

**THE IDLER: A PLAY
IN FOUR ACTS**

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The Idler: A Play in Four Acts by C. Haddon Chambers

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C. HADDON CHAMBERS

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THE IDLER

A Play in four Acts

BY
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THE IDLER.

Produced at the St. James' Theatre, London, 26th Feb.,
1891.

CAST:—

MR. MARK CROSS, Man of leisure, single, about 30..
.....Mr. George Alexander
SIR JOHN HARDING, M. P., Independent means, mar-
ried, about 80.....Mr. Herbert Waring
MR. SIMEON STRONG, Wealthy American, single,
about 30.....Mr. John Mason
GENERAL MERRYWEATHER, about 60...Mr. Nutcombe Gould
BENNETT, Mark Cross's Man-servant.....
.....Mr. Alfred Holles
LADY HARDING, Wife of Sir John, beautiful woman,
about 25. Merryweather's daughter by his first
wife.....Miss Marion Terry
MRS. CROSS, Widow, Mark's mother, about 50.....
.....Lady Monckton
KATE MERRYWEATHER, About 18. Merryweather's
daughter by his second wife....Miss Maude Millett
MRS. GLYNN-STANMORE, Fashionable widow, looking
out for a husband. About 35.....
.....Miss Gertrude Kingston

PERIOD:—The Present.

THE IDLER.

ACT I.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION: Twenty-nine minutes.

HAND PROPERTIES: MS. for Harding. Work basket and work on L. c. table. Real flower up L. Table and tea things off R.

FURNITURE REQUIRED: Wicker-work and rustic table L. c. Chair either side of it. Chair R. c. Chair R. Table R. Garden seat up L. Chair up c.

ACT II.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION: Thirty-two minutes.

HAND PROPERTIES: Bouquet for LADY H.

FURNITURE REQUIRED: Sofa L. c. Chair R. c. Grand Piano and Stool up R.

ACT III.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION: Twenty-eight minutes.

HAND PROPERTIES: Letters and salver for BENNETT. Fan for LADY H. Bell (for clock-strike) and Knocker. Writing things on R. table. Cigarettes and matches on L. c. table. Soda syphon, glasses, whiskey, lemon, knife and plate on sideboard L.

FURNITURE REQUIRED: Writing table and chair R. c. Chair R. Settee L. Chair L. of it. Small table R. of it. Sideboard L. Curtains to c. window. Clock on mantel. Lamp on pedestal by L. door.

ACT IV.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION: Twenty-two minutes.

HAND PROPERTIES: Two revolvers in case for SIR JOHN. Pocket-book for MARK. Bell (for clock-strike).

FURNITURE: Same as Act III.

THE IDLER.

ACT I.

(MUSIC for rise)

SCENE:—Veranda attached to LADY HARDING'S drawing-room, Kensington Palace Gardens, London. French window of the drawing-room open on to stage R. Arches of veranda C. and L. showing gardens beyond and in the distance Kensington Gardens.

(KATE MERRYWEATHER discovered seated up stage C.)

(Enter GENERAL MERRYWEATHER R.)

GEN. (Calling) Kate! Kate! Where are you?

KATE. (Jumping up) Here I am, Papa. Where are you going to take me this afternoon?

GEN. I don't propose taking you anywhere.

KATE. But I've nothing to do.

GEN. Then make me a bouquet for my coat.

KATE. (C. going up and getting scissors and cutting flowers from pots L. and arranging them) What's the good of being in London if you don't go out?

GEN. (Crossing L. and sitting) Pleasure may sometimes be found at home. One would think from the longing you always have to be out somewhere, that you were packed away on the fifth floor of a hotel, instead of enjoying your sister's delightful hospitality. I must really persuade Helen to invite us for another week.

KATE. (Up C. at flower stand) Please, don't, Papa—unless you mean to take me out more.

GEN. Why?

KATE. (Making bouquet C.) Well, Helen hasn't been married very long, and—

GEN. Well?

KATE. You do get a little tired of newly married people after a time, don't you?

GEN. What do you mean?

KATE. (Coming down C.) I mean that when you

haven't a sweetheart of your own it's rather a bore to—you know—to see people very fond of each other.

GEN. I haven't noticed it.

KATE. Perhaps you've never been without a sweetheart?

GEN. Kate! (*Rising*) Your remark is scarcely respectful! (*Cross R.*)

KATE. I couldn't help it—because you know, you've been married twice—and now—

GEN. Well—and now—

KATE. (*Coming to him—they meet R. of C.*) Now I'll fix this in your buttonhole. (*Bus. of pinning flower in coat*) Papa, do you know what Mrs. Glynn-Stanmore says about you?

GEN. No!

KATE. She says that when an elderly man takes to wearing flowers in his buttonhole it's a bad sign.

GEN. Mrs. Glynn-Stanmore is exceedingly impertinent—as most women are who marry above their station in life. Elderly man indeed! I shall not allow you to meet her again! She will teach you to flirt and all sorts of dreadful things. Like all widows she's too—too—

KATE. Too what, Papa?

GEN. (*C.*) Too learned—You know I was always fond of flowers.

KATE. (*C.*) But not in your buttonhole. I think Mrs. Glynn-Stanmore meant to insinuate that you were in love. (*Embracing him*) I hope not. Please say you're not in love, Papa.

GEN. (*Crossing L.*) Kate, you are getting perfectly ridiculous.

KATE. But you haven't denied it.

GEN. (*Sitting L. C.*) I don't think it is quite decent to interrogate your father on such delicate subjects.

KATE. But I notice things, you know.

GEN. Young people generally notice more than they should.

KATE. I've noticed that you've made up your mind to stay in this afternoon, and that Helen mentioned at luncheon that Mrs. Cross would call.

GEN. What of that?

KATE. Young people not only notice but draw conclusions.

GEN. Well? Well?

KATE. (*Back of chair L. C.*) I've drawn the conclusion that you're staying in for the sake of Mrs. Cross. (*Pause*)

GEN. Kate, Kate, what a worry you are! (*Rising and going up stage, then down R. C., sitting R. C.*) I think I must send you back to school.

KATE. But I don't want to learn any more.

GEN. I think you've a good deal to unlearn.

KATE. You mean I was right about Mrs. Cross? (*Crossing to him R. C.*)

GEN. Certainly not. Mrs. Cross is a woman for whom I entertain the highest respect.

KATE. Does that prevent you from loving her, Papa? (*Pause*)

GEN. (*Aside, groans.*)

KATE. I suppose you respected my Mamma, and Helen's Mamma, and loved them as well—otherwise you wouldn't have married them. (*Pause*)

GEN. Perhaps after all, my dear, it would be better for you to go out.

KATE. By myself.

GEN. (*Trying to read*) Yes—you might drive in the Park for an hour or two.

KATE. No thanks, Papa—I'd rather stay with you. It's better fun. (*Sitting on arm of chair*)

GEN. (*Rising—bus.*) Not for me. Do you know, my dear, you have a—what shall I say? an unexpectedness of thought which makes you a very disturbing companion for one of my years and temperament? (*Sitting again*)

KATE. You may be sure, Papa, that I wouldn't waste so much of my unexpectedness on you if I had any other companion. (*Bus.*)

GEN. I suppose not—It's rather hard on me though—I wish you had a little more of your sister's dignity and repose.

KATE. Helen again—always Helen! (*Crossing L. C.*)

GEN. Why not—she is a splendid model for you.

KATE. I think, Papa, I'd feel that more if you were less anxious to impress it upon me.

GEN. I am only anxious to improve you. Now, Helen—

KATE. (*L.*) Is perfect, of course. (*Seated.*)

(*Enter LADY HARDING from R. 2. W.*)

GEN. No—no one is perfect—and perhaps a perfect woman would not be a loveable woman.

LADY H. (*Putting her hands over MERRYWEATHER'S shoulders from behind*) Or a perfect man a loveable man,

GEN. (*Looking up back at her*) Then you don't even think your husband perfect?

LADY H. He's only perfectly loveable. (*Turns L. c. and sits*)

GEN. Hem! Your mother used to say that of me.

KATE. I hope *my* mother had more sense.

GEN. Your mother, my dear, was a woman of taste.

KATE. And Mrs Cross? (*Going round back of table*)

GEN. Kate!

KATE. (*To LADY H.*) Helen, you mentioned that Mrs. Cross would call this afternoon. That's why Papa won't take me out. Perhaps Mark may come with her.

LADY H. Mark!

KATE. Yes. (*Leaning on chair*)

LADY H. (*Resuming work*) Mr. Cross is not in London.

KATE. Isn't he though! Papa and I saw him in Piccadilly before luncheon.

(MERRYWEATHER sits in chair R. near R. 2. w.)

LADY H. (*Aside*) Mark returned!

KATE. Yes—Aren't you glad?

LADY H. Certainly. Why should I not be?

KATE. I only thought you might feel a little awkward in meeting him. Everybody thought at one time that you would marry him. I was sure of it!

LADY H. Your judgment isn't always correct, you see.

KATE. No. I lack experience. But you know, Helen, that you and Mr. Cross flirted dreadfully before he went away, then when John came along, I—

(Enter SIR JOHN HARDING R. 2. w.)

SIR J. Well, what took place when I came along? (c.)

KATE. (L. c.) I became silent.

SIR J. Please don't do so now.

KATE. (L. c. *down*) We were only talking of Mrs. Cross's son.

SIR J. Has Mrs. Cross a son? I had really forgotten.

LADY H. (*At work-table up L. c.*) I have surely mentioned him to you?

SIR J. I don't remember it. What's his name?

LADY H. Mark.

SIR J. Mark!—Mark Cross—the name is familiar!

KATE. (L. c.) Of course. Last season he and Helen—