

**JAMES AND JOHN:
A PLAY IN ONE ACT**

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James and John: A Play in One Act by Gilbert Cannan

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BY

GILBERT CANNAN

BOSTON
LE ROY PHILLIPS
Publisher

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PLAYS BY GILBERT CANNAN

- JAMES AND JOHN - - - - *one act.*
MILES DIXON - - - - *two acts.*
MARY'S WEDDING - - - - *one act.*
A SHORT WAY WITH AUTHORS, *one act.*

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Produced at the HAYMARKET THEATRE,
March, 1910.

<i>John Betts</i>	-	-	-	Mr. H. R. HIGNETT.
<i>James Betts</i>	-	-	-	Mr. FISHER WHITE.
<i>Mrs. Betts</i>	-	-	-	Miss HELEN HAYE.
<i>Mr. Betts</i>	-	-	-	Mr. JAMES HEARN.

CHARACTERS

John Betts

James Betts

Mrs. Betts

Mr. Betts

Scene: Their parlour.

JAMES AND JOHN

It is half past nine of an evening and the scene is the parlour of a little house in a gaunt row of houses in a street in a London suburb. By the fireplace at the back JAMES and JOHN BETTS are playing backgammon, the board on a little table between them. They are both grey. JAMES has a beard. JOHN is clean-shaven. JOHN wears glasses. Both wear morning-coats and both have carpet slippers. JAMES smokes, JOHN does not. JOHN has a glass of whisky on the mantelpiece within reach: JAMES is teetotal. They are absorbed in their game and pay no attention to their mother, a stout old lady who is sitting in her chair reading a novel, sleeping, and knitting. Her chair is by another little table on which the solitary lamp of the room is placed so as to cast its light on her book. She is directly in front of the fire so that her back is towards the audience. JOHN is sitting with his back towards her.

The room is ugly and Mid-Victorian. Its door is to the right. Its window to the left. In the window is a stand of miserable-looking ferns and an india-rubber plant.

JAMES

[*Looking up, abruptly.*] Very nice. I think I shall gammon you, John.

H'm.

JOHN

[*He rattles the dice furiously, seeing the game go against him.*]

JOHN

[*Triumphantly.*] I take you there and there . . .

JAMES

We shall see.

[*Silence.*]

MRS. BETTS

Did you say it was raining when you came in, John?

JOHN

[*Turning irritably.*] I have said so four times.

[*Silence. They devote themselves to their game again.*]

MRS. BETTS

[*Plaintively, as though she knew full well that her remarks would fall on deaf ears. She lays down her book.*] This isn't a very interesting book. . . . I don't think books are so interesting as they used to be . . . they all seem to be trying to be like real life. . . . I must say I like to know who marries who . . . and I don't like stories about married life. . . . I suppose the authors must be thinking of their own. . . . Depressing. . . . You haven't said how you like my new cap, Jamie. . . .

MRS. BETTS

You did say it was raining, John?

[No answer—only a frenzied rattle of the dice.]

I don't think anything has happened. . . .

The next-door people have had trouble with the servant again. . . . A thief this one.

. . . I wonder if it is raining. . . . I wouldn't like it to be wet for him. . . .

[JAMES and JOHN look at each other and JAMES looks over at his mother. She is fumbling for her handkerchief.]

JOHN

Gammon. . . .

[He rises and looks down at his brother in triumph. Each takes a little note-book from his pocket and makes a note of the game.]

JAMES

I still lead by two hundred and twenty-three games. . . .

[MRS. BETTS is wiping her eyes and snuffling. JOHN goes to her and pats her shoulder kindly.]

JOHN

Would you like a game, mamma? . . .

MRS. BETTS

No—no-o-o . . . I couldn't— not to-night. . . .

JAMES

I thought we had agreed not to talk of it nor to think of it. . . .