

CHRISTMAS BOXES

A Farce

IN

IN ONE ACT

BY

AUGUSTUS MAYHEW

AND

SUTHERLAND EDWARDS

AUTHORS OF

*The Goose with the Golden Eggs—The fifth of November—The
Poor Relation, &c., &c.*

THOMAS HAILES LACY,

89, STRAND,

(*Opposite Southampton Street, Covent Garden Market.*)

LONDON.

*First Performed at the Strand Theatre,
Under the Management of Miss Swanborough,
1860.*

CHRISTMAS BOXES.

CHARACTERS.

MR. JACKLEY	Mr. JAMES ROGERS.
MR. HOLLY	Mr. J. TURNER.
MRS. JACKLEY	Miss M. SIMPSON.
MRS. HOLLY	Miss BUPTON.
MARY	MISS LAVINE.

COSTUMES.

MR. JACKLEY.—Black morning suit.
MR. HOLLY.—Tweed morning dress.
MRS. JACKLEY AND MRS. HOLLY.—Fashionable morning dresses.
MARY.—Coloured muslin dress.

CHRISTMAS BOXES.



SCENE.—*A Drawing Room in Jackley's House. Fireplace, C. —fire—pier glass—the room is decorated with holly, as at Christmas time—folding doors, L. C.—door, L. 2 E.—door, L. 1 E.—door, R. 2 E.*

JACKLEY *discovered in easy chair, R. of fireplace, reading the "Times"—table, chair, R.—table, two chairs, L.*

JACK. It's all very well for people to talk of "Merry Christmas!" What a merry thing, to be driven into the workhouse— isn't it? It only comes once a year, thank Heaven! for I hate it as if I had been born a turkey! (*reads*) "Handsome Christmas presents. Cashmere shawls, from sixteen to two hundred guineas." With such advertisements as these, it should be death to teach women to read! Here's another handsome Christmas present! (*reads*) "Buy one of Twangey's treble action self-transposing pianos." I'll see Twangey shot first! (*rising, indignantly*) And here's an advertisement that makes me feel tipsy even to read it! (*reads*) "Christmas hamper. A bottle of brandy—two of rum—two of gin—three of port—and four of sherry." The man who could encourage such drunkenness, must be a soda water manufacturer. (*throws down paper*) And what does all this present-making lead to? Why, there isn't a woman or a child in the land, that doesn't dream of them! All my household have entered into a conspiracy to get Christmas boxes out of me! During the last week, my wife has never once contradicted me! My eldest daughter has ceased to come down to breakfast in curl papers! even my youngest, best beloved girl, has been attempting to extort money out of me under the pretence of repeating Mrs. Barbauld's lively verses. Ha, ha! I shouldn't wonder, if even Mrs. Holly, who has been stopping with us for the last fort-

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CHRISTMAS BOXES.

night, imagines that I am going to give her a Christmas box !
(*sits down, and takes up paper*) Let me read the paper, and
drive these sad thoughts away. (*reads*) " Court of Common
Pleas."

Enter MARY, C. from L.

MARY. (*smiling*) The postman is down stairs, sir.

JACK. Take him the letter, and let him go !

MARY. He's come for his Christmas box, sir.

JACK. Give him a shilling, and tell him that if he doesn't
deliver the letters earlier, I'll have him punished. *Exit MARY, C.*
There's another shilling gone ! If this continues, Mrs. Jackley
will have to go without her present ! (*reading*) " Mr. Boshy
moved for a rule—"

Enter MARY, C. from L.

MARY. (*smiling*) There is the beadle, sir, come for his
Christmas box.

JACK. (*savagely*) Give him a shilling, and tell him that the
manner in which he allows the boys to make slides before our
door is a disgrace to the nineteenth century.

Exit MARY, C. to L.

The chances of Mrs. Jackley's getting a Christmas box are on
the decrease. (*reading*) " Lord Chief Justice.—Take a rule,
Mr. Boshy." " Mr. Boshy.—Without costs, my lud ?"

Re-enter MARY, C. from L.

MARY. (*smiling*) The waits have called for their Christmas
boxes, sir.

JACK. (*in an agonised tone*) Give them a shilling—(*with
energy*) but tell them not to let the man who plays the trom-
bone have any of it—he's an asthmatic villain ! I play
the trombone myself, and know something about it !

Exit MARY, C. to L.

Mrs. Jackley must wait until next year for her present. (*read-
ing*) " Lord Chief Justice.—With costs, Mr. Boshy." " Mr.
Boshy.—Thank you, my lud." I'll be bound to say there
was swindling somewhere."

Re-enter MARY, C. from L.

MARY. If you please, sir, here's the milkman, the turncock,
the lamplighter, the original dustman, and the sweep from over
the way, come for their Christmas boxes.

JACK. (*throwing down paper*) The original dustman with
the sweep from over the way ? Why, I thought they had no

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connection! Here, I'll give them something. Where's my stick?

MARY. (*alarmed*) Shall I tell them to call again, sir?

JACK. No! and if ever they do call again, give them all in charge.

Exit MARY, alarmed, L. of F. D.

JACK. (*pacing the room*) There! now Mrs. Jackley can't have her present—that's settled. She has made me admire that bracelet whenever we have been down Regent Street. But it's no use, she can't have it—I have no twenty pounds to throw away on such nonsense!

Enter HOLLY, C. from L., unobserved.

HOLLY. (*aside, L.*) Drat Mrs. Holly and her Christmas box! where am I to get the money from? I wonder if Jackley has any spare cash he could lend me?

JACK. (*to himself*) It is positively disgusting, to see how women like jewellery! I believe they only marry for the sake of the gold ring!

HOLLY. (*aside*) He's never without a tolerable balance at his banker's. Deuce take the Christmas boxes, say I—and he may take Mrs. Holly, too, if he likes! I may as well ask him—he can but refuse. Besides, needs must when Mrs. Holly drives!

JACK. (*to himself*) Now I offered her one of those lovely muslin dresses, at three-and-sixpence, marked "distingue," warranted to wash, and a new silver thimble to make it with. But bless you, up flew her nose, as if I had offered her a black draught!

HOLLY. (*coming forward*) Ah, Jackley, my dear friend, how do ye do? (*shake hands*) How well you're looking this morning!

JACK. (*aside*) Ecod, these compliments! Can Holly be fishing for a Christmas box?

HOLLY. (*L.*) I'm glad I've found you alone—I have a favour to ask of you. The fact is, I am sadly in want of twenty pounds! (*takes chair, and sits by the side of JACKLEY*)

JACK. (*R.—aside*) As if everybody wasn't in want of twenty pounds! (*aloud*) How very singular! (*aside*) I must choke him off!

HOLLY. Just imagine, an acquaintance of mine, a Spaniard, and you know what fellows the Spaniards are for gambling—has lost a large sum of money at cards, and has applied to me. You see, I don't know very well how to refuse him!

JACK. Don't you? Oh, I'll tell you—say you will see him at Jericho.

HOLLY. Yes, but I thought that perhaps you might—

JACK. I only wish I could: but you see, one of my friends, one of my earliest and best friends, a Swede, lost a large sum yesterday in a bet, and he has asked me to assist him in paying it.

HOLLY. How very annoying! If I refuse this suspicious Portuguese—

JACK. Portuguese! you said he was a Spaniard!

HOLLY. Did I? Well, Spain and Portugal are almost the same country. I haven't enough money myself, I can't even afford to give my wife a Christmas present!

JACK. That's just my case. I'm sure I think of Mrs. Jackley before every one. (*aside*) She takes good care of that. (*aloud*) But I promised this unfortunate Norwegian—

HOLLY. Norwegian! why he was a Swede just now!

JACK. That's very odd! But then, you know, Sweden and Norway are the same kingdom.

HOLLY. Jackley, look me in the face—Ah, your nose quivers!

JACK. What do you mean? Let my nose alone! (*rising*)

HOLLY. Come, Jackley, let us be frank. Is your Swede authentic?

JACK. No—he is a twin brother to your Spaniard. The fact is, I haven't got twenty pounds—if I had, Mrs. Jackley would have seized upon it long since, for her Christmas box.

HOLLY. What shall I do? I dare not refuse Mrs. Holly, or out of spite, she'll fall ill, and ruin me in doctors' bills.

JACK. And I want every sixpence I have. I have no patience with Mrs. Jackley! she knows, as well as I do, that at this time of the year they always play guinea points at the club—besides, am I to sacrifice my oyster and punch parties for her trumpery bracelet?

HOLLY. And Mrs. Holly must needs pester me about her velvet dress, when I shall want every farthing I have for my nights in town. What does she think I brought her up to London for, unless it was to enjoy myself?

JACK. This Christmas box system is disgusting!

HOLLY. How are we to escape?

Enter MARY, C. from L.

MARY. (*blandly*) If you please, sir—

JACK. Don't bother me!

MARY. The young man from the baker's, sir, wants a Christmas box.

JACK. Tell the scoundrel to go to the devil!

MARY. Mr. William is no scoundrel, sir, because he drives a fancy bread cart!

JACK. Hold your tongue, you hussey!

MARY. I am no hussey, sir. That's not the way to speak to a poor girl whose uncle's godfather kept a servant of his own!

JACK. Go out of the room!

Exit MARY, C. to L.

Thank goodness that girl will not expect a Christmas box.

HOLLY. I should think not!

JACK. I only wish to Heaven Mrs. Jackley would give me a similar chance! but catch her!

HOLLY. (*suddenly*) I say, Jackley, I've got an idea!

JACK. Good gracious! where?

HOLLY. Suppose we make our wives quarrel with us, then they wouldn't expect Christmas boxes either?

JACK. (*considering*) But perhaps they wouldn't make it up again. Mrs. Jackley is capable of cutting all the buttons off my shirts.

HOLLY. Oh, we would make it all right, with a nice seed cake for the children on twelfth night.

JACK. Well, how are we to set about it? (*both think*) Suppose we talk politics, that always brings on a quarrel. (*suddenly*) Ah, I have got it—we will come home drunk. (*reflecting*) No, Mrs. Jackley is used to that.

HOLLY. I am burning to begin a quarrel. What shall I do? (*looks about*) I have it. (*rushes to fireplace, takes up poker*) Suppose I break one of your pier glasses? (*JACKLEY stops him*)

JACK. (*reflecting*) Let me see—what is there my wife dislikes very much?

HOLLY. What is best calculated to drive Mrs. Holly wild?

JACK. By Jove, I'll eat onions! No—the worst of it is, they disagree with me.

HOLLY. I'd smoke in bed—but it always makes me sick.

JACK. There won't be much difficulty any how in getting up a quarrel with Mrs. Jackley—she has the spirit of a game cock.

HOLLY. And Mrs. Holly is a powder magazine in petticoats.

JACK. (*going to table, R.*) I have it. (*he rings bell*)

HOLLY What is it?

Enter MARY, C. from L.

MARY. Did you ring, sir?

JACK. Yes! Go up stairs to the loft, and bring me down my trombone.

HOLLY. (*at fireplace*) I never thought of that. (*to MARY*) Bring me down my flute at the same time. *Exit MARY, L. 2 E.*

JACK. (*delighted*) I gave up practising, because it affected her nerves—it worries her as hissing does a bull dog.

HOLLY. The last time I played the flute, Mrs. Holly left me for ever.

JACK. (*joyfully*) Who knows? perhaps Mrs. Jackley might go home to her mother. I hear a woman coming—silence!

Enter Mrs. JACKLEY, door R. 2 E.

MRS. J. (*sweetly, to JACKLEY*) Good morning, my love! (*to HOLLY*) I came to look for you, Mr. Holly. (*crosses to C.*)

HOLLY. (*L.*) For me, madam?

MRS. J. Your wife wishes to see you immediately. (*to JACKLEY*) You know, dearest, that we are going to a ball on Wednesday.

JACK. (*R.*) What? Why, you are always going to balls!

MRS. J. Are we, love? But this is a very large ball, and we wish to talk the matter over with our dear husbands.

JACK. (*aside*) She's leading up to the bracelet—I feel it coming on like a fit. (*goes to table, sits*)

MRS. J. We want to consult you about our toilettes. (*to HOLLY*) You have such excellent taste, Mr. Holly.

HOLLY. Oh, madam! (*aside*) I wish my wife would only follow it! how she would hate velvet dresses!

MRS. J. Yes, excellent taste! Your wife is aware of it, and is waiting for your advice.

HOLLY. (*aside*) The velvet dress—it hangs over me like a pall. (*aloud*) You are very kind—I will go to my wife directly. (*crosses to R.—Mrs. JACKLEY goes up to fireplace*)

JACK. (*rising, and meeting HOLLY*) Be a man, and don't give way!

HOLLY. (*R.—aside to JACKLEY*) Death rather than slavery!

Exit, R. D.

(*JACKLEY seats himself L. of table—Mrs. JACKLEY draws chair, L.*)

MRS. J. And now I'm going to consult my little husband's taste.

JACK. (*savagely*) I have no taste! I'm a barbarian—Goth! You've told me so yourself a thousand times.

MRS. J. I have, my love? Oh, how can you say so? You nasty, wicked story! You, who could edit a book of fashions!

JACK. Yes—you said I was a Goth the day when I remarked that I didn't like short sleeves! You positively called me a Goth!

MRS. J. No, my love—I said short sleeves never looked well unless there was a nice bracelet on the arm—but with a nice bracelet, my love, they are very pretty.

JACK. (*aside, rising*) I'll try and smoke her off. (*crosses to L. —goes up to fireplace, and takes cigar out of case*)

MRS. J. (R.) You are not going to smoke in this room, my cherub?

JACK. Yes, I am, my lamb. (*lights cigar with fusee*)

MRS. J. So he shall, then, bless him! (*aside*) How provoking he is!

JACK. (*smoking violently—aside*) This ought to do it—it makes me feel queer already.

MRS. J. There, sit down in the arm chair, and enjoy yourself. (*aside*) I must humour him.

JACK. (*aside*) I see I must come down to the trombone! She doesn't say a word against the smoke!

MRS. J. (*aside, R.*) He shall dearly pay for this!

JACK. (*aside*) Why doesn't that girl bring the trombone? By heavens I shall be ill!

Enter MARY L. D. with trombone and flute, gives trombone to JACKLEY, crosses with flute to R. and exits, R. door.

Is there any tune you prefer, Mrs. Jackley? (*blows a course of notes*)

MRS. J. (R.) Remember, sir, there are invalids next door!

JACK. They shall have constant change of airs! (*begins playing, blows one or two notes, stops, coughs, and makes faces*) Drat it! this comes of keeping musical instruments in a loft! The tube is full of dust! (*begins blowing again*)

MRS. J. For mercy's sake, Mr. Jackley— (*stops her ears*) What does this mean?

JACK. It means that I have neglected my music for some time, and now I am going to study it again. (*plays "God save the Queen," when half through it, HOLLY takes it up on the flute, R.*) Oh Holly is practising too! Go it, Holly!

MRS. J. It appears that you are both musicians. (*in a kind voice*) If it amuses you, I think I can accustom myself to it, my pet!

JACK. Can you? (*blows a very discordant note*)

MRS. J. That's very clever, very clever indeed! I didn't think the trombone could produce such thrilling melody! (*flute is heard, R.*) I prefer it immensely to the flute! (*sits down and caresses him*) Go on, my dear, pray go on!

JACK. (*aside*) Go on, go on! I haven't breath enough left to blow out a candle!

Enter MR. and MRS. HOLLY, R. door—MRS. HOLLY caressing MR. HOLLY, who has a flute in his hand.

MRS. H. I'm quite enchanted! (*to MRS. JACKLEY*) Did you

hear my husband? Doesn't he play the flute beautifully? (*the LADIES retire up stage—JACKLEY and HOLLY come forward*)

JACK. (*L. out of breath to HOLLY*) It's no use—a dreadful failure! my wife suffers with the resignation of a skinned eel—seems to like the torture!

HOLLY. (*aside*) Mrs. Holly disgusts me with her praises!

JACK. (*aside*) We must think of some other plan, that doesn't take the breath away so much! I am like a broken bellows!

MRS. J. (*aside to MRS. HOLLY*) I think this is the moment to offer them our presents—it may soften their hearts!

MRS. H. Oh, wait for me—my braces are not yet finished.

MRS. J. You must be quick, then, for my cravat is quite ready. (*shows it—aloud to JACKLEY*) What are you gentlemen talking about? we're getting quite jealous!

JACK. (*L.*) Jealous! (*aside, to HOLLY*) I have hit upon a scheme—send your wife away, and I'll tell you what it is.

HOLLY. (*R., to MRS. HOLLY*) My dear, I wish to speak to Mr. Jackley for a few moments, about—about—(*crossing to R.*)

MRS. H. (*interrupting him, and going down, R.*) We leave you directly, dearest! (*aside, to MRS. JACKLEY*) Come along, come along! I can see velvet in the distance.

MRS. J. (*down R.*) Bracelets are floating about before my eyes!

MRS. H. Good bye, my sweetest! (*to MR. HOLLY*) *Exit R.D.*

MRS. J. Good bye, pet! (*to MR. JACKLEY*) *Exit R. D.*

HOLLY. (*R.*) Well! what's your plan?

JACK. (*L.*) Holly, can you trust me?

HOLLY. Jackley! I would trust you with an empty carpet bag amid the treasures of the Bank of England.

JACK. Holly! I am not talking of treasures, I am talking of our wives! Have you perfect faith in the fidelity of Mrs. Holly?

HOLLY. My wife! I would trust her in a tunnel with Charles the Second!

JACK. (*aside*) Poor fool! (*aloud*) Charles the Second is dead, Holly!

HOLLY. So I am told, Jackley!

MRS. JACKLEY opening door, R.

MRS. J. I am sure they are talking about the presents—I must listen.

JACK. This is the plan I have hit upon—you must make love to my wife—it will be tedious, I know, my dear friend—but never mind—I shall suffer with you—for I will make love to yours!

MRS. J. (*at door*) The monsters! (*aside, and retires*)

HOLLY. What a strange idea! What will it lead to?

JACK. Don't you see—I fall at the feet of Mrs. Holly—you fall at the feet of Mrs. Jackley! I catch you at it—and you catch me at it—we are both jealous! A violent scene ensues—you break a cheap cup—I break a trumpery saucer of the same service, to save expense. “What, madam,” I exclaim! “such conduct when I was on the point of buying you that magnificent bracelet”—you say the same thing about the velvet dress! Then all is over, and no more about Christmas boxes until next year.

HOLLY. Admirable!

JACK. A few days after everything will be explained—you were merely at the feet of my wife to pick up a pin—I was hunting for a fourpenny piece! But Christmas will have passed, and we shall have saved our money.

MRS. J. (*aside, at door, R.*) Oh, very well, gentlemen! then it's a battle between us! *Disappears.*

JACK. But I am thinking of one thing! we must agree upon the signal for surprising each other. (*considering*) Let us see! (*HOLLY sneezes*) Just the very thing we want! Directly you fall at the feet of Mrs. Jackley, begin sneezing violently—the partition between the two rooms is thin, and I cannot fail to hear you.

HOLLY. But suppose I can't sneeze?

JACK. (*taking snuff box from mantle piece*) Here is some snuff—take a pinch—that'll make the sneezing easy!

HOLLY. (*taking snuff*) Thank you!

JACK. Now I'll wait here listening—you go to my wife!

HOLLY. Hadn't you better begin?

JACK. No! I thought of the plan.

HOLLY. But don't you see—I might have thought of it just as well!

JACK. Let us begin together, then! Whose ever wife comes in first, the husband leaves the room! (*crosses to L.*)

HOLLY. Adopted unanimously!

Enter MRS. HOLLY, R.

MRS. H. (*aside*) Very well, gentlemen! We'll see about it! (*going towards fireplace*)

JACK. (*aside*) Your wife! leave me!

HOLLY. (*feeling his pockets*) Dear me! where is my handkerchief? I must have left it in the other room. (*aside, to JACKLEY*) I'll find Mrs. Jackley—lay it on thick! *Exit R. D.*

MRS. H. (*coming down, R.*) How remarkably clever he thinks

himself! (*sits down, R. of table, and works at a pair of braces*) I wonder how he will commence!

JACK. (*aside*) What am I to say to her? Let me see—how did I begin with Mrs. Jackley—no, that won't do! I remember, she began with me! (*with a sudden burst of passion*) Oh, madam!

MRS. H. (*starting*) Good heavens have you hurt yourself?

JACK. No, madam! (*putting his hand to his heart*) But I burn here!

MRS. H. Take a little magnesia, it's an excellent thing for heartburn! Ah! you can't think how you frightened me!

JACK. (*persuasively*) Am I so frightful, then?

MRS. H. Frightful? dear me, no! but—

JACK. What, madam? Is it possible that you can do me the honor of considering me a dangerous man?

MRS. H. Who knows? You can be very agreeable when you choose!

JACK. (*modestly*) Oh! I think you must be flattering me. (*aside*) How much better that is than Mrs. Jackley's plan of calling me a brute! By Jove, what a nice little thing she is.

MRS. H. What are you thinking of, Mr. Jackley?

JACK. What am I thinking of? Ask me rather of whom I am thinking—of whom I must always think! from the rising of of the morning sun to the lighting of the evening gas! (*taking her hand*) I am thinking of a lovely and an amiable woman!

MRS. H. Do you mean Mrs. Jackley?

JACK. I said a lovely and an amiable woman—I will not name her! (*ogles MRS. HOLLY*)

MRS. H. Oh, Jackley!

MRS. H. (*aside*) She calls me Jackley! (*continuing*) I have not named her! (*ogles her*)

MRS. H. Don't look at me in that manner—you might be struck; so my hair is not properly done—I must look quite ugly!

JACK. Ugly! how can you say such a thing! Is Venus ugly? Can the loveliest of women be ugly? No, not if she tried! (*aside*) She's a remarkably nice woman! (*aloud*) Listen to me, madam! I entreat your pardon, but I have hitherto lived close to you without seeing you, like Milton with his two daughters; but now, when I look at you, I perceive all your charms, which break upon me all at once like—like—like the illuminations at Cremorne!

MRS. H. Oh, Edward!

JACK. (*overcome*) She calls me Edward!

MRS. H. I dare not listen to you—I am not accustomed to so much attention.

JACK. (*aside*) She calls that attention! (*aloud*) Put that work down, I beg of you, and let us enjoy a few moments platonic conversation.

MRS. H. Impossible—it is a Christmas present which I have scarcely time to finish.

JACK. A present! Would I were a widower, and Holly gathered to his ancestors!

MRS. H. How spiteful of you to say such a thing—who told you it was for him? It is true I commenced it for him!

JACK. (*seizing her hand*) Ah! and if you would finish it for some one else—speak—sweet canary bird, speak!

MRS. H. Oh, indeed!

JACK. Let me entreat you, cherubim!

MRS. H. (*who has finished her work*) There, the braces are finished. Now I wonder if they will be long enough. (*looking at JACKLEY*) Would you have the kindness to lend me your shoulders for an instant?

JACK. (*throwing himself on his knees*) My shoulders! take 'em; and my legs too, if you'd like 'em—even my heart—every thing is at your service. (*begins taking off his coat*)

MRS. H. No, no—remain as you are. (*places braces on his shoulders*)

JACK. Oh, you delicious woman! (*touches her hair.*)

MRS. H. Be quiet, Mr. Jackley. (*pricks him with needle—aside*) He's going too far!

JACK. How can I be quiet, when—(*pauses, as if going to sneeze*) when—(*aside*) Confound that snuff! I'm going to sneeze! (*aloud*) Oh, my adored—my beloved!

MRS. H. I shall call my husband, sir.

JACK. No, one word only!—(*pauses*) listen to the voice of love! (*sneezes loudly—aside*) Heavens, the signal! (*HOLLY is heard to sneeze loudly, R.—aside*) Holloa! Holly is at it too! (*HOLLY sneezes again—aside*) I can't attend to him—the moments are precious now! (*sneezes—HOLLY sneezes, R.*)

MRS. H. Rise, sir! pray, rise—some one is coming! (*JACKLEY is going to sneeze again—she pushes him aside*) Let me go! let me go! (*Crosses, and exits E. door.*)

HOLLY enters from R. door, wearing the cravat which Mrs.

JACKLEY had been working.

JACK. (*without perceiving HOLLY*) If ever I take a pinch of snuff again—

HOLLY. (*R.—aside*) The deuce take the snuff! I was getting on capitally when I sneezed! (*aloud*) I say, Jackley, are you deaf?

JACK. No. Do you wear cotton in your ears? (*sneezes again*)

HOLLY. (*sneezing*) I've done nothing but sneeze!

JACK. It's very strange—I did not hear you!

HOLLY. How could you, when I didn't hear you? What have you got on your shoulders?

JACK. Oh, a pair of braces. I was obliged to put something on, it was so cold stopping on my knees. (*rises*) Where did you get that cravat from?

HOLLY. Get this cravat from, Jackley? Do you suppose I stole it? (*aside*) Never will I betray that charming woman!

JACK. (*aside*) Poor Holly! What a wonderfully meek expression of countenance he has!

HOLLY. (*aside*) To think that he is owner of that angel!—poor Jackley!

JACK. And my wife? I suppose she was in a dreadful temper?

HOLLY. Wouldn't listen to a word I said—and mine?

JACK. Threatened to scream for help, because I said she had cheeks as blooming as lobsters.

HOLLY. (*aside*) That will take the conceit out of friend Jackley, I think!

JACK. This is all very well—but our scheme has failed.

HOLLY. Yes—you didn't make your appearance at the proper time! (*suddenly*) Suppose we begin again?

JACK. (*with animation*) Very well—I've no objection—suppose we begin again?

HOLLY. And this time you really must sneeze louder.

JACK. Yes, yes—I'll make the windows rattle.

HOLLY. You'd better take another pinch of snuff.

JACK. Ah, don't spare the snuff! (*takes a pinch which he throws away—aside*) Not this time, Holly! not this time.

HOLLY. It shall not be from want of snuff if you don't hear me! (*takes a pinch of snuff and throws it away*)

JACK. Now it's my turn to look out for Mrs. Holly! Don't come before I sneeze! (*HOLLY assents—aside, as he is going out*) In case he should get tired of waiting, I'll send him the newspaper! *Exit L. D.*

HOLLY. That sweet woman is thrown away upon Jackley—what eyes! that glance went through my heart like a skewer!

Enter MRS JACKLEY, R. D.

MRS. J. (*aside*) Oh, here's my bracelet! I thought he wasn't far off!

HOLLY. (*aside, L.*) The angel has followed me! How lovely she looks! (*MRS. JACKLEY walks about*) She walks like a

goddess! If that carriage of hers had been ordered in Long Acre, it could not be more springy! (*aloud*) Oh, madam, I have been counting the minutes since I left you! if you doubt me, listen! It is exactly thirteen minutes and eight seconds since we parted!

MRS. J. (R.) What, are you still thinking of that nonsense?

HOLLY. Do you call it nonsense, charmer, when my heart is fluttering like a fly on a catch-'em-alive-oh! Do you call that nonsense?

MRS. J. Not so loud! if my husband should hear you I am a lost woman!

HOLLY. Oh, say not lost! Am I not near to look after you!

MRS. J. Oh, Mr. Holly, you must forget what has happened—I spoke in a moment of spite against my husband!

HOLLY. Beautiful, spiteful creature?

MRS. J. (*indignantly, as if to herself*) That he should have refused me that bracelet!

HOLLY. To his wife, too—to the woman his friend adores!

MRS. J. A trumpery twenty pounds!

HOLLY. Oh, it is too much!

MRS. J. Too much! (*savagely*) Do you think it dear, then?

HOLLY. Dear! (*confused*) Yes—that bracelet is and always will be dear to me, because it pleases you!

MRS. J. But never mind, now I would not accept the bauble from him—no, not if he offered it on his bended knees!

HOLLY. Noble creature! but if I were to offer it you?

MRS. J. Why tempt me, cruel man? I dare not accept it, Holly!

HOLLY. (*pressing his bosom*) Oh, what sweet words! How delicious to be called Holly. But if I were to insist upon it? if I said you must and shall accept this gift?

MRS. J. Spare me the trial—I am but a weak woman!

HOLLY. Describe the bracelet to me, that I may instantly lay it at your feet!

MRS. J. Oh, do not ask that! If I were to tell you that it is an emerald, surrounded by diamonds, I should never forgive myself!

HOLLY. (*aside, with joy*) Pretty innocent! she has let the cat out! (*aloud*) It is useless to refuse me—give me the address!

MRS. J. No, no, no, never!

HOLLY. (*aside*) I must worm it out of her! (*aloud*) You say the address is—

MRS. J. Heavens! what have I done? Surely I have not told you that it was No. 450, Regent Street. Oh, why did you make me tell you? cruel, but talented man!

HOLLY. (*rubbing his hands—aside*) I knew I should get it out of her! (*aloud*) I fly in the swiftest cab. (*snatching up his hat*) In a few moments that emerald, surrounded by diamonds, shall be yours.

Is going off, returns, kisses her hand, and exits, C. D. L. U. E.

MRS. J. (*laughing*) That's off my mind! I wonder if Mrs. Holly has been as successful! My husband is more difficult to manage than this simpleton. (*retires up, R.*)

Enter JACKLEY, joyfully, L. D.

JACK. (*without seeing MRS. JACKLEY*) That Holly is a brute! a man with a paving-stone in his bosom. Poor little woman! the fact is, Holly doesn't know the value of this inestimable creature. Let me see my notes. (*takes out pocket-book*) Must be eighteen breadths in the skirts, or she feels cramped, pretty dove!

(*MRS. JACKLEY coughs—JACKLEY turns, sees her, and crosses off, L. of F. doors.*)

MRS. J. Now I do hope he'll not go buying her a trumpery cotton backed thing. Mr. Jackley can be so mean when he goes out shopping.

Enter MRS. HOLLY, L. D.

MRS. H. (*laughing*) Oh, dear! what a charming man your husband is! I daren't tell you half the things he said to me—you'd tear my eyes out. But first of all, answer me, do you feel happy and contented?

MRS. J. I feel, dear, as if my heart were reposing on jeweller's cotton. But really, you must take care of Mr. Holly—he's not fit to be trusted alone!

MRS. H. Poor simpletons! it's a very delightful way of punishing them! (*goes up to fireplace*)

Enter MARY, L. D. U. E.

MARY. (L.) If you please, mum, I should wish you to suit yourself this day month, mum, if convenient.

MRS. J. Why, what's the matter?

MARY. Oh, nothing, mum, only of course you wouldn't like to keep a hussey in your house!

MRS. J. What do you mean?

MARY. Especially, mum, hussies that are acquainted with scoundrels, which Mr. William is not—but an honest baker's boy!

MRS. J. Heaven bless the girl—explain yourself!

MARY. There's nothing to explain, mum—only servants has

their feelings, mum, as well as other folks. Ten pounds a-year doesn't include abuse, if it do tea and sugar.

MRS. J. Who has been abusing you?

MARY. Why, Mr. Jackley, mum, worse than if I was the man for the Poor Rate.

MRS. H. (*down, R. to MRS. JACKLEY*) Don't you understand this quarrel—the Christmas boxes.

MRS. J. (*as if remembering*) Of course—and the silly girl has fallen into the trap.

MRS. H. (*aside to MRS. JACKLEY*) Without getting the toasted cheese! and only to think, my dear, that with the blessings of education that girl might have had a bracelet. Ah, it's very sad!

MRS. J. (*to MARY*) Nonsense, Mary! Mr. Jackley was only joking! (*giving money*) There is a Christmas box for you. Will that make peace between you?

MARY. (*taking the money*) Oh, thank you, mum! I am not one to refuse the blessings of peace—especially when it is a five shilling one. (*aside, joyfully, as she goes out*) Who knows with his bad stomach and that cold pork for dinner, he might call me a toad before night. *Exit L. of C. D.*

MRS. H. (R.) What are you thinking about?

MRS. J. (R.) I was thinking how I could deduct that five shillings out of the housekeeping.

MRS. H. Oh, say it was for soft soap used in the kitchen.

Enter MARY, L. C. with parcel—she goes to MRS. JACKLEY.

MARY. Could I speak to you, mum! (*showing parcel*)

MRS. J. Oh, you need not mind Mrs. Holly. Give me the parcel.

MARY. (*whispering to MRS. JACKLEY*) I was to have half-a-crown, if I gave it to you without her seeing me.

MRS. J. Then you had better go and claim it quickly. (*takes parcel and shows it to MRS. HOLLY*) Oh, my dear, I've got it—here it is. My heart is all in a flutter lest your charming husband should have made a mistake. The Lowther Arcade is such a temptation. Come and see!

Exeunt MRS. JACKLEY and MRS. HOLLY, R.

MARY. They seem to understand all about it! I had better get my money before he finds it out.

Goes to door, L. C. and runs against JACKLEY, who enters.

JACK. (*crossing to R.*) Bless the girl, what is she about?

(*puts handkerchief to his nose.*)

MARY. That's my luck! instead of calling me names, he's blessing me!

JACK. Do you think noses are picked up in the gutter?

MARY. Can't say, sir—I've heard of folks going about with their eyes on the ground, but never their noses.

JACK. There, get out of the room—you—you—

MARY. (*quickly*) Yes, sir—yes, sir!

JACK. You precious beauty!

MARY. (*aside, going*) There he goes! Now he's complimenting me! a good five shillings out of my pocket. *Exit C. D. L.*

JACK. I've managed it beautifully! I crept up into her dressing-room and put my present on the table. I'd give anything to see her open it! her eyes will light up so—like the illuminated clock at Charing Cross. I had the bill put inside, so that she might see to what an amount I loved. Egad! nineteen pounds is a good sum to pay for a heart—especially when you consider that for the same money you might have fifty legs of mutton. (*goes up, R.*)

Enter HOLLY, L. C. D. with his hat on—crosses to R.

HOLLY. (*aside*) Hang it! here's that Jackley, confound him!

JACK. (*aside*) Just because I wish that donkey, Holly, was at the bottom of the sea, he comes into my drawing-room. (*aloud*) Been out, Holly?

HOLLY. No, Jackley!

JACK. Going out, Holly?

HOLLY. No, Jackley!

JACK. Why not, Holly?

HOLLY. Because it looks like rain, Jackley!

JACK. Like rain! why, there isn't a drop within twenty miles, if you were to squeeze each cloud like a sponge. My barometer says it's "set fair," Holly!

HOLLY. Your barometer is broken, Jackley. (*savagely*) Come, do you want me to go out?

JACK. Thank you! would you mind going as far as St. Paul's to see the exact time?

HOLLY. (*seating himself, R.*) Yes, I should mind, Jackley!

(*takes up the paper.*)

Enter MRS. JACKLEY, R.—crosses to JACKLEY, L.

MRS. J. Oh, you darling! now, I won't say a cross word to you for the next twelvemonth. Oh, thank you—thank you!

HOLLY. (*R. aside*) Confound it, she's making a mistake—she ought to thank me! (*making signs to her*)

Enter MRS. HOLLY, R.—embraces HOLLY.

MRS. H. Oh, you love, how kind—how thoughtful of you. It looks beautiful—I could dance for joy! (*turns him round to R.*)

HOLLY. (R.) I don't understand you! you stare me in the face and say, "It looks beautiful." That style of compliment, Mrs. Holly, is too coarse.

MRS. H. You dear angel! I was talking of the velvet dress, you know.

HOLLY. Once for all, I must beg of you never again to refer to that article of female attire!

MRS. H. You cunning fellow! but you are found out. (turning to MRS. JACKLEY) Doesn't he do it cleverly dear? anybody would fancy that it was not his present. Now, wouldn't you, Mr. Jackley?

JACK. (L. makes signs to her—confused) Really, from his manner, I could almost swear that it wasn't his present. (aside) Nineteen pounds! fifty legs of mutton thrust into Holly's pocket!

HOLLY. (looks savagely at JACKLEY, and then suddenly turning to MRS. HOLLY) Well, then, since I am found out, it's no use keeping up the delusion. 'It is my present! I knew how much you wanted this foolish dress, and I said to myself—"She shall have it—cost what it may, she shall have it! What are my comforts compared to my wife's happiness? If I stint myself of my little luxuries, will not her grateful smile more than reward me?"

MRS. H. (aside) The hypocrite! (goes up stage)

MRS. J. And she trusts that man with a latch key!

(joins MRS. HOLLY.)

JACK. (aside to HOLLY) Sir, I suspect you sent my wife that bracelet.

HOLLY. (aside to JACKLEY) I believe, sir, that velvet dress came from you.

JACK. You needn't be afraid, Holly, it is paid for!

HOLLY. (changing his tone) Oh, oh, oh! No offence, I trust, Jackley!

JACK. (softly). I don't mind shaking hands, Holly!

(they shake hands.)

HOLLY. I gave twenty pounds for the bracelet—how much was the dress?

JACK. (impatiently) Do, for heaven's sake, drop the subject—I'm sick and tired of it. (aside) If I tell him mine was only nineteen, he might want the sovereign.

HOLLY. The fact is, Jackley, your wife is a sweet little creature, and you don't treat her properly.

JACK. If, sir, you loved your delicious wife half as much as I do, what a life of joy and splendour would she lead. Holly, repent in time, or some of these days you'll get six months with hard labour.

MRS. J. (*coming down L. C. and shaking her finger at JACKLEY*) No oyster suppers, sir—no whist—no punch parties, Mr. Jackley.

HOLLY. (*R. laughing*) Give it him, madam! I'm glad you've discovered the wretch's real character.

MRS. H. (*coming down, R. C.—to HOLLY*) And you, sir, will have to exist without your Cyder Cellars—I know all about it.

JACK. That's right, madam—don't spare him. I wish, madam, it was consistent with your elevated and feminine delicacy to kick that man Holly!

MRS. J. Wretched men! you will have to pass your evenings in your wives' society. Never mind! we must ask all our friends to look in upon us, to keep up your courage!

MRS. H. And when we feel dull, we will get up a laugh by telling how our clever husbands were punished for trying to escape from our CHRISTMAS BOXES.

HOLLY.	MRS. HOLLY.	MRS. JACKLEY.	JACKLEY.
R.		CURTAIN.	L.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; C. *Centre*; R. C. *Right of Centre*; L. C. *Left of Centre*; D. F. *Door in the Flat*; or Scene running across the back of the Stage; C. D. F. *Centre Door in the Flat*; D. R. C. *Right Door in the Flat*; L. C. F. *Left Door in the Flat*; R. D. *Right Door*; L. D. *Left Door*; 2 E. *Second Entrance*; U. E. *Upper Entrance*.

*.*The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.