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# POT LUCK



GERTRUDE ROBINS

*Sixpence.*

AMATEUR FEE, HALF A GUINEA EACH REPRESENTATION.



POT-LUCK

# Concerning "POT-LUCK"

A Farcial Fact in ONE ACT by

GERTRUDE ROBINS

Produced by the Buckinghamshire Players at NAPHILL

1910

Under the patronage of

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"A delicious sample of Buckinghamshire language—sparkingly spontaneous. The charm of it all lay in its novelty."—*L. Godfrey Turner in Vanity Fair*.

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By

GERTRUDE ROBINS

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DRAM. PERS.

WILLIAM JENKINS . *Burly Chairmaker and Poacher, aged 50.*  
ALICE JENKINS . *His wife, aged 35, fair, florid and cheerful.*  
SERGEANT BRISTOW . . . . . } *Typical Rural Police.*  
P.C. BIRCH . . . . . }





## POT-LUCK

SCENE.—*The Buckinghamshire Village of Naphill.*

TIME.—*The Present.*

*The Jenkins' kitchen. Stove in open fireplace back of stage. Door to scullery L. Window back R. Door to bedroom up R. Chest of drawers down R. Cupboard up L. Table C. Usual details of old-fashioned cottage interior. A few chair-backs in fireplace corner.*

MRS. JENKINS *discovered by fire R. making pillow-lace. She wears a large white apron and her hair in curlers. Door opens and JENKINS puts his head round cautiously.*

JENKINS (*hoarsely*). Sst! Sst!! Be you alone, Allus? Eh? Nobody there?

MRS. JENKINS. No, it's all roight. What's the matter?

JENKINS (*entering*). I gotter foine brace o' burds. Oncommon foine they be. Jest you look 'ere. Wait till I show ye. (*Holds up a sack from which he cautiously extricates a brace of pheasants.*) Look, 'ere they be. They be all roight, I tal ye.

MRS. JENKINS. My word, William, ain't they foine! Wherever did you get they from?

JENKINS. Down the larch wood, back o' our field. They was both up a tree together, settin' on the same branch. And they was so faat, they didn't make no attempt fer ter floi. They jest rolled off as though they be droonk when I took a shot at 'em.

MRS. JENKINS. Oh, Will, you did orter to be more keeful! Why, they'd be 'earing yer gun up at the farm.

JENKINS. Oo! Goo long with ye, me gal! That be orl roight. Whoi, theer wer a whole lot o' jantlemen from London a-shootin' in the copse t'other soide of the presarve, and nobody couldn't tal which be moi gun shot and which be their'n.

MRS. JENKINS. I 'ope nobody see'd ye bringing on 'em 'ome loike that.

JENKINS. Corse not. The chaps be all at work. No one didn't see me, I promise you. 'Sides, if they did, what's the odds? 'Ow weer they to know what I got in me bag. Whoi, I might 'a bin bringing 'ome some toppings for the pig.

MRS. JENKINS. You makes me that narvous, I dursen't 'ardly look the pleeceman in the face.

JENKINS. You 'aven't got no call for to neither. What next!

MRS. JENKINS. Oh, leave off with ye! What be ye goin' to do with they burds?

JENKINS. Oh, I'll take 'em down town to-morrow. Bailey, 'e can do with 'em, I make no doubt.

MRS. JENKINS. I do 'ope you won't be 'eld up on the road.

JENKINS. An' wot's the odds if I be?

MRS. JENKINS. Oh, 'ow can you say that? You don't want ter be foined—ter 'ave ter pay no ten pounds, loike Stevens did.

JENKINS. Oh, Stevens! 'E's a silly 'ole beggar, that's what he be. Whoi, do you know what oi'd do if they was to stop me on the road? Oi'd just tiggie Kittie with the end of me whip, jest one little touch, ever so loight, and she'd go ahead loike steam, and Oi'd loike to see the bloke as 'ud catch up with 'er.

MRS. JENKINS. Oh la! What a one you be, to be sure. Well, Oi must be gettin' me dinner on.

JENKINS. Good-noight! What, aren't ye got the dinner on yet? And Oi be that 'ungry, I tal ye.

MRS. JENKINS. Oh, well, it won't be long a-cookin'. Not above 'alf 'our. (*Gets up to put away her pillow. Glances out of window and shrieks.*)

JENKINS. 'Ullo! What's oop?

MRS. JENKINS. The Sergeant, William; it's the Sergeant and the Policeman with 'im comin' up towards our gate. Whatever be we goin' to do?

JENKINS. Good-noight! (*Looking over her shoulder.*) So they be! Oh dear, oh lor! Where can we 'ide they burds? (*Snatches birds and moves toward cupboard.*)

MRS. JENKINS. Not in the cupboard.

JENKINS. No. They'll goo there first of all.

MRS. JENKINS (*seizing birds*). Shall us put un in the bed, under the pillers?

JENKINS. No. That's a silly idea. (*Taking birds.*) 'Ave Oi toime to get into the shed?

MRS. JENKINS. They'd see ye cross the yard.

JENKINS (*scratching his head*). Well, they'll fair cop me now, I make no doubt. If I was only ter get out o' this, I'd never goo for another burd, that I wouldn't. I fair 'ates the soight on 'em. (*Flings birds from him on to table.*) 'Ere, if I put un in the sack, couldn't you sit on 'em, and 'ide 'em that way?

MRS. JENKINS. Don't be ser stoopid! Now listen! If Oi get ye out of this you won't do no more poaching?

JENKINS. No.

MRS. JENKINS. Promise?

JENKINS. Roight. But what be yer goin' ter do?

MRS. JENKINS. Never you moind. (*Glancing at window.*) Oh, dear! They be up the path now. 'Ere! Let's 'ave 'em. (*Snatches birds and sack.*) You be gettin' on with yer work.

(*Exits into scullery. Left alone, JENKINS puts on apron, sits by fire, takes glasspaper from shelf, chair backs from floor, and begins polishing. Loud knock heard off at outer door. MRS. JENKINS heard talking to men. She ushers them in from scullery to kitchen.*)

MRS. JENKINS (*entering, followed by SERGEANT BRISTOW and P.C. BIRCH*). 'Ere, William, the Sergeant ter see you. (*Poking fire.*)

JENKINS (*without looking up*). Oh!

SERGEANT (*to MRS. JENKINS, who is about to leave kitchen*). You stay 'ere, please.

MRS. JENKINS. I suppose I can get me saucepans on the foire, can't Oi? Oi'm all behind with dinner as it is.

SERGEANT. Birch, keep an eye on her.

(*BIRCH salutes and stands at doorway. SERGEANT BRISTOW takes out notebook and makes entries. MRS. JENKINS reappears from scullery with saucepan, which she places on stove and returns to scullery. BIRCH moves after her.*)

MRS. JENKINS (*off*). 'Ere, Mister, you moight jest cop 'old this one, whoile Oi takes the kettle.

(*Enter MRS. JENKINS with kettle, followed by BIRCH staggering under weight of big saucepan which he nearly puts on table.*)

MRS. JENKINS. Oh! Not on the table, silly! 'Ere. Roight on the foire. That's it. Thank you.

SERGEANT (*from notebook*). Now then, Jenkins. From certain information received, half an hour ago you were seen coming up the larch wood carrying fire-arms and a brace of pheasants which you were putting into a sack.

MRS. JENKINS. Well I never!

JENKINS. Oh, wor Oi!

SERGEANT. Now, it's my duty to warn you that anything you say now may be used against you. At 11.45 you were seen——

JENKINS (*to himself*). Wonder 'oo it was. I didn't see nobody.

SERGEANT. That's not your business. The witness is prepared to swear.

JENKINS. I don't 'old with swearing, I don't.

SERGEANT. Now then, we've had you under suspicion for months.

JENKINS. O pray! Oi be sorry to 'ave taken oop such a lot o' your toime.

SERGEANT. No nonsense, now, I've got a search warrant. (*Producing it.*)

JENKINS. Oo, 'ave yer?

MRS. JENKINS (*attempts to take warrant*). Let's 'ave a look.

SERGEANT (*motions her aside and reads*):—"To each and all of the Constables of Naphill. Information on Oath has this day been laid before me. That the following goods, to wit, Pheasants, have lately been feloniously stolen, taken, and carried away out of the preserves, and that the informer hath probable cause to suspect, and doth suspect, that the said goods, or some part thereof, are concealed in the house of William Jenkins. You are hereby authorized and commanded, with proper assistance (*nodding towards P.C. BIRCH*), to enter the said house of the said William Jenkins in the Daytime——"

JENKINS. Good-noight!

SERGEANT. "—and there diligently search for the said goods, and if the same be found upon such search, that you bring the goods so found, and also the Body of the said William Jenkins, before the Court."

MRS. JENKINS (*alarmed*). The body. Wot's 'e mean, Will?

JENKINS. Oh, I suppose they be goin' to 'ang me now.

SERGEANT. Now then! Where are those pheasants?

JENKINS. Oh, they pheasants!

SERGEANT. Yes, "they pheasants." Where are they?

JENKINS (*scratching his head*). I wunner what in the nation Oi done with 'em.

SERGEANT. We shan't leave you wondering very long.

JENKINS. Oh! you won't leave me wunnering very long, won't you? Oi'm glad o' that, because oncertainty always upsets me.

SERGEANT. It will be better for you to tell at once where to find those birds.

JENKINS. Wal, ter tal ye the truth, if you was ter give me the price o' three 'alf pints o' beer, I couldn't tal ye, so there!

SERGEANT. All right, my man. (*To BIRCH.*) Stay here and keep them both under observation, whilst I make a search.

MRS. JENKINS. Oi could make a few observations! But there, Oi'd best get on with me work. (*Resumes lace-making.*)

BIRCH (*saluting*). Very good, sir.

SERGEANT. Now, for the last time, Jenkins, are you going to tell me where those birds are, or must I look for them?

JENKINS. Just as you chuse.

SERGEANT. Very well. I suppose this is the bedroom?

MRS. JENKINS. I'm afraid you won't foind it very toidy, sir. I always does it of an afternoon.

(*SERGEANT goes into bedroom.*)

JENKINS. What a froightful worrit 'e be!

BIRCH. Why don't you tell where they are, and save trouble?

JENKINS. Cos I dunno, that's why.

MRS. JENKINS. Really, Mister, you did oughter take my 'usband's word for it. 'E ain't one to tell lies, William ain't. 'E don't know anything about they burds, I'll lay 'e don't.

BIRCH. Well, we gotter do our dooty.

JENKINS. Rummy sort o' duty. marchin' into a party's bedroom oninvoited.

BIRCH. Well, I can tell you, the Sergeant ain't one to stand any nonsense, so you'd best be careful.

JENKINS. Oh! And why, pray?



BIRCH. Because his evidence will make a lot of difference to you, one way or the other.

JENKINS. Oh, yes.

MRS. JENKINS. 'Ow?

BIRCH. Why, at the Assizes, Aylesbury, next month.

MRS. JENKINS. 'Ere, 'arf a minute, Mister, give us a chance!

BIRCH. Like as not you'll get fined ten pound or three months 'ard. They're very sharp there.

JENKINS. Yus, I know; they're all jantlemen on the bench. With 'undreds of acres, every one on 'em, just for their own amusement.

BIRCH. And what if they have? You ain't got no right for to steal their pheasants.

JENKINS. Pheasants! Pheasants! Whoi I 'ates the soight on 'em.

BIRCH. They cost no end o' money.

JENKINS. I know what they costs. Ten shilling a piece be the toime they paid for the keeperin' and that, and any poor chap what picks up a burd or two that's met with an haccident, they charges 'im ten pound a brace, or three months. (*Noise of boxes, etc., thrown about in bedroom.*)

MRS. JENKINS. Oh dear, oh dear, jest 'ark at 'im. There won't be nothin' left in its place. I believe 'e's a-rummagin' through everything.

BIRCH. Can't be 'elped, marm. Dooty's dooty. (*More noise.*)

MRS. JENKINS. Oh, Oi can't stand this no longer. I must see what 'e be up to. (*Goes towards door as SERGEANT returns.*)

SERGEANT (*to BIRCH*). Theyre not in there. Now we must do this room. (*Looks under cushions on chair.*)

MRS. JENKINS (*who has been standing looking into bedroom horrified, screams, rushes into bedroom, and returns holding bedraggled hat, trimmed with pheasant feathers. Confronting SERGEANT*). Look what you

done with my 'at! My best Sunday 'at! Look at it! Wot yer mean by it? (*Re-arranging hat.*) I shan't be able to wear it to-noight at the chapel tea, I shan't! (*Half crying.*) Oh you, you——

SERGEANT. I can't help it. I thought it was one of the pheasants a-top of the cupboard.

MRS. JENKINS. Well, you don't know much then, if you don't know the difference between a pheasant and a 'at. Look at it, Will! And you should just see what a state the room be in too. Everything upside down.

JENKINS (*to SERGEANT*). Wot 'a ye been a-doin' in there?

SERGEANT. Executing my duty.

JENKINS. We be 'earing a lot about dooty this marning. I shall make it my dooty to show the Inspector that 'at, and claim for a new one. Then 'ow are we goin' along?

SERGEANT. Well, it's your own fault. You've only got yourself to blame. If you'd told me where the birds were, it would have saved my time and your wife's hat.

JENKINS. You call yourself a sergeant! Call yourself a sergeant!! And not know any better than fer to muddle up a woman's 'at and make 'ay of 'er things. I tal ye, next toime I goes to town, I shall goo straight to the station and report yer. You ain't got no business fer to go about in people's 'ouses a-spoilin' o' their clothes. And you can just pay for 'em too.

SERGEANT. Now then, I can't stay here all day. Come on, where are those pheasants?

JENKINS. I tole you afore, and I tals you agen, I don't know.

SERGEANT. All right. You'll be sorry for this, my man. (*To BIRCH*). Constable, you go all round the walls, look in the cupboard, and see if there are any loose boards on the floor. Oh, and don't forget to look up the chimney. I'll search these drawers.



BIRCH. Very good, sir. (*He looks in cupboard.*)

JENKINS. Whoi, you ain't looked atop o' that shelf. Fancy you overlookin' that!

SERGEANT. Examine it, constable.

BIRCH (*stands on tip-toe, and feeling along shelf, pulls it down with contents*). They're not there, sir.

SERGEANT. Then look somewhere till you find them.

JENKINS. Yes, Birch, you go on. Look somewhere till you foind 'em.

(*BIRCH taps round walls, then crawls on floor tapping with his truncheon for a loose board. SERGEANT throws out contents of drawers on floor.*)

JENKINS (*shouting loudly while police made noisy search*). Goo on, goo on do. I'll have a noice report to make the Inspector. (*SERGEANT knocks over vase.*) I'll have a tidy claim agin yer for damages. Goo on, don't you moind me, smash a few more things, anything you takes a fancy to. (*Pointing to flower-pot.*) Yew ain't looked in that flower-pot. That 'ud be a foine place to grow pheasants in. (*INSPECTOR picks up water-jug, and in doing so spills water.*) Why you bain't lookin' for goldfish, be you? I thought it was burds you was after.

SERGEANT (*to BIRCH, who is looking up chimney*). Anything to report, constable? (*BIRCH emerges with black face, and shakes his head in reply.*)

JENKINS (*laughing and slapping BIRCH on back*). Lor luv a duck! You do look a noice article to be sure! (*Roars with laughter.*) I say, you 'aven't looked in the shed. Whoi, Oi could 'ide twenty score o' burds in there, and you wouldn't foind one of 'em. You goo and 'ave a real good 'unt out there.

BIRCH (*to SERGEANT*). Shall I go, sir?

SERGEANT. Yes, make a thorough search, and report to me as soon as you can.

JENKINS (*to BIRCH busy putting back his truncheon*). That's roight. You make a thorough search, don't

you miss anything. Oh, and when you done the shed, go and 'ave a turn at the garden. You'll foind the fork outside. They burds moight 'a buried their-selves. I'd be glad for to 'ave it turned up. The land's very clungy after the rain. And heavy too.

(BIRCH *exits*. SERGEANT *tries to move heavy chest*.)

JENKINS. Oh, don't strain yerself, Sergeant! Shall Oi land ye a 'and?

SERGEANT. You shut up.

MRS. JENKINS. Oh, don't go fer to lose yer temper, pray, Mister Sergeant.

JENKINS. No. It's me what onghter lose me temper if it comes to that. But I ain't. I be jest amusing meself, and adding up me little bill for damages and moral injury.

SERGEANT. Moral injury! Pah!

JENKINS. Yes, that's wot Oi said. Moral injury! Look at moi woife. She ain't 'arf done frettin' over that 'at o' 'ers. I shan't 'ear the last of it for weeks!

SERGEANT (*referring again to notebook*). Ah! I haven't done the scullery yet.

JENKINS (*in stage whisper to MRS. JENKINS*). Oh la! (*Aloud*.) Oh, I shouldn't bother about the scullery, Sergeant. You can see there ain't nothing there. Besides, that's ser draughty!

SERGEANT. Ah! You don't want me to search there, then! I got you now.

JENKINS. Oh, it's all the same to me. Only we ain't got such a many vases and whatnots there. There ain't no 'ats there neither.

(SERGEANT *exits and heard off clattering pails, etc.*)

JENKINS (*in a whisper*). I say, 'e'll foind 'em now, won't e?

MRS. JENKINS. No. They're all roight.

JENKINS (*loudly to SERGEANT outside*). I say, Sergeant. There's our pig bucket just outside the door. It's been standing there since Midsummer, so it'll be

a bit 'oigh. Same as the gentry loikes their burds.

SERGEANT (*off*). Birch, get a stick, and see if there's anything in that pail.

BIRCH (*off*). Roight, sir. Phew! Oh lor, oh lor!

JENKINS. Oi thart 'e'd foind it a bit 'oigh! (SERGEANT *returns*.)

JENKINS. What, no luck! Arn't you found narthing?

SERGEANT. Birch!

BIRCH (*enters begrimed*). Yes, sir (*trying to get rid of dirt from clothes*.)

SERGEANT. Well? Don't stand rubbing yourself. Have you nothing to report?

BIRCH. No, sir. Not a feather.

SERGEANT. Sure? Certain? Positive?

BIRCH. Yes, sir. If I might be so bold, sir, I'm of opinion we've been misinformed this time, sir. Now I come to think of it—er——

SERGEANT. What?

BIRCH. When Stevens informed us——

JENKINS (*jumping up*). So it wor Stevens, wor it? Old Johnnie Stevens! The beggarin' ole rawscal! Oi'll inform 'im of something, that Oi will. So you'd rather take the word of an ole loier like 'im than me! And 'e's been 'ad up afore the bench and foined many a toime.

MRS. JENKINS. Ugly old villain! Why 'e's fair jallus o' Will, 'e is, 'cos Will can get along and earn an honest living with the chair-tops, and won't goo lung with 'im after burds o' noights.

JENKINS. You'd be spendin' yower toime to better account if you was to keep an oi on 'im instead o' comin' 'ere and a-turnin' moi 'ouse upside down. Oi'll goo and see Stevens directly Oi 'ad a bit o' dinner, that Oi will. Oi'll push 'is hugly old face in. Oi've owed 'im a 'idin' for a long toime.

SERGEANT. You'll do nothing of the sort, my man. We've had enough trouble with you already. I shall hold you responsible for any breach of the peace.

JENKINS. Oh, thank yew.

SERGEANT. If you'll take my advice, you'll let this be a warning to you. Ready, Birch.

JENKINS. Whoi, you ain't a-goin' just yet, are ye? What's yer 'urry? Stop an' 'ave a boite with us.

(To MRS. JENKINS.) What 'ave we got fer dinner, Allus? (MRS. JENKINS *shakes her head warningly at him.*) Eh?

MRS. JENKINS. Pot-luck!

JENKINS. That's all roight! You won't moind that, will ye, Sergeant?

SERGEANT. No, thanks. (To BIRCH.) Ready?

JENKINS. Oh, all roight then. *We can't afford to be so particular.* (SERGEANT and P.C. *go to door.*) Well, good marning to ye. Pleasant journey. Oi won't ferget my little bill for the Inspector.

(*Exeunt SERGEANT and P.C.*)

JENKINS (*with loud sigh of relief*). Thank goodness that's over.

MRS. JENKINS (*proceeds to lay table for dinner*). Yes.

JENKINS. But whatever did you do with 'un, Allus?

MRS. JENKINS. Never you moind.

JENKINS. Well, you fair bested me, that you 'ave. You bested me, and you bested Birch, and you bested the Sergeant, and you bested the 'ole lot on us proper. You be a rare clever woman, Allus, that you be.

MRS. JENKINS. Yes, and you very noigh upset the 'ole applectart, you did.

JENKINS. Me? 'Ow? When did Oi?

MRS. JENKINS. That don't matter now. Come to yer dinner. (*Glancing at disturbed furniture.*) Lor, what a job I'll 'ave to get straight after they men, it's as bad as a Spring clean.

JENKINS. That'll be all roight. I'll lend you a 'and.

MRS. JENKINS. But Oi don't moind, so long as you keep yer promise.

JENKINS (*scratching his head*). Ah!

MRS. JENKINS (*pointing at him*). Yes, William! You promised me that if I got you off, you wouldn't go after no burds again—never no more. Think, William, what it moight 'ave been, with you in prison for three months! Now, you bain't going back on your word, be you, Will?

JENKINS. No, me gal, Oi'll keep me promise fair, that Oi will.

MRS. JENKINS. Ah! You makes me feel 'appier than ever since the day I married you.

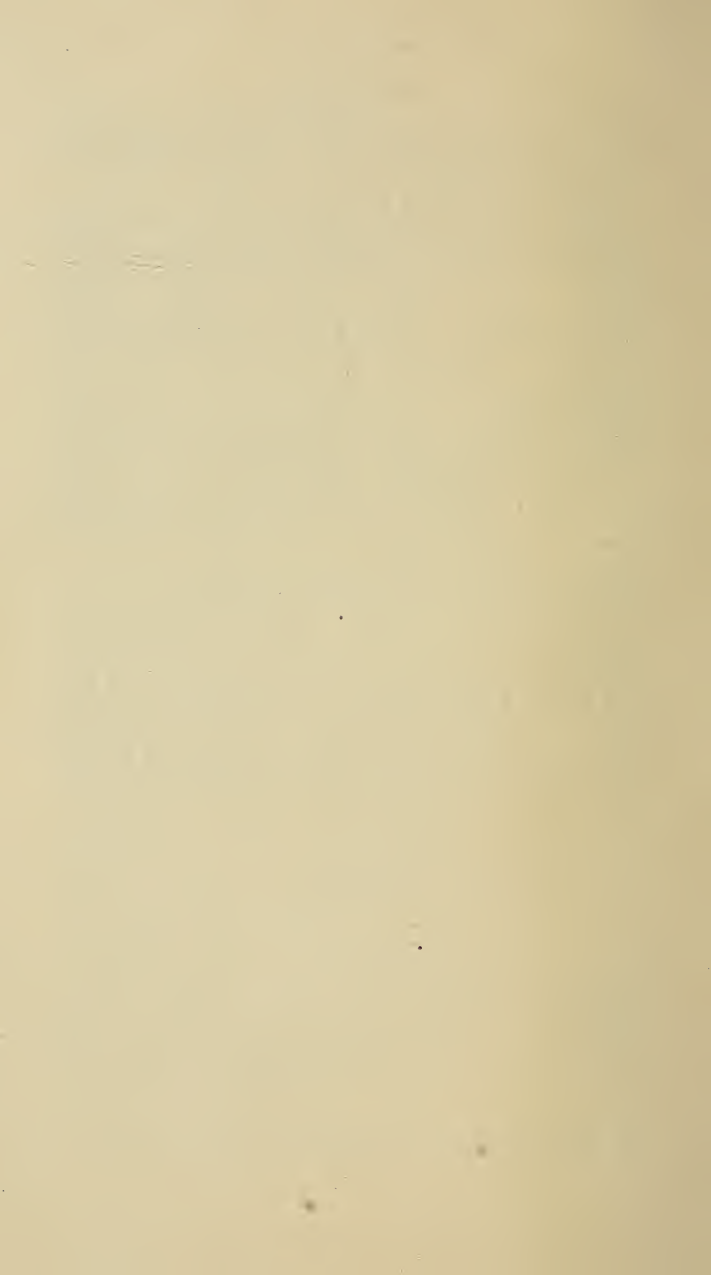
JENKINS. You be a funny ole wench, Allus! There now! (*Kisses her.*) (*Coaxingly*) Now tal me what you done wi' 'em.

MRS. JENKINS. You sit down to your dinner. (*Ladles potatoes out of saucepan on to plates.*)

JENKINS (*sitting at table*). Well, it beats me 'ow you done it.

MRS. JENKINS (*who has taken large dish and fork from dresser stands over stove. From big saucepan she takes two steaming pheasants, and turns round holding them up*). 'Ere you be, Will. You'll 'ave to spit out the feather. It was the best I could do—Pot Luck.

CURTAIN.



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