

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen  
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo  
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm  
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller  
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall  
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis  
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac  
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch  
Homer Tolstoy Whitman  
Darwin Thoreau Twain  
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott  
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte  
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse  
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke  
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chambers Irving  
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# **The Climbers A Play in Four Acts**

Clyde Fitch

# Imprint

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TO  
CHARLES T. MATHEWS

in grateful recognition of his  
true friendship and loyal enthusiasm  
from the beginning

C.F.



## ***THE CLIMBERS***

ACT I. In Late Winter.

*At the Hunters'.*

ACT II. The Following Christmas Eve.

*At the Sterlings'.*

ACT III. Christmas Day.

*At the Hermitage, by the Bronx River.*

ACT IV. The Day After Christmas.

*At the Sterlings'.*

New York: To-Day



## **THE PEOPLE IN THE PLAY**

*(Transcriber's Note: One character is listed as Dr. Steinart in the List of Characters, but Dr. Steinhart in the body of the play.)*

Richard Sterling.

Edward Warden.

Frederick Mason.

Johnny Trotter.

Godesby.

Dr. Steinart.

Ryder.

Servant *at the Hermitage*.

Jordan. *Butler at the Sterlings'*.

Leonard. *Footman at the Sterlings'*.

Master Sterling.

Servants.

Mrs. Sterling (*née Blanche Hunter*).

Miss Hunter.

Mrs. Hunter.

Jessica Hunter.

Clara Hunter.

Miss Godesby.

Miss Sillerton.

Tompson. *Mrs. Hunter's Maid.*

Marie. *Clara Hunter's Maid.*

**Originally produced at the Bijou Theatre, New York, January 21,  
1901, with the following cast:—**

Richard Sterling		Mr. Frank Worthing
Edward Warden		Mr. Robert Edeson
Frederick Mason		Mr. John Flood
Johnny Trotter		Mr. Ferdinand Gottschalk
Dr. Steinart		Mr. George C. Boniface
Godesby		Mr. J.B. Sturges
Ryder		Mr. Kinard
Servant at the Hermitage		Mr. Henry Warwick
Jordan	<i>Servants</i>	Mr. Edward Moreland
Leonard	<i>at the</i>	Mr. Henry Stokes
A Footman	<i>Hunters'</i>	Mr. Frederick Wallace
Richard Sterling, Jr.		Master Harry Wright
Mrs. Hunter		Mrs. Madge Carr Cook
Mrs. Sterling ( <i>née</i> Blanche Hunter)		Miss Amelia Bingham
Jessica Hunter		Miss Maud Monroe

Clara Hunter		Miss Minnie Dupree
Miss Hunter		Miss Annie Irish
Miss Godesby		Miss Clara Bloodgood
Miss Sillerton		Miss Ysobel Haskins
Tompson	<i>Maids at</i>	Miss Lillian Eldredge
Marie	<i>the Hun- ters'</i>	Miss Florence Lloyd

**Produced at the Comedy Theatre, London, September 5, 1903,  
with the following cast:—**

Richard Sterling	Mr. Sydney Valentine
Edward Warden	Mr. Reeves-Smith
Frederick Mason	Mr. J.L. Mackay
Johnny Trotter	Mr. G.M. Graham
Godesby	Mr. Horace Pollock
Dr. Steinart	Mr. Howard Sturges
Master Sterling	Miss Maidie Andrews
Ryder	Mr. Henry Howard
Jordan	Mr. Elgar B. Payne
Leonard	Mr. Littledale Power
Footman	Mr. Rivers Bertram
Servant	Mr. George Aubrey

Mrs. Sterling

Miss Hunter

Mrs. Hunter

Jessica Hunter

Clara Hunter

Miss Sillerton

Tompson

Marie

Miss Godesby

Miss Lily Hanbury

Miss Kate Tyndall

Miss Lottie Venne

Miss Alma Mara

Mrs. Mouillot

Miss Florence Sinclair

Miss L. Crauford

Miss Armstrong

Miss Fannie Ward

## ACT I

*A drawing-room at the Hunters', handsomely and artistically furnished. The woodwork and furniture are in the period of Louis XVI. The walls and furniture are covered with yellow brocade, and the curtains are of the same golden material. At the back are two large windows which give out on Fifth Avenue, opposite the Park, the trees of which are seen across the way. At Left is a double doorway, leading into the hall. At Right, opposite, is a door which leads to other rooms, and thence to other parts of the house. In the centre, at back, between the two windows, is the fireplace; on the mantel are two vases and a clock in dark blue ormolu. There is a white and gold piano on the Right side of the room. The room suggests much wealth, and that it has been done by a professional decorator; the personal note of taste is lacking.*

*It is four o'clock in the afternoon. The shades of the windows are drawn down. There are rows and rows of camp-chairs filling the entire room.*

*The curtain rises slowly. After a moment, Jordan, the butler, and Leonard, a footman, enter from the Left and begin to gather together and carry out the camp-chairs. They do this with very serious faces, and take great pains to step softly and to make no noise. They enter a second time for more chairs.*

Jordan. [*Whispers to Leonard.*] When are they coming for the chairs?

Leonard. [*Whispers back.*] To-night. Say, it was fine, wasn't it!

Jordan. Grand!

*[They go out with the chairs and immediately reënter for more. They are followed in this time by a lady's maid, Tompson; she is not a young woman. As she crosses the room she stoops and picks up a faded flower which has fallen from some emblem. She goes to the window at Right, and peeps out. She turns around and looks at the others. They all speak in subdued voices.*

Tompson. Jordan, what do you think—can we raise the shades now?

Jordan. Yes, of course—after they've left the house it's all over as far as we here are concerned.

[*She raises both shades.*

Tompson. Phew! what an odor of flowers!

[*She opens one of the windows a little.*

[*Marie, a young, pretty, French woman, enters from the Right.*

Marie. Will I help you?

Tompson. Just with this table, thank you, Marie. [*They begin to rearrange the room, putting it in its normal condition. They replace the table and put back the ornaments upon it.*] Poor Mr. Hunter, and him so fond of mince pie. I shall never forget how that man ate mince pie.

[*She sighs lugubriously and continues her labor with the room.*

Leonard. I hope as how it's not going to make any difference with us.

Jordan. [*Pompously.*] Of course not; wasn't Mr. Hunter a millionaire?

Tompson. Some millionnaires I've known turned out poor as Job's turkey in their coffins!

Marie. What you say? You tink we shall 'ave some of madame's or ze young ladies' dresses?

Tompson. [*Hopefully.*] Perhaps.

Marie. I 'ave already made my choice. I like ze pale pink of Mees Jessie.

Leonard. Sh! I heard a carridge.

Tompson. Then they're coming back.

[*Marie quickly goes out Right.*

Jordan. [*To Leonard, hurriedly, as he quickly goes out Left.*] Take them last two chairs!

[*Leonard, with the chairs, follows Jordan out Left. Tompson hastily puts back a last arm-chair to its usual position in the room and goes out Right. Mrs. Hunter enters Left, followed by her three daughters, Blanche, Jessica, and Clara, and Master Sterling, who is a small, attractive child, five years of age. All are in the deepest conventional mourning, Mrs. Hunter in widow's weeds and Clara with a heavy, black chiffon veil; the*

Boy is also dressed in conventional mourning. As soon as they enter, all four women lift their veils. Mrs. Hunter is a well-preserved woman, with a pretty, rather foolish, and somewhat querulous face. Her figure is the latest mode. Blanche Sterling, her oldest daughter, is her antithesis, — a handsome, dignified woman, young, sincere, and showing, in her attitude to the others and in her own point of view, the warmth of a true, evenly-balanced nature. Jessica is a typical second child, — nice, good, self-effacing, sympathetic, unspoiled. Clara is her opposite, — spoiled, petulant, pretty, pert, and selfish.

Mrs. Hunter. [*With a long sigh.*] Oh, I am so glad to be back home and the whole thing over without a hitch!

[*She sinks with a great sigh of relief into a big chair.*]

Blanche. [*Takes her son to Mrs. Hunter.*] Kiss grandmother good-by, and then Leonard will take you home.

Mrs. Hunter. Good-by, dear. Be a good boy. Don't eat too much candy.

[*Kisses him carelessly.*]

Master Sterling. Good-by. [*Runs towards the door Left, shouting happily.*] Leonard! Leonard!

Mrs. Hunter. [*Tearfully.*] My dears, it was a great success! Everybody was there!

[*The three younger women stand and look about the room, as if it were strange to them — as if it were empty. There is a moment's silence.*]

Blanche. [*Tenderly.*] Mother, why don't you take off your bonnet?

Mrs. Hunter. Take it off for me; it *will* be a great relief.

Blanche. Help me, Jess.

Mrs. Hunter. [*Irritably.*] Yes, *do* something, Jessie. You've mortified me terribly to-day! That child hasn't shed a tear. People'll think you didn't love your father. [*The two are taking off Mrs. Hunter's bonnet. Mrs. Hunter waits for an answer from Jessica; none comes.*] I never saw any one so heartless! [*Tearful again.*] And her father adored her. *She* was one of the things we quarrelled *most* about!

[*Over Mrs. Hunter's head Blanche exchanges a sympathetic look with Jessica to show she understands.*]

Clara. I'm sure *I've* cried enough. I've cried buckets.

[*She goes to Mrs. Hunter as Blanche and Jessica take away the bonnet and veil and put them on the piano.*]

Mrs. Hunter. [*Kissing Clara.*] Yes, dear, you are your mother's own child. And *you* lose the most by it, too.

[*Leaning against the side of her mother's chair, with one arm about her mother.*]

Clara. Yes, indeed, instead of coming out next month, and having a perfectly lovely winter, I'll have to mope the whole season, and, if I don't look out, be a wallflower without ever having been a bud!

Mrs. Hunter. [*Half amused but feeling Clara's remark is perhaps not quite the right thing.*] Sh—

[*During Clara's speech above, Blanche has taken Jessica in her arms a moment and kissed her tenderly, slowly. They rejoin Mrs. Hunter, Blanche wiping her eyes, Jessica still tearless.*]

Clara. And think of all the clothes we brought home from Paris last month!

Mrs. Hunter. My dear, don't think of clothes—think of your poor father! That street dress of mine will dye very well, and we'll give the rest to your aunt and cousins.

Blanche. Mother, don't you want to go upstairs?

Jessica. [*Sincerely moved.*] Yes, I hate this room now.

Mrs. Hunter. [*Rising.*] Hate this room! When we've just had it done! Louis Kinge!

Blanche. Louis *Quinze*, dear! She means the associations now, mother.

Mrs. Hunter. Oh, yes, but that's weak and foolish, Jessie. No, Blanche—[*Sitting again.*]—I'm too exhausted to move. Ring for tea.

[*Blanche rings the bell beside the mantel.*]

Clara. [*Crossing to piano, forgets and starts to play a music-hall song, but Mrs. Hunter stops her.*] Oh, yes, tea! I'm starved!

Mrs. Hunter. Clara, darling! As if you could be hungry at such a time!

[*Jordan enters Left.*

Blanche. Tea, Jordan.

Jordan. Yes, madam.

[*He goes out Left.*

Mrs. Hunter. Girls, everybody in town was there! I'm sure even your father himself couldn't have complained.

Blanche. Mother!

Mrs. Hunter. Well, you know he always found fault with my *parties* being too mixed. He wouldn't realize I couldn't throw over all my old set when I married into his, — not that I ever acknowledged I was your father's inferior. I consider my family was just as good as his, only we were *Presbyterians*!

Blanche. Mother, dear, take off your gloves.

Mrs. Hunter. I thought I had. [*Crying.*] I'm so heartbroken I don't know what I'm doing.

[*Taking off her gloves.*

[*Blanche and Clara comfort their mother.*

Jessica. Here's the tea —

[*Jordan and Leonard enter with large, silver tray, with tea, cups, and thin bread-and-butter sandwiches. They place them on small tea-table which Jessica arranges for them.*

Mrs. Hunter. I'm afraid I can't touch it.

[*Taking her place behind tea-table and biting eagerly into a sandwich.*

Jessica. [*Dryly.*] Try.

[*Blanche pours tea for them all, which they take in turn.*

Mrs. Hunter. [*Eating.*] One thing I was furious about, — did you see the Witherspoons *here* at the house?

Clara. I did.

Mrs. Hunter. The idea! When I've never called on them. They are the worst social pushers I've ever known.

*[She takes another sandwich.]*

Clara. Trying to make people think they are on our visiting list! Using even a funeral to get in!

Mrs. Hunter. But I *was* glad the Worthings were here, and I thought it *sweet* of old Mr. Dormer to go even to the cemetery. *[Voice breaks a little.]* He never goes to balls any more, and, they say, catches cold at the slightest change of temperature.

*[She takes a third sandwich.]*

Blanche. A great many people loved father.

Mrs. Hunter. *[Irritably.]* They ought to've. It was really foolish the way he was always doing something for somebody! How good these sandwiches are! *[Spoken very plaintively.]*

Jessica. Shall we have to economize now, mother?

Mrs. Hunter. Of course not; how dare you suggest such an injustice to your *father*, and *before* the flowers are withered on his grave!

*[Again becoming tearful.]*

*[Jordan enters Left with a small silver tray, heaping full of letters.]*

Has the new writing paper come?

Blanche. *[Who takes the letters and looks through them, giving some to her mother.]* Yes.

*[Blanche reads a letter, and passes it to Jessica.]*

Mrs. Hunter. Is the black border broad enough? They said it was the thing.

Clara. If you had it any broader, you'd have to get white ink to write with!

Mrs. Hunter. *[Sweetly.]* Don't be impertinent, darling!

*[Reading another letter.]*

*[Enter Miss Ruth Hunter. She is an unmarried woman between thirty and forty years of age, handsome, distinguished; an aristocrat, without any*

*pretensions; simple, unaffected, and direct in her effort to do kindnesses where they are not absolutely undeserved. She enters the room as if she carried with her an atmosphere of pure ozone. This affects all those in it. She is dressed in deep mourning and wears a thick chiffon veil, which she removes as she enters.*

Ruth. Oh! you're having tea!

*[Glad that they are.]*

Mrs. Hunter. *[Taking a second cup.]* I thought the children ought to.

Ruth. Of course they ought and so ought you, if you haven't.

Mrs. Hunter. Oh, I've trifled with something.

Jessica. Sit here, Aunt Ruth.

Blanche. Will you have a cup, Aunt Ruth?

Ruth. Yes, dear, I'm feeling *very* hungry.

*[Sitting on the sofa beside Jessica and pressing her hand as she does so.]*

Mrs. Hunter. Hungry! *How can you!*

Ruth. Because I'm not a hypocrite!

Mrs. Hunter. *[Whimpering.]* I suppose that's a slur at me!

Ruth. If the slipper fits! But I confess I haven't eaten much for several days; I couldn't touch anything this morning, and I begin to feel exhausted; I must have food and, thank Heaven, I want it. Thank you.

*[To Blanche, taking the cup from her.]*

Mrs. Hunter. I think it's awful, Ruth, and I feel I have a right to say it—I think you owed it to my feelings to have worn a long veil; people will think you didn't love your brother.

Ruth. *[Dryly.]* Will they? Let them! You know as well as I do that George loathed the very idea of crêpe and all display of mourning.

Mrs. Hunter. *[Feeling out of her element, changes the subject.]* You stayed behind?

Ruth. Yes. I wanted to be the last there. *[Her voice chokes; she tries to control herself.]* Ah! you see my nerves are all gone to pieces. I won't cry any more!

Mrs. Hunter. I don't see how you could bear it—staying; but you never had any heart, Ruth.

Ruth. [*Mechanically, biting her lips hard to keep the tears back.*] Haven't I?

Mrs. Hunter. My darling husband always felt that defect in you.

Ruth. George?

Mrs. Hunter. He resented your treatment of me, and often said so.

Ruth. [*Very quietly, but with determination.*] Please be careful. Don't talk to me like this about my brother, Florence—or you'll make me say something I shall be sorry for.

Mrs. Hunter. I don't care! It wore on him, the way you treated me. I put up with it for his sake, but it helped undermine his health.

Ruth. Florence, stop!

Mrs. Hunter. [*In foolish anger, the resentment of years bursting out.*] I won't stop! I'm alone now, and the least you can do is to see that people who've fought shy of me take me up and give me my due. You've been a cruel, selfish sister-in-law, and your own brother saw and hated you for it!

Blanche. *Mother!*

Ruth. [*Outraged.*] Send your daughters out of the room; I wish to answer you alone.

Mrs. Hunter. [*Frightened.*] No! what you have to say to me I prefer my children to hear!

[*Clara comes over to her mother and puts her arm about her.*

Ruth. I can't remain quiet any longer. George—[*She almost breaks down, but she controls herself.*] This funeral is enough, with its show and worldliness! I don't believe there was a soul in the church you didn't see! Look at your handkerchief! Real grief isn't measured by the width of a black border. I'm ashamed of you, Florence! I never liked you very much, although I tried to for your husband's sake, but now I'm even more ashamed of you. My dear brother is gone, and there need be no further bond between us, but I want you to understand the true reason why, from to-day, I keep away from