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**THE NEW WOMAN IN
MOTHER GOOSE LAND**

**BY
EDYTH M. WORMWOOD**



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Eldridge Entertainment House
Franklin, Ohio

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ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE

Franklin, Ohio

The New Woman In Mother Goose Land

A Play For Children

By Edyth M. Wormwood.

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CHARACTERS.

Peter, the Pumpkin Eater.

Mrs. Peter—his wife.

Mr. Bachelor.

Mrs. Bachelor—his wife.

Mrs. Horner.

Jack
Tom
Rocakby Baby

} Her Children,

Mrs. Winkie.

Mary
Jack
Jill
Willie
Simon

} Her Children.

Mrs. Bunting.

Baby Bunting—her child.

16 Characters—7 male, 9 female.

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The New Woman in Mother Goose Land.

(SCENE—The living room of Peter, the Pumpkin Eater. The Pumpkin, which is just behind the scenes, is made of orange-colored crepe paper, on a frame of wood or wire. It should reach to Mrs. Peter's arm-pits.)

Mrs. Peter

Now Peter, I'm just running down to the club,
And must not a moment delay.
Friends coming this evening, the cook has just
left.
You'll have to get dinner to-day.

Peter

This sort of fool business has gone far enough.
You are clever, my dear, Amy Blanche,
But your place is at home, so I've rigged up a
scheme
To show you I'm boss of this ranch.

Mrs. Peter

You'll work some great wonders, I haven't a
doubt.
No mere, worthless *man* will cage me.
I'm in for the rights of my sex, and for votes.
I am and intend to be free.

Peter

That speech sounds quite well; but 'tis easy to
bluff,
As you very shortly shall see.
I'm a mere man, 'tis true; but, my dear Amy
Blanche,
You will surely be caged, and by me.

(*He steps out and returns, rolling the pumpkin shell.*)

Mrs. Peter

Now Peter, whatever have you got that for?

Peter

To keep you in, Amy, my dear,
When you're tempted to roam. It will hold you
quite well.
So, Amy, just step over here.

Mrs. Peter

I'm not going into that horrible thing.

Peter

I think it quite pretty and neat.
You'll find it quite cozy and comfy in there,
For I've rigged you a bird of a seat.
Come, get in and try it.

Mrs. Peter

I shan't, Mr. P.

Peter (Advancing toward her. She backs away.)

I shall put you in, then, Mrs. P.

Mrs. Peter (As he begins to carry her.)

You let me alone! I'll get in if I must,
But you're mean as you ever can be!

(She climbs in by the help of a chair.)

Peter

Now, Amy, whenever you get on a hunch
All over creation to roam,
I shall pop you right into this pumkin-shell fine,
And keep you quite safely at home. (*peeps over*)
Now don't sulk, my dear, you are all right you
know.

I think my plan really will do.
Perhaps, though, you'd like to have something to
read

I'll drop in a paper or two,

(He dumps in a few magazines. Doorbell rings. He admits Bachelor.)

Bachelor

When I was a bachelor, I lived by myself,
And kept all my mending done fine.

I thought if I married, 'twould be wifey's job,
But look at these trousers of mine.

(Holds up trousers, showing large holes in seat and knee.)

Wifey's off to the Club, and to Charity Fairs;
She's simply determined to vote.
She has no time to spend with her husband at
home,

Or to mend up his trousers and coat.
So I plainly perceive I must mend them myself,
It's a job that I just hate to do,
So I thought my repair kit I'd bring over here,
And chew on the subject with you.

(He pulls patches needle and thread out of his pocket, sits down and begins to mend.)

Peter

My wife's just the same; but I've put up a kick
And showed I'd a will of my own.
I've put her in jail in that great pumpkin shell,
She's sulking it out there alone.

(sings)

Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater,
Had a wife and couldn't keep her;
Put her in a pumpkin shell,
And there he kept her very well.

(Both laugh. Peter begins to peel potatoes, Back to mend. Enter Jack and Jill very noisily. They are very ragged and dirty.)

Jack

Hello, Mr. Peter. We're hungry as bears,
Oh, do give us something to eat!

Jill

Some pie and some cake and some raspberry jam,

Jack

And a sandwich of raised bread and meat.

Peter

I won't feed such dirty small gluttons as you.
Go home, kids, and make yourselves neat;
Tell your mother you need some whole clothes to
 put on
And ask her for something to eat.

Jack

Say, what are you givin' us? Ma ain't to home,
She leads the club meeting today.

Jill

She was writing her paper and so couldn't cook.
We're starving, Pete, just as we say.

Bachelor

Poor kiddies! I know how to pity you now.

Peter

If that's the case, I won't be mean;
But while I am getting your luncheon, you kids
Must go in and make yourselves clean.

(He points to door. They go out at it, and he begins to cut bread. Presently they begin to quarrel. Their voices are plainly heard.)

Jill

Now Jack, you're a nasty mean boy! I'm all wet.

Jack

It's nothing to me if you are.

Jill

You jerked the old basin, you horrible hog.
You just wait! Tonight I'll tell Ma.

Jack

I didn't.

Jill

You did.

Jack

Now, Sis, you dry up.
Or I'll empty the rest on you, too.

Jill

Not much, sir, you won't. I'm the quickest, you see.

Now does that feel real nice to you?

(Jill rushes out, Jack after her. Jill's apron is wet, so are Jack's head and waist. Jill dodges behind Bachelor.)

Jill

Don't you wish you could catch me?

Jack (diving after her)

I can, and I will.

Peter (holding out plate of sandwiches)

Quite fighting, you terrors, and eat.

Jill

I'd rather have cake.

Peter

Well, I guess you won't starve

On good, wholesome bread and cold meat.

(Children begin to eat, greedily. Enter Contrary Mary.)

Mary

Look here, you young scamps, where is that pail of water

I sent you for so long ago?

I've something to do besides chase you around,

As you very shortly shall know.

Jack

Oh, cut it out now, Sis, and join in the strike, 'Gainst Suffragettes and Women's clubs.

If the men can rebel, why, the children can, too, And show there is some fight in cubs.

Mary

You're a slangy boy, Jack, but I think I will strike;

I'll be really contrary, and shirk.
Why should Mother go, all dressed up, to the
Club,
And leave me to do all the work?

(She seats herself, and begins to help Peter peel potatoes.)

Simple Simon (voice off stage, drawling whine)

Now, Willie, you stop! I hain't tetchin' o' you.
(fall heard)
There! You tripped me, and jest made me fell.
I guess my arm's bruk, an' I've cracked all my
ribs.
When Ma gits hum, I am sure goin' to tell.

Willie Winkie (voice off stage)

Pooh! Who cares for Ma? She'll be talking of
votes,
And coaxing Pa's money for clothes.
No use to tell Mary. She'll be fixing her hair,
And thinking of parties and beaux.

(Simon and Willie enter)

Mary

Is that so, Master Willie? Well, I guess not much!
The parties are all well enough,
But for beaux I've no use. Why, I just detest
boys,
So please don't talk such foolish stuff.
It's really too bad, Si, for Will to act so,
And tonight you had better tell Pa.
He'll trim Willie Winkie all up in good shape.
He's not quite so busy as Ma.

Willie

I'll run off and hide until Pa's gone to bed—
He's sure to go early to sleep—
Then I'll come from my hiding place, still as a
mouse,
And softly to bed I will creep.

Simon

Mr. Peter, them sandwiches look dretful good.
I likes bread and meat pow'ful well.
Say, give us one, Jill. I just bet they are good.
I'd like to chew on 'em a spell.

Peter

Chew away to your heart's content, Simple Si.

Willie Winkie (*grabbing Simon's sandwich*)

Hold on! Guess I'll have that one, Si.

Simon (*whining*)

Mr. Peter, Will snuck my good sandwich away.
Can I have some more, and some pie?

Peter

I haven't the pie, but you can have some more
Of the bread and butter and meat.
Now Willie, don't steal from your brother again,
But ask me for something to eat.

Willie (*touching Jack's shoulder*)

Tag! You can't catch me, I know, Master Jack.

Jack (*starting after him*)

I can't? Well, quite soon you shall see.

*They race noisily around, tipping over the chairs.
Peter catches Willie and shakes him.)*

Peter

Now, either get out, or sit down in your chairs
And be good, as small boys ought to be.

*(Child is heard crying. Mrs. Peter pops up head,
and looks anxiously around. Rockaby Baby runs in,
followed by Jack Horner.)*

Rockaby Baby

I wants my own Mamma to rock me to sleep.
I feels like there's sand in my eye;
And Jacky is horrid and bad as can be.
I guess I shall just has to ky.

(She does so, loudly.)

Peter

Where is *your* mother gone, Jacky, my boy?

Jack Horner

To Suffragette Meeting't Duck's Bend.
She went on the first trolley out this A. M.,
And left me this young one to tend.

Mrs Peter

Peter! Help me right out of this thing, right
away!

That baby's as tired as can be.
Let me rock her to sleep, do, the poor little thing!
I'll stay at home now. I agree.

*(Peter helps her out, and she seats herself in rocker,
and croons Rockaby Baby to sleep.)*

Jack Horner

I say, Mr. Peter, can I have that shell
You took your wife out of just then?
I'd like it to dump that kid into next time
That ma leaves me to tend her again.

*(Mrs. Peter carries baby from room and returns
without her.)*

Peter

Your Pa'd better have one to put your Ma in
Whenever she's tempted to stray.
If he kept one on hand, all ready for use,
He could choose whether she'd go or stay.

Jack Horner

More likely she'd put him in. Pa is hen-pecked,
And scared of my Ma as can be.
Just wait till I grow up! No woman, you bet,
Will get any chance to boss me.

Baby Bunting (running in)

I'se tired, and hungry, and dirty, and cold,
And I is just deffully c'oss.

Mamma's went to the Club, and my Daddy's
went hunting.

I guess dat they bofe must be loss.

Mrs Peter

Your Mamma'll be home pretty soon now, my pet,
Come here, now, and bylow with me.

Your mamma'll come home safe, and Daddy will
too,

And bring you a rabbit. You'll see!

(Baby B goes to her. She takes her up, and rocks her. Enter Tom, the Piper's son, playing a harmonica. All begin to dance but Mrs. P., who rocks the baby in time to the music. Tom plays faster and faster, till all are prancing, and gasping for breath. Bachelor succeeds in catching Tom. and taking harmonica away, when all sink down to rest.)

Bachelor

See here, my young Thomas. That's really
enough.

How long do you think we can dance?

That's the worst of your playing, that every one
round,

Is always compelled to just prance.

Tom

'Tis great fun, I tell you! Good exercise, too,

'Twill keep you from getting too fat.

You're really too short to take on much more
flesh,

Now really, you can't dispute that.

*(Enter Mrs. Horner, Mrs. Bunting, Mrs. Winkie,
Mrs. Bachelor, all at once.)*

Mrs Winkie

Why children! I left you at home. Don't you
know

I expected to find you right there?

(to Peter and wife)

Now! really, I'm sorry you've had them to tend.
Si's eating, I really declare!

Mrs Horner

Now where is the baby, Jacky and Tom?
You had her when I went away.
You tend her while I am in sight, and that's all!
Has she had any dinner today?

Mrs Peter

She's in the back room, fast asleep on my couch,
And here's Baby Bunting, you see.
Her daddy went hunting, and left her alone,
And so she came over to me.

Mrs Bunting

But I thought you were going to Club meeting,
too.

Mrs Peter

Oh, I was detained till too late!

Peter

Yes, you were detained—there's no doubt of
that, dear,
But how, you've forgotten to state.

Mrs Horner

We missed you at Club meeting, Amy, my
dear,
Though I was quite sure you'd be there.
You were not forgotten, though. This coming
year
You'll sit in the President's chair.

Peter

No, I don't think she will. She has given up the
club.
Today has decided her quite.

Mrs. Peter

Oh, has it, indeed? For *today*, sir I said.
Mr. Bachelor, am I not right?

Mr Bachelor

Don't refer it to me. I don't know, I am sure.
And I never would dare interfere
'Twixt a man and his wife.

Mrs. Bachelor

I should think not, indeed!
They would soon teach you better, my dear.

Peter

Well, ladies, I'd just have you every one know
That I am the boss of this ranch,
And my wife stayed at home just because I said
so.

Now isn't that so, Amy Blanche?

(While Peter talks, his wife winks at the other ladies, and looks quizzically at Peter, but she answers meekly.)

Mrs Peter

Why, Peter, I really suppose that it is.

Peter

And you promised—

Mrs Peter (interrupting)

To stay home *today*.

Peter

And you did.

Mrs Peter

Why, of course. It was too late to go.
I suppose you must have your own way.

Peter

In this case, I must. You will give up the club.
Today has disgusted me, quite.

(to the others)

We will care for your children at ten cents an
hour,
While you are away, day or night.

Mrs Horner

That means that *Amy* will. What could you do
With a whole lot of boys like my Jack?
Or a baby that cried?

Mrs Bunting

Yes, what would he, indeed?

Bachelor

I'll tell you, I'd skin the whole pack!

Peter

The kids will be cared for, ma'am, never you fear.
For *my* wife will remain in her home,
And obey, as she should, too, from this day hence-
forth.

No more I'll allow her to roam.

(While he talks, Mrs. Peter winks and gesticulates to the other ladies, who reply with sly nods. Mrs. P. answers Peter as if convinced by his talk.)

Mrs Peter

I suppose you are right, dear; and if I must stay,
I'll take care of the children—and yet—
How about the pay for it—the ten cents an hour?

Peter

It will go in my pocket, you bet!

Mrs Peter

But can't I have half?

Peter

No indeed, Amy Blanche. You have no need of
money. You see,
I pay all your bills.

Mrs Winkie

Precious small ones they are!

Peter

And that money will stay right by me.

Mrs Bachelor

Would you take mending, too? I can never find
time

To keep Hubby's clothes in repair.

The holes that man gets in his trousers and socks
Would fill any heart with despair.

I don't like to make the man mend for himself,

For he seems to think that it's real mean;

But to hire it done while I have a good time,

Would make me as glad as a queen.

Peter

Yes, we'll take in the mending as well as the kids;
But, to give you a piece of my mind,
Your place is at home with your mending and
babes,
As sooner or later you'll find.

Baby Bunting

Daddy left me alone!

Mrs Bunting

What a naughty old dad!
Well, when he gets back, he'll just find
When he's left with the baby to tend, he must
stay.
Won't I give him a piece of my mind!

Bachelor

What is it that ails all the women, these days?
You'd think they had all gone quite wild.
They want half your money, they're all bound to
vote,
And they care not for husband or child!

Peter

You must set your foot down, friend, and set it
down hard (*illustrates*)
That's what I have done; and you'll see
That my wife will no more be seen gadding
round.
She will stay at home, meekly, with me.

(*This seems to amuse Mrs. P. but she says nothing*)

Mrs Horner

But you men have your clubs, where you gossip
and smoke,
And play poker, and drink, so I've heard.

Bachelor

(*looking at his wife, nervously, but speaking to Mrs.
Horner*)

That is slander, vile slander, ma'am. (*to his wife*)
Really, my dear,
'Tis not true, I will pledge you my word.

Mrs Winkie

Well, our club is for culture, and all higher things,
Then think of our charity work!

Peter

And think of your children, neglected at home.
Don't you think your chief duty you shirk?

Mrs Horner (rising)

I am sorry to see you submit, Amy dear,
To be bossed round and down-trodden so,
But don't let a word of this matter get out,
Or it might deal our cause a great blow.

(She passes into next room, comes out with her baby, who is half awake and fussing. She passes out, with a disgusted look at Mrs. Peter)

Mrs Winkie

Mary should have looked after my children; but
then
She is always contrary, you know!
I'll send them to you when the cause needs my
time.
Come, children, it's quite time to go.

(Gathers her children and passes out, with an indignant glance at Peter)

Mrs Bunting

Come, baby. We'll go home and scold naughty
Dad
For leaving the baby alone.

Peter

Mrs. Bunting, 'tis you who should tend to that
child.
Now surely, that fact you will own.

Mrs Bunting

When we've once got the vote, we will all have
more time
To stay in our homes; so, you see,
The quicker we get it, the better for you.
To that you must surely agree.

Peter

No, never. A woman was made to keep house.
She never was fitted to rule.
She can tend to the children, can sew, mend and
cook,
Or, if not wed, why, she can teach school.

Mrs Bunting

If not fitted to rule, why then trust your dear
children to us, sir?

Peter

Why, madam, you see,
'Tis your duty to tend them, your privilege, too.
You'd better be guided by me.

Mrs Bunting (rising)

When I learn my duty, 'twill not be from a man.

Mrs Peter

Don't quarrel. Just leave baby here
When you want to go out. If I am at home,
I'll keep her with pleasure, the dear!

(Sundry looks and nods pass between the two women, then Mrs. B. turns her back on the men, and speaks to the women)

Mrs Bunting

Goodby, Mrs. B. Mrs. Peter, I hope
That you will not desert our great cause.

Mrs Bachelor

Oh, the men will stay home and try housework
a while,
When we women are making the laws.

(Mrs. Bunting passes out, her baby in her arms)

Mrs Bachelor (rising)

Come, Hubby, 'tis time we were getting home,
too.

Peter

Oh, stay here with us, and take tea.
I have done all the cooking today, and you'll see
What housekeepers menfolks can be.

Mrs Bachelor

I thank you, but really, we'll have to get home.
I must do up my work while 'tis light,
Hubby always upsets the whole house when I'm
gone,
And we've company coming tonight.

Bachelor

Will you lend me your cure, Peter, just for awhile?
You really do not need it now.

Mrs Bachelor

Cure for what? Are you ill, dear?

Bachelor

No, wifey, you are;
But I'll cure you, for I know just how.

Peter

Yes, I'll lend it with pleasure. It's great, I must
say.
It did it's work quite quickly here.
I'll send it tomorrow.

Mrs Bachelor

I don't understand.

Bachelor

Well, tomorrow you will, never fear.

(During the last ten lines or so, Mrs. P. laughs quietly to herself, nods knowingly to Mrs. B. and places finger on lips)

(Mr. and Mrs. Bachelor pass out. Peter sings boastfully)

Peter

Peter, Peter, Pumpkin eater,
Had a wife and couldn't keep her.

Put her in a pumpkin shell,
And there he kept her very well.

(Passes out. Just as the curtain falls, Mrs. Peter says)

Ah, but did he?

CURTAIN.

SCENE II.

(Bachelor's house. Mrs. Bachelor and Mrs. Peter sewing. Bachelor in pumpkin, looking over edge)

Bachelor

Now, my dear, this is foolish, you know very well.

You can't keep me here in this old pumpkin shell.

Mrs Bachelor

Yet you thought to keep me there, my dear Mr. B. The shoe's on the other foot now, as you see.

Bachelor

But I'd be so ashamed, dear, if Peter came in! Let me out, now, my love. Don't sit there and grin!

Mrs Bachelor

There's somebody coming. It's Peter, I see. We'll put him in there, too, between you and me.
(winks at Mrs. Peter)

Peter (entering)

(Bachelor dodges out of sight)

Well, how did it work?

Mrs Bachelor

Well, sir, it worked fine!
It's a capital place for that husband of mine.

Peter

For your husband! Why, madam, I meant it for you.

Mrs Bachelor

I know, but for that trick I knew one worth two.

Peter (advancing to pumpkin)

Stand up, friend. Where are you? I'll soon help you out.

(Women grab him by the legs, and tip him in)

Mrs Bachelor

Ha, ha! One more enemy we've put to route!

Peter

I'll climb out! Do you think, ma'am, you can keep me in?

Mrs Bachelor

Then your knuckles I'll rap with this big rolling pin.

(She does so. Peter howls)

Peter

But my dear—

Mrs Peter

No use darling. 'Twas so yesterday
You served me. It's our turn now. We'll have
our say.

You're to grant we are equals, the women and
men,

You're to give us the vote, or you stay in that
pen.

You're to give us some money to use as we please.
We don't like for every penny to tease.

Peter

But then you'll all do as you did yesterday.

Leave your homes and your children to us, every
day.

Mrs. Bachelor

No, you'll find, if you give us the vote, as you
should,

That every woman will quickly make good.

There'll be no need of working for these things,
you see.
When once they are ours, as you'll surely agree.
Our homes and our children with pride we will
tend,
And protect them, as well. Come, agree now,
my friend.
Or some time you will spend in that old pumpkin
shell.
Own up that we're right, sir. You know it quite
well.

Peter

I had no idea that my wife would join in
With such terrible doings. Don't sit there and
grin.
It is very provoking of you, Amy Blanche!
I want to get out!

Mrs Peter

Well, we gave you a chance.

Peter

I wouldn't have thought—

Mrs Peter

Then you've learned something. See?

Peter

Well, really now, upon my life,
I would never have known you for my gentle
spouse—
I believe I have got a new wife.

Mrs Peter

You certainly have. I'll stand up for my rights.
In that shell you must stay, sir, till you
Agree that we're equals and give us the vote,
That is surely the best way to do.

Peter

I agree.

Bachelor

So do I. Let us out now, my dear.

Mrs Bachelor.

Are you sure that you quite understand?

Peter

Yes, we'll be co-workers the women and men,
For the best in all ways for our land.

Mrs Bachelor

You'll never be sorry. (*to audience*) Now, ladies,
our play
We hope that you all understand.
If you wish for the vote, why, just get it, my
friends,
As we do here in Mother Goose land.

(*The ladies sing, as the men climb out.*)

Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater,
Had a wife and couldn't keep her.
Put her in a pumpkin shell,
And then she put him in as well.

Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater,
Had another, didn't love her,
Peter learned to read and spell,
And then he loved her very well.

Men

Hurrah for the women! They beat, every time!
Just give 'em the vote, not to do it's a crime.
Then you'll all get some peace, and, as we under-
stand,
Find everything fine as in Mother Goose Land.

CURTAIN.

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Franklin, Ohio

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SEVEN MALES AND THREE FEMALES

THIS play was produced professionally for several seasons under another title, and is now released for amateur production without royalty and without restrictions of any kind. The scenery and costumes are simple. Time, about two hours. A young society girl plays an important part in overthrowing a corrupt political boss and brings about the election of her fiance. The race for the hand of a wealthy widow by rival suitors furnishes the comedy. A pretty story is unfolded, but without actual love-making or any scenes objectionable to the amateur. Recommended for high schools and dramatic clubs.

 The garden party in the second act affords opportunity for the introduction of any number of characters.

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