

**A RICE PUDDING: A  
COMEDY IN  
TWO ACTS**

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A Rice Pudding: A Comedy in Two Acts by Esther B. Tiffany

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**ESTHER B. TIFFANY**

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TWO ACTS**



# A RICE PUDDING

A Comedy in Two Acts

BY

ESTHER B. TIFFANY

AUTHOR OF "THAT PATRICK" AND "YOUNG MR. PRITCHARD"

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Walter H. Baker & Co.

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### CHARACTERS

JOHN RICHARDS.

DE. THWAITE . . . . . *A young physician*

MRS. RICHARDS . . . . . *Young wife of Richards*

MARION . . . . . *Younger sister of Richards*

ELLEN O'SHAUGHNESSY . . . . . *A cook*



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*NOTE.*—The ladies can be partially dressed for the reception, under their big aprons, in Act I., and the room can be partly cleared by Richards during Mrs. R.'s and Marion's conversation on the dress, which would make only a short wait between the acts necessary.



*Under the apron*

# A RICE PUDDING.

## ACT I.

SCENE. — *Dining-room of new house. Room filled with packing boxes, pictures, rolls of carpets, shades, tubs, kitchen utensils, etc. Enter MRS. R. and MARION in high-necked, long-sleeved aprons.*

MRS. R. (*despairingly*). Not a carpet down but this!

MAR. Painters and plumbers all over the house!

MRS. R. The furnace not in!

MAR. Not a chair to sit on —

MRS. R. Or a table to eat off of —

MAR. Or a bed to sleep on —

MRS. R. Or a servant to cook anything —

MAR. Or anything to cook!

MRS. R. And yet they all promised faithfully to have everything in order by to-day.

MAR. It hardly looks as if we could have our reception here by next Thursday, does it?

MRS. R. Why, I had been thinking we might take a leisure hour this morning to write the invitations — but it doesn't look much like leisure hours!

MAR. Come, let's unpack the china, anyway.

MRS. R. There! the boxes are still nailed up, and Peter promised to have them all ready for us. Never mind, we'll hang the pictures. Where's the step-ladder? Oh! here.

MAR. Now, I'll climb up, and you hand me the picture. I think the Madonna would look well here — don't you? (*Mounts ladder.*)

MRS. R. Got it? Quick! I cannot hold it —

MAR. Wait!

MRS. R. Oh, there! we've smashed it. (*Between them picture falls to floor.*)

MAR. John will say we ought to have waited for him.  
(*Descends ladder.*)

MRS. R. Did you ever see anything like the way those painters have splashed these windows? Will it ever come off? Why, who's that?

(*Enter ELLEN.*)

ELLEN. And this is the house I was to come to?

MRS. R. Oh, there you are at last! Take your things right off, and begin on these dirty windows.

ELLEN. Shure an' it wasn't to wash windys I hired out.

MRS. R. (*to MARION*). It's true. I didn't stipulate anything about washing windows. I engaged her to cook.

MAR. (*aside*). Well, you'd better set her at cooking, then.

MRS. R. (*aside*). Very well. (*To ELLEN.*) On the whole, you may go into the kitchen and cook.

ELLEN. And what wull I be after cookin'?

MRS. R. (*aside*). Very true again. What can she cook? We shall have to send her out for provisions. (*To ELLEN.*) Well — er — let me see — what's your name?

ELLEN. Miss Ellen O'Shaughnessy.

MRS. R. Ellen? Oh, that will never do. My name is Ellen, too.

MAR. Haven't you any other name?

ELLEN. Shure an' my other name's Miss O'Shaughnessy.

MRS. R. Well, haven't you any middle name — or nickname — that they called you at home?

ELLEN (*reflecting*). They used to call me cabbage-head when I went to school.

MRS. R. I think I'll call you Nelly.

ELLEN. Shure an' it's you we moight call Nelly, and me stick to me rightful name.

MRS. R. (*to MARION*). Do you think she means to be impertinent, Marion? We must assert our dignity at any cost.

MAR. No — she's only a cabbage-head, as she says.

MRS. R. Very well, Nelly. The other servants haven't come yet, so you'd better go yourself and buy some provisions. You can get some — some —

MAR. Potatoes.

MRS. R. Yes — potatoes.

ELLEN. How many?

MRS. R. (*aside*). How many, Marion?

MAR. Oh, dear, I wish I had my cook book. Why, I suppose — we are such a small family — about — a — quart.



MRS. R. (*to ELLEN*). A quart of potatoes.

ELLEN. A quart of pertaties — is it?

MRS. R. And some — some —

MAR. Rice — John is very fond of rice.

MRS. R. Oh, yes — rice. (*Aside.*) How much? A peck?

MAR. Yes — I suppose so.

MRS. R. (*aloud*). A peck of rice —

ELLEN. Peck of rice —

MRS. R. And a pound of butter — and a pound of flour — and — and —

ELLEN. A pound of flour, did ye say?

MRS. R. (*with dignity*). I said a pound of flour. (*Aside.*) Marion, you don't think she's laughing — do you?

MAR. Why, I don't see anything to laugh at.

MRS. R. No, of course. Only I shouldn't want her to suspect that we've neither of us kept house before.

MAR. Why, Ellen, as if I hadn't been to cooking-school —

MRS. R. I know it, Marion. If I hadn't you to fall back on, what should I do? What meat shall we have?

MAR. Steak is the easiest.

MRS. R. (*to ELLEN*). Some steak.

ELLEN. Wan slice?

MRS. R. One slice? Mercy, I could eat a whole slice myself! Four — five slices — and a quart of spinach — and — and — a loaf of bread — and — well that will do for the present. We'll have an early dinner to-day. You can broil the steak, and cook a quart of rice — and boil the potatoes and the spinach — and have it ready at one o'clock. Here's some money.

ELLEN. I'll ax wan o' thim nice-lookin' plumbers to go along wid me. (*Exit.*)

MRS. R. How was my manner, Marion? Not too dignified?

MAR. You did beautifully.

MRS. R. I don't want to be too dignified. I don't want to have my servants afraid of me.

MAR. I don't think she looked exactly afraid of you.

MRS. R. A knock! Come in!

(*Enter THWAITE.*)

THWAITE (*bowing*). I beg your pardon. I tried to ring the doorbell, but there seems to be no doorbell yet.

MRS. R. Oh, no, there is — isn't any — anything — yet.

THWAITE. My name is Thwaite. I have the good fortune to be your next-door neighbor, and, as I noticed you were moving in to-day, I just ran over to see if there were not some way in which you could make me useful.

MRS. R. You are very kind, Mr. Thwaite.

MAR. We are extremely obliged.

THWAITE. Not at all.

MAR. We are rather at a standstill.

MRS. R. Perhaps, if it wouldn't be asking too much, we should like that box opened.

THWAITE. I'll go and find a hammer. (*Exit.*)

MRS. R. Marion, we'll ask him to the reception.

MAR. I wonder if my pink surah will do.

MRS. R. No, indeed. You are to wear your white net.

MAR. Men are convenient sometimes.

(*Enter THWAITE.*)

THWAITE. This box? (*Opens box.*) There you are. What next?

MRS. R. That barrel, if it's not asking too much!

THWAITE. Only too happy. Might I be permitted? (*Unbuttons coat.*)

MRS. R. Oh, certainly. (*THWAITE takes off coat.*)

MAR. You are getting all dusty. Here, take this apron. (*Buttons THWAITE into apron, which has been lying across box.*)

THWAITE. Now I am ready for anything.

MRS. R. Come, Marion, we'll be unpacking the china. (*They unpack the china while THWAITE works on barrel.*)

MAR. (*running to mantel.*) We'll have these two vases here.

MRS. R. And the clock in the middle. Oh, Mr. Thwaite, can you lift that heavy clock off of the ironing-board, so that we can get some idea how the room will look when everything is in order?

THWAITE (*lifting clock with difficulty.*) I can say with truth this is the first moment in your company that time has hung heavy on my hands. (*Puts clock on the mantel.*)

MRS. R. I wish time were always so quickly disposed of.

MAR. I am glad you were not tempted to kill time by smashing the clock.

MRS. R. (*ecstatically.*) How sweet it looks there! Stand back both of you and see what a lovely effect! The clock in the middle, and those two vases on either side.

MAR. Beautiful!

THWAITE. Stunning!

MRS. R. How pleased he will be!

THWAITE (*aside*). What he? Oh, yes — their father — the old gentleman I have noticed overseeing the workmen.

MRS. R. Never mind about that barrel now, Mr. Thwaite; let's hang pictures.

THWAITE. The profession of hangman is new to me, but I will do my best. (*Mounts step-ladder with picture.*) I am rather afraid, under the circumstances, of so long a cord.

MAR. Afraid?

THWAITE. Yes. Give a man rope enough, you know, he'll be sure to hang himself. There — is that straight?

(*Enter ELLEN*)

ELLEN. The range is a-roarin' awful.

MRS. R. Oh, Marion, you know all about ranges.

MAR. (*aside*). I wish I had my cook book. (*Aloud.*) Very well, Nelly, I'll see what's the matter. (*Exit.*)

MRS. R. (*sitting down on lowest round of ladder, talking up to THWAITE*). We'll wait till she comes back. She's the one to settle about the pictures.

THWAITE. Is your sister artistic?

MRS. R. Yes, indeed. Artistic, and literary, and scientific, and all that sort of thing, but lately he's given that up, and has gone into cooking.

THWAITE. Cooking?

MRS. R. Yes — and she knows everything that is to be known about cooking — theoretically. She has been to cooking-school.

THWAITE. Graduated with honors, I suppose.

MRS. R. Yes, indeed. We are going to keep the house together. I don't know what I should do without her knowledge. She's begun writing a cook-book, too.

THWAITE. Illustrated?

MRS. R. Oh, certainly. It's going to be lovely. She made such a charming sketch for the book, the other day, of some boiled potatoes; only by the time she had finished, the potatoes were all cold, and didn't taste as nice as they might; but, then, as long as she had forgotten to add salt, and boiled them about a half hour too long, it didn't so much matter.

THWAITE. She goes into things very thoroughly, doesn't she?