

**PLEASE PASS THE
CREAM**

A COMEDY

**BY
CHARLES NEVERS HOLMES**

PLEASE PASS THE CREAM

MR. JOHN CLARK

*A "Self-Made"
Man*

MRS. JOHN CLARK

*A Former
Schoolma'am*

PLACE—Anywhere.

TIME—Breakfast.

TIME OF PLAYING—*TWENTY MINUTES.*

COSTUMES.

MR. CLARK—Breakfast Attire.

MRS. CLARK—Morning Gown.

PROPERTIES.

All listed in description of stage setting.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of the stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *1 E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance; *R. 3 E.*, right entrance up stage, etc.; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

PLEASE PASS THE CREAM

SCENE: Dining-room of the CLARKS, cosily furnished in dark; dining-table in center, two chairs at opposite ends, table set with plates, knives, forks, spoons, glasses, coffee pot and cups at right end, with sugar and a cream-pitcher; plate, knife, fork, spoons, glass at left end; also a carafe of water; butter, salt and pepper boxes, napkins, etc. A sideboard with silver. Rug under table. Modern hanging lamp over it. Doors at right and left. Window at back beside sideboard. Telephone on small table in left corner. MR. CLARK, about 40 years of age, stout and easy going, seated in chair at left end of table. MRS. CLARK, about 35 years old, rather slim and nervous, at the right end. As the curtain rises both are eating some meat and potatoes, a clock in hall behind door at right striking the hour of eight.

MRS. CLARK (*raising her napkin to her mouth*). I wish you wouldn't say "it don't," John. That isn't grammatical!

MR. CLARK (*raising a piece of potato on his knife to his mouth*). It ain't—why isn't it?

MRS. C. (*dropping her napkin to the floor, in a voice of utter horror*). Oh, John, John! How many, many times have I besought you not to use that terrible, terrible word "ain't"?

MR. C. (*very cheerfully, raising another piece of potato on his knife*). I dunno, Martha. I never was much good at mental arithmetic.

MRS. C. (*picking up her napkin, mournfully*). John, don't you remember that you *promised* me when we were engaged never more to utter that abominable word.

MR. C. (*cutting awkwardly at his meat*). I *ain't* quite sure that I made such a promise, Martha.

MRS. C. (*sharply*). John Clark, you *certainly* did make such a promise—not once but *several* times!

MR. C. (*starting to raise a piece of meat to his mouth, letting it fall*). But, Martha, that was *only* an engagement promise, and engagement promises *ain't* no wise binding, so to speak, after the wedding march is ended.

MRS. C. (*angrily, again dropping her napkin*). Mr. Clark, if you utter that word *again* I shall withdraw from the table!

MR. C. (*still cutting away awkwardly at the meat*). All right, Martha. I won't use that word no more.

MRS. C. (*picking up her napkin, sharply*). John Clark, what you have just said is also ungrammatical. It is *very* incorrect for you to say "I won't use that word no more."

MR. C. (*raising another piece of potato on his knife*). But, my dear, I don't see *why* it is incorrect for me to say that I won't use the word "ain't" again. *Now* you're blaming me for *not* using it.

MRS. C. (*a little confused*). You know *very* well what I mean! (*Suddenly and more sharply*.) John, how many times have I requested you not to *eat* with your knife?

MR. C. (*letting his knife fall out of his hand to the floor*). But what is a knife for if it isn't to eat with?

MRS. C. (*in tone of utter disgust*). Oh, won't you *ever* speak correct English. Why *couldn't* you have said, "What is the purpose of a table-knife if it is not to use in eating?"

MR. C. (*very cordially, reaching down to pick up the fallen knife*). You are *exactly* right, my dear. I agree wholly with you—the purpose of a table-knife is to be used in eating.

MRS. C. (*very sharply*). But a table-knife is *not* a freight elevator, John Clark!

MR. C. (*starting to raise more potato on his knife*). No, Martha, a fork is the proper instrument with which to convey a piece of meat from one's plate to one's mouth.

MRS. C. (*rising hastily, speaking quickly*). John, stop that! Never use a knife, even at home, that has fallen to the floor! (*Goes to the sideboard, opens a drawer, takes out a table-knife and exchanges this knife for the one just dropped by MR. C.*) There! (*Resuming her seat.*) Don't you dare to misuse this knife as you misused the other one, John Clark!

MR. C. (*rather humbly*). No, ma'am! Still, it's ever so much easier to eat with my knife than with my fork.

MRS. C. (*decidedly, beginning to eat again*). No, it isn't! Besides, it's *very* vulgar—and dangerous, too.

MR. C. (*now using his fork*). Yet I've read somewhere—I know I have—that George Washington ate with his knife in the same way that I did.

MRS. C. (*quickly*). Oh, well, forks were not invented then.

MR. C. (*drinking from his glass of water*). They never should have been invented. Fingers are ever so much better than forks.

MRS. C. (*rising from her seat to go again to the sideboard*). I expected you to say that fingers were invented before forks. How *did* it happen that you forgot to make that remark—again?

MR. C. (*using his napkin very clumsily*). Really I can't see why an honest hungry man should be ashamed of eating with his knife.

MRS. C. (*returning to her seat with the sugar tongs*). Well, it's not the correct thing socially. Mrs. James's husband *never* eats with his knife. (*Quickly.*) John, that isn't a wash towel; it's a napkin.

MR. C. (*dropping the napkin to the floor*). I wish that Mrs. James's husband would pay that \$100 he has owed me for a year.

MRS. C. (*beginning to pour out the coffee*). You should feel proud that a gentleman of *such* high social position as Mr. James owes you a hundred dollars.

MR. C. (*picking up the napkin*). Well, when a dozen other gentlemen of high social position have each owed me a hundred dollars for more than a year I don't feel so proud of Mr. James's owing me a hundred plunks.

MRS. C. (*beginning to put in some sugar with the tongs into the cup of coffee*). Not a hundred plunks, dear. You mean a hundred dollars.

MR. C. (*a little crossly*). I mean *just* what I say—a hundred *plunks*! Perhaps if he ate with his knife and said "ain't" the way I do he would never have borrowed them hundred plunks.

MRS. C. (*in utter horror*). "Them hundred plunks!" Oh, John!

MR. C. (*angrily*). Ye-es, *them* hundred “bucks”! (*More angrily*.) Now, see here, Martha Smith, I am a *ve-ry patient* man. My father was a patient man and my mother was the most patientest woman you ever did see; but they have had their limits, and so have I. (*Bringing his hand down firmly upon the table*.) And when I get *real* riled I ain’t nearly as agreeable as aforesaid. (*Pauses for a moment as though to emphasise his remarks*.) As I said, I am a *ve-ry patient* man, but I have my limit. Now, Martha Smith, you have been a-pestering me all breakfast time, and a-correcting me on my expressions of speech. Also, you have been fault-finding with my table manners, and I have got *ve-ry* tired of it. Now, I want you to understand, Martha Smith, right *here*, that I won’t tolerate another word from you (*he rises and then bangs his fist hard upon the table*), and I’ll say “it ain’t,” “it hain’t,” “it don’t” as often as I *darn* please! And I’ll eat with my knife or my fingers as often as I *darn* please! (*Raising his voice still more*.) Do you understand *that*, Martha Smith? (*He glares angrily at her*.)

MRS. C. (*very coolly and very deliberately*). Mr. Clark, you are *so* amusing when you get “real riled.” If you could only *see yourself* (*mimics him*) “when you ain’t nearly as agreeable as aforesaid.” Now, I *never* get angry myself, *never*. And at any rate not after seeing you in a tantrum. It’s too disgusting. You are *not* a handsome man, even when you are *agreeable*, Mr. Clark; but when you are really “riled,” *my!* you’re *homely*, as homely as—well, words *fail* me! (*She laughs somewhat irritatingly*.)

MR. C. (*walking furiously up and down the left side of the room, savagely*). *If you only was a man for a minute!*

MRS. C. (*more coolly and deliberately*). I wish I were for only *half* a minute.

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