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American Dramatists Series

**A Light From
Another World**

C. H. McGurrin





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American Dramatists Series

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

A Play in One Act

C. H. MCGURRIN



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A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

CHARACTERS

ELEANOR WITHINGTON

"SPIKE" PUFFER

BILLINGS, A FOOTMAN

SCENE

Drawing room at the Withington Mansion, Fifth Avenue, N. Y.

Stage Setting—L. C. Beautiful stair case leading to landing high enough to run L. from entrance from hall across entire back of stage. Under landing C. large double opening showing lower hall running off L. Mantel L. 2 set obliquely. Small chair immediately R. of entrance from hall. Large table L. C. well down stage. R. of table. chair. R. C. small table on which telephone stands. L. of telephone table, chair. Other appropriate furnishings and decorations.

The room is magnificently furnished, with gilt furniture, costly hangings, rare pictures, pieces of statuary and everything indicating refinement of taste, wealth and luxury.

A gilt clock on the mantel indicates the hour of 7:45.

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

On rise of curtain, enter ELEANOR WITHINGTON, from stairs. She is dressed for the opera. Has a letter in her hand which she opens:

ELEANOR

From brother Bob—and a special delivery too. Surely it must be very important. (*She goes to chair R. of larger table.*)

(*She opens letter and reads*):

“Dear Sis:

“I’m in a peck of trouble.” (*Aside*) Same old story. “In fact it’s simply awful.” (*Aside*) Gracious! This IS serious. “You see it was this way: I went down to New York last Thursday with the squad—the day we played Columbia. Now, I know it was fearfully shabby of me not to run up to see you all even for a minute—but I didn’t—didn’t even call you up. The truth is I didn’t want the Governor to know that I came down. Well, after the game we celebrated. I remember when we *began* the celebration—but—that’s about all. You can

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

imagine the rest. Sometime before morning a few of us were in the Bowery district playing cards. I lost what little money I had with me and all I could borrow from the fellows besides. Then it seems I began to draw checks on an imaginary bank account. I gave two checks—for a thousand dollars each—to someone. I had forgotten all about this feature of the evening's entertainment until I was forcibly reminded of it this afternoon when I had a call from an individual, one 'Spike' Puffer—as he calls himself—a resident of the district, a typical Bowery sport, who claims to be the owner of the checks. He demanded immediate payment. I pleaded with him for time—and reasoned with him as hard as I could. I promised to pay—but the more I showed a desire to be decent and settle the matter quietly, the more boisterous he became, and he threatened to put the matter in the hands of the district attorney. I finally got him to promise to call at the house to-night, to see the Governor—I did this so that you might see him first and arrange it in some way—you are clever enough not to let it get up to the Governor if this works out. You know what it would mean for me, after that last experience, if Dad were to hear of it. I will be most anxious to hear from you—so let me have the

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

news, good or bad, as soon as possible—and in the meantime I'll hope for the best.

“Your unfortunate brother,

“Bob.”

Poor Bob! What a silly boy you are to be sure.

To-night! (*She looks at clock and observes the time*). Well, no theatre party for ME. Papa is upstairs too. Well, Bob, fortune favors you thus far.

(*She rises and puts her cloak on back of same chair—and goes to telephone on table R. C.—and calls up*).

“Hello—Riverside 6752. Is that you Helen, dear? This is Eleanor—yes, Eleanor—yes. Dear, I'm very, very sorry, but it isn't going to be possible for me to be one of the party to-night. No, I've just had a very severe headache come on—I'm fearfully ill; yes—I'm just as sorry as I can be—and I was about ready, too. It's fortunate that I caught you in time so as to save you driving around for me—so am I—dear—Yes—if I should feel better within an hour or so, perhaps I'll have Dickens drive me down. Yes—in the left-hand lower—No. 3—very well. I surely will if I feel up to it. That's very sweet of you, dear. Oh no indeed—not for the world. Yes, I will—good-bye, dear.”

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

Well, that much out of the way.

(*She goes to wall R.—presses button and BILLINGS appears in C. doorway. ELEANOR goes over L. C.*)

Billings, I am expecting a caller this evening—a gentleman—I mean—(*She has letter in her hand and glances at it*)—a bowery sport—(*Look of consternation overspreads the face of BILLINGS*)—His name is Spike Puffer. Now, if Mr. Puffer *does* call do not insist on formalities but show him in immediately. That is all Billings.

BILLINGS

(*With astonishment.*) Yes, my lady.

(*Bell rings violently and continuously—while BILLINGS looks first at ELEANOR and then in direction of door—the bell still ringing.*)

ELEANOR

That *Might* be the gentleman now Billings.

BILLINGS

Yes, my lady. (*Exit BILLINGS and ELEANOR*)

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

exit up stairs. Presently BILLINGS appears followed by SPIKE. BILLINGS stops inside of doorway R. SPIKE passes inside of him and steps slightly down L. SPIKE is dressed in a plaid suit—red necktie—high collar, shortly clipped black hair, ponderous mustache—red over-gaiters over patent leather shoes, large diamond in shirt front, massive watch chain, large diamond ring—gloves in hand—and wearing a silk hat—which BILLINGS offers to take as he passes by him—but SPIKE jumps side-ways out of reach and square off in pugilistic attitude.)

BILLINGS

You may be seated in here, sir. (*Points to chair in room.*) Will I take your hat?

SPIKE

(*Drawing away out of his reach.*) Not on yer life—Cappie—ye don't get your "feelers" on dis "Lid"—so now be good—be good, Cappie— be good. Your stunt now is to tell de old guy that owns de shack as how a gent wants for to get a peep at him—and be quick about it too, for MISTER Puffer aint got no time for to be doin' de society on

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

Fifth Ave. Dye get me?

(*Exit BILLINGS. SPIKE still keeping his hat on his head, goes in and looks around the room at the different articles of furniture, much amazed by the splendor of it all—remarking to himself—“Gee—but dis is a swell shack—on de level. His old ‘pipes’ must have plenty of de change—for sure.”*)

(*Enter ELEANOR from upstairs. SPIKE does not see her immediately—but continues to admire and remark about the articles in the room until ELEANOR finally arrests his attention by saying—“Good evening.”*)

SPIKE

(*L. C. down stage—Turning suddenly in her direction, again partly squaring off—then removing his hat with a quick jerk, and replacing it on his head*). Hullo, Sis—where’s de old guy what owns de joint?

ELEANOR

(*Half repeating to herself*) “The old guy”—
You are Mr. Puffer?

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

SPIKE

(Bows profusely but grotesquely) Sure, I be. Mister THOMAS Puffer—"Spike" Puffer to de trade. *(Strikes pose with thumbs under sleeves of waist coat)*. De sign what's over de door of de place says it all—*(Points as if reading sign)* "Spike" Puffer, Treater-right of Gents"—and I'm on de level too—see?

ELEANOR

(Advances to him and extends her hand) I am Eleanor Withington.

SPIKE

(Slightly jumping away from her and again assuming a pugilistic attitude—gradually gathers himself—then walks over to ELEANOR, and shakes her hand much after the style of the prize ring—walks back a little ways—turns to her. Tilts his hat on one side of his head). Well, "Ellie" you look all right to me at date; I suppose you'se de sister of Little Willie Sweet-cap.

ELEANOR

Of who?

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

SPIKE

Of little Archie wid de cigarette—de boy what handed me de bum mazume.

ELEANOR

If you refer to my brother Bob, then yes. He wrote me all about it.

SPIKE

Well, pal, you're all right at dat—but I wants to see de old guy, to get de dope on whether he wants to hand de coarse bills for dese checks (*Producing them.*) for if he don't "come across with it," I'll have little Archie taken out of de spellin' factory and put along side of de boys what wears de funny clothes.

ELEANOR

Oh I understand—you want to see Papa and have him redeem the checks that brother Bob gave you.

SPIKE

You guessed it de first thing—and you're clever at dat.

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

ELEANOR

Sit down, wont you Mr. Puffer? (*Pointing to chair—and is about to sit down herself.*)

SPIKE

(*Still inclined to back away.*) No, I ain't got no time for to do de heavy on visiting—and I aint strong wid de conversation. So I'll just take a run up de steps and see his old gum-drops for meself. (*Starts to go towards stairs but ELEANOR quickly puts herself between him and the stairs.*)

ELEANOR

Oh no, you must not do that. Besides Papa could not see you just now. Come and sit down Mr. Puffer, and let's you and I talk the matter over, and maybe I can settle it with you.

SPIKE

(*Aside.*) She settle it—(*Laughs.*) Wouldn't dat spill yer milk. (*Walks down L. C.*) Gee but what a pair of lamps she's got. (*He comes to the*

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

chair where ELEANOR has previously laid her opera-coat and sits down on the coat—while she unseen by him runs and tries to rescue her opera coat but is too late—he still having his hat on.)

ELEANOR

Wont you let me take your hat Mr. Puffer?

SPIKE

(Reluctant to do so.) I'll let you take it but don't put it where dat guy wid de fancy base-ball suit on can get his mits on it.

ELEANOR

Oh no, I'll put it right here where it will be very safe. *(She puts his hat on chair near door—he meanwhile observing her closely—and she comes back and sits down).* Now, Mr. Puffer, I want you to tell me all about this affair—how my brother came to give you these checks, and all about it. Won't you?

SPIKE

Say, see here Sis,—what are ye handing me? A

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

con game of some kind. Or is this going to be a debatin' society? If it is, yours truly ain't dere wid de goods—so get wise to it—get wise to it.

ELEANOR

Surely you haven't any objection to telling me the circumstances?—that is only fair; and I know you want to be fair with me.

SPIKE

(*Aside*). She'll have me all to de bad wid dem lamps in a minute. I'm beginning to feel lik a dirty deuce already. (*Turning toward her*). Say on de level, Sis—sure I will—sure I will. (*He gets up and goes over and again grotesquely shakes her hand—then goes back, turns chair around and sits on it*). But mind you, I don't want you to give me de double cross—de ye see? Well, it was dis way—I do my business wid gents—on de square—I do—wid just gents—gents all—not kids—de ye see? And it tells it on de sign what's over de door of the place—in big letters “Spike Puffer, Treater Right of Gents.” (*He rises and goes through all the motions illustrating the recital*).

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

About a week ago, de ye see, one night, in comes Willie de Sweet Cap into de place wid three or four of his play-fellows, do ye get me—and dey all was pretty well to de bad for de steam, and de first thing what de does is to order up a drink all round—and dis is on de level lady—for I ain't going to hand you no double cross—for I'm going to give it to you dead-right. Well den dey wants fer to play a little poker; and dey plays for a while, and de kid was all to de good on de game.

It gives him de pranks and he gets a bit cockey, de ye see? So dey wants something fer to be doin' in de big line—dey wants fer to tackle de cart-wheel and dey begins to bet heavy and to lose dere change. De rest of de bunch makes a duck and leaves de kid to go it alone and soon he's all in. Den I steps up to him and I says, says I—"Sonny you'd better go de hay and quit de game." But he wasn't dere for to hear me and it was no go. I tells him "Dere's nothin' doing—dere's nothin' doin'" —and de kid comes back at me, de ye see—he comes back at me! So he goes to it and when de blow-off comes he's all to de bad on de cashin' in, and den he tips it off to me who he is, and he writes de check and I takes de bum steer and cashes it for him de ye see. Den to de wheel again goes Willie—and soon

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

he's all to de bad again, and I puts myself in speaking distance and yells to him to call it all off—fer dere's nothin' doin'—but he's fer bein' game, and he gets anoder of de coarse bills and gives me anoder piece of de bum paper—and he goes to it again, and soon he's all in—and den I shuts down for keeps on de change box and de kid makes a duck. In de morning I presents dese checks to de bank, and I gets de horse-laugh and de raspberry all at de same time and I finds dat I'se had de double-cross handed to me do ye see? I locates Willie down in de spelling factory and I goes down and puts it up to him and he hands me de old phoney dope of no coin. I argues wid him to make good and in de blow-off I gets a line on de shack and he tells me de old man will do de heavy on cashing de bum paper and put me all to de good again. Now, dere's de hull story from start to finish and told in plain talk so you can understand every word of it. (*He goes and sits in the chair again*).

ELEANOR

I think I DO understand every word of it, Mr. Puffer. But I want to ask you if you really think you did right in allowing my brother to gamble

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

away this money in your place, when he was under the influence of liquor.

SPIKE

Nix! Nix! Nix! now Kid—NIX! What line of talk be ye going to hand me now? A salvation army song?

ELEANOR

(She stands up and takes a step nearer to SPIKE.)

No, Mr. Puffer, I am going to talk with you as a sister would talk—a sister who dearly loves her brother—as one who has the honor, the life and the future of another at heart. And I am sure you will listen to me until I tell you MY story—wont you?

SPIKE

(Aside.) Gee but dare's something about dem lamps what makes me do it whether I want to or not. She's got me stung—she's got me stung. Say, sure I will, Miss—sure I will—but make it short and den hurry and come across wid the mazume-- for I've got to have de two thousand—and I can't

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

take no seventy-five cents words fer it neither.

(During these lines SPIKE at first grows uneasy and restless and gradually the force of ELEANOR'S recital begins to make an impression upon him. While he tries to resist its effect it is obviously beginning to tell seriously with him. Then before she is through it has worked a complete psychological change in SPIKE culminating in his reformation.)

ELEANOR

I do not suppose that anything I may say to you will appeal to your sympathies nor make you fully understand the subject of which I shall speak. Nor will what I shall say be said in the sense of trying to evade the payment of a debt—for to do that would be a breach of honor—and honor is of what I wish to speak. When I speak of "sympathy," I mean rather that sympathy which exists between the members of a family brought up in the atmosphere of love and affection; where the interests of one are the interests of the other; where what concerns one, concerns all; where the same joys, the same sorrows are shared by each one alike—where even so small a thing as the breaking of a little toy is of almost as much concern, in the world I speak

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

of, as taking of a human life, in the world to which I shall contrast it. I realize that all of this will be strange to you—absurd—nonsensical—ridiculous; for yours is the life, the existence of a totally different world. A world far removed from everything where peace and happiness and contentment abide;—a world where contentions and strifes abound—where children are often conceived in sin, baptized in inhumanity and harshness, reared in brutality and crime and taught to believe that life's goal is the mastery of distorted principles and vice; where they are taught to believe that everything that is decent, everything that is superior, everything that is virtuous—is a common and legitimate victim of illegal traffic. And so when I speak to you of this love of OURS—this affection for one another, this consideration and love for our own—and what it really means, I cannot wonder at it that you will regard it lightly and look upon it as trivial and silly. You must understand too that I do not speak of YOUR world without having had actual experience within it and among the class of people that dwell in it. Because, for five years I was a daily visitor there, ministering to the wants of the poor and afflicted and the sick and the needy and the abandoned. And I DO know that once in a while during

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

this experience of mine I found a nature that was foreign to its surroundings—a life here and there that was being stifled in the atmosphere in which it existed. But such cases were rare indeed.

SPIKE

(*As if trying to throw off the effect it has produced.*) Say kid—you can't get by wid dat stuff—I want my money.

ELEANOR

Oh Please try to understand that it is not my purpose to ask you any favor in the matter of cancelling this obligation—for I mean that you shall be paid in full for this debt of my brother. I do want to appeal to you, however, and ask you if you will not some time think over it in the hope that you *might* realize that you are doing a great wrong in carrying on this traffic—a traffic which is daily ruining many lives that otherwise would be useful lives—lives that are so dear and so precious to *someone*—*somewhere*. The sign over your door which as you say reads “Spike Puffer, Treater-right of Gents”—reads instead “Young lives ruined—and

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

Hearts broken here"—for that is what it in reality says—and in letters of fire. But YOU do not think of these things. I know that you do not know how much it means to mothers, to sisters, to fathers—to those who hold these lives that you do so much to ruin and blight. But maybe you WILL sometime think it over—and who knows—maybe the time will come when the light will shine through all this horrible gloom—AS A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD—and show you what a great wrong it is after all. I know that your kind of people are not ALL without feeling. I know that sometime they DO have love and affection, and that sometimes their love and affection is as pure and noble as any love can be.

SPIKE

(*Aside and in deep earnest*). Yes—dat's so—sometimes dey do.

ELEANOR

I remember *one* case during my ministrations and work in those settlements—a family of four—the father, mother, a brother and a sister. It was the

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

oft-repeated story with them—the father sent to prison, the mother, sickly and worn out by sorrow and toil going at length to her well-earned peaceful rest—the first, really, she had ever known—leaving the brother and the sister alone. I remember the sister—a sweet little girl of fourteen—and the brother, a boy of sixteen her only support. And how that brother did love his little sister! No affection COULD have been stronger and no love greater than his. His sister was his first thought in all things; and no sacrifice was too great for him to make in order that she might be comfortable and happy. But, alas, she was a flower too tender to survive the chilling winds that prevailed there, and to live in an atmosphere that could give her no sustenance—and so she faded away, day by day—and we all were helpless. Her's was indeed a sweet nature and a beautiful character. I grew to be very fond of her. I visited her every day for a long time. One morning, in the early autumn when the leaves were turning—when the flowers were withering—when all the nature was beginning to die—she began to die too—and so she left us, and the brother's heart was broken—for all that he loved on earth had gone away. He could not be consoled. He grew hardened in the midst of his surroundings and he

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

finally adopted the life that was everywhere around him.

I speak of this so you will understand that I feel something might possibly be accomplished in the direction I speak of. I will be contented if you will even sometime think on what I have told you of the mothers, the fathers and the sisters and the brothers that often suffer so much and who are made to thus suffer through wanton indifference to what concerns them most.

Now, I desire to arrange to pay you the amount of these checks.

SPIKE

(Rises). Who has gradually become interested and absorbed in what was being said and visibly affected by it and who is now thoroughly conquered). Say lady—hold on for a minute—don't talk of dat fer just a minute. You'se pretty near done de business wid me—dats what you've done—pretty near done de business. Besides, I ain't long on de conversation, and besides dat I can't put up no talk for to tell you much about it—for I ain't never had no show at spellin' and such— But I do know that once before I seen a lady like you—and she was kind

A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

too—just like you was to dat little sis—it just done de business wid me—dat's what it done—just about done de business. For I had a little sis once—and she was about all dere was in it for me—and she took sick and died too—just like dat other one—what you tell about—and dis same lady what I tells you about was HER friend—and when little sis died I never seen dat lady no more after dat at all—and I'd of just took right out my heart for her, for what she done for my little sis—dat's what I would have done—just took it right out for her—

ELEANOR

Ah, if you thought as much of your sister as this brother thought of his "Little Bo-Peep" as he called her—

SPIKE

(In astonishment). Bo-Peep! *(Inaudible whisper)*. Why—dat was de very thing what I called MY sister—and—you—why you—ARE DAT VERY LADY. *(He is so overcome by emotion that he cannot speak—nor does he know just what to do to express his great awe and reverence for ELEANOR;*

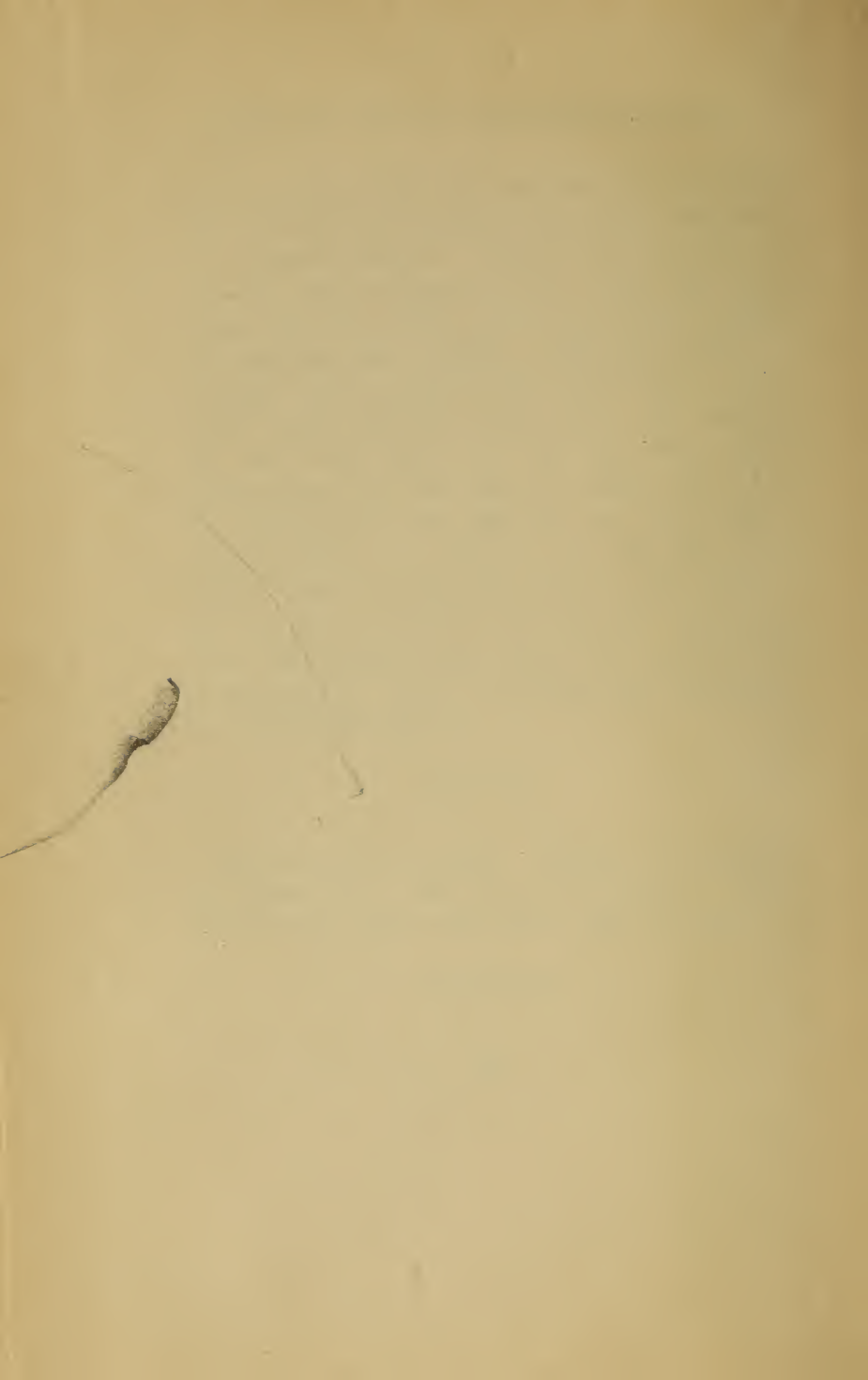
A LIGHT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

he is standing behind her, and falls on one knee, kisses the hem of her gown—repeating to himself—in an audible whisper). “You are dat very lady”—*(he rises, looks at ELEANOR in awe, slowly takes out checks from his pocket—tears them in two, walks over and puts them on table)*. Dere dey be, lady—*(choking with emotion)* dere dey be, lady—*(He walks towards the door, then turns)*. And besides dat, lady—God bless you—and God bless your brother Bob—and God bless your father too—God bless you most of all—*(He goes near door, takes his hat and as he is about to go into hall)* and besides—I’m going to take down de sign what’s over de door of de place—fer dere ain’t going to be no more Spike Puffer’s place—for I’m tru wid de hull game! *(Exits. ELEANOR goes and rings bell—BILLINGS appears)*.

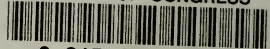
ELEANOR

(Goes C. looks at clock). Billings, you may say to Dickens that I will drive to the theatre. *(She takes her coat from chair, and is about to exit)*.

CURTAIN



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