

A PAIR OF LUNATICS

(Humorous Reading from the Play)

by
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W. R. Walkes
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The scene of this little play is the drawing-room of a lunatic asylum. The characters are George Fielding and Clara Manners. George enters yawning.

“Well, I’ve had about enough of this. Of all the dreary entertainments in this world, a dance at a lunatic asylum is the dreariest. Tom said I should find it such splendid fun to listen to the strange delusions of the patients. All I can say is, that if this is his idea of fun he’s a duller dog than I thought he was. Gad! They’re just about as amusing as Uncle Timothy’s rheumatism. What bores me so terribly is their want of originality. They have a poor half-dozen or so of fancies between them, and they copy one another like a lot of understudies. Now, let me see. I have danced with no less than three Empresses of China, each of whom offered to share with me the throne of the Celestial Empire; four of my partners announced themselves Queens of the Air, and implored me to go out on the roof, and together wing our flight to the sunny South; while the only one who seemed to have a line of business all to herself was my last partner, who flew into a terrific rage because, I had, she said, borrowed her nose to go to an evening party and hadn’t returned it. As she manifested a strong desire to regain possession of her lost property by main force, I thought it best to leave her and seek seclusion here.

How refreshing is this quiet after the glare and noise of the rooms below, and the ceaseless babblings of insanity! (Yawns) I feel very tired, quite sleepy, in fact—I’ll close my eyes for a few minutes—just for—a—few—min—”

He sleeps, and Clara enters.

CLARA: Thank goodness, here’s an empty room where I can rest for a while in quiet. Oh, why did Aunt Maria bring me to this ghastly, gruesome function? My head’s in a perfect whirl. Dr. Adams assured me that all my partners would be quite harmless. I suppose he meant by that that they wouldn’t try to murder me—and of course that’s some comfort—but their insane ramblings make my very flesh creep, and their vacant laughter—oh! (Shudders) It’s horrible—horrible! (Looks around) I wonder where I am! Oh! (Starting up) Perhaps it’s a padded room. (Looks around) No, there’s nothing padded but the furniture, but suppose it should be where the violent people are kept in chains—and things. I don’t think I’ll stay. (She starts to leave. George snores. She stops suddenly) Good gracious! What’s that? (He snores again. She is frightened) Oh! It’s a groan; some poor creature in a strait-waistcoat which doesn’t fit. Oh, what shall I do? I can’t move.

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