

GEORGE BAKER

A MYSTERIOUS
DISAPPEARANCE

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Содержание

CHARACTERS	4
COSTUMES	5
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	11

George M. Baker

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CHARACTERS

Captain Boliver Bobstay, "Mysteriously disappeared."
Charles Cleverly, an Amateur Farmer.
Dixon Dolby, out for a Day's Sport.
Carlos Carrots, a Farm Hand.
Mrs. Cleverly, Charles's Wife.
Nelly Cleverly, Charles's Sister.
Miss Persis Grievous, "Widow Bobstay."

COSTUMES

Captain. Wide-bottomed trousers, and "Reefer" of blue; blue shirt; black handkerchief; bald wig for own; black wig and big black whiskers for disguise.

Dolby. Checkered suit; gaiters; Jockey cap.

Charles. Blue flannel suit; wide-brimmed straw hat.

Carlos. Wide straw hat; heavy shoes; blue stockings; short pants; and jacket open; with red or yellow waistcoat; red wig.

Nelly. Pretty muslin dress, with apron and morning cap.

Mrs. C. Morning dress.

Miss Persis. Red wig, with long curls. Dress very high-colored; spectacles of a light blue; hat. She is rather old, with affected girlish dress and ways.

SCENE. —*Sitting-room in farm-house. Door in flat C. Window in flat L. Lounge under window. Table L. corner, back, with cover, books, and flowers. Small table, R. C. Arm-chair, L. C. Chair, L., near first entrance. Door R. and L. Nelly discovered dusting.*

Nelly (throwing brush on lounge). That will do for to-day. It's time Carlos were back from the post-office. I am anxious to obtain a letter from my invisible adorer, Dixon Dolby. How my good brother would open his eyes if he knew the extent of my wickedness. Three months ago, six of us girls at school, desirous of acquiring proficiency in correspondence, agreed to

write to gentlemen whom we had never met, but whom we knew by reputation to be gentlemen. My choice was my brother's chum before his marriage, Dixon Dolby. My plan succeeded admirably. He answered the note signed, Rosa Bean. The most tender and impassioned epistles followed on both sides, until at last he had the impudence to request an exchange of photographs. I consented, but was not fool enough to allow him to discover my identity; so, to secure his, I sent instead a photograph of my brother's wife. I knew they had never met, but they must; and when they do, won't there be fun. I only hope I shall be at the *denouement*. Ah! here's Carlos.

(Enter Carlos, C., with two letters and a paper.)

Well, Carlos, what success?

Carlos (putting letters behind him). Hey? What'll you give to know? Ought to give a feller somethin' purty sweet, cos I ran all the way.

Nelly. Indeed I will, Carlos. My warmest thanks and my sweetest smile.

Carlos. Is that all? Well, here's a letter *(gives her a letter)*.

Nelly. O, thank you, Carlos. You're a dear, good boy *(takes letter, and sits in arm-chair, L.)*.

Carlos (comes down R., puts newspaper on table). Kinder thought I might get somethin' sweeter; a kiss, perhaps. But I s'pose she was afraid somebody might be lookin'. I wouldn't a cared if they had. She's jest as purty as a pictur; and I kinder think she hankers arter me. I jest like her, you bet! Wish sometimes I

could be a caterpillar, and crawl under her purty feet. I couldn't be more smashed than I am now. Wal, I'll go and hunt up Mr. Cleverly with the other letter (*goes up C.*). Nothin' wantin', Miss Nelly?

Nelly. Nothing; thank you, Carlos.

Carlos (at door). O, she's a beauty. Takes such pains to call me Carlos. Mr. Cleverly he always calls me Careless, 'cause he says it's my natur. [*Exit C.*]

Nelly (takes photograph from letter). There he is; charming fellow. He has no idea I am the sister of his best friend. Not bad-looking (*holds photograph up*).

(*Enter Mrs. Cleverly with hat and shawl, door L. She looks over Nelly's shoulder at picture.*)

A girl might be happy with such a man. I've no doubt I shall blush when we meet. (*To photograph.*) You dear fellow, you are good-looking and smart —

Mrs. C. Indeed he is, Nelly.

Nelly (jumping up). O, good gracious! you here?

Mrs. C. Have I disturbed your devotions? Who is he? When will it be?

Nelly (puts photograph in her bosom). Nonsense; it's only a slight acquaintance.

Mrs. C. You do not slight his picture. I should say he was a bosom-friend. Where's Charley?

Nelly. Out on the farm, hilling corn, I believe.

Mrs. C. Poor fellow! how his corns must ache! and his back.

Ha, ha, ha! He works so hard to make a pleasure of what he does not enjoy. Nell, tell him, if he comes in, I've run over to Mrs. Young's to borrow her pat. I won't be gone long. [*Exit C.*]

Nelly. She saw him, but she doesn't know him. If she only knew what he received in exchange. Well, I'm not going to spoil a frolic for fear of the consequences.

Charles (outside). Hang the corn, Careless; my back's nearly broken now.

(*Enter C. with a hoe, followed by Carlos.*)

Carlos. How about the onions, sir?

Charles. How about them as much as you like, but no hoe about them for me.

Carlos. They won't be worth a cent.

Charles. Well, don't get sentimental over them, Careless. They're not worth weeping over; no, Careless. I've set myself up for an independent farmer, and there's no clause regarding hoeing in my declaration of independence. You shall have a holiday: you needn't work to-day. You're not very fond of it at any time; but this day we have a visitor.

Nelly. A visitor?

Charles. Yes, Nelly. I've got word from him; he's coming down for a day's sport. The very man I've picked out to lead you to the hymeneal altar.

Carlos. Gosh all hemlock!

Charles. What's the matter, Careless?

Carlos. Me – I – nothin'; only darned skeeter up my nose.

Nelly. Picked out for me? Thank you; I can do my own picking.

Charles. And your own leading too. You're smart enough to do the leading business. Where's Jenny, "the girl I left behind me"?

Nelly. She left before you – came in. She ran over to Mrs. Young's to borrow her pat.

Charles. Her Pat? Haven't I told her I wouldn't have an Irishman on the place?

Nelly. Ha, ha, ha! It's a butter pat.

Carlos. Ho, ho, ho!

Charles. What's the matter with you, Careless? (*Carlos looks sober.*) Do that again, and you'll get anything but a pat. Go, make yourself presentable; put your auburn locks in curl-papers, and wash your face. You shall guide my friend in his day's sport.

Carlos. Yes, sir. (*Aside*) He's going to lead her with a halter, is he? I'll show him sport. [*Exit C.*]

Charles. Yes, Nelly, we're to have a visit from my old chum, Dixie Dolby.

Nelly. Good gracious! he coming here?

Charles. Yes; for the first time; and to the country for the first time, too. This little matrimonial scheme of mine is the only secret I ever had from him. He didn't know I was courting Jenny Bobstay until he received my wedding-cards. Wasn't he surprised? No more than I, however. Just a year ago, that highly respectable old mariner, Captain Boliver Bobstay, mysteriously disappeared from Valparaiso, where the stanch bark "Indigo

Blue” was waiting for a cargo. His coat and hat were found upon the pier; but the wearer never did appear upon that pier again.

Nelly. And he was not heard of again?

Charles. No. Yes. Six months ago, Jenny received a deed of this place from Uncle Bobstay. How it came, or where it came from, nobody knew; but it was found all right, and being a nice cosy place here, we married and settled upon it three months ago.

Nelly. But, Charley, your friend —

Charles. O, yes; Dolby – clever fellow. You’ve never met him, Nelly?

Nelly. No. I’ve often heard you speak of him, and feel inclined to like him.

Charles. I know you will, Nelly. Now let’s have something nice for dinner, in honor of our guest; something extra, you know.

Nelly. I’ll look after the dinner. When he comes, we shall have something *extra*. [*Exit R.*]

Charles. She’s a nice girl. I hope Dixie will like her. To think of his coming down here to see me a married man. Why, I should almost as soon expect, Uncle Bobstay to walk in at my door.

(*Enter C. Bobstay. He has a black wig and black whiskers.*)

Bobstay (at door). Avast there! Are the decks, clear? Sh —

Charles. Hallo! Who have we here? Come in.

Bobstay (comes down R.). All right, my hearty. When a messmate’s going down in the briny – for the last time, mind – what do we do? Why, we extends a helping hand, and grabs him by the hair of the head, don’t we?

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