

1. Narrator / Father / Mother / Boys / Fanny Eliza / Widow

2. Earbrass

3. Little Henry

The setting is the same as before. As the lights come up, MR. EARBRASS is discovered down stage with a croquet mallet. LADY CELIA enters upstage and after observing for a moment turns to the audience.

CELIA as the NARRATOR. Mr. Clavius Frederick Earbrass is, of course, the well known novelist. Of his books; *A Moral Dustbin*, *More Chains Than Clank*, *Was it Likely?*, and *The Hipdeep Trilogy* are, perhaps the most admired. Mr. Earbrass is seen on the croquet lawn of his home . . .

EARBRASS. . . . Hobbies Odd, near Collapsed Pudding in Mortshire.

NARRATOR. He is studying a game—

EARBRASS. —left unfinished at the end of summer.

NARRATOR. On November 18th of alternate years, Mr. Earbrass begins writing his 'new novel'.

EARBRASS. Weeks ago I chose the title at random from a list of them I keep in a little green note book.

NARRATOR. It being tea-time of the seventeenth, he is striving mightily to think of a plot to which *The Unstrung Harp* might apply.

EARBRASS. (*Begins slowly.*) Little Henry Clump was scarcely three years old when he found out that his heart was wicked.

(HENRY enters followed by MARY as MOTHER and HAMISH as FATHER.)

HAMISH as FATHER. But remember, Henry . . . God loves you, nevertheless.

MARY as MOTHER. That's right, Henry. God loves you, nevertheless.

LITTLE HENRY. My heart is quite wicked, but God loves me, nevertheless!

EARBRASS. He soon learnt a great many texts and hymns—

LITTLE HENRY. (*Singing feebly.*) Unfurl the banner of love and let it fly!

EARBRASS. —and was always singing and saying them over to himself.

LITTLE HENRY. (*Pointing heavenward.*) Look, look!

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(MONA as HENRY'S LITTLE SISTER, FANNY ELIZA, enters and joins him.)

EARBRASS. Once when he saw a sea-gull rise from the waves—
LITTLE HENRY. Oh, Fanny Eliza, my dear little sister! When I die I shall go up to heaven just like that bird.

EARBRASS. —Little Henry made a rather adroit prediction about his future. He habitually went without sweet things.

LITTLE HENRY. So that I might be able to give pennies to stop the poor heathen from bowing down to idols.

EARBRASS. He dearly loved his parents—

LITTLE HENRY. Mother. Father.

EARBRASS. —and never tired of trying to be helpful.

LITTLE HENRY. Is there anything I might do for you? (LITTLE HENRY'S parents shake their heads "no" and turn away.)

EARBRASS. Although he was kind and good, he was sometimes tempted.

LITTLE HENRY. (*To audience.*) Get thee behind me, Satan!

EARBRASS. But, he felt his sins deeply and was truly sorry for them afterwards. (LITTLE HENRY falls to his knees in prayer.) He was often discovered upstairs . . . alone on his knees.

FATHER. Dear little Henry.

MOTHER. Dear little Henry.

(JASPER and HAROLD enter as boys. They mime ice-skating.)

EARBRASS. One Sunday he saw some boys sliding on the ice.

LITTLE HENRY. (*Rising.*) Oh, dear!

EARBRASS. He went up to them and said . . .

LITTLE HENRY. (*Crossing to the boys.*) Oh, what a shame it is for you to idle on the Sabbath instead of reading your Bibles! (*The boys laugh at HENRY and exit.*)

EARBRASS. He was very fond of Fanny Eliza, and whenever she got into a passion he became alarmed. (**FANNY ELIZA goes into a temper tantrum, waving her arms and stomping on the floor.**)

LITTLE HENRY. (*Crossing to FANNY ELIZA.*) Oh, Fanny Eliza, my dear little sister. I am deeply concerned for the salvation of your soul. (**FANNY thumbs her nose at her brother and exits. HENRY is dejected.**)

EARBRASS. On a winter afternoon when he was four years and

. . . five months old, he went to give his bread pudding to an unfortunate widow. (ORTENZIA *enters as a widow*. HENRY *crosses to her*.)

ORTENZIA *as WIDOW*. Why, my dear little Henry. How kind. (The WIDOW *waits until HENRY has turned his back then laughs hysterically and exits*.)

EARBRASS. That night, as Little Henry was returning home, a great black cloud came up. Large hailstones fell in profusion. Little Henry developed . . . a . . . sore throat, which by morning had turned into a fatal illness.

FATHER. My dear little Henry.

MOTHER. My dear little Henry.

EARBRASS. His last words were—

LITTLE HENRY. God loves me and has pardoned all my sins. I . . . am . . . happy.

FATHER. (*Weeping*.) My dear little Henry.

MOTHER. (*Weeping*.) My dear little Henry.

EARBRASS. Then he fell back, pale . . . and still . . . and dead.

MOTHER and FATHER. (*Singing*.) Unfurl the banner of love and let it fly.

EARBRASS. Henry Clump's little body turned to dust in the grave, but his soul went up to God.