

A STORM IN A TEA CUP.

A COMEDINETTA,

IN ONE ACT.

BY

BAYLE BERNARD,

*Author of "His Last Legs," "The Farmer's Story," "The
Man about Town," "Lucille," "The Mummy,"
&c., &c., &c.*

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A STORM IN A TEA CUP.

*First Performed at the Royal Princess's Theatre, on Monday,
March 20, 1854.*

CHARACTERS.

MR. FELIX SUMMERLY	Mr. W. LACY.
MRS. FELIX SUMMERLY	Mrs. W. LACY.
"THEIR RESPECTED PARENT"	Mr. CHESTER.
"THEIR JEWEL OF A SERVANT"	Miss VIVASH.
"THE HANSOM CABMAN"	Mr. BRUSH.

SCENE—A VILLA NEAR LONDON.

Time—1854.

COSTUMES.

MR. SUMMERLY.—Claret Newmarket coat, light waistcoat, sage-coloured trousers.

MRS. SUMMERLY.—Grey silk morning dress.

JANE.—Cotton gown, cap, &c.

CABMAN.—Usual dress.

PARENT.—Blue coat, white waistcoat, nankeen trousers, white neck-cloth broad brim hat.

Time—30 minutes.

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*Tempête dans une
tasse d'eau*

A STORM IN A TEA CUP.

SCENE I.—*Parlour of a Villa near London opening on a garden at back. Chimney piece, R. H. A door leading to an inner room, R. H. A Table laid for breakfast, C.—R. H., on chairs, an open carpet bag, and round the room corded boxes, carpet bags, brown paper parcels, &c., in confusion. L. H., on chair, an open portmanteau. "Their jewel of a Servant" discovered laying breakfast.*

SUMMERLY and MRS. SUMMERLY are heard outside, R. H.

SUMMERLY. Jane, Jane, breakfast ready?

JANE. Directly, Sir!

SUM. Letitia, Letitia!

MRS. S. Yes, Felix.

SUM. Five minutes to ten! half an hour, remember, to get to the docks, and at eleven we start!

He enters, R. D., loaded with cloaks, paletots, &c., umbrellas, fishing rod, hat case, which he puts on sofa.

SUM. Jane, has the tailor sent?

JANE. No, Sir, not yet.

SUM. Man brought a telescope?

JANE. No, Sir, he hasn't.

SUM. (L.) Nor a box from the printsellers?

JANE. No, Sir, there's nothing.

SUM. Well, that will do. No time to be thunderstruck! Breakfast, breakfast! *(she goes off by R. H. door, he puts down things)* Confound those fellows! I said ten at latest—told 'em that the boat was off at the half hour—but they

leave everything to the last, out of spite, I really think, at seeing other folks happy. Precious sharp run though—to start for the Rhine at half a day's notice—hadn't a thought of it till three o'clock yesterday, when Woolet came up to me, and said, in that charming frank manner of his, "Summerly, what do you say to taking my leave?" "Your leave, Sir," said I—I always "Sir" a senior. "Yes," he replied, "I'm off, you know, to morrow, and it's exquisite weather, just the thing for a trip." "You're joking, Sir," said I. "Not at all;" he replied, "I'm perfectly serious, and there's a reason I should be; I've got some law business to keep me in town which may cost me some hundreds if I'm out of the way; so what do you say, will you take my leave and let me have yours, and I don't mind allowing you my extra fortnight?" Now, there's a noble fellow! I said done, of course—was off at once—ran over to my banker's for a letter of credit—then home to Letitia, and told her to pack; and packing we were till nearly daylight this morning. But what a capital fellow to throw in his fortnight. I'm off for two months. Well may London boast of the Adamant Fire and Life Assurance Company, when that company is ennobled by such a chief clerk. Far removed be the day when we shall have to pay his insurance. Sad, sad, will be the hour when his amiable widow claims her 5,000 pounds!

MRS. SUMMERLY. (*comes from door, R. H., loaded with a dress, boots, and dressing case*) Why, Felix, have you finished?

SUM. Yes, except breakfast; packed all but myself.

MRS. S. Well, it's quite useless; I shall never be ready. I've a load of things yet, and not a cranny to put them in. (*crosses behind to portmanteau L. H.*)

SUM. Oh, nonsense, love, nonsense! all you want is a little extra decision.

MRS. S. Not at all: what I want is a little extra portmanteau.

SUM. Well, (*sits at R. of table*) you work away and I'll pour out the tea. Jane, Jane, are you coming?

MRS. SUMMERLY (*busying herself, L. H., at her open trunk*).

JANE runs in with tray, containing teapot, eggs, &c.

SUM. 'Pon my soul, you're a quick one! talk of the telegraph when you're to be had—post come in yet?

JANE. No, Sir, it isn't. (*back of table*)

SUM. Well, where's the ham? That's not come in either! You don't call this your general delivery. (*holding up plate.*
JANE runs off by R. H. door. *He cracks egg, pours out tea*)

MRS. S. (*aside*) No, no, it's no use, it's no use; I shall ruin that dress—eh? There's his bag, not a quarter full yet, with its mouth gaping open as if it asked to be fed. (*goes to R. H.*) His handkerchief at top—the very thing for my boots—now they're sure not to be crushed; and here's room for my desk between his trousers and waistcoat!

SUM. Letty, are you ready?

MRS. S. Yes, in a moment.

SUM. Ah, I knew all you wanted was a little decision!

MRS. S. (*giving desk a push*) Very true, a little decision.

SUM. Everything gives way when it comes to a push.

MRS. S. (*aside*) I hope not in this case!

JANE enters with telescope and box of cigars.

SERVANT. Telescope, Sir, and a box of cigars.

SUM. Cigars! bless my soul, quite forgot them, and what should I have done without them! (*takes knife and opens box*)

Exit JANE R. door.

MRS. S. And now for my breakfast. (*sits L. of table*)

SUM. (*jumps up*) Yes, the old sort, and what an odour they've got! a positive bouquet—no cabbage leaf here—no tincture of logwood. All honor to Raleigh, benefactor of man, who puts so much good into every one's mouth; but where are they to go? carpet bag's full: there's her portmanteau open, just room I see for these and the telescope. (*crosses, to it puts them in*) Yes and my railway library, my shilling's worth of history, horror and fun, Eugene Sue and the Wandering Jew—who knows, perhaps I may meet him?

MRS. S. (*turning*) Why, Felix, what are you doing?

SUM. Packing away my cigars.

MRS. S. On the top of my dresses? (*jumping up*)

SUM. Why, my love, they won't hurt.

MRS. S. That box will destroy them.

SUM. Then we'll dispense with the box—there fragrant shower. (*empties box into trunk then throws it away*)

MRS. S. Well, but cigars are not eau de Cologne, and they may make people think that I smoke them myself; they're a horrible habit, your only bad taste; your cigars, as you know, are always provoking me.

SUM. And yet the poor things are the mildest Havannah's. But I say, see my telescope—bought it last night, and got the maker to oil it that it might come out at a sling. (*throws it open*, MRS. S. *slightly starts*) There's a fine fellow, carries as far as an 84 pounder.

MRS. S. And looks something like one.

SUM. No matter the distance, makes everything plain.

MRS. S. Then I beg that you'll use it when you look at the women.

JANE *returns from R. with parcels*

JANE. From the tailor, if you please, Sir, and a shop in Cheapside. (*goes off again*)

MRS. S. More parcels, Felix, why where are they to go?

SUM. To Germany, I hope. (MRS. S. *goes up to table and gets a cup of coffee, then comes forward again*)

These are our best treasures, I didn't forget them though my time was so short; look here, Letty, here—here's a handbook, my darling. (*opens parcel*)

MRS. S. (L.) A handbook!

SUM. A handbook to tell us all we're to see—roads, cities, and pictures; inform us of everything from the price of a cutlet to the style of a Raphael. (*putting it on table*)

MRS. S. Well, that is a treasure!

SUM. And a pocket vocabulary in German and English, with questions on every conceivable subject. I've learnt already how to say "How d'ye do," and bring us some dinner, "bringen dass mittags mahl," bring in the beef.

MRS. S. I see.

SUM. Not at all hard, it's so very like English, (*reads*) "wie befinden sie sich," that's how dy'e do, or how do we find you? we befiniding, quite English—don't know what sich is, suppose it means such.

MRS. S. Well, Felix, well.

SUM. Then here's an auxiliary—a map of the Rhine that would make a stair carpet! There's a spread of knowledge, (*throws it out*) with the river winding down it like a worm in a bottle. (*gives map to her*)

MRS. S. Why, with all these companions, we might as well stay at home. (*folding map*)

SUM. And here's something more.

MRS. S. Good gracious me!

SUM. My coat for the steamer; it may come on to blow hard,

you know—you go below, I stop on deck, to have a chat with the Captain and a friendly cigar—we pace the plank together puffing away like a couple of funnels. (*puts on hat and coat, &c., crosses L. and R.*) There's a suit of armour to make a man weather proof!—Who's to be frightened in such rigging as this?

MRS. S. Why whoever looks at you—but now let's finish breakfast!

SUM. Yes! Yes! to breakfast. (*throws off coat, sits at table*) The fly'll be here at the half hour?

MRS. S. Yes, to a minute.

SUM. And your father's going with us?

MRS. S. He is, to the Docks.

SUM. And some friends are coming in.

MRS. S. The Browns and the Simpsons, just to shake hands.

SUM. Kind of 'em really—excellent people. They seem to be as pleased as if they were going themselves; and if they are delighted, what should I be? Oh, Letty! Letty—I don't think I could be happier if Woolet had popp'd off and I was at the head of the office.

MRS. S. And would that event please you?

SUM. Officially, of course, love! (*half turns chair*) One's income and spirits are like gas and a balloon—as one enlarges t'other rises (*turns wholly to front—spreads himself out, &c.*) But a trip up the Rhine, the enjoyment of all others I've panted so long for—have talked and have dreamt of—with its fine German wines and its old German songs. learnt one last year (*roars out*)

“Be blessings on the Rhine,

The Rhine, whereon the grapes are growing!”

MRS. S. Oh, Felix!

SUM. The Rhine! What's the matter—have I got a bad ear?

MRS. S. No; but you'll give me one.

SUM. And then to go with you, love—every year we've been somewhere during the two we've been married—first into Wales then to Boulogne; but this was a treat above all to partake with you—to share the inspiration of its scenery, its climate; to drink in by your side, love!—(I'll take some more tea!)—to drink in by your side its poetical

beauty. (*she puts a roll into his hand*) You, whose affection has made my life such an Eden; whose sweetness, whose kindness—(sugar, my darling!)—have turned a wild scape-grace into a being all quietude, mildness, and—

MRS. S. Milk?

SUM. Thank you, love—thank you! Yes, Letty, yes, it's a proud recollection that our happiness has been a stream that has flowed on unruffled; all the world to each other, we'd nothing to wish for, confiding as we have done with the most perfect reliance.

Enter JANE, D. R. with a letter.

JANE. A letter, if you please, Sir; but I've had such an accident (*behind table*)

SUM. An accident! (*turning to her*)

JANE. Yes, Sir, in my hurry just now, I upset the ink, and running to the ham, Sir, the letter fell into it!

SUM. What, into the frying pan?

JANE. No, Sir, the ink. (*holding it by corner*)

SUM. And now is served up with appropriate gravy—a nice affair, certainly—international postage, an epistle from France, with our own kitchen stamp. *Exit JANE, R. D.*

MRS. S. From France, Felix!

SUM. Yes, but plague take the girl, the ink has run over both the post mark and name—left nothing but “—ummerly, sincerely.”

MRS. S. And don't you know the hand?

SUM. Can't say I do.

MRS. S. And you're expecting no letter?

SUM. None from abroad—your father expects one—he wrote to my friend Hooker, who lives at Bourdeaux, to send him some claret, and has had no reply.

MRS. R. Well, then, let me look. (*takes it*) This writing's a female's.

SUM. Certainly like it. (*turns, helps himself to ham, eats*)

MRS. S. But the post mark indeed is—(*blotting it on table L. H.*) and yet, that's a B and an O and a U—Boulogne. Why, Felix, this letter's for me!

SUM. For you, love!

MRS. C. For me, it comes from Jane Morrison!—she's at Boulogne, we met her last year there!

SUM. Jane Morrison!

MRS. S. Yes, my old friend and schoolfellow, who's there with her brother.

SUM. Oh! ah! With her brother! (*stops eating*)

MRS. S. (*going to open it*) No, I'll read it after breakfast, or when I've done packing, for I've a world still to do, and—(*puts it in her pocket*)

SUM. You won't read it now, then?

MRS. S. Why, I can guess what it's about; she has all sorts of nonsense to tell me of new comers, perhaps of our acquaintance—there now. (*clearing corner of table for contents of pocket*) I've finished breakfast, and, as time is on the wing, let me finish the portmanteau. (*she leaves table for her trunk L.—he remains at table with his knife*)

SUM. (*aside*) There—with her brother!

MRS. S. Why, Felix, you monster, you've not only put in your horrid cigars, but see the gloves you have put in too, and this lot of books, when I wasn't looking. Oh, I'm a duck of a wife to indulge you this way.

SUM. There—with her brother!

MRS. S. (*turning*) Why, are you going to sit there all day?

SUM. Why, I haven't done breakfast, I'm so hungry this morning—seem to smell the sea air, and this ham is so good that—(*exting quickly and looking down*) I say, my love, you haven't put by that letter because I'm in the way?

MRS. S. (*turning*) What, Felix!

SUM. I say—because I'm here.

MRS. S. Because you are here?

SUM. Yes!

MRS. S. And do you think I have any secrets?

SUM. Why I can't say you have had.

MRS. S. And am I going to commence now?

SUM. Well, I really don't know, but—(*he eats and drinks, making a great clatter*)

MRS. S. Why, Felix, what's entered your head? (*advancing to table*)

SUM. Some ham, but this moment, and famous it is.

MRS. S. Well, this is really too good.

SUM. (*clattering*) What, the meat or the question?

MRS. S. Well, I've no time to laugh, but what can make you so stupid? (*she returns to trunk*)

SUM. (*aside*) Time enough to compliment.

JANE appears at door.

JANE. (R. H.) Mrs. Andrews, if you please, Ma'am, has brought you what she promised.

MRS. S. (L. H.) What, the mantle?

JANE. Yes, Ma'am, and hopes she is in time.

MRS. S. Why the excellent creature made it up for herself to go abroad in this summer, but illness preventing, she brings it to me. Now, Felix, you shall see it, and say if it's not a most charming invention.

SUM. (*aside*) I hope it's the only one.

SERV. And she says, if you please, Ma'am, that you promised her the key of the enclosure whilst you were away?

MRS. S. Oh, certainly, certainly—I've got it in my pocket, but it's so frightfully crammed, what with letters and packets and all sorts of things—no—I must turn them all out. (*empties her pocket on the table*) Yes, there it is, I'll take it myself—but you needn't stop. Felix, you can pack away and I'll be back in an instant. (*she goes off behind the table with*

JANE)

SUM. (*turns letter over with his fork*) Comes from Jane Morrison. Well, I suppose that's the fact; and yet it's very odd that that brother of hers writes just such a scrawl—that Captain, confound him, who's also Letty's old friend, and used to call every morning, and give her his arm, whilst I was compelled to pair off with his sister; they must have walked ten miles a day up and down that long pier. Now I fancy I can see his very face in this letter, (*spikes it with his fork, and holds it up*) his wretched white look (*turns white side to the audience*) and his black, dirty moustachios. (*turns inked side*) It can't be from him, of course not; that's nonsense—and yet really his impudence was a something so great,—that I should just like to,—open it—yes, open it—if my honour's concerned; but then it's concerned two ways. Not exactly the thing to break open a letter—What, not a wife's? Isn't all that's hers mine? haven't I law on my side? Yes, but not honour. Honour would say it's a dirty, contemptible, pitiful thing to break open a letter—an act that no gentleman could ever commit. True, replies Prudence; but ends you know sometimes justify means, and if peace is at stake— Pooh, pooh, exclaims Honour, no ends whatever can justify wrong. Come

come, rejoins Prudence, there's self-preservation; if a pistol were aimed at you, you'd knock it aside. This letter's a pistol and aimed at the heart, and do you mean to say we've no right to discharge its contents? Prudence has it all hollow (*rises*), hasn't left Honour a spindle to stand on, and so having conclusively settled the matter, I—(*he is about to break the seal when MRS. SUMMERLY returns in the jacket; he puts the letter behind him*)

MRS. S. Well, Felix, it's on, and how does it look? (*turns round*)

SUM. (L.) Look—why—why—

MRS. S. Why what's the matter—anything awkward?

SUM. (*aside*) About one of us, certainly.

MRS. S. I see you're not pleased, though you don't like to say so.

SUM. Pleased! I'm delighted—think it's highly becoming.

MRS. S. Well, it's wonderfully comfortable; and now to lock up—you've finished what you were about?

SUM. Why, no, not entirely.

MRS. S. What wasting your time still? now everything's packed, I see—you've been wanting to open something.

SUM. Letty!

MRS. S. Ah, you have now—you have—it's always in this way that work gets behind. (*his back is turned to audience; he shakes the letter*)

SUM. Behind!

MRS. S. But there's no standing still. (*goes up to c. table*) These matters of mine must go back to my pocket—letters, keys, scissors—

SUM. (*aside*) I must get rid of this somewhere; pitch it into her trunk. (*getting up to it, L.*)

MRS. S. Eh! why, where's Jane's letter? Felix, have you seen it?

SUM. (*making a pitch at her trunk, turns*) Seen what?

MRS. S. Jane Morrison's letter—do you know where I put it?

SUM. Why, how very absurd to ask that question of me.

MRS. S. Why, I must have laid it somewhere; I thought on the table.

SUM. Then, on the table you'll find it—on the table, of course—

MRS. S. But, you see, it's not on the table, though I'm sure it's in the room; perhaps it's under the table—help me to move it—now, do help me to move it, Felix. (*he crosses in front to L. of table*) Why don't you take both hands?

SUM. (*R. of table*) Where's the need if one's enough—if one hand will do? (*keeping letter behind him with one hand, JANE enters with paper parcel and sees it*)

MRS. S. No, not a sign of it. Oh, Jane, have you found it—that letter that came this morning, that you dropped in the ink?

SUM. Yes, Jane, have you found it?

JANE. Why, isn't that it in your hand, Sir? (*down, R.*)

SUM. My hand!

JANE. Yes, Sir, which you're holding behind you.

MRS. S. Behind you!

SUM. Bless my soul, so it is!

Exit JANE.

MRS. S. And so, Mr. Felix, you were hiding it, were you?

SUM. Why, certainly, Letty; I—(*gives letter*)

MRS. S. And merely to teaze me, when our time is so short; you're a nice person, really, but I shall be even with you! (*advances L., puts letter in her pocket*)

SUM. Then you're not going to read it! (*advances, R.*)

MRS. S. To read it! why, Felix, you're wonderfully anxious—I begin to think you're in love with Jane Morrison.

SUM. In love with her?

MRS. S. Yes, for you were very attentive, you know, at Boulogne—you were her constant companion.

SUM. Because you were every day snapped up by the Captain.

MRS. S. The Captain!

SUM. Who had also the honour to be your early acquaintance.

MRS. S. Certainly.

SUM. And who now, perhaps, writes about old recollections.

MRS. S. And do you think this letter's from him?

SUM. Well, if I must be explicit—

MRS. S. Then—now all's explained—you're again so absurd as to be jealous of that person.

SUM. Jealous!—I deny it. I despise a jealous man; and should doubly despise myself to be jealous of him, an effemi-

nate puppy, who was my utter contempt—a disgrace to the army, where, at least, we want men.

MRS. S. And which, Sir, in his case, possesses a gentleman.

SUM. A gentleman, indeed, who puts scent in his handkerchief!

MRS. S. Who is my old acquaintance.

SUM. And was to have married you. I can't say it's a compliment that I was preferred to him.

MRS. S. And you're making me doubt whether it's proved an advantage.

SUM. Oh, I dare say!—pity you lost him—but whatever your feelings, I hope you'll respect mine. Jealous of him, indeed!

MRS. S. And yet if I retract, I don't see that you gain by it; for that takes away the sole excuse for your rudeness, your conduct to the Captain, which everyone wondered at. Oh, if I had so acted towards one of your friends, what a storm would have followed!

SUM. Well, and so you did act. Only a twelvemonth ago, your conduct was infinitely worse to Miss Hooker.

MRS. S. Miss Hooker!

SUM. Miss Hooker—and merely because, as her father's old friend, I went down to Streatham to dine there on Sunday.

MRS. S. (*energetically*) Miss Hooker is a vulgar, illiterate being, who hasn't one claim to the name of a lady.

SUM. She's a generous, excellent, well-disposed girl, who has it in her power to make any man happy.

MRS. S. Then I regret very much she didn't try to make you.

SUM. And perhaps so do I, Madam—perhaps so do I.

MRS. S. And, if she had, I would have given full praise to her talents.

SUM. Which you praise enough now, for you're dying of jealousy.

MRS. S. I jealous of her!

SUM. Yes, of her, Madam, of her.

MRS. S. Defence, in such case, I should think degradation; and now, Mr. Summerly, you believe that this letter has been sent by a person in whom I encourage a secret attachment?

SUM. I regret to confess it. (*with a long sigh*)

MRS. S. Which letter, in consequence, you expect me to open?

SUM. I expect you to open.

MRS. S. Then, Mr. Summerly, you had better be seated, Sir, for I must tell you you're very likely—to wait!

SUM. You will not?

MRS. S. I will not. If you can insult me so much as to indulge this suspicion, on you shall devolve the further shame of disproving it.

SUM. Oh, very good!—just as you please, Madam—grand manner certainly of hiding your fears—of saying, in fact, you're afraid to convince me; but I'm happy to tell you there's not the least need, for I can guess its contents; and, if you like, you shall hear them.

MRS. S. (*goes up L., brings down chair, and throws herself in it*) Oh, with all my heart!

SUM. He begins, then, in this way—"My adored Letitia!"

MRS. S. (*turning to him*) Mr. Summerly!

SUM. Shall I go on?

MRS. S. Oh, if you like! (*turning away again*)

SUM. "My angel of angels—I learn that your husband has obtained his yearly leave, and proposes a tour."

MRS. S. Now, how should he learn that? (*turning round to him*)

SUM. Well, he imagines it—just the same thing. (*she turns away again*) "Where is your destination?—let me know by return of post, that I may instantly follow you; or is it not possible to persuade the good creature to come to *Boulogne*,—as you did come last year—where my sister, of course, would engage his attention, whilst—"

MRS. S. (*turning round to him again*) And you've the audacity to say he could write such a letter?

SUM. I strongly suspect it.

MRS. S. And that I could receive it?

SUM. I regret to say ditto.

MRS. S. (*rises*) Then, Mr. Summerly, you must feel that I no longer deserve the name of your wife, and that our duty is to part, Sir.

SUM. Well, Madam, to part.

MRS. S. And that, on the instant, without a moment's delay!

SUM. Without a moments delay !

MRS. S. So, it's fortunate this discussion has taken place now, since it will save you the intended expense of my journey !

SUM. Fortunate, indeed—it saves money and character !

JANE *looks in from door*

JANE. The cab's come, Sir.

MRS. S. Then send it away again ! (JANE *looks surprised without moving*) I am not going.

SUM. You are not, but I am ; tell it to stop. (JANE *disappears*) Do you think I mean to lose a long-treasured enjoyment because you are not with me ? No, Madam, no, I shall go to the Rhine, if I go there alone—you can stay here ! The tradespeople, of course, will supply all you want, and—

MRS. S. And so you think I will stay here—moping all by myself, whilst you're flying about as gay as you please ! No, Mr. Summerly, if you go to the Rhine, Sir, I shall go to Paris ! (*goes to L.*)

SUM. To Paris !

MRS. S. To Paris ! Aunt Martha offered to take me not ten days ago, (*returns to C.*) and I shall send her a note instantly to say I consent.

SUM. (*pausing with vexation*) And would you, Madam, with no better guardian than an invalid old aunt, expose yourself to all the temptations of Paris ?

MRS. S. Temptations, Mr. Summerly, are in the heart—not the eyes !

SUM. Would you hazard your reputation, your priceless repute, by conduct that the kindest could not fail to condemn ? If you have no respect for yourself, have you none for my feelings—for the name of my wife, Madam ?

MRS. S. And so I am to value what you throw away. However, don't fear, Sir—however provoked, don't fear I shall be wanting in respect to myself, and now, as time flies, we'll separate our luggage, and then you can take your course—I can take mine. You start to-day, I start to-morrow. (*she goes to her trunk L.H.*)

SUM. Of course, Madam, of course ; and the result, as you say, will indeed be a saving. All I shall want now is my bag and a hat box—just lock 'em up and call in the man—and (*he goes to his bag R.H.*) a few things of yours, Madam

—your boots, and your hair-brushes, and your trumpery parcels (*he throws them out on the floor*)

MRS. S. And a few things of yours, Sir, your books and your gloves, and your horrid cigars (*throws them out, then loose cigars, then grasps a bundle*), or rather dead cabbage leaves steeped in a tanpit (*throws the bundle, which he catches*)

SUM. Havannahs! Havannahs, Madam! Two guineas a pound! That's the last blow; after that, would a worm even want spirit to wriggle? No, that has nerved me, and now, Madam, we separate (*grasping his bag and hat-box, she clasps a band-box and parasol*)

MRS. S. Yes, Sir, we separate.

SUM. Wide as two continents.

MRS. S. Wide as two continents.

SUM. As Asia and Africa.

MRS. S. With a desert between us (*JANE looks in again*)

JANE. Mr. and Miss Johnson and all the Simpsons, if you please, Sir.

SUM. Our neighbours—very well, you'll see them, of course, as you're going to stay, and you can explain to them, say what you like as to *why* you're deserted, but as my time's limited, I shall be off.

MRS. S. Indeed you shall not, Sir—Jane, leave the room—(*JANE exits*) leave me to explain, why should I have to endure that disgrace more than you, or indeed half so much? As this step is your seeking, I desire, Mr. Summerly, that you explain all yourself, and if you won't go to them, you must at least see my father.

SUM. Your father?

MRS. C. Of course, he will be here in a minute, and he, I presume, will require an explanation.

SUM. (*aside*) Well, that's true enough.

MRS. S. And one, let me add, that will prove satisfactory.

SUM. (*aside*) But that gains my point, that must make her reveal. Well, Madam, well, if I must tell our friends, if you force me to acquaint them with this shameful necessity, I must have my credentials, I must furnish both to them and your father the proof.

MRS. S. The proof!

SUM. That letter you've got, Madam, that letter, if you please.

MRS. S. Oh, very well !

SUM. Which, awkward as it is, you see—must be surrendered.

MRS. S. Indeed, Mr. Summerly, that letter is yours.
(*draws it forth and extends it*)

SUM. That's not the right one.

MRS. S. My aunt's, I beg pardon ! (*returning it, disengages another*)

SUM. Be certain this time—just be sure it's the one (*she draws it out, looks at it*) Well, Madam, well ! (*extends his hand for it without looking*)

MRS. S. (*aside*) Why, now I look again I've a very great doubt, that I'm almost convinced this is not her handwriting.

SUM. (*aside*) I knew I had fixed her—I was sure she wouldn't give it.

MRS. S. And yet there's a B, and an O R D—why, this is not from Boulogne, this comes from Bourdeaux.

SUM. Bourdeaux ?

MRS. S. Yes ; where I don't know a soul ; it's not for me, after all !

SUM. Not for you !

MRS. S. No, Sir, so take it, and welcome ! (*she flings it on the stage and goes, L., he takes it up*)

SUM. Well, really, how very odd !

MRS. S. (*with bitterness*) And now, Sir—(*returning to c.*) I wish you joy of your valuable proof, with which you can enlighten your friends as soon as you like.

SUM. How exceedingly awkward !

MRS. S. This grand demonstration of your generous charges—this ample excuse for its manly results !

SUM. What a plaguy position ! (*aside*)

MRS. S. And as your time's so very precious, so exceedingly brief, perhaps you'll adjourn to our good friend's at once, though without your credentials—with only a letter from a girl at Bourdeaux. At Bourdeaux ! why, isn't it there where the Hookers live ?

SUM. The Hookers !

MRS. S. And their excellent, well-disposed daughter, Miss Betsy ?

SUM. (*aside, gravely*) She does.

MRS. S. Who offers such a proof of her taste and pro-

priety as to address an old lover who's been married these two years.

SUM. (*aside*) Confound it! I hope not.

MRS. S. This model of a woman—this modern *Prize Maiden*!

SUM. (*aside*) She's deuced romantic! what if it should be so?

MRS. S. And now, Mr. Summerly, perhaps *you'll* read the letter?

SUM. (*aside, gravely*) Not for a hundred pounds!

MRS. S. Perhaps you'll be so good as to show the beauty of confidence—confidence, the source of domestic felicity!

SUM. (*he picks up her boots from floor and begins brushing them*) Well, of all the fairy coverings that ever graced woman's foot—

MRS. S. Never mind my foot, Sir! (*pulling him up and round to her*) Look in my face!

SUM. And such bijou as these to be covered with dust!

MRS. S. Which you hope, on the contrary, to throw in my eyes! Do you mean, Sir, to read it?

SUM. (*polishing boots with coat sleeve*) Now really, my darling, this affair's so absurd!

MRS. S. Absurd, Sir! A letter that's sent by Miss Hooker!

SUM. Who's a positive ninny—the greatest fool in the world!

MRS. S. Then the greater brute you to encourage her feelings.

SUM. (*getting angry*) Encourage—I deny it! I don't care a pin for her.

MRS. S. Say rather for *truth*, Sir! When you talk in this manner, you know you'd have *married* her—were stopped by a quarrel, and were so base to me as to keep it all secret.

SUM. (*loudly*) Silence, Madam, silence!

MRS. S. And now it's quite clear you're as loving as ever—

SUM. As loving!

MRS. S. And this tour up the Rhine was, after all, a mere scheme to get over to France and drop down to Bourdeaux.

SUM. Well, there's no standing this! rather than this I'd break open a mail bag! *he throws down the boots, seizes the letter and is about to break it open, when her*

RESPECTED PARENT *enters at back.*

PARENT. Well, Letty! well, Felix!

MRS. S. Oh, here's my father!

SUM. In time, then—good time?

MRS. S. To hear its contents.

SUM. To hear it—to read it! My dear Sir, here's a letter.

MRS. S. Yes, here's a letter!

SUM. Which I wish you to read, Sir.

MRS. S. Which I wish you to read, Sir!

SUM. Which your daughter insists is intended for me.

MRS. S. And my husband has said is intended for me.

SUM. So do you be the judge, Sir.

MRS. S. Ay, do you be the judge.

SUM. I demand the ordeal.

MRS. S. And I abide the result.

PARENT. (*opens letter, an enclosure falls out*) Why, it isn't for either of you!

BOTH. For neither!

PARENT. For neither; this letter's for me!

BOTH. For you, Sir?

PARENT. For me; it's about the claret I ordered.

SUM. The claret!

PARENT. From Hooker's, who's ill—lost my address—so his wife has enclosed his reply to yourself. (*he turns away to read the letter; they pause in confusion, then look at each other*)

MRS. S. Why, Felix!

SUM. Letitia!

MRS. S. And—and—is it then possible—

SUM. That all this tornado—

MRS. S. Has actually arisen—

SUM. From nothing at all!

MRS. S. From nothing at all!

PARENT. (*advancing*) And so you've been quarrelling—actually quarrelling at a moment like this, when you've most cause to be happy! when the boat starts at 11, and—(*he looks at his watch*) it's past the half hour.

SUM. It is, Sir.

PARENT. It is; so throw on your things—we'll put in the luggage. Here, Jane! Cabman! Jane! (*he seizes bags, parcels, &c., and the JANE and CABMAN entering do the same, and go out with them to the back and return till the room is cleared*)

SUM. Then, Letty, my beauty, here's your mantle and ugly. (*tying shade on bonnet*)

MRS. S. And, Felix, my darling, here's your hat and your wrapper.

SUM. But these dear little boots—I must find room for them!

MRS. S. And these darling cigars—they'll go in my reticule!

PARENT. (*returns from outside at back*) Now, are you ready? for we are—come along. *Exit.*

SUM. Very good, quite ready, come along, Letty. Stop—just a moment—only to say a word—a word to some friends we leave here. (*they return to the audience*) We've scarcely a moment, as of our course you perceive, but before our departure, we just wish to say—

MRS. S. Yes, we just wish to say—

SUM. That as people often quarrel about nothing at all—

MRS. S. About nothing at all—

SUM. At the time of all others, when they ought to be happy—

MRS. S. When they ought to be happy—

SUM. If they'd just take the trouble to begin by enquiry—

MRS. S. And add to enquiry a little belief—

SUM. They'd not only save themselves needless vexation—

Enter RESPECTED PARENT at back.

MRS. S. But what is as valuable, public respect.

PARENT. (*at back*) Are you coming?

SUM. Come along, Letty. (*they run off*)

CURTAIN.