

COMEDIES FOR AMATEUR ACTING

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Comedies for amateur acting by J. Brander Matthews

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J. BRANDER MATTHEWS

**COMEDIES FOR
AMATEUR ACTING**

APPLETONS' NEW HANDY-VOLUME SERIES.

COMEDIES

FOR

AMATEUR ACTING.

*EDITED, WITH A PRELIMINARY NOTE ON
PRIVATE THEATRICALS,*

BY

J. BRANDER MATTHEWS.

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D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,
1880.

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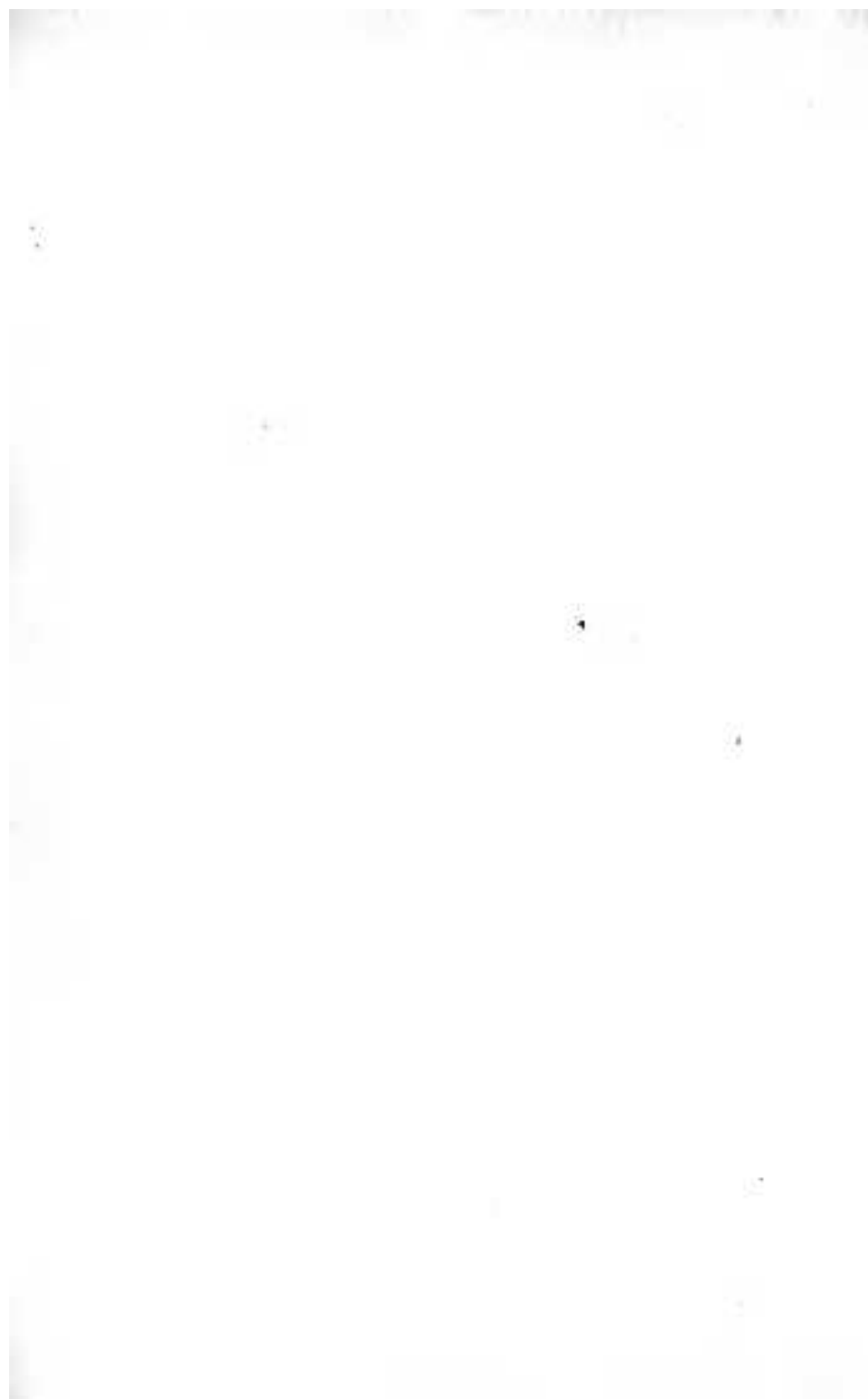
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PREFATORY NOTE.

AN aspiring amateur actor once asked a celebrated dramatic critic, "What did you think of the performance of our club?" And the cruel critic is said to have answered, slowly and with a slight drawl, "I should hardly have called it a club; it seemed to me more like a collection of sticks."

At another private performance, it was either Garrick or Kean who exclaimed involuntarily, "There is an actor," when the footman of the play presented a letter—and it turned out that, none of the amateurs being willing to accept so small a part, a professional "utility man" had been engaged from the theatre. The player was probably not the equal of his noble and gentle associates in intelligence or in education, but he knew his business. And it was his business—for them it was only amusement. Yet many of them were doubtless told, and some of them perhaps believed, that they had only to desire success on the stage to find it within their grasp. They believed, in short, that they could be actors if they chose; in truth, they were only amateurs. Charles Lamb reports Coleridge as having said: "There is an infinity of trick in all that Shakspeare wrote: I could write like Shakspeare if I had a mind." And Lamb adds