

# NEW PLAYS FROM OLD TALES

ARRANGED FOR

*BOYS AND GIRLS*

BY

HARRIET SABRA WRIGHT

ILLUSTRATED BY

LEON D'EMO

**New York**

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1921

*All rights reserved*

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

COPYRIGHT, 1921,  
BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

---

Set up and printed. Published November, 1921.

Press of  
J. J. Little & Ives Company  
New York, U. S. A.

## CONTENTS

|  | PAGE |
|--|------|
| AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE . . . . .                       | 1    |
| THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA . <i>Wilde</i> . . . . .   | 25   |
| THE PRINCESS WHO HID HER SHOES <i>Nyblom</i> . . . . . | 49   |
| TAMLANE . . . . . <i>Old Ballad</i> . . . . .          | 65   |
| PILGRIM'S PROGRESS. PART I . <i>Bunyan</i> . . . . .   | 81   |
| PILGRIM'S PROGRESS. PART II . <i>Bunyan</i> . . . . .  | 110  |
| THREE SUNDAYS IN A WEEK . . <i>Poe</i> . . . . .       | 137  |
| ON THE OLD PLANTATION . . . <i>Pyrrnelle</i> . . . . . | 149  |
| FEATHERTOP . . . . . <i>Hawthorne</i> . . . . .        | 163  |

**FEATHERTOP**

## FEATHERTOP

Feathertop is Nathaniel Hawthorne's story of what might have happened in a New England village during the witchcraft delusion in the seventeenth century. There is opportunity for good acting when Mother Rigby, the witch, uses all her power and brings a scarecrow to life. Don't miss the mock seriousness of it all and the New England flavor in the humor of Mother Rigby.

One club of boys who gave Feathertop took time to saturate themselves with its spirit. They read it first as a Halloween story and, seeing a play in it, aspired to create the parts of the Scarecrow and Mother Rigby. One boy at once wanted to be Dickon and not even pretty Polly Gookin went begging—so resourceful are boys. Lilacs were blooming in New England dooryards when Feathertop finally strutted his brief hour across the stage. The play was given in May to close a season which the boys had devoted to early American authors.

## CHARACTERS

MOTHER RIGBY, *the Witch*

DICKON

THE SCARECROW FEATHERTOP

JUSTICE GOOKIN

POLLY GOOKIN

FIVE VILLAGERS

SCENE I. Interior of MOTHER RIGBY'S cottage. Morning.

SCENE II. Street before JUSTICE GOOKIN'S house. Midday.

SCENE III. Interior of MOTHER RIGBY'S cottage. Twilight.

## STAGE SETTINGS AND DIRECTIONS

Have an entrance at the back and one at each side of the stage if possible.

A continual haze of smoke from Mother Rigby's pipe should make the cottage interior and the whole play seem as unsubstantial as a dream.

Cubeb tobacco may be used for the pipe.

SCENE I. Interior of MOTHER RIGBY's cottage. Use plain-colored hangings for the walls to look like wood. Denim or cambric is good material for background. A rough hearth can be made from boxes covered with cloth to look like stone. An old chair of Colonial design and a basket of straw are needed. A kettle, rag rug, and a spinning wheel may be added. A white wig with pigtail, a three-cornered hat and ancient plum-colored coat hang from pegs on the wall. The scarecrow stands in the corner.

SCENE II. Street and front of Gookin house. If nothing better offers itself, use cambric or paper muslin for background to represent the outside of the Gookin house. A door and window will have to be sketched on the cloth. But it is to be hoped that a real door with glass in it will be available.

SCENE III. Same as Scene I.

## COSTUMES

MOTHER RIGBY wears a dark, coarse dress in Colonial fashion with old black shoulder shawl and cap or hood. She has a pipe and staff.

The SCARECROW is really a boy who stands stiffly in the corner at first. He wears a mask—a stout wire mesh mask fastened securely is best. It can be bought at a costumer's. His head is also covered by a yellow cloth representing a pumpkin with eyes, nose and grinning mouth. He has on his scarlet breeches, and a shirt hangs loosely from his shoulders. Later on, MOTHER RIGBY deftly removes the cloth pumpkin, as she places the wig and three-cornered hat on the SCARECROW, giving the effect of transforming the pumpkin head into the face of a conventional man of the world [*thanks to the mask.*] The addition of the plum-colored coat with bright five-pointed star on the breast and lace frills at neck and wrists completes the get-up of a fine gentleman.

The VILLAGERS wear high black Puritan hats, coats and knickerbockers in Puritan style with broad white collars.

JUSTICE GOOKIN is dressed like the VILLAGERS but wears a long fine cape as well.

Polly Gookin has the typical costume of the period with snowy cap and kerchief.

Dickon in black with horns and tail.

## USEFUL BOOKS ON COSTUMES

Talbot Hughes. Dress Design.

Constance D'Arcy Mackay. Costumes and Scenery for Amateurs.

Melicent Stone. The Bankside Costume Book.





## FEATHERTOP

### SCENE I

*[Interior of MOTHER RIGBY'S cottage. Morning.]*

MOTHER RIGBY

Dickon, a coal for my pipe!

*[Enter DICKON with lighted coal. He applies it to the witch's pipe, then capers about the room.]*

MOTHER RIGBY

*[Smoking and nodding her head.]* Good! Thank ye, Dickon! Be within call, Dickon, in case I need you again. *[Exit DICKON.]* And now for making this scarecrow. *[She*

*goes to look over materials she has collected for the making of a scarecrow.]* I could with very little trouble make a scarecrow ugly enough to frighten the minister himself—but—I don't want to set up a hobgoblin in my own corn patch. I could do it if I pleased, for 'tis true I'm a witch. Aye—and the most cunning witch in New England; but, there is no use in scaring the little children for a mile roundabout. No—my scarecrow shall be a fine gentleman! [*She begins to stuff the figure with straw and adjusts the pumpkin head on its shoulders.*] Many a fine gentleman has a pumpkin head, as well as my scarecrow. I've seen worse ones on human shoulders, at any rate. But the clothes shall be the making of this man.

*[She takes down from a peg an ancient coat and puts it on the figure. (See costumes.) Then places a wig on the bare scalp of the pumpkin and surmounts the whole with a three-cornered hat, in which she sticks the longest tail-feather of a rooster. She stands the figure up in the corner of her cottage and chuckles as she beholds it.]*

You are well worth looking at—that's a fact! I've made many a puppet since I've been a witch, but methinks this is the finest of them all. 'Tis almost too good for a scarecrow. Well, I'll just fill a fresh pipe of tobacco, and then take him out to the corn-patch. Dickon! [*sharply*] another coal for my pipe!

*[Enter DICKON. He applies coal as before. Exit DICKON.]*

#### MOTHER RIGBY

*[Sits and smokes, looking intently at the scarecrow.]* That puppet yonder is too good a piece of work to stand all summer

in a corn-patch frightening away the crows and blackbirds. He is capable of better things. He looks almost human! I could make a Man of my scarecrow, were it only for the joke's sake—for a witch I am and a witch I'm likely to be. What if I should let him take his chance among the other men of straw and empty fellows who go bustling about the world. [*Puffs her pipe and smiles. Then she takes the pipe from her own mouth and thrusts it into the mouth of the scarecrow.*] Puff! puff! puff away, my fine fellow! Your life depends on it! [*A whiff of smoke comes from the scarecrow's mouth!*] Puff away, my pet! Puff away, my pretty one! [*Coaxingly.*] It is the breath of life to ye, and you may take my word for it. [*More and more smoke comes from the scarecrow's mouth. The old witch claps her skinny hands together for joy.*] Well pulled, my pretty lad! Come! Another good stout whiff, and let it be with might and main. Puff for thy life, I tell thee! Well done, again!

[*The witch then beckons to the scarecrow.*] Why lurkest thou in the corner, lazy one? Step forth! Thou hast the world before thee!

[*The figure makes a step forward—a kind of hitch and jerk, then totters and almost loses its balance but puffs vigorously and becomes steadier and stronger.*]

### MOTHER RIGBY

[*Now pretending to be angry, clenches her fist and shakes it at the figure.*] Thou hast a man's aspect—have also a voice—I bid thee speak!

[*The scarecrow gasps, struggles and mumbles in a poor, stifled voice.*]

## SCARECROW

Mother, be not so awful with me! I would fain speak, but, what can I say?

## MOTHER RIGBY

Thou can'st speak, can'st thou? Then thou shalt say a thousand things and yet say nothing. Be not afraid. I shall send thee presently out into the world where thou shalt talk. Talk! Thou shalt babble like a mill-stream, if thou wilt.

## SCARECROW

At your service, mother, with all my heart. [*Puts hand stiffly to his heart.*]

## MOTHER RIGBY

And that was well said, "With all my heart." [*Puts her hands to her sides, laughing loudly.*] I have taken great pains with thee. Thou art the very best witch's puppet in the world and I will send thee out into the world where thou shalt play thy part with the best of men. Now give heed to what I say. [*She thrusts her wrinkled face close to the scarecrow and rubs her hands with glee.*] There is in the town a certain magistrate named Justice Gookin. The worshipful Justice Gookin hath a comely maiden, Polly Gookin, for his daughter. Now—hark ye, my pet. Thou hast a fair outside and thou art the very man to win a young girl's heart. Never doubt it. I tell thee it shall be so. Put a bold face on, sigh, smile, flourish thy hat, thrust forth thy leg like a dancing master, put thy right hand to thy heart, and pretty Polly Gookin is thine own.

## SCARECROW

[*Looks intently at MOTHER RIGBY.*] Really! Is it possible! Indeed!

## MOTHER RIGBY

[*Convulsed with laughter.*] Oh, thou wilt be the death of me! Thou playest thy part to perfection. But stick to thy pipe. Remember thy life depends upon it. When thou shalt find thy pipe getting low, cry sharply: "Dickon, a coal for my pipe!" else instead of a gallant gentleman, thou wilt become nothing but a bag of straw and an old pumpkin head. Now depart, my treasure, and good luck go with thee!

## SCARECROW

[*In a stout voice and sending forth whiffs of smoke.*] Never fear, mother. I will thrive if an honest man and a gentleman may.

## MOTHER RIGBY

That was well said! Here! Take my staff along with thee. It will guide thee straight to Justice Gookin and his daughter. And if any ask thy name, it is Feathertop, for thou hast a feather in thy hat. Now, get thee gone, Feathertop. I have done my best for thee.

[*FEATHERTOP goes out of the cottage, striding manfully towards town. MOTHER RIGBY watches him out of sight.*]

[CURTAIN]

## SCENE II

[*A group of villagers standing together on the street near JUSTICE GOOKIN'S house. Enter FEATHERTOP, strutting along swinging his cane with an airy grace like a fine gen-*

*tleman. As often as every five steps he puts his pipe in his mouth and puffs deeply at it. Stir among the group of villagers.]*

#### VILLAGERS

Who is he? Who is the stranger?

#### FIRST VILLAGER

It is some great nobleman, beyond question. Do you see the star at his breast?

#### SECOND VILLAGER

Nay, it is too bright to be seen. Yes, he must needs be a nobleman, as you say. But by what conveyance, think you, can his Lordship have voyaged hither? There has been no vessel from the old country for a month past; and if he has arrived overland from the southward, pray where are his attendants and equipage?

#### THIRD VILLAGER

He needs no equipage to set off his rank. If he came among us in rags, nobility would shine through a hole in his elbow. I never saw such dignity of aspect. He has the old Norman blood in his veins, I warrant him.

#### FOURTH VILLAGER

I rather take him to be a Dutchman or one of your High Germans. The men of those countries have always the pipe at their mouths.

## FIFTH VILLAGER

And so has a Turk. But, in my judgment, this stranger hath been bred at the French court, and hath there learned politeness and grace of manner, which none understand so well as the nobility of France. That gait, now! A vulgar spectator might deem it stiff—he might call it a hitch and jerk—but to my eye, it hath an unspeakable majesty, and must have been acquired by constant observation of the deportment of the Grand Monarque. The stranger's character and office are evident enough. He is a French ambassador come to treat with our rulers about the cession of Canada.

## JUSTICE GOOKIN

[*Accompanied by his daughter POLLY he has come out of his house and joined the group in time to hear the last remark.*] More probably a Spaniard and hence his yellow complexion. Or, most likely, he is from Havana or from some port on the Spanish Main, and comes to make investigations about the piracies which our Governor is thought to connive at. Those settlers in Peru and Mexico have skins as yellow as the gold which they dig out of their mines.

## POLLY GOOKIN

Yellow or not, he is a beautiful man! So tall, so slender! Such a fine, noble face, with so well shaped a nose and all that delicacy of expression about the mouth! And, bless me! how bright his star is! It positively shoots out flames!

## FEATHERTOP

[*Bowing and flourishing his pipe.*] So do your eyes, fair lady. Upon my honor, they have quite dazzled me!

## POLLY GOOKIN

Was ever so original and exquisite a compliment!

## FEATHERTOP

Really! Indeed! [*He steps up to JUSTICE GOOKIN.*] Does the worshipful Justice Gookin know one Mother Rigby? Mother Rigby knows the worshipful Justice Gookin, and she has sent me hither. My name is Feathertop. [*Whispers in JUSTICE GOOKIN'S ear and indicates that he wishes to be presented to POLLY.*]

## JUSTICE GOOKIN

[*He is startled at the mention of the witch, MOTHER RIGBY, but quickly recovers himself.*] Polly! Daughter Polly! Come hither, child. This gentleman is the Chevalier Feathertop, nay, I beg his pardon, my Lord Feathertop, who hath brought me a token of remembrance from an ancient friend of mine. Pay your duty to his Lordship, child, and honor him as his quality deserves.

[*Exit JUSTICE GOOKIN. As he goes he shows signs of uneasiness. He enters his own front door and peeps out from behind silk curtains which shade the glass in the door. POLLY curtsies and FEATHERTOP bows, with one hand on his heart. Then he offers his arm to POLLY and the two walk a few steps together. FEATHERTOP tries to take a puff at his pipe. It has gone out.*]

## FIRST VILLAGER

There is something mysterious about this stranger. As he turned about, the star on his breast was all ablaze.



## SECOND VILLAGER

It was indeed and it will go near to dazzle pretty Polly Gookin.

*[Exit VILLAGERS. POLLY and FEATHERTOP approach the GOOKINS' front door.]*

## FEATHERTOP

Sweet one, I find my pipe getting low. My physician orders me to smoke and puff for my health. Indeed, my life depends upon it. I must go apart into some corner and light my pipe again.

## POLLY GOOKIN

*[Looks at him with alarm, then passes her hand over her eyes.]* The sun dazzles my eyes strangely. What can be the matter with your Lordship? All of a sudden you look so dim and faded.

## FEATHERTOP

*[Starts to enter front door of the Gookin house and sees his reflection in the glass. He starts with horror as he sees himself, for some of the straw stuffing is protruding from his coat. In his confusion he shakes the ashes out of his pipe. He cries sharply.]* Dickon, a fresh pipe of tobacco! Dickon, another coal for my pipe!

*[Enter DICKON with coal. As POLLY sees DICKON she shrinks from FEATHERTOP, shrieks and sinks down insensible. JUSTICE GOOKIN opens door and rushes to POLLY.]*

FEATHERTOP *refuses to use the coal which DICKON offers. He throws up his hands in despair.*]

## FEATHERTOP

The girl was half won. Methinks a kiss from her sweet lips might have made me altogether human. But—I've seen myself. I've seen myself for the wretched, ragged, empty thing I am. [*Pulls more straw out from within his coat.*] I'll go back to Mother Rigby. [*Drags himself off.*]

[CURTAIN]

## SCENE III

[MOTHER RIGBY'S *cottage.*][*Twilight.*]

## MOTHER RIGBY

[*Sitting alone and talking to herself.*] Yes, I've made puppets of all sorts—clay, wax, straw, sticks, night fog, morning mist, sea-foam and chimney smoke. But, methinks, Feathertop is the best. Aye, he is the best witch's puppet in the world. And now, that he may hold up his head in the great world where not one man in a hundred is more gifted than he, I will endow him with an unreckonable amount of wealth. He shall have a gold mine in Eldorado, and ten thousand shares in a broken bubble; half a million acres of vineyard at the North Pole, a castle in the air and a chateau in Spain, together with all the rents and income therefrom accruing. With these he can pay

his way over all the earth; if he but stick to his pipe—if he but stick to his pipe! And as for Polly Gookin—Oh, pretty Polly Gookin, will your silly maiden's heart be given to a shadow? to a witch's puppet? [*There is a sound of tramping like the clatter of sticks.*] Ha! What step is that?

[FEATHERTOP *bursts headlong through the cottage door. He is in a dilapidated state. His hat is awry and straw is sticking out from his coat.*]

## MOTHER RIGBY

What has gone wrong? Did Justice Gookin thrust you from his door? The villain! I'll set twenty fiends to torture him till he offer thee his daughter on his bended knees!

## FEATHERTOP

[*Despondingly.*] No, mother, it was not that.

## MOTHER RIGBY

Did the girl scorn you, my precious one? I'll cover her face with pimples! Her front teeth shall drop out! In a week she shall not be worth thy having!

## FEATHERTOP

[*Weakly.*] Let her alone, mother. I've seen myself! I'm nothing but a thing of sticks and straw and I'll exist no longer. [*He flings his pipe away, clutches at himself, pulling straw from within his coat—then sinks upon the floor.*]

## MOTHER RIGBY

Poor fellow! My poor dear Feathertop! There are thousands upon thousands of coxcombs in the world made up of

just such a jumble of worn-out and good-for-nothing trash as he was, yet they live in fair repute, and never see themselves for what they are. [*Muttering to herself she picks up the pipe, fills it with tobacco and looks doubtfully at FEATHERTOP.*] Poor Feathertop! I could easily give him another chance and send him forth again tomorrow. But no! His feelings are too tender—his sensibilities too deep. Well, well! I'll make a scarecrow out of him, after all. 'Tis an innocent and useful vocation and will suit him well. If each of his human brethren had as useful a vocation 'twould be the better for mankind. [*She places him in the corner, then puts pipe in her own mouth.*] And—as for this pipe of tobacco, I need it more than he. Dickon [*in a high, sharp tone*], another coal for my pipe! [*Enter DICKON, as before.*]

## THE END

[Dramatized, by permission, from "Mosses from an Old Manse," by Nathaniel Hawthorne, published by Houghton Mifflin Company.]