. SPAT.*) Now, Mr. er-Spat, if you will not be seated, will you tell me the reason of this unexpected, yet pleasant, visit?

P. SPAT Well-er-I am in rather an awkward position-you-er-see-er-well-er-as it is rather private, would you mind-er – moving-this-er-lad?

CHARLES That's quite all right, Mr. Spat, he is my confidential clerk.

P. SPAT As you are no doubt aware – I am wealthy – I have enormous wealth. (*BILL and CHARLES look at each other and rub their hands.*) I am being blackmailed.

CHARLES Very serious! Very serious. You appear very agitated, Mr. Spat. Take a seat just to cool your agitation.

P. SPAT (*Appearing as if to sit, BILL and CHARLES look intently. He does not sit.*) I'm being most brutally blackmailed; brutally blackmailed.

CHARLES This is most serious. But, do please take a seat. We can talk over things so much more easily.

P. SPAT Well, as you are so persistent, and I certainly do feel ill. (*BILL and CHARLES anxiously watch him. He takes a long time to sit down, brushing^j the seat with his handkerchief, etc., etc. Finally he sits down; CHARLES and BILL hug each other and dance. P. SPAT groans, makes horrible contortions and falls to the floor.*) I'm ill! Oh! oh! I'm ill! I feel as if I am melting inside. A doctor! A doctor!

BILL Give him a pill.

CHARLES Not so fast. (*To P. SPAT.*) I believe you are an impostor; prove to me you are wealthy and I shall see what I can do.

P. SPAT I can't remove my wallet—it's in my pocket. Oh! Oh!

BILL (*Searching for and finding the wallet.*) Give him a pill, he's got bags of it.

CHARLES Stand up.

P. SPAT I can't—I can't—I'm dying! Oh! My trousers!

CHARLES Take this. (*He gives him a pill. P. S. swallows the pill, recovers, collapses into the chair and then goes through a similar procedure. CHARLES gives him another pill; he recovers and BILL holds him to prevent him from falling into the chair again.*) You are ill, Mr. Spat. I should go home at once. I shall call to see you to talk over your affairs.

P. SPAT (*Tottering.*) I will, I will. I think you are wise. Oh dear! oh dear! My trousers are ruined! Good day, Mr. Jackson. Oh dear! Oh dear! My trousers! My trousers! (*He staggers out.*) (*CHARLES and BILL go to the table and turn out the wallet.*)

CHARLES Gosh! £100 each, Bill – we're made. (*CHARLES puts the money back into the wallet and puts it into his pocket. He and BILL are bending over the table as an ERRAND BOY comes in, whistling. He places a small parcel on the table and then wipes his forehead.*)

ERRAND BOY Crumbs, it's hot! (*He sits in the chair and then rolls about.*) Help! Help! Furnaces! Help!

BILL (*Just noticing Mm.*) Hello! What's this?

CHARLES When did you come in? Fancy wasting a pill on him. *He gives the ERRAND BOY a pill. (The boy recovers and rushes out wildly.)* What a waste of a good pill. (*A knock.*) Hop it, Bill – someone at the door. (*BILL goes out and CHARLES returns to the table. After a short pause BILL returns with JOAN SINCLAIR, a young lady in very modern attire. She comes in and goes to sit in the chair but BILL snatches it away. She falls to the ground as CHARLES is coming forward to shake hands with her. Her foot is raised upwards and CHARLES grabs her ankle instead of her hand.*) You fathead, Bill. I'm very sorry, Miss Sinclair. I'm sorry you were just about to sit in a very shaky chair and my servant tried to save you.

JOAN S. (*Jumping up.*) I think this is disgusting. I have never been so disgracefully treated in my life.

CHARLES I'm very sorry, but

JOAN S. That is quite sufficient. Where is Mr. Jackson?

CHARLES I am Mr. Jackson.

JOAN S. Mr. Jackson, indeed – kindly send for him at once.

BILL Oh! Who are you to order us about? He is Mr. Jackson.

JOAN S. Kindly do as you are told – at once. I am Mr. Jackson's fiancée; do you think I do not know Mr. Jackson when I see him?

BILL Lumme!

CHARLES That's cooked it.

(*JOAN S. is standing by the chair. CHARLES walks over and pushes her into the*

chair).

CHARLES Take a seat. *(She sits down and is smitten as the others.)* Now – some money and a promise you will not tell the master and I will make you well again.

JOAN S. *(Crawling about.)* I refuse! I refuse! Help! Oh! Oh!

CHARLES Promise, or crawl about for the rest of your days.

JOAN S. I feel burning to pieces.

CHARLES I can save you – pay up. *(CHARLES stands looking down at her. She crawls close to him and clutches at him, accidentally pushing him into the chair. He shouts loudly for a pill. BILL gets the box and gives him one. As he recovers JACKSON enters.)*

JACKSON What is this, Miss Sinclair? Joan! What are you doing there?

CHARLES She sat in the chair.

JACKSON My dear Joan! What is the matter?

JOAN S. They've poisoned me. Oh! Oh! James, do something!

CHARLES Give her a pill, sir.

JACKSON A pill.

CHARLES Yes, sir! You remember, a magic pill.

JACKSON Ah, yes. *(He snatches a pill and gives it to her.)* Take this, my darling. *(JOAN S. rises and collapses into JACKSON'S arms. They fall together into the chair. There is a wild excitement with both of them shouting and moaning. CHARLES restores them and AHMED ALI enters.)*

AHMED Art satisfied with my powers?

BILL Lumme! The Sheikh of Araby!

CHARLES Shut up, you idiot – he's dangerous.

AHMED Money, or further curses will fall upon you.

JOAN S. Oh! James! Who is this monster?

BILL He's advertising Palm Olive Soap.

AHMED Silence, blockhead. Money or further curses.

JACKSON I cannot pay you – I haven't any money.

JOAN S. James, I thought you were wealthy. You told me you had a wonderful business.

JACKSON Please don't complicate things now. *(To AHMED.)* I have no money to pay you.

AHMED I want £200 – unless I have it all of you will be turned into cockroaches.

JOAN S. He's mad.

JACKSON Unfortunately he is not. We are all cockroaches unless we can find £200.

JOAN S. I call it very absurd. I don't believe him. Do you mean to tell me he has power to bewitch people?

CHARLES He bewitched you, miss.

JOAN S. Me?

CHARLES When you sat in that chair. Try it again if you don't believe.

AHMED Enough. Money or my threat will be put into execution. *(To JACKSON.)* Did you report to the police?

JACKSON Good gracious, no.

AHMED Nor will you – my power will make you forget it. I want my £200.

JACKSON I haven't the money.

AHMED *(Pointing to CHARLES.)* He has.

JACKSON Rot! He hasn't two hundred farthings.

CHARLES (*Pointing to BILL.*) Try him.
AHMED Here! At once! (*CHARLES goes forward.*) Empty your pockets. (*CHARLES pulls out a lot of rubbish.*)
JOAN S. There, Mr. Knowall – he hasn't any money.
AHMED Silence, woman, or I shall make thee more like a chimpanzee than thou art.
JOAN S. (*To JACKSON.*) James, will you stand and hear me insulted like that?
JACKSON (*Agitatedly.*) We must humour him. I don't know what to do.
AHMED (*Crossing to CHARLES and taking a wallet from his inside pocket.*) What is this?
BILL Hey! Half of that is mine.
AHMED Silence, slug!
JACKSON Charles, where did you get that money?
AHMED He pilfered it from the wearer of the window in his eye and white blankets on his boots.
JACKSON Upon my soul, I believe I am going mad.
AHMED (*Holding up the wallet.*) The stars have once more led me truly.
CHARLES What about my £100?
BILL And mine?
AHMED (*Menacingly.*) Enough of this! (*He turns to go out.*) Farewell – farewell! (*He goes out.*)
BILL Lumme – £200 gone West.
CHARLES (*Looking after him.*) Gone East, you mean. (*JOAN S. swoons into JACKSON'S arms, BILL and CHARLES stand looking at the door as the curtain falls.*)

BAULKED.

A Playlet for Boys—Set in Cromwellian Times.

Characters.

SIR JOHN HENLEY.
GEORGE, His Son, a Lad of about 12.
HORACE METCALFE, A "Roundhead" Spy.
LERWAY, Sir John's Servant.
4 ROUNDHEAD SOLDIERS.

SCENE.

A room in the mansion of SIR JOHN HENLEY in the time of the Commonwealth. The room is plainly furnished with a table covered with a heavy cloth. A few chairs are scattered about the room. At the back is a French window with heavy curtains hanging down the sides. There is an oaken chest in the corner. GEORGE is standing looking through the window when METCALFE (who is dressed as a Cavalier) enters.

METCALFE Good morning. Master George.

GEORGE Good morning, Mr. Metcalfe.

METCALFE And what is troubling your small brain this morning?

GEORGE The same as should trouble all loyal sons of King Charles.

METCALFE That he should be allowed to return to his country and rule us?

GEORGE That is so. These troublous times are weighing heavily upon my father.

METCALFE But why should he not rest and leave all these dangerous things be.
There is no need for him deliberately to seek death.

GEORGE How do you mean?

METCALFE It is hardly fair for me to discuss my kind host with his son. Sir John has been kindness itself to me since he saved me from the party of Ironsides who came to desecrate the altars of our church.

GEORGE He only did what any Christian gentleman would do – he protected you.

METCALFE Yes – and he has given me a home until such time as I can return to my own hearth.

GEORGE Why speak of this, Mr. Metcalfe?

METCALFE Merely to explain that I only point out the foolishness of your father's ways; not in any critical sense but with the hope of saving him from trouble.

GEORGE Please say what you mean.

METCALFE I fear your father is planning a rebellion against Cromwell.

GEORGE But what if it is true?

METCALFE Then he is unwise. Cromwell is all powerful and will crush him as a cat crushes a small mouse, if any certain information reaches his ears that your father is playing traitor.

GEORGE Traitor!

METCALFE If he commits high treason!

GEORGE High treason!

METCALFE That is the name given to plotting against the State.

GEORGE But surely you don't call it treason?

METCALFE What I call it does not matter, it is what Cromwell calls it.

GEORGE But what makes you think my father contemplates organising a rebellion?

METCALFE By using my eyes – hasn't he told you?

GEORGE Told me – what?

METCALFE That Lord Redbury of the Castle and he are quietly marshalling force —

GEORGE But you seem to know all about it; has he told you?

METCALFE He has not exactly told me, but —

GEORGE Then, Mr. Metcalfe, it is not fair for us to continue this discussion.

METCALFE As I explained before, Master George – I have the safety of your father at heart, and — *(Six JOHN enters. He is a brusque man of about 40 and is dressed as a Cavalier.)*

GEORGE Father!

SIR JOHN Good morning, Metcalfe; good morning, my son.

METCALFE Good morning, Sir John. I hope you hear better news regarding Lady Redbury.

SIR JOHN My good wife, as you know, went across to the Castle last evening and I have heard no news so far this morning. As far as I can ascertain Lady Redbury is seriously ill and my wife's stay may be a long one.

METCALFE My Lady Redbury was riding but a few days ago – the illness must have taken her very suddenly, Sir John.

SIR JOHN (*He looks hard at METCALFE.*) Yes, very suddenly. I believe she contracted a severe chill and now further complications have arisen.

METCALFE I am indeed sorry to hear it. Would you care for me to ride across to the Castle to find the latest news for you?

SIR JOHN No, thank you, Metcalfe – there is no need to trouble – my wife will be able to send the information by one of Lord Redbury's servants.

METCALFE Then I can be of no service?

SIR JOHN No, thank you, Metcalfe.

METCALFE Then if you will pardon me I shall go to attend to my studies.

SIR JOHN Do so by all means. (*METCALFE bows and retires. SIR JOHN sits down and GEORGE sits on his knee.*)

GEORGE My father – I have to confess something to you.

SIR JOHN Speak on, my son.

GEORGE I hope it will not hurt you very much.

SIR JOHN How can anything hurt in these troublous times – I have suffered enough for the Cause to harden myself against anything.

GEORGE Then I will tell you. I don't trust Mr. Metcalfe.

SIR JOHN (*Laughing*). And why not?

GEORGE You do not tell him anything?

SIR JOHN Of course not, my son. I tell no one.

GEORGE But you have told me.

SIR JOHN That's different.

GEORGE Why is it different, because you trust me and you do not trust him?

SIR JOHN (*Laughing.*) Now you are getting me entangled. I do not know sufficient of him to trust him entirely. I think he is supporter of the Cause—I found him being ill-treated by those brutal soldiers when he was defending the ancient monuments of his village church.

GEORGE But are you sure?

SIR JOHN Although I know it is hard to trust anyone these days I hope I can believe my eyes.

GEORGE But suppose these men were only pretending – so that you would rescue Mr. Metcalfe – bring him here – and —

SIR JOHN (*Laughing uproariously.*) When the Merry Monarch returns to his throne I will tell him of your keenness – but I think it is misplaced.

GEORGE But did you not notice the way he doubted whether Lady Redbury was really ill.

SIR JOHN He only suggested the illness was sudden.

GEORGE And how anxious he was to go across to the Castle?

SIR JOHN Tut! Tut! Pure kindness of heart. You must not become too suspicious. (*A knock. LERWAY enters bearing a scroll.*)

LEEWAY From the Castle, Sir John. (*He turns and retires.*)

SIR JOHN Now you run away and forget all your notions. See how many eggs there are in that robin's nest we found the other day.

GEORGE You'll tell me all about it later?

SIR JOHN If ——

GEORGE If what, father?

SIR JOHN If I think you ought to know.

GEORGE Then I know you'll tell me.

(He kisses his father and goes out. SIR JOHN unrolls the scroll and reads; he lays it on the table. LEEWAY knocks and enters.)

LEEWAY The messenger from the Castle awaits a reply, Sir John.

SIR JOHN I will come to see him now.

(He goes out with LEEWAY. METCALFE creeps in from the other door, picks up the scroll, reads and then, hearing someone coming, darts behind the curtain taking the scroll with him. The footman enters and searches for the paper; he goes to the door and calls "MASTER GEOEGE!" GEORGE enters.)

LEEWAY Sir John was reading a paper a moment ago; left it here when he went out to speak to the messenger from the Castle and sent me back for it. It's gone!

GEORGE Gone!

LEEWAY Yes, Master George, look for yourself *(They both search and find no trace.)*

GEORGE My dear father is getting forgetful – I expect he has taken it with him. Come, let us search him —— *(He goes out pulling LEEWAY after him. METCALFE comes out from the curtain, places the paper on the floor between the chair and the table and pulls the cloth over so as to hide it partially and then creeps out. SIR JOHN hurriedly enters, followed by GEORGE and LERWAY.)*

SIR JOHN I am certain I left it.

GEORGE But we've searched.

LERWAY *(Nervously.)* Thoroughly – Sir, John. *(They search again. SIR JOHN pulling up the table cover discovers the paper.)*

SIR JOHN Here it is!

GEORGE Well – well.

SIR JOHN Master George – that is bad for you. Poor Lerway is old – but you!

GEORGE I can make no excuses – but I don't think it was there when I searched.

SIR JOHN All right, Lerway. All is well that ends well.

LERWAY Very good, sir! But I agree with Master George, Sir John.

SIR JOHN It must have been spirited away by the Henley Ghost. *(They laugh. LERWAY goes out.)*

SIR JOHN I don't know whether my boy is really wise enough to know what is in the scroll.

GEORGE I stand rebuked, my father, but still maintain what I say.

SIR JOHN And shall I tell you?

GEORGE No, sir, if you think I am unworthy.

SIR JOHN I like your spirit, my son. I think you are worthy. Listen. *(He opens the scroll.)* "All ready – come to the Castle – take the troop back to Henley Mansion after dark. Redbury."

GEORGE Then you are to cross to Redbury and bring some of the soldiers over here and hide them in our cellars for us to feed them until the blow is

struck.

SIR JOHN Very apt, my son. And what will you do?

GEORGE Stop here to keep old Lerway company.

SIR JOHN Quite right! Quite right! (*He is going out.*)

GEORGE My father!

SIR JOHN Well!

GEORGE I don't like Mr. Metcalfe.

SIR JOHN (*Laughingly.*) But – you couldn't find the paper, could you? Well, my son, farewell until night falls. I am crossing to the Castle.

GEORGE Please destroy that letter from the Castle!

SIR JOHN Of course I will – Farewell. (*He goes out. GEORGE crosses to window and looks out. METCALFE enters.*)

METCALFE Has Sir John gone?

GEORGE Yes, didn't you see him?

METCALFE I was not sure. Has he gone to the Castle?

GEORGE I expect so – I think Lady Redbury is worse this morning.

METCALFE Master George, I can scarcely credit she is ill and I am afraid it is merely a plan that will end in a death – not of Lady Redbury but of your father!

GEORGE How do you mean?

METCALFE Surely you can see – I know you too well to know that you are not slow-witted and you must guess. You saw the messenger from the Castle and saw your father depart immediately.

GEORGE But he is an old friend of Lord Redbury and naturally would like to see him if his wife is so very ill.

METCALFE Do you really believe this?

GEORGE I do —

METCALFE Then you are dull-witted and foolish. I always thought you were quick and far-seeing beyond your years.

GEORGE You would have me believe my father is engaged in a plot to restore to this country that which you would have? If you think this surely you should be with him?

METCALFE I risked my life once.

GEORGE Did you really risk it?

METCALFE Of course I did; has not your father told you?

GEORGE He has told me – but perhaps dull-wittedness runs in the family.

METCALFE How do you mean? Do you think I lied?

GEORGE Lied? How, Mr. Metcalfe?

METCALFE You doubt my word!

GEORGE Of course not. I am being just as suspicious as you are about Lady Redbury.

METCALFE (*Musingly.*) No! You are not dull-witted.

GEORGE Why not? Must a boy be suspicious to be quick-witted?

METCALFE But you have no suspicions?

GEORGE Of course not.

METCALFE You are a curious lad. Tell me this – do you really think Lady Redbury is indisposed ?

GEORGE No.

METCALFE Ah! Now we are nearer.

GEORGE How?

METCALFE You think she is not indisposed.

GEORGE She is not indisposed.

METCALFE Then I am right?

GEORGE In what way?

METCALFE She is not ill at all.

GEORGE Oh yes – she’s ill – she’s very ill – she’s not indisposed!

METCALFE (*Angrily.*) I think you are being insolent.

GEORGE Mr. Metcalfe! Nothing was farther from my mind.

METCALFE Then you suspect nothing.

GEORGE I suspect a lot of things, Mr. Metcalfe, but it is not wise for a boy to suspect.

METCALFE I think you are right, George. (*He wanders towards the door.*) In some ways I like you – but (*He goes out, GEORGE sits down and thinks. Suddenly he jumps up and calls “LERWAY!” LERWAY enters.*)

LERWAY Yes, Master George!

GEORGE Has Mr. Metcalfe gone out?

LERWAY Yes – or at least he is preparing to do so. He is taking one of Sir John’s horses as he has had permission to do.

GEORGE Then I am sure.

LERWAY Sure! Sure of what?

GEORGE I am right – he took the despatch!

LERWAY Mr. Metcalfe! Took the despatch!

GEORGE Now, Lerway – just do as you are told! I will write a letter to look like the one that came from the Castle. You take the remaining horse, hurry after my father – tell him to come back *alone* after dark and make him carry the letter I will give you. Then hurry on to the Castle. Tell them to make sure Lady Redbury is ill in bed – in bed, mind! And tell Lord Redbury to hide his men anywhere except in the Castle? Say the plot is discovered.

LERWAY Plot! Soldiers!

GEORGE Now – don’t be stupid – you get the horse ready. I will get the letter written and then away.

LERWAY They will think I am mad —

GEORGE Lerway – Lerway. I’m right – do as you’re told – mind I might be your master one day!

LERWAY Oh dear – I don’t know what to do!

GEORGE Quick! Listen! Was that letter here when we searched?

LERWAY No, Master George. I’m sure of that.

GEORGE Do you believe in ghosts?

LERWAY Not in the daytime!

GEORGE Then who had it?

LERWAY That I cannot say.

GEORGE Who was the only one in the house?

LERWAY Mr. Metcalfe.

GEORGE Now do as you're told – quick.

LERWAY Oh!

(He dashes out. GEORGE crosses to the chest – takes out a quill and parchment and brings them to the table and commences writing as the curtain falls. The curtain is allowed to remain down some time to denote passage of time. When it is raised candlesticks are lighted and METCALFE dressed as a Roundhead officer is lighting the last one. He crosses to the window, pulls the curtains across. He goes to the door and summons three Roundhead soldiers.)

METCALFE Sir John will be here shortly. The soldiers he is bringing will be left outside and our other men will deal with them. We must capture Sir John red-handed.

1ST SOLDIER Very good, captain!

METCALFE Now – one each side of the door. *(Two SOLDIERS take up this position.)* You *(to the Third)* stand there facing the door. When Sir John enters cover him with your weapon.

SRD SOLDIER Very good, sir. *(The SOLDIERS take up their positions.)*

METCALFE Hark! Ready!

(A footstep can be heard outside. The SOLDIERS stand on the alert, the two by the door ready to pounce upon SIR JOHN. The door opens and GEORGE walks in. The two SOLDIERS grasp above his head and clutch each other. GEORGE walks between them and says:)

GEORGE Good evening, Mr. Metcalfe.

METCALFE Master George!

GEORGE Why not? *(He looks at the SOLDIERS.)* Who are these?

METCALFE That is no business of yours.

GEORGE But why not? Surely I should be presented to your friends.

METCALFE Silence! I am on duty!

GEORGE What for?

METCALFE To arrest your father.

GEORGE Arrest my father! Why?

METCALFE That is my business.

GEORGE Do you know, Mr. Metcalfe, I don't think I like you.

METCALFE That is quite sufficient of your impertinence. Stand there! *(To SOLDIERS.)* Quick! Ready! *(They stand at their position and SIR JOHN enters. He is captured by the SOLDIERS.)*

METCALFE I arrest you!

SIR JOHN You, Metcalfe! Arrest me! On what grounds pray!

METCALFE Conspiring against the lawful government of the land, against the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth.

SIR JOHN What grounds have you for this charge?

METCALFE A letter you received this morning from the castle.

SIR JOHN A letter!

METCALFE Yes. Do not deny it – you have brought a party of soldiers across

from the Castle this evening.

SIR JOHN Brought soldiers!

METCALFE To deny it is useless.

SIR JOHN But I do deny it.

METCALFE (To a SOLDIER.) Search him. (*This is done and the scroll discovered.*) There!

The despatch! Now deny it!

SIR JOHN Please read it and you will see why I went to the Castle.

METCALFE Really Sir John – your effrontery is beyond words. (*He snatches the scroll from the SOLDIER and reads:*) “Come quick – Lady Redbury is more seriously ill than first thought. Evelyn.” What is this?

SIR JOHN From my wife.

(*Another SOLDIER enters; he salutes.*)

SOLDIER Captain! Sir John entered alone – we have scoured the countryside and no soldiers are to be seen.

METCALFE I have been duped – quick – to the Castle! we’ll catch someone yet! (*He dashes out followed by the SOLDIERS. SIR JOHN sees his son and crossing to him shakes him by the hand.*)

SIR JOHN Well done, my son! Well done!

GEORGE (*Seriously.*) Do you know, my father —

SIR JOHN What, my boy?

GEORGE I don’t like Mr. Metcalfe.

CURTAIN.



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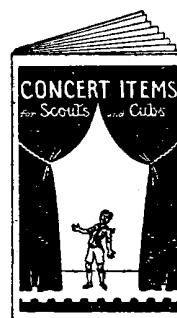
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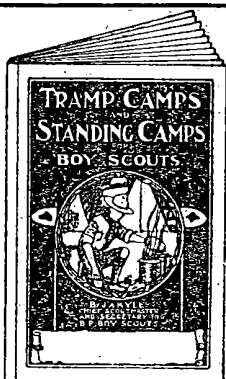
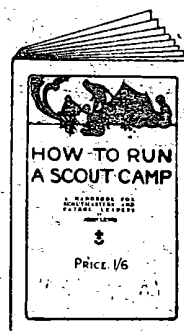
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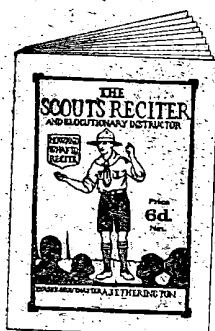
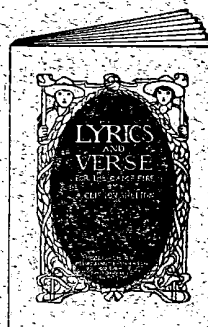
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