

GEORGE BAKER

PAST
REDEMPTION

George Baker
Past Redemption

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Past Redemption A Drama in Four Acts:

Содержание

COSTUMES	4
Act I. – A Husking at the Old Home	6
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	20

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COSTUMES

John Maynard. Act I. Mixed pants and vest, blue striped shirt, collar rolled over vest, without necktie, straw hat, bald gray wig, heavy gray side-whiskers. Act II. and IV. Add a dark coat.

Harry Maynard. Act I. Neat gray suit, with game-bag, felt hat, leggings. Act III. White shirt without collar, rusty black pants, and coat out at elbows, unshorn face, hollow eyes. Act IV. Light pants, dark vest and coat, with white overcoat, high-colored handkerchief thrown about the neck, felt hat.

Robert Thornton. Act I. Light gray suit, leggings, game-bag, felt hat, heavy watch-chain, and full black beard and moustache. Act II. Handsome black suit, black hat, light overcoat on his arm. Act III. Fashionable suit, with a liberal display of jewelry. Act IV. Dirty black pants, torn at the knee, white shirt, soiled and ragged, showing a red shirt beneath; rough grizzled beard and wig; pale and haggard; dark, ragged coat.

Tom Larcom. Act I. and II. Rough farmer's suit. Act III. Flashy mixed suit, false moustache and chin-whiskers. Act IV. Neat suit

with overcoat and felt hat.

Nat Harlow. Neat mixed business suit; a little dandified.

Hanks and Huskers. Farmer's rough suits.

Capt. Bragg. Dark pants, white vest, blue coat with brass buttons, military stock and dickey; tall felt hat; bald gray wig, and military whiskers.

Murdock. Fashionable dress.

Daley. Dark pants and vest, white apron, sleeves rolled up, no coat.

Stub. Act I. Gray pants, blue striped shirt. Act III. Dark pants, white vest, red necktie, standing collar, black hat, short black coat. Acts II. and IV. Same as first with the addition of a coat.

Mrs. Maynard. Acts I. and II. Cheap calico dress. Act IV. Brown dress, with white apron, collar and cuffs. Gray wig for all.

Charity, age about thirty-five. Act II. Pretty muslin dress, with a white apron, tastefully trimmed, lace cap, light wig. Act III. Gray dress handsomely trimmed, gray waterproof cloak. Act III. Dark travelling dress, handsome cloak and hat.


Jessie. Act I. Muslin dress, with collar and cuffs. Act II. Something of the same kind. Act III. Handsome dress of light color. Act IV. Gray travelling dress, with cloak and hat.

Kitty. Act I. Light muslin dress. Act II. Something of the same kind. Act IV. Red dress, white collar and cuffs, shawl and hat.

Chorus of Ladies for Act III. Dark and light dresses, with "clouds" of different colors about their heads.

Act I. – A Husking at the Old Home

Scene. —A barn. In flat, large door to roll back l., closed; above door, hay-mow, practicable staging, loose hay piled upon it; over that, window, through which moonbeams stream. l., stalls with harness suspended from pegs, bench on which are two basins and towels. r., bins, above stalls and bins, r. and l., hay-mow with hay (painted). r. c., two benches

thus:  b d a c, on which are seated a. Tom Larcom, b. Nat Harlow, and between them four farmers, three girls; another girl standing c.; beside her on floor, kneeling, a farmer picks up the husks thrown by the huskers, and puts them in a basket. A small pile of corn, d., which the occupants of the benches are at work on, throwing the corn into bins, r.; the husks behind. Just back of b., Hanks seated on a barrel with violin playing, "In the sweet by and by." Stub leaning against wing, l., i e. listening; stool r., i e.; red lanterns hung r. and l., red light from footlights. Hanks plays the air through during the rising of curtain.

Stub. Golly! hear dat now, will you? D-d-dat what I call music in de har, fur it jes make my har stan' on end, yes, it does. And I feel – I feel jes as dough I was skewered onto dat ar fiddle-bow, an' bein' drawned frou a sea ob bilin' merlasses. Golly, so sweet!

Nat. There's a first-class puff for you, Hanks, from the mouth of a critic – with a black border.

Tom. You do beat all nater, Hanks, with the fiddle; your hand is as cute, and your ear as fine, as though the one had never held a plough, or the other listened to the jingling of a cowbell. Talk of your genuses. Give me the chap that's a Jack at any thing, from digging ninety tater-hills afore breakfast, to sparking a pretty girl at 'leven o'clock on a starlight night.

Stub. Wid de ole man comin' roun' de corner ob de house wid a double-barrel revolver, "You scoot or I shoot." Don't forget de embellishments, Tom Larcom. (*All laugh.*)

Nat. Ha, ha! had you there, Tom.

Tom. What are you laughing at? If old Corum mistook me for a prowler one night, am I to blame?

Stub. Coorse not, coorse not, when you didn't stop to 'lucide, but jumped de fence and scooted down de road hollering "Murder!" (*Laugh.*)

Tom (*flinging an ear of corn at Stub*). A little more ear and less tongue, Stub.

Stub (*ducking his head*). Don't waste de fodder. Had ear enough dat night. Golly! jes woke de whole neighborhood.

Tom. Ah! the course of true love never did run smooth.

Stub. By golly! you – you found it pretty smooove runnin' dat night.

Tom (*threatening Stub*). Will you be quiet?

Stub. Ob coorse. Don't waste de fodder.

Nat. Ah, Tom, Nature never cut you out for a lover.

Tom. P'r'aps not; but I've got *art* enough to cut you out, Nat,

if you do make up to my property, Kitty Corum. (*Enter Kitty, r., overhearing last words.*)

Kitty. Indeed! Your property! I like that. And when, pray, did you come into possession?

Tom. That's for you to say, Kitty. I'm an expectant heir as yet. Don't forget me in your will, Kitty.

Nat. Don't write your will in his favor.

Kitty.

"When a woman wills she wills: depend on't;
And when she won't she won't, and there's the end on't."

Tom (*sings*). "If I could write my title clear."

Nat. Give me the title, Kitty.

Tom. I'd give you a title – Counter-jumper, Yardstick; that's about your measure. You talk about titles; why, all you are good for is to measure tape and ribbons, cut "nigger-head," shovel sugar, and peddle herrings for old Gleason. Bah! I smell soap now.

Nat (*jumping up*). You just step outside, and you shall smell brimstone, and find your measure on the turf, Tom Larcom.

Kitty. There, there, stop that! I'll have no quarrelling. Supper's nearly ready, and the corn not finished.

Tom. We'll be ready for the supper, Kitty. If I could only find a red ear.

Kitty. And if you could?

Tom. I should make an impression on those red lips of yours that would astonish you.

Kitty. Indeed! It would astonish me more if you had the chance. (*Laugh.*) But where's Harry Maynard?

Tom. Off gunning with Mr. Thornton. He said he'd be back in time for the husking: they must have lost their way.

Kitty. His last night at home, too.

Stub. Yas, indeed. Off in de mornin', afore de broke ob day. I's gwine to drive dem ober to de steam-jine station. Miss Jennie gwine to see him off; 'spect she'll jes cry her eyes out comin' home.

Tom. Well, I can't see the use of Harry Maynard's trottin' off to the city with this Mr. Thornton. Let well enough alone, say I. Here's a good farm, and a smart, pretty girl ready to share life with him; and yet off he goes to take risks in something he knows nothing about.

Kitty. Don't say a word against Mr. Thornton; he's just splendid.

Chorus of Girls. Oh, elegant!

Tom. There it is! Vanity and vexation! here's a man old enough to be your father. Comes up here in his fine clothes, with a big watch-chain across his chest, and a seal ring on his finger, and you girls are dead in love with him at first sight.

Kitty. Tom, you're jealous. Harry Maynard is not content to settle down here; he wants to see the world, and I like his spunk. If I was a man *I* would get the polish of city life.

Stub. So would I, so would I. Yas, indeed; get de polish down dar. Look at Joe Trash; he went down dar, he did. New suit ob store clo's onto him, and forty dollars in his calf-skin. He come back in free days polished right out ob his boots.

Tom. Well, I s'pose it's out of fashion not to like this Thornton, but there's something in the twist of his waxed-end mustache, and the roll of his eye, that makes me feel bad for Harry.

Kitty. You needn't fear for Harry. He won't eat him.

Stub. No, sir, he's not a connubial: he's a gemblum.

Tom. Ah! here's the last ear, and, by jingo! it's a red one.

Chorus. Good for you, Tom! good for you!

Nat. I'll give you a dollar for your chance.

Tom. No, you don't, Nat; I'm in luck. – Now, Kitty, I claim the privilege. A kiss for the finder of the red ear. (*All rise.*)

Kitty. Not from me, saucebox.

Nat. Run, Kitty, run! (*Kitty runs in and out among the huskers, Tom in pursuit.*)

Tom. It's no use, Kitty; you can't escape me. (*She runs down r. corner; as Tom is about to seize her, she stoops, and runs across stage, catches Stub by the arms, and whirls him round. Tom, in pursuit, clasps Stub in his arms.*)

Stub. "I'd offer thee dis cheek ob mine." If you want a smack take it. I won't struggle.

Tom (*strikes his face with hand*). How's that for a smack?

Stub. Dat's de hand widout de heart: takes all de bloom out ob my complexion. (*Goes across stage holding on to his face, and*

exits r. Kitty runs through crowd again, comes r., Tom in pursuit.)

Tom. It's no use, Kitty: you must pay tribute.

Kitty. Never, never! *(Runs across to l., and then up stage to back. Door opens, and enter Harry Maynard and Thornton, equipped with guns and game-bags; Kitty runs into Harry's arms.)*

Harry. Hallo! just in time. You've the red ear, Tom, so, as your friend, I'll collect the tribute. *(Kisses Kitty.)*

Kitty *(screams)*. How dare you, Harry Maynard!

Tom. Yes, Harry Maynard, how dare you?

(Thornton, Harry, Kitty, Tom, and Nat come down; others carry back the benches, and clear the stage; then converse in groups at back.)

Harry. Don't scold, Tom. It's the first game that has crossed my path to-day: the first shot I've made. So the corn is husked, and I not here to share your work. We've had a long tramp, and lost our way. *(goes to r. with Thornton; they divest themselves of their bags, and lean their guns against bin. 2d entrance.)*

Tom (l. c.). Empty bags! Well, you are smart gunners: not even a rabbit.

Harry (r. c. Thornton *sits on stool*, r.). No, Tom; they were particularly shy to-day, so I had to content myself with a deer, your dear, Tom. *(All laugh; Nat, l., very loud, Tom threatening him.)*

Kitty (c.). His dear, indeed! I'll have you to understand I'm not to be made game of.

Harry. No, dear, no one shall make game of you; but keep a

sharp lookout, for there's a keen hunter on the track, and when Tom Larcom flings the matrimonial noose —

Kitty. He may be as lucky as you have been to-day, and return empty-handed.

Tom. Don't say that, Kitty; haven't I been your devoted —

Kitty. Fiddlesticks! (*pushes him back, and comes to l. C.*) If there is any thing I hate, it's sparking before company.

Nat (l.). And there's where you're right, Kitty. As much as I love you, I would never dare to be so outspoken before company.

Tom. Oh, you're a smart one, you are! (*Enter Stub, r.*)

Stub. Supper's onto de table, and Miss Maynard, she says, says she, you're to come right into de kitchen, eat all you like, drink all you like, an' smash all de dishes if you like; an' dere's fourteen kinds ob pies, an' turnobers, an' turn-unders, an' cold chicken, an' — an' — cheese —

Harry. That will do, Stub. My good mother is a bountiful provider, and needs no herald. So, neighbors, take your partners; Hanks will give you a march, and Mr. Thornton and I will join you as soon as we have removed the marks of the forlorn chase.

Stub. Yas, Massa Hanks, strike up a march: something lively. Dead march in Saul; dat's fus rate.

Tom (c.). Kitty, shall I have the pleasure? (*Offers his left arm to Kitty.*)

Nat (l.). Miss Corum, shall I have the honor? (*Offers his right arm to Kitty.*)

Kitty (*between them, looks at each one, turns up her nose at*

Tom, *and takes Nat's arm*). Thank you, Mr. Harlow. I'll intrust this *property* to you.

Nat. For life, Kitty?

Kitty. On a short lease. (*They go up c., face audience; others pair, and fall in behind them.*)

Tom (c.). Cut, – a decided cut. I must lay in wait for Yardstick when this breaks up, and I think he will need about a pound of beefsteak for his eyes in the morning. (*Goes l. and leans dejectedly against wing. Music strikes up, the march is made across stage once, and off r., Stub strutting behind.*)

Harry (*crosses l.*). Why, Tom, don't you go in?

Tom. Certainly. Come, Hanks. (*Goes over to Hanks.*) They'll want your music in there, and I'm just in tune to play second fiddle. (*They exeunt r., arm in arm.*)

Harry (*goes to bench l., and washes hands*). Now, Mr. Thornton, for a wash, and then we'll join them. (*Thornton keeps his seat in a thoughtful attitude. Harry comes down.*) Hallo! what's the matter? Homesick?

Thornton (*laughs*). Not exactly; but there's something in this old barn, these merry huskers, this careless happy life you farmers lead, has stirred up old memories, until I was on the point of breaking out with that melancholy song, "Oh, would I were a boy again!"

Harry. Now, don't be melancholy. That won't chime with the dear old place; for, though it has not been free from trouble, we drive all care away with willing hands and cheerful hearts.

Thornton. It is a cheery old place, and so reminds me of one I knew when I was young; for, like you, I was a farmer's boy.

Harry. Indeed! you never told me that.

Thornton. No: for 'tis no fond recollection to me, and I seldom refer to it. I did not take kindly to it, so early forsook a country life for the stir and bustle of crowded cities. But, when one has reached the age of forty, 'tis time to look back.

Harry. Not with regret, I trust: for you tell me you have acquired wealth in mercantile pursuits, and so pictured the busy life of the city, that I am impatient to carve my fortune there.

Thornton. And you are right. The strong-armed, clear-brained wanderers from the country carry off the grand prizes there. You are ambitious: you shall rise; and, when you are forty, revisit these scenes, a man of wealth and influence.

Harry. Ah, Mr. Thornton, when one has a friend like you to lead the way, success is certain. I am proud of your friendship, and thankfully place my future in your keeping.

Thornton. That shows keen wit at the outset. Trust me, and you shall win. (*Rises.*) But I am keeping you from your friends, and I know a pair of bright eyes are anxiously looking for you. (*Goes to bench, and washes hands.*)

Jessie (*outside l., sings*), —

"In the sweet by and by,

We shall meet on that beautiful shore," &c.

Harry. Ah! my "sweet by and by" is close at hand. (*Enter Jessie, r., with pail.*)

Jessie. O you truant! (*Runs to him.*) Now, don't flatter yourself that I came in search of you. Do you see this pail? this is my excuse.

Harry. 'Tis an empty one, Jessie. I am very sorry you have been anxious on my account; but I'm all ready, so let's in to supper.

Jessie. Not so fast, sir: the pail must be filled. I'm going for milk.

Harry. Then "I'll go with you, my pretty maid." – You'll excuse me a moment, Mr. Thornton.

Jessie. Mr. Thornton! – Dear me, I didn't see you! Good evening.

Thornton. Good evening, Miss Jessie.

Jessie. Are you very, very hungry?

Thornton. Oh, ravenous!

Jessie. Then don't wait, but hurry in, or I won't be responsible for your supper: huskers are such a hungry set. – Come, Harry.

Harry. Don't wait, Mr. Thornton: it takes a long time to get the milk; don't it, Jessie?

Jessie. Not unless you tease me – but you always do.

Harry. Of course, I couldn't help it; and tease and milk go well together. (*Exeunt Jessie and Harry, l. Thornton stands c.looking after them.*)

Thornton. Yes, yes, 'tis a cheery old place. Pity the storm should ever beat upon it; pity that dark clouds should ever obscure its brightness; yet they will come. For the first time in a life of

passion and change, this rural beauty has stirred my heart with a longing it never felt before. I cannot analyze it. The sound of her voice thrills me; the sight of her face fascinates me; the touch of her hand maddens me; and, with it all, the shadow of some long-forgotten presence mystifies me. This must be love. For I would dare all, sacrifice all, to make her mine. She is betrothed to him. He must be taken from her side, made unworthy of her, made to forget her. The task is easy to one skilled in the arts of temptation. Once free, her heart may be turned towards me. 'Tis a long chase: no wonder I am melancholy, Harry Maynard; but there's a keen, patient hunter on the track, who never fails, never. (*Enter John Maynard, r.*)

John Maynard. Well, well, here's hospitality: here's hospitality with a vengeance. That rascal Harry has deserted you, has he? — you, our honored guest. It's too bad, too bad.

Thornton. Don't give yourself any uneasiness about me, old friend. Harry has left me a moment to escort a young lady.

Maynard. Ah, yes, I understand: Jessie, our Jessie, the witch that brings us all under her spells. No wonder the boy forgot his manners; but to desert you —

Thornton. Don't speak of desertion; you forget I am one of the family.

Maynard. I wish you were with all my heart. I like you, Mr. Thornton. I flatter myself I know a gentleman, when I meet him. You came up here, looked over my stock, and bought my horses at my own price, no beating down, no haggling; and I said to

myself, He's a gentleman, for gentlemen never haggle. So I say I like you (*gives his hand*), and that's something to remember, for John Maynard don't take kindly to strangers.

Thornton. I trust I shall always merit your good opinion.

Maynard. Of course you will; you can't help it. There's our Harry just raves about you, and you've taken a fancy to him. I like you for that too. Then you are going to take him away, and show him the way to fortune by your high pressure, bustle and rush, city ways. Not just the notion I wanted to get into his head; but he's ambitious, and I'll not stand in his way. He's our only boy now. There was another; he went down at the call of his country, a brave, noble fellow, and fell among the first; and he died bravely: he couldn't help it, for he was a Maynard. But 'twas a hard blow to us. It made us lonely here; and even now, when the wind howls round the old house in the cold winter nights, mother and I sit silent in the corner, seeing our boy's bright face in the fire, till the tears roll down her cheeks, and I – I set my teeth together, and clasp her hands, and whisper, He died bravely, mother, – died for his country like a hero, – like a hero.

Thornton. Ah! 'tis consoling to remember that.

Maynard. Yes, yes. And now the other, our only boy, goes forth to fight another battle, full of temptation and danger. Heaven grant him a safe return!

Thornton. Amen to that! But fear not for him. I have a regard, yes, call it a fatherly regard; and it shall be my duty to guard him among the temptations of the city.

Maynard. That's kind; that's honest. I knew you were a gentleman, and I trust you freely.

Thornton. You shall have a good account of him; and 'twill not be lonely here, for you have a daughter left to comfort you.

Maynard. Our Jessie, bless her! she's a treasure. Sixteen years ago, on one of the roughest nights, our Harry, then a mere boy, coming up from the village, found a poor woman and her babe on the road lying helpless in the snow. He brought her here: we recognized her as the daughter of one of our neighbors, a girl who had left home, and found work in the city. This was her return. Her unnatural father shut the door in her face, and she wandered about until found by Harry. She lingered through the night, speechless, and died at sunrise. I sought the father, but he had cast her out of his heart and home; for he believed her to be a wanton. Indignant at his cruelty, I struck him down; for I'm mighty quick-tempered, and can't stand a mean argument. I gave the mother Christian burial, took the child to my heart, and love her as if she was my own. As for him, public opinion drove him from our village; and her child is loved and honored as he could never hope to be.

Thornton. And your son will marry her with this stain upon her?

Maynard. Stain? what stain? Upon her mother's finger was a plain gold ring; and, though the poor thing's lips were silent, her eyes wandered to that ring with a meaning none could fail to guess. She was a deserted wife; and, even had she been all her

father thought her, what human being has a right to be relentless, when we should forgive as we all hope to be forgiven? But come, here I am chatting away like an old maid at a quilting. Come in, and get your supper, for you must be hungry: come in. (*Exeunt r. Enter l., Harry, with his arm round Jessie, the pail in his hand.*)

Harry. Yes, Jessie, 'tis hard to leave you behind; but our parting will not be for long. Once fairly embarked in my new life, with a fair chance of success before me, I shall return to seek my ready helper.

Jessie. Harry, perhaps you will think me foolish, but I tremble at your venture. Why seek new paths to fortune when here is all that could make our lives happy and contented?

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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