

**BABIE: A COMEDY
IN THREE ACTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649334193

Babie: A Comedy in Three Acts by Emile de Najac & Alfred Hennequin

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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EMILE DE NAJAC & ALFRED HENNEQUIN

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A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS.

Translated from the French of

EMILE DE NAJAC AND ALFRED HENNQUIN,

BOSTON:

Walter H. Baker & Co.

42545.45.6

1918, Dec. 20.

G. M. B.

F. E. C. 25

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HARRY WARD, Babie himself.
HENRY SKELTER, Babie's cousin's husband.
MR. HERODOTUS CRAM, Babie's tutor.
MR. OCTAVUS WARD, Babie's papa.
CHARLIE WILKINS, Babie's chum.
HAIRDRESSER.
MRS. DIANA SKELTER, Babie's cousin.
MRS. OCTAVUS WARD, Babie's mamma.
MADAME AURELIA, a lady friend of Babie.
ANNIE BELL, Charlie's friend.
SUSAN.

Costumes — Modern and appropriate.

BABIE.

ACT I.

SCENE.— *A drawing-room closed in; fireplace R., to the left of this a speaking-tube; two entrances L., two R.; sofa and work-table L.; table, chair, and easy-chair R. Furniture disposed. Door (pract.) in flat.*

Discovered. MRS. WARD seated on sofa, folding flannels; MR. WARD in arm-chair R., reading paper. Several papers on table.

MR. W. (*reads*). Latest by telegraph — m — m — bah! no news: what's come to every thing? (*Scans paper.*) Aha! "We take great pleasure in indorsing the subsidies proposed by the committee. If they be carried, we guarantee a speedy recovery from the present crisis." Good! exactly my opinion.

MRS. W. (*folding shirts*). When you were Babie's age, how many flannels did you wear?

MR. W. None at all, ma'am: the Wards never coddled themselves. Babie is the first Ward that ever looked to flannel as a guardian.

MRS. W. Poor dear! he need look to some one, with such a father!

MR. W. (*taking another paper*). Aha! "We observe with horror and dismay the subsidy bill brought forward by the committee. If it be carried, we must inevitably fall into irretrievable bankruptcy." Good, good! precisely what I say.

MRS. W. I make Babie wear them because his blood is so poor. Haven't you noticed how pale the poor darling is of a morning?

MR. W. (*irritably*). No. Do let me read my papers!

MRS. W. You read papers enough at the club, I should think.

MR. W. I read all I can at the club, I assure you. I buy those they don't have there, and *try* to read them at home, but—

MRS. W. (*crossing R.*). Oh, politics! Whenever I ask you a question, you are buried in some paper.

MR. W. Well, a man must keep himself informed as to party movements, mustn't he? Gad! if I weren't at it all the time, I'd find myself a democratic Ward in no time; for there's a change of platform every campaign, like a horse-car.

MRS. W. (*sitting R.*). I don't know about any such nonsense: but this I do know, — you'd do a deal better to keep yourself informed as to what is passing at home. You have only one child; and he, poor dear, hardly knows you.

MR. W. Which only proves that he's not a wise child, as the old saying is. But that's only a fair specimen of feminine exaggeration.

MRS. W. I don't exaggerate. Have you ever taken care of him? Do you ever think about his education? Do you even know whether he is alive or no? The poor child gets home at only two o'clock, and yet you won't wait lunch for him.

MR. W. But, you know, my digestion—

MRS. W. That's right. Your papers, your club, and your digestion, first, then your poor suffering child. What a father! Ah! if he didn't have me, poor thing! for I know far better than you how to care for him. (*Crosses L., and sits.*)

MR. W. Well, then, what are you complaining of?

MRS. W. I don't complain; for, if you had been in charge of him, he never would have got to be twenty-two years old.

MR. W. Twenty-two! and not out of swaddling clothes!

MRS. W. If you can't avoid being coarse, Mr. Ward, you had better stay at the club. I don't want the example of such vulgarity set to Babie.

MR. W. (*rising*). Very good, ma'am; very good indeed. I'll take your advice. (*Busy picking up papers.*) I can read in peace there, at least. This is what it is to be a family man. (*Crossing, exit 2 E. L.*)

MRS. W. (*rising, crosses R.*). What a model for Babie! When a mother is not by, who is there to care for one? But, thanks to my vigilant care, Babie is without the slightest taint, as innocent and pure (*enter Mr. W. L. 2 E.*) as his father ought to be.

MR. W. (*crossing R., MRS. W. L.: aside*). It occurred to me that I don't show proper firmness in going away like that: besides, it rains, and I've mislaid my umbrella. (*Aloud.*) No; I'll read here, and undisturbed, Mrs. Ward. (*Sits R. Pause.*) Mrs. Ward, Babie has now got to be a man, and —

MRS. W. A man? hear him! why, he's the merest child in the world!

MR. W. Humph! Well, at any rate, you won't deny that he's a very backward child.

MRS. W. Well, yes; I think so myself. He often flunks his examinations.

MR. W. Flunks?

MRS. W. That's the word he uses. But it's not his fault, the poor dear! he is so delicate.

MR. W. He must, however, some time or other —

MRS. W. Never fear: I've arranged it all. He is to have a private tutor; and in order that he may be more independent, and less disturbed at his studies, I have fitted up a study for him on the ground-floor. Even now I am expecting the tutor whom Mrs. Wilkins has recommended.

SUSAN (*enters 2 E. L.*). O Mrs. Ward! Master Harry's breakfast has been ready this half-hour, and it's getting quite cold. Sure, he's very late this morning.

MRS. W. And what do you mean, Susan, by criticising Master Harry's actions?

SUSAN. Oh! if you please, ma'am, I was just passing through the dining-room, and I saw —

MRS. W. Never mind the explanation; see if he is in his room.

SUSAN (*crossing to tube, whistles; whistle heard in answer*). Yes, ma'am, he's there. (*In tube.*) Master Harry, your breakfast is getting cold: you'd better hurry. (*Listens.*)

MRS. W. What does the darling say?

SUSAN (*repeating*). He's putting on his coat, and—be up directly, and (*imitating voice*)—Good-morning, mamma.

MRS. W. Dear child! Is Mr. Skelter's room made ready for him, Susan?

SUSAN (*crosses I E. L.*). Yes, ma'am; all but a few last touches. (*Crosses to table, L., and arranges flannels.*)

MR. W. Skelter isn't at all slow about availing himself of our invitation.

MRS. W. Why; it was fully two months ago, that, during our stay at his farm, he promised to visit us. He is coming to get his wife's sister Matilda, who is at school here, and wants me to see to her outfit. You know, she is intended to be Babie's wife; that is, as soon as—

MR. W. Absurd! preposterous! Why, as you yourself said, he is nothing but a child.

MRS. W. Well, as to that—

MR. W. To be sure, between ourselves, in the future—
(*BABIE enters I E. R.*)

SUSAN. Here's Master Harry.

(*MR. and MRS. W. rise, and cross to him.*)

BABIE. Good-morning, mamma. Good-morning, papa. Oh, I'm so hungry! (*Kisses MRS. W.*)

MRS. W. Are you cold, Babie? are you sure your feet are dry?

BABIE (*aside*). Babie! pah! (*Aloud.*) Yes, mamma, quite dry.

MRS. W. That's right, dear. To make sure, though, I've got you another dozen of flannels. (*MR. W., disgusted, crosses R., and sits.*)

BABIE (*aside*). O Lord! more swaddling-clothes!

MRS. W. And, darling, promise me never again to use them to clean your rifle with. Flannels are meant to protect us from draughts, not to polish guns.

BABIE. I'll remember, mamma. (*Aside.*) They'll be getting me a nurse next.

MRS. W. Susan, take the flannel; down to Master Harry's room.

SUSAN. Yes, ma'am. (*Bur. with BABIE, throwing kisses; exit I E. R.*)

BABIE. I've something to tell you, papa. I came home from school with Charlie; and on the way we were talking