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SEPARATE MAINTENANCE.

A Farce,

IN ONE ACT.

BY

J. STIRLING COYNE, Esq.,

AUTHOR OF

The Home Wreck; The Little Rebel; Black Sheep; The Love Knot;
Presented at Court; What will they say at Brompton? Man of Many
Friends; My Wife's Daughter; Box and Cox Married and Settled;
Binks the Bagman; How to settle Accounts with your Laundress;
Did you ever send your Wife to Camberwell? A Duel in the
Dark; Leo the Terrible; Mrs. Bunbury's Spoons; The
Water Witches; An Unprotected Female; The Pas de
Fascination; The Hope of the Family; Willikins
and hys Dinah; The Old Chateau; Fraud and
its Victims; Catching a Mermaid; The
Secret Agent; Samuel in Search of
Himself; That Affair at Finchley;
&c., &c.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,]

THEATRICAL PUBLISHER,

LONDON.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Mr. Pennipother..... *Mr. Keeley*
Mrs. Pennipother..... *Mrs. Keeley*
Jane Briggs *Mrs. Humby*
Lord Dudley Brompton, of the Blues *Miss A. Woulds*
Sir Toppleton Toffts *Mrs. Buckingham*
The Honourable Frederick Lipscombe.... *Miss Messent*
Captain Featheridge, of the Guards *Miss Duval*

First produced at the Haymarket Theatre, April, 1849.
Time in Representation—45 minutes.

COSTUME.

Mr. Pennipother—Striped dressing gown, blue dress coat, white waistcoat, black trousers, white nightcap.
Mrs. Pennipother—White muslin dress.
Jane Briggs—Coloured muslin, cap and apron.
Sir Toppleton—Light blue loose coat, yellow trousers, black hat.
Lord Dudley Brompton, The Hon. Frederick Lipscombe, and Captain Featheridge—Dark blue frock coats, with scales, dark blue trousers with gold lace down the sides, crimson sashes, undress caps, with gold bands.



SEPARATE MAINTENANCE.

SCENE.

A handsomely furnished ground floor Apartment in a Villa in the Regent's Park. At the back a large French window reaching to the ground, and extending nearly the entire width of the room, with folding glass door, c. through which is seen the lawn of the Villa, planted with shrubs, and ornamented with flower pots and stands. A verandah runs along the front of the Villa, outside. A practicable window, 4 E. R. H. Door, 2 N. E. H. Two doors. 2 & 4 E. L. H. Piano, and table, R. H. Table, L. H. Bust, on a pedestal, L. H. A table, C.

JANE enters, U. E. L. H. with coffee pot and cups—places them on table, C.

Jane. Well, if I hadn't a strong constitution, I could never stand this house! Not that the place is so bad, neither. I've twelve pounds a year, and a holiday once a month. We keep that real blessing to housemaids, a footman in livery—and we live near the Albany Barracks! But what's wages—what's holidays—what's a footman—or, indeed, what's all the soldiers in the Albany Barracks, to a girl, if she hasn't no comfort of her life? I like my missus very well, and master's the pleasantest gentleman that ever slipped half a crown into my hand, but, somehow, they're always pulling the marriage knot contrary ways, and never agree on nothing but disagreement; so that between them they worrit me worse than a gallows slave! I'm sure it's enough to give a timid young woman a turn agin cannoble happiness! For my part, I believe the marriage union is very like the Poor Law Union—it always separates men and their wives! And as to the torch of Hymen—the only good it does is to light a fire for cooking family broils! *(Bell rings, L. H.)* Now, there—there's master's bell! I wonder what he wants. P'rhaps he's got no buttons on his shirt? very likely! or, may be,

he wonders what's become of the bottle of Eau de Cologne—just as if he might not have known that the cat drank it. (*Bell rings, R. H.*) Ha! There's missuss's bell. I knew there would be an opposition call of the house before long. That's always the way with them! (*Bell rings R. and L. H.*) There they go together! Well, of course I can't attend to both—so I'll be perfectly impartial, and pay no attention to either. (*Bells ring R. and L. again.*) There they go again! (*Sings.*) "Those evening bells!"

Enter MR PENNIPOTTER, L. H.

Penni. Ha! I suppose I might ring my arm off before any one would come. Where's James?

Jane James, sir? I believe he's gone to fetch the "Three Musquetars," for Missus.

Penni. Three Musqueteers!

Jane. Yes, sir: from the Library.

Penni. Oh, the Library! I wish Mrs. Pennipotter would not make a point of sending him to the Library when I want him to go to the Post Office. You must take it yourself, Jane.

Mrs. P. (*Within, R. D.*) Jane! Jane, come here directly!

Jane. Oh, dear! There's Missis calling me to hook her, sir.

Penni. Hook her? Don't stir—I desire you. A man to be contradicted in this way in his own house—(*Pauses.*) But it don't matter—you may go. (*Exit Jane R. H. D.*) This is the anniversary of our marriage—and I have determined that nothing shall make me quarrel with her to-day. We've got over the dinner pretty smoothly, and I'll be as placid as a mill-pond for the remainder of the evening. If she tries to irritate me, I'll say—(*Looking towards window, c.*) 'Pon my life, that's a monstrous fine girl walking in the Park—(*Takes an opera glass from table, L. and looks through it, at the window.*)—and that's a beautiful King Charles she has with her! I wish she'd cast her eye this way—she might see something deserving her attention. Ha! bless me—the dog has left her to scrape acquaintance with another little dog, and she don't miss him. He's running this way! If I could catch him now—(*Runs to window, and is whistling to the dog, and calling.*) Whew! whew! Here. Bijou! Frisk! Tinker! Tinker! Here, boy! Here, Mignon! Whew! whew! (*He runs out, c. and is seen running amongst the shrubs, as if in pursuit of a dog, whistling and calling all the while. He at length catches the dog and returns breathless with*

his exertion, to the house.) Ha! pretty creature—I've got him, but I've lost his mistress. She's out of sight—and—I haven't breath—left—to run after her. Stay—here's a name engraved on his collar. (*Reads.*) "Arabella"—nothing more. The information is far from satisfactory. Never mind—there will be handbills out describing him, to-morrow:—"Lost, in the Park—a small dog—by a Lady—marked with black and white spots"—and then I shall have the pleasure of restoring the dear animal to the fair owner—who, by a sudden impulse of gratitude, will throw her arms about my neck—(*Clasps the dog to his breast.*)—exclaiming—Curse you, you ugly brute—would you bite me? My wife must not know anything of this little affair, so I'll conceal my prize in this room for the present. (*Goes into room L. H. as Mrs. Pennipother, followed by Jane, enters, &c. H.*)

Jane. It's very true, ma'am. Husbands and donkies are the obstinatest things in nature. The best plan for managing them is to let them have their own way.

Mrs. P. Well—and do I ever oppose my husband? Never! I've been a perfect model of patience—an uncomplaining house lamb—(as my dear friend, Mrs. Thornbury says)—(*Pennipother appears at L. H. D.*)—who would not quarrel with a fly, if I wasn't provoked to it. I'm sure there's nothing on my part that should prevent Augustus and I living as happily together as a pair of turtle doves.

Penni. (*Advancing.*) Then, my love, we shall be happy. From this day forth, nothing shall disturb the peaceful tenor of our lives.

Mrs. P. Ah, now you do speak rationally, Augustus! Shall we agree, then, never to quarrel again?

Penni. Certainly, my love; and Jane, here, shall be witness of the compact. Observe, Jane—your mistress promises never to irritate me again.

Mrs. P. No, my dear Augustus, you mistake. It is you who promise never to contradict me any more.

Penni. Hem! Suppose, then, we make the condition mutual?

Mrs. P. Agreed. There's my hand on it!

Penni. And there's my hand, and seal! (*He kisses her.*)

Jane. Witness present—Jane Briggs.

Mrs. P. And whenever Jane perceives the slightest symptom of disagreement between us, she shall cry—"Hem!"

Penni. Oh, there will be no necessity, my love. However, if any little difference should arise, she may give us warning by crying "Hem!" Do you hear, Jane?

Jane. Yes, sir. I'll give you warning, never fear.

Penni. Ha! By the bye, Angelina, do you remember that this is the anniversary of the auspicious day that made you Mrs. Pennipother?

Mrs. P. Ten years this very day, my love.

Penni. Ten years! (*Sighs.*) Ah!

Mrs. P. What do you sigh for, Mr. Pennipother?

Penni. I didn't sigh, Mrs Pennipother!

Mrs. P. You did sigh, sir!

Penni. I didn't—did I, Jane?

Jane. Oh, yes, you did, sir—and a very miserable sigh, too.

Penni. Ah—well, perhaps I did. I was thinking of the morning we were married. How beautiful you looked in your blue silk bonnet.

Mrs. P. It was pink, love—you remember—

Penni. No—I beg your pardon, my dear—it was blue. I shall never forget it—never! It was a heavenly blue!

Mrs. P. Pink, Augustus, Pink! pink!

Penni. I'm positive it was blue.

Jane. (*aside.*) It's almost time for me to come in with my "Hem!"

Mrs. P. Allow me to know something about the matter, my dear. I ordered the bonnet. Pink!

Penni. And I paid for the bonnet—blue!

Mrs. P. Ha, ha, ha! Really, Augustus, you are making yourself quite ridiculous. It was pink, with blonde lace-trimming.

Penni. Damn the trimming, madam—it was blue!

Jane. Hem!

Penni. (*Recollecting himself.*) Thank you, Jane—thank you. [*Jane exits U. E. L. H. for coffee.*] Ha, ha, ha! What a silly affair to differ about. Let's think no more about it.

Mrs. P. Certainly: if you confess the bonnet was blue.

Penni. Any colour in the rainbow you please. And now, Angelina, I'll take a cup of tea with you.

Mrs. P. Coffee, Augustus.

Penni. I like tea better

Mrs. P. Coffee, you know, is my favourite beverage.

Penni. Then you may take your coffee, madam—

Jane. Hem!

Penni. (*Recollecting himself.*) Eh? And on this auspicious day, I'll take a cup along with you (*Sits at table.*)

Mrs. P. My dear, you'll catch cold in the draught, there. (*Points to another chair.*) Come and sit here.

Penni. No, I like the air. There's a freshness in it that delights me

Mrs. P. But you'll be having the rheumatism for it, to-morrow—and very likely, too, you'll get a sore throat, and a swelled face, and a touch of the lumbago, and a tooth ache, and a stiff neck, and a bad cold—and you'll be laid up for a month at least, and we shall have a doctor's bill for you, Mr. Pennipother, and 'twill be a great mercy and a pity if you don't die, and leave me a lone widow. I know you wouldn't mind it—and who's to supply your place then, Mr. Pennipother, I should like to know? Oh, will you leave that place?

Penni. I'd rather not, my dear, 'pon my word. I'm very comfortable here.

Mrs. P. You won't move, sir?

Penni. Not an inch! I'd perish on the spot before—

Jane. Hem! hem!

Penni. (*Recollecting himself.*) Ha! Before—before I'd oppose your wishes, my angel! It was only a joke of mine. I'll sit wherever you please. (*aside.*) Confound that "Hem!" (*Sits in another place.*)

Mrs. P. For my part, Augustus, I wonder why all married people do not agree as we do. Your coffee, love—(*Hands him a cup.*)

Penni. Thank you. Why, my dear—I suppose it is because the wives—(*Tastes his coffee.*)—don't put any sugar in their husband's coffee.

Mrs. P. What do you mean? I put three large lumps in your cup.

Penni. Not one, by all that's bitter!

Mrs. P. Oh, Mr. Pennipother! where do you expect to go some of these days? Three lumps, as I'm a living woman!

Penni. Madam—Mrs. Pennipother—Angelina, on this auspicious anniversary I have determined not to quarrel with you—but I appeal to your feelings as a wife, and to your judgment as a woman with a profound knowledge of groceries, to taste that coffee—(*Offers her a spoonful of the coffee to taste.*)—and say candidly if there be any sugar in it. There—

Mrs. P. There's no necessity, sir—I'm satisfied!

Penni. You won't taste it? Here, Jane—you taste that coffee, and pronounce an impartial verdict upon it. (*Offers a spoonful to Jane, who rejects it.*)

Jane. Oh, dear sir—I'd much rather not, indeed, sir—if you please,

Penni. Then I'll decide the sugar question myself, by protesting openly and energetically against this abominable, tyrannical, intolerable——

Jane. Hem! hem!

Penni. I don't care for your hem! hem! Our compact is at an end—the treaty of peace is broken—and I stand here armed for the worse——(*Flourishing the spoon, which he has retained. At this moment the dog in the room, L. H. begins to bark loudly. Pennipother stands transfixed—Mrs. P. starts up—Jane expresses surprise.*)

Mrs. P. What dog is that? Where is it, Jane?

Jane. It's in master's study, ma'am.

Mrs. P. Ha! though he knows I detest dogs, and would never allow one in the house. Mr. Pennipother, whose dog is that in your study!

Penni. (*Carelessly.*) How should I know? Perhaps it's the learned dog, Toby—delivering a lecture upon matrimonial happiness.

Mrs. P. I shall soon see! (*Goes to door, L. to open it.*)

Penni (*aside, and delighted.*) It's my turn now! (*Mrs. Pennipother opens the door—the dog inside barks furiously—Mrs. P. retreats, screaming.*)

Mrs. P. Oh, the monster! He flew on me like a lion. Jane, for heaven's sake, go and secure the savage animal. (*Jane goes into room, L. H.*) I know he was placed there on purpose to devour me!

Re-enter JANE, with the dog.

Jane. Oh, ma'am—it's a real beauty—it is! What pretty silky ears! And here's a collar—with a name on it!

Mrs. P. A name! Whose name? Let me see it! (*She reads on dog's collar.*) "Arabella!"

Jane. Arabella!

Penni. (*Stifling his laughter.*) Arabella!

Mrs. P. Basest of men—who is Arabella?

Penni. meekest of women—I don't know.

Jane. (*aside.*) Of course he don't! None of 'em ever do!

[*Exit L. H.*]

Mrs. P. Mr. Pennipother, beware! I can bear a great deal. There's a measure to human patience, sir——

Penni. You have always given me a very short measure of the article.

Mrs. P. Oh, you may enjoy your unfeeling jokes—but a worm, Mr. Pennipother—a worm has a right to speak.

Penni. Certainly. Though I never heard of the creature exercising its right in that way.

Mrs. P. To be short, sir—I'll carry my injured feelings

to Doctors' Commons. I'll have reparation—I'll have a separate-maintenance, si — (Jane re enters, without the dog.)

Penni. With all my heart, madam !

Mrs. P. And it shall be to-morrow, Mr. Pennipother !

Penni. This moment, if you please. I see no reason why we should trust the happiness of a mutual separation to the uncertainty of the law, when we can manage the matter so much more quietly and discreetly ourselves.

Mrs. P. Very well, sir. What do you propose ?

Penni. I propose that we shall divide the house—the furniture, and other effects. You take one half, and I keep the other.

Mrs. P. Divide the house, sir ? I don't understand you.

Penni. Oh, nothing more easy, madam. You shall retain your bedchamber, and all your apartments on that side of the house—while I reserve my study, and all the rooms on this side.

Mrs. P. Oh, very well, sir ! The plan is admirable—let us set about it instantly.

Jane. (aside.) I wonder if I am to be thrown into the lady's or the gentleman's side of the house.

Penni. In the first place—the door, there, and the scraper shall remain common property. Do you consent to that, madam ?

Mrs. P. Oh, certainly. But I stipulate for an exclusive latch key.

Penni. A latch key ! (aside.) What the devil can she want with a latch key ? Oh, very well—very well ! This sitting room I propose shall be equally divided. You shall be mistress of all that lies on the further side of the seam in the carpet, and I'll be monarch of all I survey on this side of it.

Mrs. P. But this is a pet piece of furniture of mine—(Lays her hand on table, c.) I must retain this.

Penni. With all my heart ! And this easy chair is a special favourite of mine. (Mrs. P. and Jane remove C. table to R. Pennipother removes chair to L. H.)

Mrs. P. Oh, pray take it. I can see no possible objection to the arrangement—unless you should be disturbed when my friends and I keep it up rather late.

Penni. (aside.) Keep it up !

Mrs. P. Young fellows, you know, are apt to be racketty after supper—and the Railway Overture performed at two o'clock in the morning might not be agreeable.

Jane. (aside.) Young fellows! Suppers! Oh, whatever can missus mean? She that would never allow me no followers—and looked the area door every night at ten o'clock with her own hands, lest the policemen should drop in for a broiled bone!

Mrs. P. Then I hope you have no objection to cigars—for we do the Havannah's enormously.

Penni. (aside.) Havannahs! I don't like the familiar way she talks of these things! Ecod, how do I know—while I have been abroad burning the candle at one end, she may have been at home here, flaring it up at the other end! Ha—if I thought so—but, no—'tis only meant to alarm me. It won't do! *(aloud.)* Oh, I shan't mind it—as I never mean to come home till after four o'clock in the morning. Besides, I like cigars—and I am decidedly partial to the Railroad Overture, with a tongs and poker accompaniment.

Mrs. P. (Who has been whispering to Jane in an under tone.) You understand my directions, Jane?

Jane. (In the same tone.) Oh, yes, ma'am—perfectly! I'm to go to the two Miss Smiths, Miss Middleton, Miss Gaylad, and tell them— *(Whispers.)*

Penni. (Who has been writing.) It's all right; and there is my name to it! *(Writes.)*

Mrs. P. Hush! You know what to say. Go and tell them—lose not a moment! *[Exit Jane, L. C.]* Well, sir—what next?

Penni. I believe that is all. Let me see. *(Reads.)* “Memorandum of an Agreement between Augustus Pennipother, of Paradise Lodge, Regent's Park, on the one part, and Angelina Pennipother, of the same place, on the other part—Witnesseth—um—um—um— *(Reading the paper to himself.)* And now, madam, allow me to present you with a document which divides our carpet and our destinies for ever. *(Gives her the paper.)* From this moment a moral barrier, a conventional Great Wall of China stands between our separate establishments.

Mrs. P. [Returns the paper.] And you may rest assured, sir, I will never attempt to play Thisbe to your Pyramus through it.

Penni. Hold! Before we separate eternally, I have one last request to make—oblige me with that hat, which I left on your premises.

Mrs. P. With the greatest pleasure! *[Gives him his hat.]*

Penni. And now, Mrs. Pennipother—

Mrs. P. Now, Mr. Pennipother—

Penni. Farewell!

Mrs. P. Adieu! [*Pennipother pirouettes round—Mrs. P. arranges flowers in a vase.*]

Penni. Hey! At last I'm free! Free as a bird, and sportive as a fawn! Toll lol de lol lol! I feel that exhilarating sense of liberty, which I have not experienced since the day I was married. (*Sings.*)

"I'll be a butterfly, born in a bower,

Where roses, and lilies, and violets sweet."

Ha, ha, ha! I'll sing when I like, and I'll whistle when I like—aye, and I'll play the flute that my late wife prohibited—[*Takes a flute from table.*—because it was a nuisance to the neighbourhood.

Mrs. P. (*aside.*) Oh, my gentleman—say you so? [*Pennipother begins to play 'Away with melancholy' on the flute, when Mrs. P. sits at the Piano on her side of the apartment, and strikes up a Polka, which puts Pennipother out. He endeavours repeatedly to recover the Air, and beats time, but at last gives it up in a rage, and rushes to the boundary line, and gesticulates as if he was going to remonstrate with her.*]

Penni. [*Recollecting himself—apart.*] No, no—she shan't perceive that she annoys me. [*Begins to dance, when she suddenly stops.*] Never mind—I'll go and read in my study. [*A bouquet is thrown through the window R. H. and falls near Mrs. P. who picks it up.*] Hey! What's this? A bouquet thrown through the window for my wife!

Mrs. P. Oh, dear—dear flowers! I know the precious hand you come from! [*Kisses them.*]

Penni. [*apart.*] She knows the precious hand, and she kisses them!

Mrs. P. [*Kissing the flowers.*] Ah, this is the blessed privilege of a separate maintenance! A woman does just as she likes, and has no stupid husband watching her with jealous eye.

Penni. I beg your pardon—my eye—[*Checking himself.*] No, I won't: it's nothing to me! [*Mrs. Pennipother at window, R. kissing her hand, and nodding to some one outside the window.*] There! she's kissing her hand, and smiling at the fellow, whoever he is! [*Shakes his fist.*] I'll go and kick the rascal round the Park! [*Puts on his hat.*] It may be prudent, though, to ascertain the size of the enemy before I commit myself. [*Takes an opera*

glass from table.] But the window is on Mrs. P.'s premises! [Mounts on a chair, and endeavours to get a view through the window. No—I can't get a sight of him on my own premises! [Jumps down.] Never mind: I can be as gay as she is free. I'll punish her that way! Now how shall I amuse myself this evening? I know! I'll go to the Casino, and after that I'll have a supper of oysters, with brandy punch—and after that—ha, ha, ha—I'll not come home till morning! [Exit L. H. laughing.]

Mrs. P. Good, gracious! He can never be such a reprobate!

Enter JANE, R. C. D.

Jane. Oh, ma'am! I see you have got the bouquet! I threw it in at the window, as you told me.

Mrs. P. Yes: but would you believe it, Jane—that he saw it, and instead of flying into a jealous rage, as I expected, my gentleman is going to fly to the Casino.

Jane. Oh, ma'am! what ever could have put such an idea into his head? Fly to the Casino! Well, let him go, I say!

Mrs. P. No, Jane; my duty as a wife forbids my exposing the dear little stupid scamp to the perils of the Polka. Have you seen the Miss Smiths, and the other ladies?

Jane. Oh, yes, ma'am. They'll be here directly.

Mrs. P. And the ginger beer champagne—and the chocolate cigars?

Jane. All ready, ma'am! [*Looking off at back.*] Here are the ladies coming! [*Exit 2 R. L. H.*]

Mrs. P. Well, I believe no woman was ever placed in so critical a situation as mine! If I give way now, I shall dwindle into a submissive wife. Never! The spirit of my sex rejects the pitiful alternative.

Enter, C. D. CAROLINE SMITH, KATE SMITH, JULIA MIDDLETON, and FANNY GAYLAD, in male attire.

Ah, my dear girls! This is really kind of you! Well, you do look amazingly masculine. Jane has told you of Pennipother's and my separation—and of the little domestic Drama I want you to perform in.

Enter JANE, 2 R. L. H. with wine and glasses, and candles on a tray.

Sir Top. Oh, yes, we know all; and you see we are quite prepared to play our parts [*Jane laying the table, R. H.*] Allow me to introduce you to my sister Kate, *alias* Lord Dudley Brompton, of the Guards—Julia Middleton, *alias* the Honourable Lionel Lipscombe—Fanny Gaylad,

alias Captain Featheridge, of the Blues—and, though last, not least, your humble servant, Sir Toppleton Toffits. And now, my dear, tell me—do we look the creatures?

Mrs. P. Look the creatures? To the perfection of puppyism! Hist! I hear Pennipoth-rooming here. Sit down—sit down [*They sit at table.*—and, mind—whatever he says or does, you take no notice of him. Now—you have drank my health, and I'm about returning thanks.

Enter PENNIPOTHEE—he is dressed in a showy style.

Penni. [*Humming and dancing as he enters.*] lol lol de roll lol lol, &c. [*The Party at the table applaud on the table with their hands, and Mrs. P. rises. Pennipother utters an exclamation, and is struck at the sight.*]

Mrs. P. Hum! My Lords, and Gentlemen—Standing, as I do, in a position as novel as it is delightful, I have no hesitation in saying I never felt the proud independence to which our sex is entitled until the present moment.

Penni. I beg leave to observe——

Jane. Order! chair!

Penni. Oh! [*Drops into the arm chair.*]

Mrs. P. I glory in being the champion of poor, oppressed, much-injured, and deeply wronged married women in every part of the world——

All. Hear! hear!

Mrs. P. And the determined enemy of those domestic and desperate despots, our husbands, in every quarter of this habitable globe!

Ladies. Hear, hear!

Penni. I rise to observe——

Jane. O-o-order!

Penni. [*Dropping into his chair.*] Good gracious!

Mrs. P. My Lords, and Gentlemen—The time is come when the women of England shall be heard from the lowest kitchen to the highest attic of any house in the empire—when the standard of female freedom shall be planted on the broad basis of the marriage settlement—when husbands shall only do what their wives like, and the wives shall only do what they like themselves!

Ladies. Hear, hear!

Mrs. P. I therefore beg to thank you for the honour—you have—confided—unexpected—drinking my health—and—assurance—sentiments—grateful—everlasting and eternal——[*Sits down*]

Ladies. Bravo! bravo! bravo!

Sir Top. Capital—capital! 'Pon my life, Mrs. Pennipother, I never knew you in such delightful spirits. Did you, my Lord?

L. Brompton. Decidedly—never!

Mrs. P. Well, I don't know how it is, but I never felt so happy in my life! More champagne, Jane!

Pennipother. Champagne! My wife—my head—oh!

C. Feather. I confess there's nothing so fascinating as a petit souper with a charming hostess.

Sir Top. Especially when we are not bored with the presence of a stupid fool of a husband—eh, my Lord!

L. Brompton. Decidedly. Husbands are all bore!

Pennipother. Candid, at all events—though not particularly flattering!

Sir Top. By the bye, Mrs. Pennipother—what have you done with that particularly obnoxious person?

Mrs. P. My husband? Oh, poor Pennipother—ha, ha! Do you know that he grew so tiresome, I was obliged to put him upon board wages. [*Ladies laugh.*]

Sir Top. An admirable way of getting rid of a matrimonial incumbrance—isn't it, my Lord?

L. Brompton. Decidedly! I shall mention the plan to some married ladies of my acquaintance.

Pennipother. [*Stamping about.*] Board wages? Hah! I'm in a pleasant situation here! I must hear all, and see all, and can neither speak nor interfere, nor cross that infernal seam in the carpet!

Mrs. P. More wine, Jane! [*Offers Lord B. a cigar case.*] Have a cigar, my Lord? [*Jane opens bottles, and fills out wine.*]

Lord B. Decidedly! Anything from this fair hand. [*Takes her hand in his.*] Oh, heavens! I could worship this hand—[*Kisses it.*—decidedly!]

Pennipother. Ha! [*Snatches up chair.*]

Mrs. P. For shame, my Lord; you are such a flatterer!

Pennipother. Now if I wasn't a member of the Peace Society, I'd exterminate that puppy! Ha! [*Flinging down the chair.*]

Sir Top. Hey? Demme! what's all this?

Mrs. P. Oh, nothing—nothing. Pray sit down, gentlemen. 'Tis only a troublesome neighbour of mine, who has the misfortune to be unsettled in his mind, and sometimes takes extraordinary liberties with his furniture.

Sir Top. Poor devil!

L. Brompton. Miserable rascal, decidedly! [*Pennipother knocks about the chairs.*]

Mrs. P. Jane, tell the gentleman on the opposition benches, I'll thank him not to make so much noise.

Jane. Please, sir, Missus wishes you wouldn't bang about the chairs and tables like that.

Penni. Tell your mistress I shall bang about whatever I like on my side of the premises. There—there———
[Rattles a chair violently about until he breaks it, and then a bust which stands on a pedestal.] There—I'll ruin myself if I like!

Mrs. P. By the bye, Sir Toppleton, who was that distinguished foreigner I saw riding with you yesterday in the Park?

Sir Top. Oh, that was the young Marquis de Mearaux, confessedly the handsomest man in France.

L. Brompt. And the best shot in Europe, decidedly!

Sir Top. It is well known that he has either killed or wounded thirteen husbands in duels already.

Penni. *[aside.]* Thirteen husbands! atrocious scoundrell!

Mrs. P. What a valuable member of society! Sir Toppleton, you must positively bring the Marquis here! I've particular business for him.

Penni. *[aside.]* She means to make me his fourteenth hapless victim! I wish I was comfortably hanged! Eh, hanged! *[Mysteriously to Jane.]* Jane, harkye! Don't let them hear us! Do you think my wife would be very sorry if I was hanged?

Jane. Hanged, sir?

Penni. Yes, or shot—or poisoned—or drowned!

Jane. La, sir! whichever way would be most agreeable to you, sir, I'm sure would please her.

Mrs. P. What a shocking piece of scandal, Captain!

Penni. Ah, so I thought. I'll disappoint her, though, for I shan't make myself a subject for a coroner's inquest, but she shall imagine I have done so. I'll give you a sovereign; Jane, if you'll assist me in a plan I have just thought of.

Jane. Oh, sir—you may depend upon me for a sovereign.

Mrs. P. Ha, ha, ha! And how did the poor husband act?

Sir Top. Why he complained to all his acquaintances, and of course he got terribly laughed at—for nobody pities a husband.

Penni. Now, Jane, observe. A few minutes after I have left the house, you come in with my hat—which I'll leave on the lawn—and tell your mistress that a policeman brought it, saying the gentleman it belonged to had fallen by accident into the canal, and had been drowned. Do you perceive?

Jane. I understand, sir. But if you don't die outright, what will be the use of it?

Penni. I'll tell you, Jane. To punish my wife—to make her feel the loss of a husband, like me—and to see how she'll bear my death.

Jane. Very well, sir. Leave me to manage the affair for you, sir.

Penni. Do, Jane—and the sovereign shall be yours.

Capt. F. I'll take five to one on the favourite still!

Jane. [Apart.] Let me see—Master's idea is not a bad one—but I can see how it may be managed in a way the original inventor little expects. Ah, well—he won't be the first man that walked into a trap of his own setting!

Penni. Ha, ha, ha! Liberty, fraternity, and a latch key! Where's my hat? I shall be too late for the Casino. Aha! here it is, on my head. [Going.] Vive la Polka! Vive la brandy and water! [Exit L. C. D. Mrs. P. and the four Ladies come forward.]

Mrs. P. So, he's gone—actually gone!

Jane. Oh, yes, ma'am: and, by the way he talked, I think he has been, as the gentlemen call it, indulging!

Sir Top. I fear we have gone too far with our jest, and that you have now nothing left but submission.

Mrs. P. Submission, Caroline? Oh, but I forgot—you are not a married woman. Submission! No, I'll die sooner!

Jane. I beg your pardon, mim—but don't you think if you were to die for a little while, we might bring Master back to his duty?

Mrs. P. What do you mean? That I should die

Jane. Yes, mim—but only by report. You see, if you was to let me tell Master, when he comes home, that his wicked goings on at the Casino, and his staying out all night, had driven you to desperation, and that you had made away with yourself, I'm sure it would soften his hard heart, mim.

Sir Top. Well, I really think it would. I think Jane's plan is excellent.

Mrs. P. You believe, then, that my death would restore his affection?

Jane. Believe it, mim? The death of a wife is a patent reviver for a husband's affections!

Mrs. P. Well, Jane, I allow you to make the attempt—but no submission, mind!

Jane. Nothing of the sort, mim. Now, mim, if you please to keep out of the way, we'll be ready to begin.

Mrs. P. Certainly, Jane. Adieu, for the present, dear girls.

Sir Top. Well, my dear, we shall be at hand, if you require our assistance. And now, Jane, for heaven's sake, let us have a cup of tea, for we are quite exhausted by our manly exertions.

Ladies. Ah, pray do, Jane.

Jane. Oh, yes, ladies—certainly—in a moment. This way, if you please. [*Mrs. P. takes a candle from table, and exits, R. H. Jane and Ladies exeunt U. E. L. H. Pennipother from outside opens window, R. and puts in his head.*]

Penni. Hollo! What's this? I thought I'd take a peep at my wife's party without being perceived—but they are all gone! But where's my wife—where's Mrs. Pennipother? Ha! Perhaps Jane has already told her of my melancholy end, and that she "mourns me dead in my father's halls." I'd like to ascertain the fact. There's nobody to see me—so I'll venture in. [*He enters cautiously through C. window, and goes to R. door, where he peeps and listens at the keyhole, when Jane enters, U. E. L. H.*]

Penni. Ha! I—I—I— Oh, Jane! is it you?

Jane. Oh—oh—oh! [*Sobbing.*]

Penni. What's the matter, girl?

Jane. [*Sobbing.*] Oh—oh—sir! My—m—m—mistress—my poor mistress! Oh—oh!

Penni. Your mistress—oh! Aye—capitally acted, Jane—very good, indeed! You've been telling her of my sudden death.

Jane. Ye—ye—ye—yes, sir. I told her all, and showed her your hat full of water—oh—oh—oh!

Penni. Oh, yes. Did that affect her?

Jane. Oh, dreadful, sir. You don't know the feelings of a woman, sir! When she saw the hat, she never spoke a word, but ran right off to the bank.

Penni. The bank, eh? What bank?

Jane. The bank of the canal, sir. [*Sobbing.*] Oh! I wish I had never had anything to do with the business. Oh—oh!

Penni. Hey! Well—tell me all—tell me everything!

Jane. And before any of us could stop her, she jumped plump into the canal at the end of the garden.

Penni. Into the canal! But she's not lost?

Jane. Oh, I hope not. The Humane gentlemen will be sure to find her to-morrow. I've saved her shawl, however. Ah, poor lady—it was a melancholy end for her!

Penni. Say no more. I feel—I feel that I never loved that woman till now, [*Weeping.*] Drowned herself for my

sake! Blessed angel, I have lost her for ever! [*Rushing off—Jane stops him.*]

Jane. La, sir—where are you going?

Penni. To seek her dear remains.

Jane. Oh, dear sir—don't think of such a thing. You can do no good, and may do a deal of harm—and you may be wanted here. Now pray don't go out.

Penni. Well, Jane, I won't. Leave me—leave me to my sorrows—and bring me up a basin of water gruel, without nutmeg—without nutmeg! Oh, Angelina!

[*Exit L. H.*]

Jane. Well, I've managed that part of the business easily enough. Master is satisfied that missus has drowned herself. But that's only half my plan. I must next persuade missus that master has gone and done the same. When they believe each other dead, perhaps they may be brought to live comfortably together. I hear missus's foot coming down stairs!

Enter Mrs. PENNIPOTHER, R. H.

Mrs. P. Jane! Jane! my candle has gone out, and I haven't got a light up stairs.

Jane. Oh, mim! mim! Poor master! How shall I tell you? It's so horrid—worse than any stage play, mim—and we not prepared for anything of the sort, mim! Oh, poor dear master!

Mrs. P. Jane, you know my weak nerves—don't harrow my feelings! Something dreadful has happened—what is it?

Jane. Oh, mim! Just after the ladies went away, master returns for his cigar case, so I thought it would be a good opportunity to tell him that you had drowned yourself, all through his unkindness, and his going to the Casino. Oh, mim! I wish you could have seen how wild he looked—and, says he, "Jane, I've been and murdered that angel woman!" Them's the very words he used, mim! "I can't live without her," says he—and then he walked right down to the canal, jumped in, and never came out again!

Mrs. P. Jane, what have we done? Augustus drowned! Oh—oh! That was so like him—always considerate! The poor fellow would not survive me—oh! oh! He loved me to the last—oh! [*Goes towards door.*]

Jane. Oh, mim! You are not going out at this hour?

Mrs. P. I must have air. I cannot breathe here. I will go on the lawn for a few minutes to compose myself.

Jane. Yes, do, mim—you'll be better presently. [*Exit*]

Mrs. Pennipother, C. D. *Jane takes the last candle from table.)* Now they're both dead, I can do nothing more to make 'em both happy! [*Exit 2 B. L. H. The Stage is dark. The moon shines through the windows, and on the lawn, where Mrs. Pennipother is seen walking to and fro. Pennipother enters, 2 B. L. H. in a dressing gown and white nightcap.*]

Penni. I'm afraid Jane has forgotten my gruel. Ah, I shall never get my gruel comfortably again. Heigho! I don't know how it is, but the novelty of my present position has made me quite nervous. I fancy I hear my lost Angelina's voice in the creaking of every door. Who could have thought she had so much affection for me as to go and commit—[*Sees Mrs. Pennipother on the lawn.*] Good gracious! What's that? Ha! it is the form of my deceased wife, sitting in the pale moonlight! Ha! it glides this way! I'm in a state of universal perspiration! Enter MRS. PENNIPOTTER, slowly, C. *She speaks in a pathetic tone.*

Mrs. P. Oh, dear Augustus!

Penni. [*aside.*] How tenderly the poor ghost pronounces my name!

Mrs. P. [*Perceiving him.*] Ha—what's that? Heavens! 'tis the shade of my adored Augustus!

Penni. [*aside.*] Shade? Oh, yes—I forgot she thinks I'm dead, and, consequently, an apparition like herself. [*Aloud—to her.*] Dear ghost, this visit of yours is very kind!

Mrs. P. [*aside.*] Ghost! He hasn't an idea I'm alive. He fancies I'm my own ghost. Well, I won't undeceive the poor spirit. [*To him.*] Ah, we lived very miserably when we were alive, Augustus.

Penni. Very miserably, indeed, Angelina!

Mrs. P. But now I confess it was all my fault.

Penni. No, no—it was I alone who was to blame.

Mrs. P. I led you a dog's life, Augustus!

Penni. Yes, sweet shade, you did: but then I was such an unreasonable rascal, you couldn't avoid it.

Mrs. P. We both had our little failings, when we were alive. I confess I often run bills at my milliners, which I paid out of the house money.

Penni. [*aside.*] That accounts for cold mutton and small beer at dinner! [*aloud.*] And I acknowledge that I sometimes went to the Casino, when you thought I was attending a sick uncle.

Mrs. P. [*aside.*] Oh, if he wasn't a ghost, now! [*aloud.*] But you didn't dance, dear Spirit?

Penni. Yes, I did, beloved shade—the P. o. k. a.—and I can't rest easy in my narrow grave till you forgive me.

Mrs. P. (aside.) O, that I had known this when he was alive! (*aloud.*) Well, I forgive you. And now, fleeting image of my deceased Augustus, answer me one question—it can't concern me now, but I am curious to know—did you leave me comfortable?

Penni. Comfortable, Angelina?

Mrs. P. Yes—in your will

Penni. I understand! (*aside.*) It may soothe her perturbed spirit to say I did. (*aloud.*) Yes—if you had survived me, all I did possess was yours.

Mrs. P. Generous Pennipother! You never looked in your life so interesting as at this moment. Farewell, kind spirit!

Penni. Stay, gentle spirit! I have one more offence to beg your forgiveness of.

Mrs. P. What is that, dear phantom?

Penni. I blush to say I have deceived you. I am no ghost!

Mrs. P. No ghost?

Penni. No. The story of my death was all a pretence. I am still the corporeal identity of your husband.

Mrs. P. So, then, you didn't drown yourself when you heard I was no more?

Penni. I blush to say I didn't.

Mrs. P. Then be comforted, dear Augustus, for I've been as prudent as you were. I never went near the canal, and I'm as much alive as yourself.

Penni. Alive! impossible! Eh? (*Touches her.*) Ecod, you are, though! (*They embrace each other.*)

Enter all the Ladies, on tiptoe.

Mrs. P. Oh, my dear Augustus!

Penni. My blessed Angelina! This is the happiest moment of my life! (*Ladies laugh.*) Ha! these four puppies again! Now they shall feel the weight of my vengeance—(*Seizes a chair, when Jane enters with lights.*)

Mrs. P. What are you about, Augustus? Don't you know my friends Kate and Caroline Smith, Julia Middleton, and Fanny Gaylad, who at my request undertook the characters in which you see them.

Sir Top. Aye—and I flatter myself we have done no discredit to the cloth.

Penni. Ha! what? Bless me, I never was so deceived—

Mrs. P. But this dog, Augustus—explain the d. g.

Sir Top. My dear Mrs. Pennipother, don't you know the dear little creature belongs to my cousin Arabella? She lost it in the Park this morning.

Penni. Yes—and I caught it!

Jane. Yes, you caught it—and smartly, too!

Penni. Well, I hope all your doubts are now removed

Mrs. P. Not at all! Come here, Pennipother. (*Leans on his arm.*) I have still some doubts. What will our friends, here, think of our "Separate Maintenance?"

Penni. Suppose we put the question, and divide the House?

Mrs. P. Divide the house? No—never again, my dear!

For though to please divided we appear,
You'll find we've no divided interest here!

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