

Mrs. Webb

a lot of confusion way down deep in people's minds and we thought that that ought to be in our play, too. The real hero of this scene isn't on the stage at all, and you know who that is. It's like what one of those European fellas said: every child born into the world is nature's attempt to make a perfect human being. Well, we've seen nature pushing and contriving for some time now. We all know that nature's interested in quantity; but I think she's interested in quality, too, – that's why I'm in the ministry. And don't forget all the other witnesses at this wedding, – the ancestors. Millions of them. Most of them set out to live two-by-two, also. Millions of them. Well, that's all my sermon. 'Twan't very long, anyway. *(Turning upstage, he walks up the church aisle.)*

(The organ starts playing Handel's "Largo".)

(The congregation streams into the church and sits in silence.)

(Church bells are heard.)

(MRS. GIBBS sits in the front row, the first seat on the aisle, the right section; next to her are REBECCA and DR. GIBBS.)

(Across the aisle MRS. WEBB, WALLY and MR. WEBB. A small choir takes its place, facing the audience under the stained-glass window.)

(MRS. WEBB, on the way to her place, turns back and speaks to the audience.)

MRS. WEBB. I don't know why on earth I should be crying. I suppose there's nothing to cry about. It came over me at breakfast this morning; there was Emily eating her breakfast as she's done for seventeen years and now she's going off to eat it in someone else's house. I suppose that's it. And

Start

End

Emily! She suddenly said: I can't eat another mouthful, and she put her head down on the table and *she* cried. (*She starts toward her seat in the church, but turns back and adds:*) Oh, I've got to say it: you know, there's something downright cruel about sending our girls out into marriage this way. I hope some of her girl friends have told her a thing or two. It's cruel, I know, but I couldn't bring myself to say anything. I went into it blind as a bat myself. (*in half-amused exasperation*) The whole world's wrong, that's what's the matter. There they come.

(*She hurries to her place in the pew, sees GEORGE start to come down the right aisle of the theatre, through the audience.*)

(*Suddenly THREE MEMBERS of his baseball team appear downstage right and start whistling and catcalling to him. They are dressed for the ball field.*)

THE BASEBALL PLAYERS. Eh, George, George! Hast – yaow! Look at him, fellas – he looks scared to death. Yaow! George, don't look so innocent, you old geezer. We know what you're thinking. Don't disgrace the team, big boy. Whoo-oo-oo.

STAGE MANAGER. All right! All right! That'll do. That's enough of that.

(*Smiling, he pushes them off the stage. They lean back to shout a few more catcalls.*)

There used to be an awful lot of that kind of thing at weddings in the old days, – Rome, and later. We're more civilized now, – so they say.

(*The choir starts singing "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling".* **GEORGE** *has reached the stage having come down the stage right aisle. He stares at*

* This music appears on page 102 in the back of this Acting Edition.