

# ON GUARD.

An entirely Original Comedy,

IN THREE ACTS.

BY

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(Member of the Dramatic Authors' Society).

AUTHOR OF

*Dulcamàra, or the Little Duck and the Great Quack; Allow me to Explain; Highly Improbable; Harlequin Cock Robin and Jenny Wren; La Vivandière, or True to the Corps; The Merry Zingara, or The Topsy Gipsy and the Pipsy Wipsy; No Cards (German Reed's); Robert the Devil, or the Nun, the Dun, and the Son of a Gun; The Pretty Druidess, or the Mother, the Maid, and the Mistletoe Bough; An Old Score; Ages Ago (German Reed's); The Princess, a Whimsical Allegory; The Gentleman in Black; Our Island Home (German Reed's); A Sensation Novel in Three Volumes (German Reed's); Randall's Thumb; Creatures of Impulse; Great Expectations; Palace of Truth; Pygmalion and Galatea; Thespis, or the Gods Grown Old; The Wicked World; &c., &c.*

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## ON GUARD.

*First produced at the Royal Court Theatre (under the management of Miss M. Litton), on Saturday, 28th October, 1872.*

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### Characters.

DENIS GRANT ( <i>an African Traveller</i> )	...	Mr. MARKBY.
CORNY KAVANAGH ( <i>an Adventurer</i> )	...	Mr. BISHOP.
GUY WARRINGTON	... ..	MISS M. BRENNAN
GROUSE ( <i>an Attorney</i> )	... ..	Mr. RIGHTON.
BABY BOODLE	... ..	Mr. CLAYTON.
DRUCE ( <i>a Soldier's Servant</i> )	... ..	Mr. PARRY.
MRS. FITZOSBORNE ( <i>a Widow</i> )	...	Miss M. OLIVER.
JESSIE BLAKE ( <i>Guy Warrington's Cousin</i> )	...	Miss K. BISHOP.

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### ACT I.

#### GUARD MOUNTED.

EXTERIOR OF BEAUCLERE CASTLE. (*Moonlight*)

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### ACT II.

#### GUARD RELIEVED.

DECK OF SCHOONER YACHT, OFF CADIZ.

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### ACT III.

#### GUARD DISMISSED.

GUY WARRINGTON'S QUARTERS, GIBRALTAR.

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*Time occupied in Representation—Two Hours*

# ON GUARD.

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## ACT I.

SCENE.—*Exterior of Beaulclere, an old Castle on Windermere, by Moonlight. Lake in the distance; the lower windows of the castle (L.) are lighted up; the voices of gentlemen dining are heard through half-opened windows.*

MRS. FITZOSBORNE and JESSIE *discovered in dinner dress, with "gauze clouds."*

MRS. FITZOSBORNE. Dear me, what a while those men waste over their wine!

JESSIE. Do you know, I often wonder what they talk about.

MRS. F. Ah! my dear, we had better not attempt to penetrate *that* mystery. Depend upon it, their conversation is not half as instructive as ours.

JESSIE. *We* generally talk about dress.

MRS. F. So do they—perhaps!

JESSIE. And horses, I daresay.

MRS. F. Yes; the women that wear the dresses, and the women that break the horses.

JESSIE. I daresay they are pulling us to pieces at this moment. I wish it was lady-like to listen! Why do ladies always retire after dinner, and leave the gentlemen alone?

MRS. F. My dear, during dinner many elevating and ennobling reflections occur to them, that we shouldn't understand, so we mercifully leave them that they may give utterance to their magnificent conceptions, or their teeming brains would burst.

JESSIE. Would Baby Boodle's teeming brain burst?

MRS. F. No, Baby Boodle's brain has plenty of turning room. Whenever he shakes his head, I always expect to hear it rattle!

JESSIE. How can you speak like that of a man you like?

MRS. F. Do you remember how you snubbed Guy at dinner?

JESSIE. Yes, I did it on purpose.

MRS. F. How can you speak like that to a man you like? And that man going abroad to-night!

JESSIE. That's a very different thing. I love Guy very much, but he must be kept in order. Besides, you snub Baby Boodle!

MRS. F. Yes, but Baby Boodle don't know it. That's Baby Boodle's principal charm.

JESSIE. But Baby Boodle is in love with you.

MRS. F. (*sighing*) Yes, he would be. These heavy vacuous, good-natured, gentlemanly dragoons always are. I don't think I ever completely captivated a really clever man in my life. They all seem afraid of me. Look at Mr. Kavanagh—he's a clever, bright, shrewd fellow; I long to try conclusions with him, but he won't cross swords with me.

JESSIE. You're too clever for him, dear. You pay him back in his own coin, and he don't like it. He wants a rose from you, and you give him a thistle. Now that frightens clever men.

MRS. F. And fascinates donkeys. Perhaps you're right. At all events it points my moral—never snub a clever man, if you care two pins about him.

JESSIE. Ah, Mrs. Fitzosborne, when will you practise what you preach?

MRS. F. (*rises—crosses, L.*) When bishops black their own boots on Sunday. No, no, if you want to worry poor Guy, there are other ways of doing it.

JESSIE. By flirting, for instance.

MRS. F. (*L. C.*) Yes, by flirting, in moderation.

JESSIE. (*sits on stool, R. C.*) Do you know, between ourselves, I often think that with all my demureness, I have a hidden, secret, undeveloped tendency to flirt.

MRS. F. (*sits, C.*) Do you, indeed? My dear Jessie, in a quiet demure self-contained way, you're about the most irrepressible little flirt I know.

JESSIE. Oh, Mrs. Fitzosborne!

MRS. F. Look at Denis Grant, for instance.

JESSIE. Oh, I never flirted with Mr. Grant! During the week that he has been in England I have seen a great deal of his society, and I like him immensely—he's such a brave, rough, rugged, manly man—but flirt! why he was Guy's schoolfellow, and his very dearest friend! Oh, Mrs. Fitzosborne! flirt with Mr. Grant!

MRS. F. Ah, remember, Jessie, you are the first white woman he has seen for six years. Be merciful, dear. (*rise*)

JESSIE. (*rise*) Merciful! How ridiculous! Why, I've only chatted and laughed with him as I've done with fifty

others, and you've thought nothing of it. The idea of *your* moralizing on the subject of flirtation! Is it because you've never done such a thing yourself?

MRS. F. No, Jessie, it's because I've done so much of it. I'm an old hand, and I can tell in half-an-hour how much a man can hear. When I embark on a flirtation I do so with my fingers on his pulse, and I stop when I find he's had as much as is good for him. And talking of people who have had as much as is good for them; here come the gentlemen at last!

*Enter KAVANAGH and BOODLE from dining room, through glass door.*

Well, Mr. Kavanagh, we've been expecting you very anxiously. What have you been talking about? Miss Blake says it's dress.

KAVAN. Yes, it was dress. Baby Boodle and I have been discussing a very nice point. Having regard to the conformation of Baby Boodle's face and figure, ought Baby Boodle to wear a tall hat with a narrow brim, and a long beard, or a low hat with a broad brim, and a short beard? That's the question, and we have agreed to refer it to you.

BOODLE. Nothing of the kind, Mrs. Fitz. We were talking about——

KAVAN. (*aside*) Hush!

BOODLE. Well, perhaps you're right.

MRS. F. Captain Boodle has devoted about forty years' study to the outside of his head. I think it would be only fair if he began to think about giving its inside a turn.

KAVAN. Oh, no—I can assure you that—the inside of Baby Boodle's head——

MRS. F. (*sharply*) I know what you are going to say—that the inside of Captain Boodle's head has had a *turn* already. Wasn't that it?

KAVAN. (*annoyed*) Yes—(*aside*) confound the woman! I wish she'd let me finish my sentences. (*aloud*) But Baby Boodle's anxiety about his personal appearance is a very good sign. He has an empty house to let, and he makes its exterior as attractive as possible in order that——

MRS. F. (*sharply*) In order that Reason may be tempted to come and take up her abode there. Wasn't that it, Mr. Kavanagh?

KAVAN. (*annoyed*) Yes—that is what I was going to say—I was going to add that——

MRS. F. That at present Reason don't see it; so he's going to lay it on thicker than ever. Wasn't that it, Mr. Kavanagh?

KAVAN. (*aside*) Oh! this woman is intolerable! (*crosses, L.*)

SMITH. It's a settled affair, then—if the young man embrace the offer.

PLANUS. I should rather think he would; indeed, I may venture to say I have no doubt on the subject.

SMITH. Well, doctor, we shall remain your tenants until this *important business* shall be arranged.

THOMP. But I hope there will be *no increase of lodgers*.

*Enter FUGGLES, R.*

PLANUS. Not any more, I assure you; I'll adopt measures to prevent that. Where's Fuggles? Oh! Mr. Fuggles, you will please to remember that the apartments are *all occupied*.

FUGGLES. Yes, sir! I shall not forget that. (*aside*) And if I do, the *servants* won't!

*During the conclusion of the dialogue enter SQUILL, L., he proceeds to the table, does a little business in the porter and lobster line, with skirmishing variations with FUGGLES, who snatches the lobster from his pocket and deposits it in his own; exit SQUILL with tray, L.*

PLANUS. And now, gentlemen, unless you prefer being private, I have to request the favour of your company to supper with me, *without the lobster*.

SMITH. With pleasure.

THOMP. (*nervously*) Any visitors? }

PLANUS. Only ourselves, gentlemen, and Mr. Fuggles.

SMITH. Of course, Mr. Fuggles. }

THOMP. Mr. Romeo Theodore Fuggles, of course. }

(FUGGLES bows)

PLANUS. As to visitors, we have none but our kind friends here (*addressing the AUDIENCE*), who are too generous to notice any faults in our "FURNISHED APARTMENTS."

FUGGLES. Errors of the *heart*—I mean errors of the *head*, and not of the *heart*——

SMITH. Always meet with lenity——

THOMP. And indulgence from an audience at the——

MAGNUS SMITH. FUGGLES. DR. PLANUS. TELEMACHUS THOMPSON.

R.

L.

*Curtain.*

BOODLE. It'll come! He'll got it! I didn't know what it wath; but I knew it wath coming.

KAVAN. (*hurt*) I recognise the bluntness of which you complain. If it is in the power of a knifeboard to——

MRS. F. To impart point and polish to my remarks, you will be only too happy to serve me in that capacity. Wasn't that what you were going to say, Mr. Kavanagh?

KAVAN. Well—yes. (*aside*) Confound the woman, I wish she'd let me finish.

BOODLE. You're too hard on him, Mrs. Fitz. Whenever Mr. Kavanagh hath a poor little thquib to dithcharge you alwayth take the bang out of it!

MRS. F. Mr. Kavanagh handles his squibs so awkwardly that he would certainly burn his fingers with them if I didn't take them out of his hands and finish them for him.

BOODLE. That's another; nothing could be fairer than that!

MRS. F. Oh, Baby Boodle, do go and get your breakfast while it's calm.

BOODLE. I was only backing you up.

MRS. F. Thank you, but I'm quite equal to meeting anything Mr. Kavanagh can say without assistance.

BOODLE. He's getting it all over him. (*aside*) Don't spare him; he's bad form—he's got no friends. *Exit.*

MRS. F. Now that foolish fellow has gone, let's begin. Are you fond of yachting?

KAVAN. Sometimes.

MRS. F. In fine weather?

KAVAN. No, in good company. In yachting, one's enjoyment depends so much less on oneself than on one's companions.

MRS. F. You are quite right not to depend too much upon yourself.

KAVAN. Yes. I may be hypercritical, but I am tired of myself.

MRS. F. You see you have had so much of yourself.

KAVAN. No doubt.

MRS. F. But there, I won't be rude any more, I'll say a pretty thing to you. I'll admit that if your epigrams and repartees amused you as much as they amuse others, you would never tire of your own society.

KAVAN. (*with an elaborate bow*) Thank you, Mr. Fitzosborne.

MRS. F. But they don't, do they!

KAVAN. No they don't, indeed.

MRS. F. You see you've heard them so often before! (*aside*) This man does give one such chances!

KAVAN. At all events I may conclude from your admission that they amuse *you*, that *you* have not heard them before.

MRS. F. No, indeed! the society in which I move is so horribly well-bred. I can forgive almost any rudeness if it's clever.

KAVAN. Then I may conclude that I am forgiven?

MRS. F. (R. C.) I have nothing to forgive so far—you have been neither rude nor clever.

KAVAN. (L. C., *annoyed*) If you don't take care I am afraid I shall certainly be one of those two things. (*crosses, R.*)

MRS. F. Yes, I know which.

KAVAN. I am afraid I shall be rude.

MRS. F. (R. and L.) Yes, that's what I meant. It's wonderful how you smart people wince under the operation of your own weapons when they are turned against you!

KAVAN. Why not! A surgeon would gladly cut off both of my arms if necessary, but——

MRS. F. But he would expostulate if you were to retaliate, by cutting off both of *his*——? Wasn't that what you are going to say?

KAVAN. Yes, if you had permitted me to finish my sentence.

MRS. F. If you were to cut off both his arms?

KAVAN. Certainly.

MRS. F. After he had cut off both of yours?

KAVAN. Yes, at least—that is——

MRS. F. Don't apologise for him. Under the circumstances his astonishment would be excusable!

KAVAN. Mrs. Fitzosborne—once for all I must protest——

MRS. F. Why you don't mean to say that you are getting angry?

KAVAN. I'm very much afraid I am. (*crossing, C.*)

MRS. F. Oh, but that won't do at all. Jessie expressly invited you to relieve the tedium of the voyage.

KAVAN. Did she? Are you quite sure?

MRS. F. Quite sure.

KAVAN. Then I'm very sorry for our young military friend. (*shaking her hand*)

*Enter BOODIE, from cabin.*

BOODIE. They've had a row, and they're making it up. Mrs. Fitz, the letter bag has arrived. Here are two letters for you, one for me—(*looks at it*) Tailor, eh? Good-bye. (*throws it into the sea*) Nothing could be fairer than that. One for you. (*to KAVANAGH*) And now, Mrs. Fitz, breakfast is ready.



MRS. F. Oh, I don't want any breakfast!

KAVAN. (*aside*) From Grouse, eh? Now, what the deuce can Grouse want? I only left him yesterday.

MRS. F. (*aside to KAVANAGH*) I shall keep a chair for you, next to mine. After breakfast we will renew the subject—but not a word yet.

BOODLE. The steward tells me there's a first-rate devil waiting for us below.

MRS. F. Captain Boodle, I'm quite sure of that. (*in affected astonishment*)

BOODLE. No, no; when I thay a "devil," of courth I mean a grill.

MRS. F. (*relieved*) Oh, well, you're not the first man who has mistaken cause for effect!

*Exeunt BOODLE and MRS. FITZOSBORNE into cabin.*

KAVAN. Now, here's a letter from Grouse, eh? Very good! Now, before I open this, let me see how the coast lies. Jessie seems to have taken a violent fancy to me. She invites me of her own free will to join this yachting party, and commissions her friend to let me understand that Jessie is to be had for the asking. Now, if I marry Jessie, I can dispense with Grouse altogether, for her money will, in that case, be mine, or as good as mine. Good-bye, Grouse! The connection is humiliating; I'll have nothing more to do with him; I'll return his letter unopened. Stop a bit! The worst of returning a letter unopened is that you never know what's in it. Steward!

*Enter STEWARD, L.*

STEWARD. Sir!

KAVAN. Place some boiling water in my cabin.

STEWARD. Yes, sir!

*Exit STEWARD.*

KAVAN. There are ways of returning a letter unopened after you have mastered its contents, especially when it's enclosed in an adhesive envelope.

*Exit, L.*

*Enter JESSIE and BOODLE, from cabin.*

JESSIE. Oh! what a lovely morning, Captain Boodle!

BOODLE. Yeth, pretty weil. It wath until you came on deck.

JESSIE. (*sits, L. C.*) Indeed? I haven't noticed any change.

BOODLE. Bai Jove! But no you wouldn't, becauthe you are alwayth with yourthelf, you thee; you don't think of it at the time, but you are. Now, with other fellowth, ith different. If a man wath alwayth bethide you—if he had the happineth of being alwayth bethide you—he wouldn't notith any change.

JESSIE. *Then* I shall be happy to hear what you have to say on it. (*sits on skylight, C.*)

DENIS.) Well, then—it's the old story. I don't think you are treating Guy fairly.

JESSIE. Yes; I knew it was that.

DENIS. Ah! conscience, Jessie!

JESSIE. Conscience? Nonsense—experience!

DENIS. Experience?

JESSIE. Yes, of you. You never speak to me on any other subject. It's your invariable theme—my constant oblivion of Guy. (*rising and crossing, R.*) I am going to him as quickly as the yacht will take me. What more can I do? It isn't my fault that the Skylark don't make more way. Oh! you *are* unreasonable to blame me because the Skylark don't make more way!

DENIS. Nonsense, Jessie, I blame you because you flirt with Captain Boodle.

JESSIE. But I can't help it. He's such a goose. Now you must admit that he's a goose.

DENIS. By all means, but that doesn't seem to meet my objection. Put it in this way: would you talk to Captain Boodle as you do if Guy were present?

JESSIE. I don't know. If Guy were present, I should talk to *him*.

DENIS. (C.) Well, Jessie, it's impossible to talk rationally to you!

JESSIE. (R.) You certainly have *not* been talking rationally to me!

DENIS. You must know that I am only asking you to do what is right.

JESSIE. You must know that I am not likely to do what is wrong.

DENIS. I know you are likely to do what is thoughtless and giddy, and what is liable to be misrepresented by meddling ill-natured people.

JESSIE. Evidently, Mr. Grant. (*curtseying*)

DENIS. (*after a pause*) Jessie, I think you will allow that if I had been actuated by the motives of a mere busybody, I should scarcely pursue my theme after that remark.

JESSIE. It was with the view of discouraging you that I made it. (*crosses, L.*)

DENIS. But I am not to be discouraged. I love that boy very dearly. I have sworn that I will keep watch and ward over his interests, and at the risk of forfeiting your regard, I will keep my word.

JESSIE. Mr. Grant, your want of familiarity with the usages of society may hold you excused up to a certain point. Let

DENIS. Creditors are generally ready enough to announce themselves.

GUY. There are creditors, Denis Grant, whose trade is so utterly contemptible that they are ashamed to declare it. My creditor is one of them. There are debts that it is pleasanter to pay than to receive; my debt is one of them.

DENIS. (*after a pause*) There is something wrong, Guy!

GUY. There *is* something wrong, Denis! I'm the victim of a piece of infernal treachery. There is something so wrong that, if the news that fellow has brought me is true, I have placed the whole happiness of my life in the hands of a man who has most shamefully violated that trust.

DENIS. Yes, this is serious, indeed, my poor Guy! (*taking chair*) Come, old boy, tell me all about it.

GUY. Is it necessary to tell you more?

DENIS. (*aside*) Poor fellow! he knows the worst!

GUY. (*bitterly*) I see that it is not.

DENIS. Let us be sure that we understand one another, Guy. Tell me all about it. Who is the man has wronged you, and what was the trust you reposed in him?

GUY. The trust—my love for Jessie Blake! (DENIS *shows that he expected this*) The man—Denis Grant!

DENIS. (*starting up suddenly*) Guy, what in the world do you mean? Are you serious?

GUY. Look, and judge for yourself.

DENIS. But what do you refer to?

GUY. I refer to this: When I left England I begged you to watch over Jessie Blake and protect her. You availed yourself of that trust to endeavour to win her from me. That is what I refer to.

DENIS. Guy, you are the victim of some monstrous lie!

GUY. I am!

DENIS. Sir!

GUY. Denis Grant, you quarrelled with Kavanagh on board that yacht.

DENIS. Yes!

GUY. Your quarrel had reference to Miss Blake. (DENIS *is silent*) I say your quarrel had reference to Miss Blake. Answer me, man, in heaven's name—and in heaven's name, say no if you can!

DENIS. If you insist on an answer——

GUY. I *do* insist on an answer.

DENIS. Then take this one, and be satisfied with it. It *had* reference to Miss Blake; be wise and ask no more.

GUY. I demand a full account of the circumstances of that quarrel.

DENIS. (*after a pause*) I cannot give it.

GUY. You refuse?

DENIS. I refuse.

GUY. Then I will supply one. Read that. (*hands newspaper*)

DENIS. (*reads*) Great heaven! is it possible that you believe this miserable—this preposterous lie?

GUY. That is false!

DENIS. It is infamously false. Guy Warrington. Do you know me so little that you have allowed this abominable paragraph to give you more than a moment's irritation?

GUY. If that is false will you tell me the true story?

DENIS. (*after a pause*) No, Guy! I will not! Had I known how little you know of the truth I should not have told you as much as I have. You shall never know the rest from me. It should be sufficient for you that I tell you that this paragraph, based on a certain substratum of truth, is in itself a monstrous and mischievous falsehood!

GUY. It should not be sufficient, because, if you are capable of the villany here charged against you, you are also capable of covering it with a lie!

DENIS. If you know me, you would not think me capable of this villany.

GUY. It is because I did *not* know you that I thought you incapable of it. Will you tell me the true story of your quarrel with Kavanagh?

DENIS. No! *a*

GUY. Remember what I have at stake, and in heaven's name tell me the whole truth.

DENIS. No!

GUY. I can bear it now, whatever it is; it cannot be more bitter than the belief that you have been false to me. Tell me, Denis Grant, for pity's sake! Den, dear old Den, let me think anything rather than that you have done this fearful thing. Tell me! Tell me all!

DENIS. No!

GUY. Then I accept this paragraph as it stands, and so accepting, I tell you that you have behaved like a——

DENIS. Stop, you don't know what you're doing. Give yourself time to think before you utter another word. I do not ask it for myself. Have mercy on yourself, if you will have none on me! (*taking his hand*) Guy, old fellow, it is not so much that this is hard for me to bear as that it is hard for you to bear. It is not so much that you throw hard words at me, as that you think you have reason to do so. Trust me a little longer. I have borne much for you; bear this for me, until Jessie sets me right with you. Be a man!

GUY. Will you tell me the story of your quarrel with Kavanagh?

MRS. F. I can never forgive myself.

BOODLE. (*much affected*) Yeth you could, Emily. If you could only thee yourthelf in tearth you'd forgive yourthelf directly!

KAVAN. Let me make a clean breast of it. Miss Blake, there is a consummate scoundrel who was once a clerk of your late father's. His name is—

*Enter GROUSE, L.*

GROUSE. Grouse—but he ain't a scoundrel.

KAVAN. You here?

BOODLE. It'h the criminal!

GROUSE. It's the lunatic. (*crosses to BOODLE*) If ever they get a commission to enquire into the state of your mind, you'd better put your case in my hands, or the other side will subpoena me as a witness, and it'll be all up with you. Yes, Mr. Kavanagh, I'm here, and in much better health than when we last met. Miss Blake, that person (*indicating KAVANAGH*) proposed to me a scheme by which he might dispossess you of your property. In reply, I sent him a letter, repudiating him altogether. That letter he returned to me unopened. Here it is! (*hands envelope to DENIS*)

DENIS. (*opens letter and reads*) "Sir, I have discovered that Miss Blake is an orphan. I cannot consent to assist you in dispossessing an orphan. Apply to a more hardened attorney. There are many of them in the profession. Yours—Anthony Grouse."

KAVAN. Do you mean to tell me that that is the identical letter you wrote to me?

GROUSE. And you returned unopened. The identical one. (*crosses, R.*)

KAVAN. Not a copy?

GROUSE. The identical one. You hear me, sir—the identical one. (*crosses, R.*)

KAVAN. Very good. Oblige me by reading this, Mr. Grant. (*gives copy of letter to DENIS*)

DENIS. (*reads*) "Dear Tim." Who's dear Tim?

KAVAN. His partner. That letter was enclosed to me by mistake. Read on.

DENIS. "Dear Tim,—old Blake's will has come to hand. When Kavanagh has touched the money, we'll try its capacity for further bloodletting. Yours cock-a-doodly, Toney Grouse."

GROUSE. Why, what's that?

KAVAN. That's a facsimile copy of your letter, taken in my hand press on board the Skylark.

GROUSE. But, I say, you couldn't have got at my letter, I