

ALISON'S HOUSE

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The library of the old Stanhope homestead in Iowa, on the Mississippi, where MISS AGATHA STANHOPE still lives. There is a river village near-by, and the small city where the other STANHOPEs now live is about ten miles up the river.*

It is the room of people who have lived in comfortable circumstances and signifies a family of traditions and cultivation.

Left, just rear of center, a door into the hall. In the rear corner, left, a stone fireplace. In the rear wall a bay-window, the windows coming down to a low seat, and curtained with old plum-colored velvet. Right of this are books, which are continued into an alcove. There is an easy chair near the bay-window, by it a foot-stool and a low table; front, right, a long table. At the left, front of door, a desk. The room is carpeted, a tone deeper than the curtains. On the walls are portraits of an older generation.

The time is eleven in the morning of the last day of the nineteenth century, December 31, 1899. But the furnishings of the library are of a period earlier than this.

As the curtain rises ANN is seated before her Oliver typewriter, near the alcove, behind the long table. She is fair, sensitive looking. She wears a shirt waist and blue skirt, in the manner of 1900. She is about twenty-three, and has gentle manners. She reaches down and takes another old paper from a small horse-hair trunk beside her. Makes a type-written note.

Enter JENNIE.

JENNIE (*speaking to some one behind her*). You had better come in here. Everything is so upset—with the moving. Oh, here is Miss Ann. He says he's a reporter, Miss. I don't know anything about it. (*Enter KNOWLES, a young man. JENNIE goes out.*)

ANN. You wished to see Mr. Stanhope?

KNOWLES. Well—yes, some of the family. But most of all, the house.

ANN. The house is being broken up.

KNOWLES. I want to see it before it's broken up. Especially the room that was used by Miss Alison Stanhope.

ANN. I think no one goes in that room, except the family.

KNOWLES. You are not—of the family?

ANN. Oh, no. I am Mr. Stanhope's secretary.

KNOWLES (*going a little nearer*). Those papers you're working with—are they by any chance the papers of Miss Alison Stanhope?

ANN. They are not.

KNOWLES (*with his very nice smile*). And it's none of my business what they are. I'm from the Chicago Record Herald. Down to get a little story about the house, because it is being broken up.

ANN (*with a smile*). Isn't there anything going on in Chicago?

KNOWLES. Perhaps not as much as went on in this house.

ANN. I'm surprised a metropolitan paper should be interested in the fact Miss Agatha Stanhope is moving up to town to live with her brother.

KNOWLES. It isn't Miss Agatha. It's Miss Alison.

ANN. But aren't you a little late? Miss Alison has been dead eighteen years.

KNOWLES. She isn't dead. Anything about her is alive. She belongs to the world. But the family doesn't seem to know that.

ANN. They published her poems.