

REPERTORY PLAYS N° 26



# THE SCARECROW

BY J. A. FERGUSON

LONDON & GLASGOW GOWANS & GRAY LTD

THE SCARECROW

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

NOVELS.

STEALTHY TERROR.  
THE DARK GERALDINE.

POETRY.

ON VIMY RIDGE AND OTHER POEMS.

ONE-ACT PLAYS.

CAMPBELL OF KILMHOR.  
THE KING OF MORVEN.

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# THE SCARECROW

A HALLOWE'EN FANTASY  
IN ONE ACT

BY

J. A. FERGUSON

GOWANS & GRAY, LTD., LONDON AND GLASGOW  
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A HALLOWEEN FANTASY  
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Printed in Great Britain  
by Turnbull & Spears, Edinburgh



#### NOTE.

This play uses several of the old superstitious beliefs and practices which survived in the remote Highlands much later than elsewhere. These beliefs and practices lived on not only because of the remoteness but also because they had a firm hold on a sensitive and highly imaginative people. The policeman was not a favourite figure in the Highlands.

It is an error to suppose these people spoke in any variety of dialect known as "Scotch." But when they spoke English they spoke it with the idiom belonging to their native Gaelic. Beyond this there is very little to note regarding the right speaking of the words in this play, and anyone who did no more than give a slight stress to the sibilants (*e.g.* "wass" for "was") would sufficiently convey the right impression to his audience.

J. A. F.



[Produced for the first time, on 21st October, 1921, at Maidstone,  
by the Dramatic Company of the Arts League of Service,  
Adelphi, London, with the following cast:]

<i>An Old Woman,</i>	-	-	MISS AGNES LOWSON.
<i>A Policeman,</i>	-	-	MR. CHARLES THOMAS.
<i>A Young Woman,</i>	-	-	MISS JUDITH WOGAN.

*The Play produced by* MISS ELEANOR ELDER.



### CHARACTERS.

1. *An Old Woman.*
2. *A Young Woman.*
3. *A Policeman.*

PERIOD : *Any time in the early Nineteenth Century.*

PLACE : *An out-shed of a small farm near the village  
of Torran in the Morar district of Inverness-shire.*

*The Curtain rises on a tenantless stage, fitted up as a shed or barn. As the audience sees it there is a door at the centre back, on the right of which there is a small window. On the right side wall is another door, giving access to a cow-shed. A bundle of straw and one or two filled sacks are near this door, and there is a bench formed by a plank resting on two boxes nearer centre. Close up to the window there is another box. On a nail by the window a few rabbit-skins are hanging. In the corner are implements, spade, etc. On the left of stage and up in the far corner is a barrel in which stands a scarecrow, a rather large and well-made figure with coat which comes over front edge of barrel and a face with roughly marked-in features surmounted by a rather battered silk hat. On this side of the stage there is little else beyond a bucket or two and some potatoes and turnips near the barrel, and such odds and ends as might be stored away in a farm-shed. The barrel must be large to contain the player who takes the part of the young sailor and it must be open at both ends.*

*The Woman wears a plain dark skirt with a small shawl over her shoulders, and she is bareheaded.*

*The Policeman is young, with rather unkempt hair and an ill-fitting uniform. His tunic has a button or two missing.*

## THE SCARECROW

*The Girl is neatly dressed in a plain and short skirt of dark homespun. A shawl of a dark tartan covers her shoulders and crossing in front has two ends tucked into the waist. The shawl is neatly tucked in at the back also, and it comes slightly over the top of her arms, which are bare. At her entrance she has a larger shawl which she wears drawn over the head.*

*The lighting throughout should be low enough to allow the lantern to be prominent.*

*After the curtain has been up for a moment the door opens and the woman, lantern in hand, enters, followed by the policeman.*

## WOMAN

*(Holding the lantern high.)* Here's a fine place for you to watch in.

## POLICEMAN

*(Looking about him.)* Aye, and the straw there will do well for me to stretch myself on.

## WOMAN

*(Protesting.)* To stretch yourself on! Do you think I asked you here to sleep?

## POLICEMAN

I wouldn't be at all afraid to sleep here. Not I.  
*(Seeing scarecrow, he stares at it for a moment*

## THE SCARECROW

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*uncertainly and then in a hushed voice.)* Who is there?

WOMAN

*(Looking from him to scarecrow.)* That? Are you afraid of *him*? It is only the scarecrow. We take the poor cratur in for the winter—to frighten the rats from the seed-potatoes. *(Policeman goes towards door.)* Where are you going?

POLICEMAN

Just to shut the door. There's a wind blowing in that made my hair stand on its ends just now. *(Shuts door.)*

WOMAN

*(Suspiciously.)* You are not afraid?

POLICEMAN

Afraid! I am afraid of nothing, I tell you.

WOMAN

The last policeman we had—he was a good man, a very good man, very brave. We were all quite sorry when he died.

POLICEMAN

*(With a grand air.)* Well, I don't know how brave he was, but I am very brave myself. In Tiree they used to call me the tiger, I was



## THE SCARECROW

such a raging, tearing young fellow, you understand.

## WOMAN

Were you so? Well, we'll see how you behave yourself. You may be as well-thought-of yet. Come now and see the poor cow I was telling you of.

*[She picks up lantern and walks towards barn on right, but turns when he does not follow.]*

## POLICEMAN

*(Going towards her.)* Would you say it was a hard place this for a policeman to have a good name in?

## WOMAN

Hard? No, it's an easy sort of place if you behave yourself. You have to mind that the people always have an eye on you. If they catch you doing what you shouldn't be doing or doing what they tell you not to do—well—you'll only have yourself to blame for what-ever happens.

*[They enter inner barn and are heard talking. After a little the door opens stealthily and a girl enters, and with every sign of precaution steals towards the left. Once she pauses and as if afraid turns back, but finally goes on till she reaches the barrel in which the scarecrow stands. She drops what might be food into it and whispers, putting down her hand]*

*which appears to be caught inside the barrel, for she wrenches it away with difficulty just as the voices of the woman and policeman become louder. The girl is bending to pick up two turnips as the others re-enter.*

## POLICEMAN

And you think, then, it's a witch is taking the milk of her?

## WOMAN

I do. What else could it be with the door locked every night? Do you think the old scarecrow there is doing it on the sly? (*Sees girl and cries out at her.*) What are you about?

## GIRL

I was just getting a turnip or two for the boys to make their Hallowe'en lanterns.

## WOMAN

(*Indicating policeman.*) Was it not to see himself there you came?

## GIRL

Him!

## WOMAN

Just that—anything new—

## POLICEMAN

(*Complacently.*) I am used to being looked at. I do not mind her doing it at all.



## THE SCARECROW

WOMAN

Och—for want of a better she is the kind that  
would sweetheart the old scarecrow himself.  
(*To girl.*) Be off with you!

POLICEMAN

(*As girl goes out.*) Isn't that a fine, tasty lass now!  
I haven't seen her equal since I left Tiree.

WOMAN

(*Shortly.*) She is my daughter.

POLICEMAN

Do you tell me! Well, well, there's many a  
pretty apple comes off an old, withered stump  
of a tree.

WOMAN

(*Facing him, sharply.*) She's not for your mouth.  
So you needn't be making eyes after her.  
It's not to watch her I got you here, but to  
find out who or what is taking the milk off  
my poor cow.

POLICEMAN

(*After a pause.*) There's that young sailor deserted  
from the King's ship at Tobermory—would  
the people hereaway mind if I caught him,  
do you think?

WOMAN

(*Impatiently.*) There's plenty after him without

you. It's the poor cow there that needs your help.

POLICEMAN

Do you suspicion anyone at all?

WOMAN

It's for you to find out who it is, with the great skill you have.

POLICEMAN

*(Taking out note-book and seating himself on box.)*

That's so. Well now, they have a way of finding out them things in Tiree. Did you ever see anyone counting your chickens on a Friday?

WOMAN

*(Sitting down on bench.)* Is it witchcraft you mean?

POLICEMAN

That cow there has a queer, wild look about her eyes.

WOMAN

*(Considering.)* There's that old Campbell woman in the house among the trees. I wouldn't put it past her.

POLICEMAN

In Tiree we know well how to find out them things.

## THE SCARECROW

WOMAN

Do you tell me! It must be a wiser place than they think here. What do they do?

POLICEMAN

It's the easiest thing in the world to find out a witch-wife. All you have to do is to wait till the first of the month lands on a Monday.

WOMAN

Yes!

POLICEMAN

Then you go to a place where you can overlook the house, and, if you see the smoke going against the wind, it's a witch lives there.

WOMAN

*(Gets up and begins to clear a few odds and ends to one side.)* Do you tell me! There! Isn't it the kind people that sent a man like yourself with such a wealth of wisdom on you, to take care of us all! Och, och, if you had been here last year my old goat might still be in the land of the living.

POLICEMAN

What are you doing?

WOMAN

I'm clearing a good space for you to struggle in when you catch her.

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POLICEMAN

Catch who ?

WOMAN

The witch of course. Who else? You must arrest her.

POLICEMAN

(*Rising.*) Arrest her !

WOMAN

What else are you for ?

POLICEMAN

(*Pacing about.*) I have a right to warn off all beggars, vagabonds and strollers ; to arrest all thieves, murderers, sheep-stealers and deserters from the King's service ; but there's not one word about witches in all the police regulations.

WOMAN

Are witches thieving people ?

POLICEMAN

That's true.

WOMAN

And aren't they bad people ?

POLICEMAN

Yes.

WOMAN

Very well, then.

POLICEMAN

(*Much perturbed, speaking rapidly.*) And what if she comes to milk the cow in the shape of a hare, or a gull to fly down the chimney, or a big black dog that will creep round the door in the dark? (*Woman goes on working.*) Och, och! isn't this a hard place to be a policeman in! It's sorry I am not to be still cutting peat in Tíree.

WOMAN

That was harder work.

POLICEMAN

(*Rapidly, indignantly.*) Yes; but I wouldn't be doing it at this hour of the night, nor yet on this night of the year—I that was always fond of good company. I'd be sitting round taking good cheer with my friends, and maybe putting two nuts to the fire to see if I'd be hitting it off with some nice lass before the year was out, instead of waiting in a dirty old shed with one old witch to watch for another. (*To woman who is going to the door with the lantern.*) Where are you going?



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WOMAN

I've got company coming to the house this Hallow-e'en, and I must see to them now.

POLICEMAN

You're not going to desert me?

WOMAN

I am that.

POLICEMAN

What!—leave me here all alone! I'll not stop, I tell you.

WOMAN

I'll report you if you leave.

POLICEMAN

Give me the lantern at least.

WOMAN

*(Taking a big key from her pocket.)* Why should I do that? Its light would be seen, and they'd keep away, and you wouldn't catch them at their tricks.

POLICEMAN

You're not going to lock me in? I'll not stop, I tell you.

WOMAN

You'll have to, it's your duty.



## THE SCARECROW

## POLICEMAN

*(Stamping.)* Who ever heard the like? It's my duty to lock other people up—not to be locked up myself. *(Struck by a thought.)* Why, if the door is locked, how will the milk-thieves get in for me to catch?

## WOMAN

*(Who has been knocking key as if to clear it from dust.)* I have locked this door every night, and still the milk goes. Whoever or whatever comes, a locked door makes no difference to *them*. Locking the door will not keep *it* from getting in at you.

## POLICEMAN

Then there's no sense in locking me up. Leave it open—wide open. I'll be lying inside ready to spring on them like a tiger.

## WOMAN

*(Half opens the door again and speaks from the outside.)* I'll soon be thinking you are afraid. I believe you would run away.

## POLICEMAN

*(Coming close up.)* I'll go to sleep, I will. I'll not care who comes in, nor what they do. I'll...  
[Door shut and shed is in darkness.]

## POLICEMAN

*(Finding his way across to box, sits down. He strikes*

*a match to light his pipe.*) Och, och, if the people of Tíree knew the way I am treated here it's sore vexed they would be. (*Puffs.*) What was that? (*Listens, holding up the match.*) It was just the noise of the sea, biting at the rocks. (*Whistles weakly.*) I never like to be left alone, I'm, I'm, that fond of company. (*Short silence and then loudly in a passion.*) Why the devil don't I hear them singing and laughing up by! They are all very quiet-like for Hallowe'en...

[*He goes round the shed, striking matches to peer into the dark corners. Someone is heard at the door, which is stealthily opened. He drops behind sacks. The girl enters softly, lantern in hand and carrying something in her upturned apron.*]

## GIRL

(*Quietly.*) Are you there? (*Comes forward.*) Are you there, Donald?

## POLICEMAN

(*Rising from behind sacks. Girl starts at sight of him.*) Yes, I am here. I thought you were the witch. But how in the world did you know my name was Donald?

## GIRL

(*Recovering.*) The witch! Is that why you were hiding?

## THE SCARECROW

## POLICEMAN

Yes; I was just getting ready to spring. (*Coming up to her.*) What have you in your apron? Apples! Nuts! (*He takes and bites an apple. Puts handful of nuts in his pocket.*) This is very kind of you.

## GIRL

(*Harshly.*) I—I hope they will choke you. I think now you were afraid. My mother had to lock you in, was it?

[*Policeman sits down on the board to eat apple.*]

## GIRL

(*With change of tone and coming across to him.*) Look you, if I were you I'd not wait here on a night like this; I'd go and have my fun with the others. I'd run away before herself had time to stop me, so I would.

## POLICEMAN

Would you so?

## GIRL

(*Confidentially bending towards him.*) Aye, would I. I'd never let her stop me having my fun. It's the way of the old to do that. They had their fun themselves when they were young; and when they are old they think to make up for it by stopping them that are still young. Look you, the door is open. (*Points.*)

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POLICEMAN

Aye, so it is. (*Gets up and, walking over, shuts door.*)

GIRL

What are you doing? Why do you not run away?

POLICEMAN

(*With his back to door.*) Run away, is it? I was never the man to run away from a pretty lass the like of yourself.

GIRL

(*Impatiently.*) Oh... (*Turns her back on him, walks away and then faces him.*) How long are you going to be here?

POLICEMAN

(*Coming up to her.*) I am not in any hurry at all.

GIRL

(*After a pause.*) I must be getting back now.

POLICEMAN

(*Intervening between her and the door.*) No, no, stay a while. They'll not miss you half as much as myself. It's lonely I am here.

GIRL

(*Darkly.*) Maybe you are not so much alone as you think.



## THE SCARECROW

POLICEMAN

What are you saying?

GIRL

I was saying, maybe you are not so much alone as you think.

POLICEMAN

*(Looking around doubtfully.)* Eh?

GIRL

What would you say if I myself was the witch?

POLICEMAN

*(Relieved.)* Oh, you? I'd say: Give me a spell that I may lay hands on that young fellow who deserted the King's ship at Tobermory.

GIRL

Have you seen him?

POLICEMAN

Not I; but I heard he was seen two days ago on the road to Arrochmore. He may be hiding hereaway.

GIRL

*(Quietly.)* It was a mile beyond Torran I met him.

POLICEMAN

What do you tell me! You have seen him?

GIRL

(*Defiantly.*) I have talked and walked with him.  
I have fed him and guided him on his way.

POLICEMAN

(*After a moment.*) I could arrest you for this.

GIRL

(*Laughing.*) Arrest me? And what kind of a  
life would you have here after you did it?  
Not the life of an old dog that had cast his  
teeth.

POLICEMAN

(*Crestfallen.*) That's true.

GIRL

Why, if I were only to say you had threatened  
me...

POLICEMAN

But you won't do it?

GIRL

I don't know. It would teach you a lesson—you  
bold and impudent fellow. (*A pause and  
change of tone.*) It was a mile beyond Torran  
I met him. (*Policeman walks away.*) He  
told me his sad history. (*She waits for him to  
say something.*) I said he told me his sad  
history.



## THE SCARECROW

POLICEMAN

*(Drily.)* I dare say.

GIRL

Oh, how sad and pitiful it was !

POLICEMAN

Them sailors have the fine slippery tongues for getting round all women.

GIRL

It would have made a man as hard-hearted as yourself to shed tears.

POLICEMAN

I am not hard-hearted. Why, once in Tیره...

GIRL

*(Running on.)* He was a fisherman, he said. There was a fine young girl loved him, he said ; and there was an old fellow of a rich farmer had an eye on her too. And her mother was after forcing the old man on her because of his wealth. But the girl—oh, she would not, she could not ! So the mother and the old man put their heads together, and after the lad had lost his boat, while he was in Tobermory trying for another, they got him trepanned on a King's ship and before he knew it he was bound in the

King's service...Have you ever heard the like of that ?

POLICEMAN

Many a time. I've heard better and I've heard worse.

GIRL

And the old woman pretending he had run away to be rid of her, and working on her pride to make her marry the old man before people started mocking her—You do not believe me ?

POLICEMAN

I believe you—not him.

GIRL

What's wrong with it ?

POLICEMAN

Oh, it's just too like other stories that are like it. Did he tell you he only left his ship to see the girl once before they tore him away ?

GIRL

That't what he said.

POLICEMAN

(*Gunningly.*) And it wasn't very clever of him either. Now, if it had been myself that's what I'd have told an old woman or a man.

## THE SCARECROW

But to a lovely young girl the like of yourself I'd have kept dark about the other one. I'd have said it was my mother I wanted to take farewell of. (*Girl wheels away and he adds half to himself.*) A man that is such a great fool about women should be easy for me to catch. (*To girl.*) What are you thinking of now? Am I not right?

## GIRL

(*Scornfully.*) I am thinking you are too clever to be a policeman in these parts. It's in Oban you should be—or Glasgow itself.

## POLICEMAN

(*Eagerly.*) And well I'd like to be there! It's the policeman is the master there. With his whistle and his club he rules the whole place. I saw a picture once that came from Glesgow. It was a policeman hitting a grand gentleman in a fine pair of trousers, and by the look of him, not caring at all who should see him do it. That was the best of it. But in a place like this I declare you cannot clout a boy on the ear for putting out his tongue behind your back without raising the whole country against you.

## GIRL

I never would have guessed you were so fierce a fellow. I'd...I'd never be afraid when you were near me.

POLICEMAN

What is that you say?

GIRL

I said I'd never be afraid when you were by.

POLICEMAN

What is there to be afraid of?

GIRL

Oh, the witch and all that, on a night like this.  
I thought I heard a dog howling. Isn't it  
queer we should be spending the Hallowe'en  
together in an old barn, and the house out  
there full of company and good cheer. I  
wonder what it is makes me stay on, and you  
quarrelling with me all the time.

POLICEMAN

(*Brightly.*) You are well pleased to be here, is it?

GIRL

(*Fervently.*) I am that.

POLICEMAN

If the old woman catches you—

GIRL

Herself sent me down the road to bring an old  
man up—an old man that is too blind to see  
in the dark—that I was to give my arm to.



And him with a white beard and eyes, like the old goat that died on us last year. But he is an old fellow as rich as the Jews ; and so, you see, the longer I'll be gone the better she'll be pleased.

## POLICEMAN

But in the end you'll have to go back without the old man, and what will happen to you then ?

## GIRL

I never look so far ahead. Maybe I'll take in the old scarecrow there. You could hardly tell the difference.

## POLICEMAN

Is he as bad as that ?

## GIRL

Worse too. He's more bent and not half so handsome. (*After a pause, coaxing.*) Maybe you'd go down yourself for him if I watch here while you are away ?

## POLICEMAN

And then you'd go in with him and I'd be left here alone. No !

## GIRL

You'll have a girl yourself, over there in Tíree.

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POLICEMAN

There's no one at all, I tell you.

GIRL

No one at all? And isn't that the pity—that a big beautiful man like you should never have been able to—to get one for himself.

POLICEMAN

I could have had a dozen if I'd wanted; but I never yet saw one that pulled me.

GIRL

There's a way of finding out the name of her you'll marry. It's only on the night of Hallowe'en it can be done.

POLICEMAN

Do you tell me? That's a thing they don't know in Tiree.

GIRL

Yes. You fill your mouth with water, and then you go out...

POLICEMAN

Yes.

GIRL

You go out and listen at some lighted window to what the people are saying inside.



POLICEMAN

Yes.

GIRL

The first name you hear spoken will be the name of her you will marry.

POLICEMAN

(*Considering—shakes his head.*) I wouldn't mind taking the water—though it's a poor thing for a man to put in his mouth; but I couldn't leave this place unprotected. Who knows, that witch might come in and be filling *her* mouth with the milk. You'll have to find some other way.

GIRL

Some other way for what?

POLICEMAN

(*Naively.*) Some way to tell me about the lass that won't send me out alone in the dark.

GIRL

(*Pacing away slowly.*) There is a way, but not one that gives you her name. It just tells you whether she will be a maid or a widow or none at all. I lay out three small dishes, one with water in it, another with milk and another with nothing. (*Comes back quickly.*) Then I tie a cloth over your eyes so that you cannot see.

[*She takes possession of his coloured cotton handkerchief, and puts it over his eyes from behind.*]

## POLICEMAN

(*Firmly, and taking it away.*) No, thank you. I have no mind to be blindfolded this night.

## GIRL

(*Flinging away.*) Then you won't know her name, nor aught else about her. (*At a distance.*) The young sailor would have let me blindfold him. *He* would never have feared to go out in the dark. *He* trusted me. He would have gone where I told him even if there were King's men watching for him on every road this night *except* on the bridle-road over the hills to Ballintuim.

[*Pretends to sweep into her apron.*]

## POLICEMAN

(*Sitting moodily twiddling his thumbs.*) Be quiet. I have heard too much of that fellow this night.

## GIRL

(*Steals up in front of him.*) That young sailor said I had the fine eyes.

## POLICEMAN

He would be a good judge too.

GIRL

He...said my mouth was more sweet than stolen honey.

POLICEMAN

You let him taste it well, no doubt.

*[She turns her back on him.]*

POLICEMAN

*(After a pause, lugubriously and slowly.)* Sailors are born lucky. Myself I had nothing but a taste of the old woman's tongue.

GIRL

*(Turning.)* Will you look into my eyes and tell me?

POLICEMAN

Tell you what?

GIRL

Tell me if you think he was wrong about my eyes.

*[She goes up to him and bending forward looks intently into his eyes.]*

POLICEMAN

*(Averting his gaze and putting up hand.)* It is yourself is the witch.

GIRL

*(Sitting on the bench beside him.)* Would you be so kind as to try and see if—if it is as sweet as he says?

*[He hesitates a moment, jumps up, walks away and then wheels round.]*

POLICEMAN

I would not. There's some divilry in this that's beyond me.

GIRL

Have you ever seen a witch? Come and sit down.  
I will not touch you.

POLICEMAN

I don't believe in them at all at all. There used to be witches in the old times; but they are all gone since the railway came.

GIRL

*(Standing up.)* But there is no railway nearer here than a hundred miles.

POLICEMAN

*(Going to bench and sitting down where he was before.)*  
That's true. *(Pause.)* Has yourself seen one?

GIRL

*(Sitting on box between bench and door.)* I once went at night and looked in at an old woman's window.

POLICEMAN

*(Expectant.)* Yes.

GIRL

*(Bending forward but at some distance from him as she speaks. She makes much play with her hands.)*  
She was sitting on the floor with a big dish of water on her knees, and there was a circle of twelve little black nuts around her.

POLICEMAN

Yes.

GIRL

There was a little shell floating on the water. I saw her mouth saying some words I could not hear at all.

POLICEMAN

*(Bending forward.)* Ah!

GIRL

But I knew well what she was after. *(He nods agreement.)* Then she began to rock the dish on her knees, at first little by little, her mouth all the while screwing out prayers to Satan himself.

POLICEMAN

Heaven help us!

GIRL

Then she began to rock the dish quicker and quicker, and I could see there were three



little black<sup>2</sup> peas in the inside of the shell.  
All at once I saw...

*[Covers face with her hands.]*

POLICEMAN

What? What?

GIRL

I saw the little shell sink to the bottom of the dish  
and then I heard... I heard... oh!

POLICEMAN

*(Whispers.)* What was it you heard?

GIRL

I heard all those black nuts around her began—  
began to bark like dogs.

POLICEMAN

*(Trembling.)* God bless my soul!

GIRL

*(Rapidly and rising to her feet.)* Something came  
over my eyes—I could not see. When I  
came to myself the old witch was lying flat on  
the floor, and the dish in a hundred pieces  
was scattered all over the house. *(Slowly.)*  
On that same night there was a great storm  
arose, and there were three fishermen in one  
boat out on the sea that never came back.  
Do you say you don't believe in the black art  
now?

## THE SCARECROW

POLICEMAN

(*Wiping his face.*) I always knew there was something in it.

GIRL

Why, look at that scarecrow there. He once belonged to the woman I tell you of. A very powerful scarecrow he is. He can do everything but talk. And there's them that have seen him taking a walk by himself, at night, after his day's work was over. (*She steals across and sits by his side while he stares at scarecrow.*) Do you know why people burn nuts and break nuts this night?

[*He shakes his head.*

POLICEMAN

(*Shakily.*) I know they do it, but not why they do it.

GIRL

(*Shaking him and whispering loudly.*) 'Tis because the noise keeps away the things that walk abroad this night—Break seven nuts this night and nothing can touch you.

[*He hastily gets out the nuts from his pocket, lifts a piece of iron from the floor and breaks a nut on the bench.*

POLICEMAN

(*Breaks another.*) Two.

*[As he raises the implement to break another, the sound of a breaking nut is heard from the scarecrow. The policeman looks round listening. Then thinking he is deceived again raises the implement. The moment he does so another crack is heard and he lowers his arm, takes up the nut and examines it. He lays it down again and prepares to strike it when the sound is again heard. He sits up and looks round. While he looks he sees the barrel with the scarecrow on top walking towards him as if it were a very tall person. It walks slowly and stiffly out by the door. The policeman falls backward off the bench.]*

CURTAIN