

**HOW TO TAME YOUR
MOTHER-IN-LAW; A
FARCE IN ONE ACT**

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How to Tame Your Mother-In-Law; A Farce in One Act by Henry J. Byron

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A FARCE IN ONE ACT

BY

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NEW AMERICAN EDITION, CORRECTLY REPRINTED FROM THE ORIGINAL AUTHORIZED ACTING EDITION, WITH THE ORIGINAL CAST OF THE CHARACTERS, SYNOPSIS OF INCIDENTS, TIME OF REPRESENTATION, DESCRIPTION OF THE COSTUMES, SCENE AND PROPERTY PLOTS, DIAGRAM OF THE STAGE SETTING, SIDES OF ENTRANCE AND EXIT, RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE PERFORMERS, EXPLANATION OF THE STAGE DIRECTIONS, ETC., AND ALL OF THE STAGE BUSINESS.

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How to Tame Your Mother-in-law.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

First performed at the Strand Theatre, London, under the management of Mrs. Swanborough, on Monday, May 30th, 1864.

SAMSON WHIFFLES (<i>a tea dealer</i>).....	Mr. H. J. Turner.
TOMPKINS (<i>his shop boy</i>).....	Mr. L. Fredericks.
MR. HUNX (<i>a landlord</i>).....	Mr. Collier.
MR. TIMOTHY SPANGLE (<i>an actor</i>).....	Mr. T. Thorne.
MRS. WHIFFLES (<i>Samson's better-half</i>).....	Miss E. Johnstone.
MRS. INCUBUS (<i>Samson's mother-in-law</i>).....	Mrs. Manders.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION—THIRTY-FIVE MINUTES.

SYNOPSIS OF INCIDENTS.

SAMSON WHIFFLES, a tea-dealer, is rejoiced to see his wife depart on a visit to her mother; but immediately after her departure, he is horrified at learning that his dreadful mother-in-law, MRS. INCUBUS, is about to visit his house. In the midst of his despair, he is surprised at the entrance of his old friend TIMOTHY SPANGLE, a travelling actor, just returned from an unprofitable trip on the road and in debt to MR. HUNX, the landlord of his hotel. As SAMSON lacks courage to get rid of his unwelcome mother-in-law, SPANGLE volunteers to deal with the old lady so effectually that she will gladly shorten her stay. MRS. INCUBUS duly arrives and is cordially received by Samson, but he is ostensibly forced at once to depart on pressing business, leaving the field clear for SPANGLE. The latter then enters disguised as a smuggler, and beguiles MRS. INCUBUS into purchasing, at a ruinously low price, what she supposes to be some smuggled silk. The "smuggler" having retired, MRS. INCUBUS goes off to have a look at the larder, leaving her bonnet and shawl on a chair. During her absence, MRS. WHIFFLES returns to find her lord absent, presumably enjoying himself; and, discovering the bonnet and shawl, flounces out to procure a divorce from the wretch. MRS. INCUBUS then comes back, disgusted at the painful lack of provender in the house, and is extremely disconcerted by the ravings of SPANGLE, this

time disguised as a costermonger. WHIFFLES is then brought in deplorably drunk, and realizing that his condition is not *comme il faut*, conceals himself in the preserve closet just as his mother-in-law re-enters ready to shake the dust of the premises from her feet. But in the act of departure, she is met by SPANGLE, now got up as a policeman, charged with a breach of the revenue laws, and directed to retire to her room while he fetches a cab in which to convey her to prison. While pretending to call the cab, the policeman is met by the irate Mr. HUNX, in anxious search of SPANGLE and his money. The "policeman" now tells HUNX that the absconding debtor is at that very moment in the next room, disguised as a woman in order to effect his escape, and advises HUNX to collar his victim at once, promising to be at hand in case of need. Immediately on MRS. INCUBUS' reappearance, she is seized by HUNX, but rescued by MRS. WHIFFLES, who comes in opportunely. In the course of the uproar, WHIFFLES, smeared with preserves, emerges from his place of concealment, declares his independence of petticoat government, and asserts his domestic authority. SPANGLE then comes forward and is instantly recognized by HUNX, but silences the latter by referring to his conduct at a ball on the previous night. MRS. INCUBUS is now thoroughly subdued, and SPANGLE, though he declines to enter into any explanations, offers to set forth in a practical manner, as frequently as required, the whole art of "HOW TO TAME YOUR MOTHER-IN-LAW."

COSTUMES.

SAMSON.—Business suit; hat.

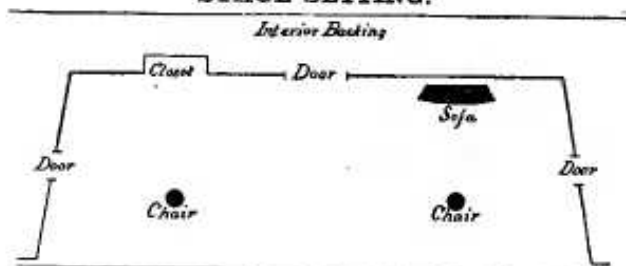
TOMPKINS.—Ordinary waistcoat and trousers; calico shirt, without collar; apron.

MR. HUNX.—Business suit; hat.

SPANGLE.—*1st dress*; business suit, hat and cane. *2d dress*; burlesque smuggler's disguise. *3d dress*; costermonger's costume. *4th dress*; policeman's uniform, shield and club.

MRS. WHIFFLES }
MRS. INCUBUS. } —Ordinary walking dresses, bonnets and shawls.

STAGE SETTING.



SCENE.—Plain chamber in 3 G., backed with interior backing in 4 G. Doors R., L., and C. Closet R. C. in flat. Sofa up L. Chairs R., C. and L. C.

PROPERTIES.

Labels and boxes. Bell behind stage. Candles, bar of soap, and preserves in closet, R. C. Letter in brown envelope for TOMPKINS. Money, watch and flask for WHIFFLES. Two handkerchiefs (one very ragged), short pipe, bottle, and parcel for SPANGLE. Money and flask in satchel for MRS. INCUBUS.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

The player is supposed to face the audience. R. means right; L., left; C., center; R. C., right of center; L. C., left of center; 1 E., first entrance; 2 E., second entrance; 1, 2 or 3 G., first, second or third grooves. UP STAGE, toward the back; DOWN STAGE, toward the footlights.

R. R. C. C. L. C. L.

NOTE.—The text of this play is correctly reprinted from the original authorized acting edition, without change. The introductory matter has been carefully prepared by an expert, and is the only part of this book protected by copyright.





How to Tame Your Mother-in-Law.

SCENE—*Parlor behind a little grocer's shop—Doors, R., L., R., C. and into shop, C.*

TOMPKINS pasting labels on boxes.

Tom. "Mrs. Whiffles, passenger to Frumpington." That's all right : and so missus is going out of town : she says it's for the benefit of her health. I'm sure it will be for the benefit of my health, and master's too—poor fellow, I never knew such a tartar as missis, never ! Talk of Timour, the Tartar, as I see last boxing night ! He is a regular lamb in armor, compared to Mrs. Whiffles. I hope she won't hurry back on *our* account ; master an' me can do without her, 'specially me. Here she comes, so as music 'ath power to sooth the savage breast, why— (*arranges boxes—sings*) "I'm afloat, I'm afloat—"

Enter MRS. WHIFFLES, R.—paces the stage.

Mrs. W. You're afloat indeed—you're a fool.

Tom. Thankee, mum.

Mrs. W. Don't answer—I hate boys that answer.

Tom. I don't answer, mum, at least master said so after he'd tried me a week.

Mrs. W. Hold your tongue, sir, and leave the drawing-room.

Tom. (*aside*) He, he, he ! calls the little parlor behind the shop, a droring-room ! I'm a going, mum. (*exit door, C.*)

Mrs. W. Yes, Mr. Sampson Whiffles your patient wife can bear a great deal, but there *are* bounds, which even the most trusting woman—but what's the use of complaining ? What are wives but beasts of burden—camels ? But the last straw breaks the camel's back, and I have had the last straw. My dear old darling of a mamma, the kindest, gentlest, best of mothers and mothers-in-law, proposes to come and stay on a visit, and Mr. Whiffles objects, positively grumbles ! But I'll be even with my

6 *HOW TO TAME YOUR MOTHER-IN-LAW.*

gentleman—I'll go and see her, and not come back till he sends for me, which he'll be too glad to do, in a couple of days. When I'm away, he'll soon find what a treasure I am.

Enter WHIFFLES, C. door from shop.

Whif. My dear, have you any idea—

Mrs. W. No, I haven't!

Whif. Hem! (*aside*) Weather-glass points to stormy. (*aloud*) Do you know, my dear, if we are out of soap?

Mrs. W. Oh, drop the shop, I'm sick of it!

Whif. If I drop the shop, my dear, the shop will very soon drop me. That's my reason for living on the ground floor instead of upstairs; I didn't want to be above my business—d'ye see? That's not so bad.

Mrs. W. Well, as you don't wish to have ma here—

Whif. But when mothers-in-law come to live with their daughters, they've a knack of—of—of—not going away again; however, if you insist—

Mrs. W. Oh, no, sir, my mamma is too proud to force her presence upon any one—however, I am going to see her; I have no doubt you will survive my absence. Plenty of your lady customers, to whom you are so polite, will be ready to sympathize with you in your lonely condition—I don't suppose you'll miss me (*cries*)

Whif. (*aside*) Weather, glass points to much rain. My dear, I hope you'll enjoy yourself, and bring back—

Mrs. W. Mamma?

Whif. No; a better temper.

Mrs. W. I, a better temper? Why, you good-for-nothing, ugly, unkind little tyrant—I've the best temper in the world.

Whif. Very likely; but you're a perfect mistress in the art of disguising it! Well, Tompkins shall fetch a cab. (*calls*) Tompkins!

Enter TOMPKINS, C.

Tompkins!

Tom. Yes sir.

Whif. Go and fetch a cab.

Tom. I've got one, sir! Such a hoss—a gray mare—riglar racer—rattle you down to the station in no time, mum.

Mrs. W. (*aside*) I do believe they're glad to get rid of me. (*aloud*) Carry my boxes to the cab.

Tom. Yes'm, with the very greatest pleasure. (*aside*) Hooray, hooray, missis is a going! (*exit with boxes, C.*)

Mrs. W. And now, good morning!

Whif. Good morning, my dear. What, ain't you agoing to—eh? (*indicating a desire to be saluted*)

Mrs. W. (*severely*) Sampson Whiffles, if you had fifty mothers,

and they wanted to come and stay with you, I should smile upon you and say "bring 'em."

Whif. I don't know where you'd put 'em though. One salute.

Mrs. W. No, sir! When I return, may you be more alive to the treasure you possess. Oh, what did I ever marry you for!

(*exit, C.*)

Whif. Sampson Whiffles, when you led to the hymeneal altar the lovely and accomplished Angelica Incubus, you considered yourself the happiest fellow in world. Six weeks after that auspicious event, you came to the conclusion that there wasn't a more miserable devil breathing. Here have I been married a year and a half, and I can hardly believe it to be less than twenty years. I don't believe that I'm thirty-two; I'm firmly convinced I'm at least sixty. I'm prematurely old; I feel it—my hair's turning gray—I'm getting weak in the knees—in fact, I'm wretched, and yet my wife is a charming woman. Ah, there's no mistake about that; everybody said so before we were married, and of course it must be so; but all I know is, if I get a chance of being married again, I shall fix my affections on anything but a charming woman—I shall select a regular sour piece of goods, and with the less teeth the better; but no more of your charming women for Sampson Whiffles.

Enter TOMPKINS, C., with letter in brown envelope.

Tom. Letter, sir.

Whif. Is there?

Tom. Yes, sir, and there's some'at else.

Whif. What?

Tom. There's twopence to pay for it.

Whif. (*gives money*) What impudence! (*TOMPKINS goes off, door, C.*) Who's this from? I should like to know—the post mark says Fru— Oh, lord! It's a letter from my mother-in-law—Angelica's ma. Ha, ha! (*opens letter*) Charming old lady, she is. The late Mr. Incubus died in a lunatic asylum—don't wonder at it—I think his daughter is making out *my* ticket for Hanwell; but she don't do it. No, I'll die sane if I go mad in the attempt! (*reads—gets excited—falls into chair*) Tompkins! Tompkins! (*jumping up*) Tompkins!

Enter TOMPKINS, C.,—WHIFFLES seizes him.

Whif. Mistaken infant—infinitesimal—homœopathic dose of humanity, why were you ever born?

Tom. Lord, master, have you got the hydro-for-beer?

Whif. Why—why did you bring me this letter? Instrument of torture, speak! Had you annihilated me—crunched—smashed—squashed me! Oh, misery! (*falls into a chair*)