

Pretty Polly. Licence no.382. Theatre R. Colchester 11-6-1900

N.B. Licence no. 383 is also for Theatre R. Colchester, dated 11-6-1900. "A sporting knight-major" – a sketch by Charles and Murray King with music by [left blank].

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Pretty Polly

A duologue

Written by

BASIL HOOD

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CHARACTERS

CHARLIE BROWN

POLLY GREY

SCENE:- London

TIME: - The Present

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PRETTY POLLY

SCENE: - A Drawing Room. Window at back. Writing table L.C. on which small mirror, string box with scissors, bottle of quinine and medicine glass.

(CHARLIE BROWN enters: he is wearing overcoat and carries his hat in one hand and a parrot cage in the other)

CHARLIE (To Parrot) Pretty Polly! Now you understand what you have to do. When I give you to Miss Polly Grey, your namesake, you will call out "Pretty Polly", and that will break the ice for me. "Pretty Polly! How I love pretty Polly!"

(POLLY GREY enters unseen and stands watching him)

Pretty Polly! I wonder if she ever thinks of me!

POLLY (aside) Good gracious!

CHARLIE (To Parrot) Go on! "Pretty Polly – how I love pretty Polly! Pretty Polly – I wonder if she ever thinks of me!" When you say that she'll think you picked it up through my saying it out loud so often. That will make it easy for me to introduce the subject I'm here for.

POLLY (aside) Oh, will it? I certainly don't intend to be proposed to by a parrot!

(Exit)

CHARLIE It will touch her heart and break the ice for me beautifully. I wonder if she ever thinks of me! I wonder if she thinks of me! I wonder – (seeing bouquet on table) who sent those flowers! (looking at card attached to bouquet) Mr Percy Green! I wonder if she would rather have his flowers than my parrot! I wonder if she likes parrots! I wonder if I'd better hide my parrot and find out if she likes parrots before I give it to her!

(POLLY is heard singing)

Yes, I think I had. (Puts cage behind sofa)

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(Enter Polly)

POLLY How do you do, Mr Brown?

CHARLIE How do you do, Miss Grey?

POLLY It seems ages since we have seen you

CHARLIE (Eagerly) Does it?

POLLY Have you been yachting - or in the country?

CHARLIE Yachting - and in a good many countries

POLLY I thought so, you are so brown. How lucky you are! - yachting always makes me green.

CHARLIE (Aside) Green - Percy Green! (Aloud) Isn't green a favourite colour of yours?

POLLY Not in complexion

CHARLIE Well, in parrots?

POLLY Parrots? Whatever makes you think of parrots?

CHARLIE It - it is a weakness of mine. I think a great deal of parrots

POLLY Oh, I hate parrots!

CHARLIE Do you? (Aside) Glad I hid it

POLLY I loathe parrots!

CHARLIE So do I

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POLLY I thought you said a parrot was a thing you thought a great deal of

CHARLIE A parrot I like, not parrots. One parrot - that's singular

POLLY It is - very

CHARLIE Parrots, in the plural, are different. Take a lot of parrots together, you know -

POLLY Altogether or singly, I abominate them. If anyone ever gave me a parrot -

CHARLIE Yes?

POLLY I should throw it out the window

CHARLIE (Aside) I shall, if I can. I must get it out of the house without her seeing it, somehow!

POLLY Oh, Mr Brown, I hadn't seen it!

CHARLIE Have you seen it?

POLLY This moment. (Taking up bouquet)

CHARLIE (Aside) Percy Green!

POLLY What a lovely bouquet! How sweet of you, really!

CHARLIE But -

POLLY They are beautiful! Flowers are such a sweet present!

CHARLIE (Aside) Why the deuce did I bring a parrot?

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POLLY I always think the form of a present so indicates the character of the giver. These sweet but simple flowers -

CHARLIE (Aside) She hasn't noticed the card, with his confounded name on it. (Aloud) As a matter of fact, you know -

POLLY I must put them in water. Excuse me one moment while I get a bowl for them.

(Exit)

CHARLIE I can't let her think they are from me - besides, she is bound to see his beastly card. (Fingering it) How awkward it will be for her when she finds out she has been thanking me in mistake. Suppose I do let her think they are from me. (Takes off card) I can send another bouquet with his card tied to it - that would be quite fair - and would save her all the awkwardness. (Puts card in pocket) Besides, she is so fond of flowers, and hates parrots. Yes - she shall have two lots of flowers, and no parrot. How on earth can I get

out of the house without her seeing it? I know! (Takes off his overcoat and holds cage concealed underneath it)

(Enter POLLY, with bowl and jug of water)

POLLY Ah! You have taken off your coat. Then you will stay and have some tea?

CHARLIE No, thanks, I'm just going.

POLLY Well, you are original! Do you usually wait to take off your coat just before you go out?

CHARLIE Yes, since I've been abroad. You see, I suffer from a sort of intermittent jungle fever that I caught in India - feel icy cold for a bit, and then burning hot. I'm burning hot now. Good-bye!

POLLY And you think I shall let you go out while you are so feverish? What would my dad say? He has fever, you know; so I know what to do. You must wait until you are cool again. You were quite right not to want tea. What you want is quinine. Here's Dad's bottle, and a medicine glass. (Mixing dose) You must have a big dose.

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CHARLIE But, really -

POLLY No sit quietly, and sip it, and tell me all about your travels - all you have seen and learnt. So you have been to India! Well, what did you find there?

CHARLIE My jungle fever.

POLLY You have hardly sipped any quinine yet!

CHARLIE Do you know I'm not quite sure that quinine is the right thing for my fever.

POLLY I'm certain it is. Now go on sipping it, and tell me all about India. I'm listening.

(The Parrot says "Pretty Polly!")

POLLY Good gracious! What was that?

CHARLIE (Aside) Confound that bird! I thought it was asleep!

PARROT Pretty Polly!

POLLY What is it?

CHARLIE What's what?

POLLY That voice!

CHARLIE Voice?

POLLY Yes. Didn't you hear it?

CHARLIE No. (PARROT speaks louder)

POLLY There!

CHARLIE Oh, that! I think it is someone singing in the street.

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POLLY It is someone talking - in this room! Oh, Mr Brown, if you are a brave man, search the room and find out what it is!

CHARLIE I am a brave man, Miss Grey. But - it's no use searching!

POLLY Why not? (PARROT speaks) There he is again! If you won't - I will! (Makes a movement)

CHARLIE No! (Aside) What on earth shall I say? (Aloud) The fact is - it was my voice that you heard.

POLLY Yours

CHARLIE Yes. You asked me what I learnt in India - that's an example - ventriloquism - I learnt it from some Indian jugglers

(PARROT speaks)

POLLY How splendidly you do it! You quite scared me. Don't do it again please.

CHARLIE I wont! (PARROT speaks)

POLLY Do leave off!

CHARLIE I will! (PARROT speaks) (Aside) I must throw the brute out of the window, if I can distract her attention for a moment

(PARROT speaks)

POLLY I asked you not to do it!

CHARLIE I do it unconsciously! I - I also learnt hypnotism – from the same jugglers. I will show you some perfectly harmless hypnotism, if you like.

(PARROT speaks)

POLLY Anything is better than that horribly uncanny voice. And I have implored you not to do it.

(PARROT speaks)

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CHARLIE I did it without thinking. Now for the hypnotism. You won't lose consciousness. Look at some bright object for half a minute. This will do. (Picking up small mirror from table) Now stare at that, and don't take your eyes off it, whatever you do. (She looks at it and he quickly ties string from string box to cage, takes it to window. While arranging this he keeps speaking to her) Mind you don't take our eyes off that bright object. Keep staring at it. Don't look at me, whatever you do.

POLLY But this bright object is a mirror - and I can see you over my shoulder! And what on earth have you got in your hand?

CHARLIE In my hand?

POLLY Why, it's a parrot!

CHARLIE Why, so it is!

POLLY Where did it come from?

CHARLIE I - I found it, on the floor: it was under my coat. (He ties Percy Green's card to the string)

POLLY Who could have put it there?

CHARLIE Why, there's a card tied to it. Mr Percy Green! What a silly thing to send you! Fancy thinking you would like a parrot!

POLLY He may have done it for a certain purpose. Perhaps the bird can talk, and he wanted it to say something which he was too shy to say himself. Perhaps he meant it to break the ice for him! What a clever idea! Poor Mr Percy Green! Why didn't he speak for himself?

CHARLIE Good-bye, Miss Grey.

POLLY Good-bye, Mr Brown.

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CHARLIE Before I leave you for South Africa I must tell you as an honourable man that I have misled you. That is my parrot. Mr Percy Green's card was tied to it by - by mistake. The voice you heard was not my voice, but my parrot's. The bird can talk, and I wanted it to say something which I was too shy to say myself. I meant it to break the ice for me. The clever idea was mine, not Mr Percy Green's. Farewell!

(Exit and returns)

I will relieve you of this innocent bird. (Takes cage)

POLLY What was it you taught it to say?

CHARLIE It said "Pretty Polly!"

POLLY How original. Is that all?

CHARLIE It was fool enough to add "I wonder if she ever thinks of me!"

POLLY And I am wise enough to answer, before you leave me for South Africa, "yes".

CHARLIE Miss Grey! Polly! May I call you Polly?

POLLY Plain Polly?

CHARLIE Pretty Polly! (Going to kiss her)

POLLY One moment! (Covers up parrot) Parrots talk, you know! (They kiss)

CURTAIN