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HOW STOUT YOU'RE GETTING!

A Farce,

IN ONE ACT,

BY

JOHN MADDISON MORTON,

AUTHOR OF

The Muleteer of Toledo, Away with Melancholy, From Village to Court, Whitebait at Greenwich, To Paris and Back for Five Pounds, The Woman I Adore, A Capital Match, The Two Bonnycastles, Who Stole the Pocket-book? Your Life's in Danger, The Midnight Watch, Going to the Derby, Box and Cox, Done on Both Sides, Poor Pillicoddy, Young England, The King and I, My Wife's Second Floor, Double-Bedded Room, Wedding Breakfast, The Milliner's Holiday, The Irish Tiger, Who's the Composer? Who do they take me for? The Attic Story, Brother Ben, Who's my Husband? Slasher and Crashier, Old Honesty, Waiting for on Omnibus, A Game of Romps, &c.

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HOW STOUT YOU'RE GETTING.

*First performed at the Royal Princess's Theatre, on Monday,
July 16, 1855.*

CHARACTERS :

MR. PLUMMY	-	-	MR. DAVID FISHER.
DOCTOR DULCET	-	-	MR. RAYMOND.
COUSIN GEORGE	-	-	MR. G. EVERETT.
MR. SLIDE,	{ <i>Professor of gymnastics, fencing, dancing, etc.</i> }	-	MR. H. SAKER.
JOE,	<i>Shopboy to Plummy,</i>	-	MR. T. COLLINS.
MRS. PLUMMY	-	-	MISS MURRAY.
MARGERY	<i>Maid of all work,</i>	-	MISS CLIFFORD.

COSTUMES :

- MR. PLUMMY.—Shepherd-plaid coat and trousers, drab boots, light blue waistcoat, light wig and whiskers.
DULCET.—Suit of black.
COUSIN GEORGE.—Brown short coat, light mixed trousers and vest, brown hat.
SLIDE.—Brown dress coat, white vest, black pantaloons, grey silk socks, pumps, black wig and moustache, white handkerchief.
JOE.—White jacket, black trousers.
MRS. PLUMMY.—Buff gingham morning dress, shawl of the same material, bonnet.
MARGERY.—High neck cotton dress, cap.

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HOW STOUT YOU'RE GETTING.

SCENE.

Back parlour at Mr. Plummy's.—The shop (a Chemist and Druggist's) seen through the door c. Chairs, tables, &c. Doors R. and L; packages of medicines, and medicine bottles piled about.

MR. and MRS. PLUMMY seated at breakfast.

Bell heard.

MRS. P. There is the shop bell, my dear.

PLUMMY. I hear it. I never sat down to any meal in my life, breakfast, dinner, tea, or supper, that that bell didn't instantly begin to ring.

Enter JOE from c., with a pill box in his hand.

JOE. Please, sir, here's Mrs. Jones, the laundress, says you sent her the wrong pills yesterday.

PLUMMY. (*flinging down his knife and fork.*) There! Did you ever hear a more ridiculous message than that? What can it possibly signify to the woman what sort of pills she takes! They're all the same price. Begone, sir, and interrupt me again at your peril! (*JOE runs out.*) Now my dear, another egg, eh? Some more ham? Humph!

MRS. P. No more, thank you, Henry, I've done. (*folds up her napkin.*)

PLUMMY. Done breakfast! Why you've hardly begun!

MRS. P. I can't waste two hours over so insignificant a meal as you do.

PLUMMY. What do you mean by wasting two hours? I'm eating the whole time. The fact is, Mary Matilda, you

never do eat ! You think you do, but you don't ; you only nibble—I'll be bound you didn't notice that these eggs were boiled as hard as Derbyshire petrifactions !

MRS. P. I confess I did not.

PLUMMY. I'll trouble you for the butter.

MRS. P. You took the last bit just now.

PLUMMY. I suppose there's more in the house ?

MRS. P. No, the man forgot to call yesterday.

PLUMMY. No butter ! I don't mean to butter myself, I mean flatter myself, but really do think that my little comforts deserve a little more attention.

MRS. P. Here's a piece more ham, dear.

PLUMMY. Ham ! You know I don't care much about ham. (*sticking his fork into a large slice of ham, and beginning to eat it.*)

MRS. P. (*laying her hand on his arm just as he is raising a piece of ham to his mouth.*) Now, listen to me, Henry dear ; if you indulge so much in the pleasures of the table, and take so little exercise, you'll very soon become so stout that you'll be quite an object !

PLUMMY. Stout ! Me ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! I like that ! (*trying again to eat.*)

MRS. P. (*stops him.*) And then, Henry dear, I shan't be able to endure the sight of you ; for if there is one thing I have a greater horror of than another, its *a little fat man* !

PLUMMY. My dearest Mary Matilda, you're wrong ! I happen to be getting thinner every day !

MRS. P. How can you say so ? Haven't I been obliged to let out every one of your waistcoats ? But put on your hat, and we'll go out and take a walk.

PLUMMY. A walk ! You forget the well-known proverb : "After breakfast walk a mile." I mean "Sit a mile," I should say "Sit awhile."

MRS. P. But I particularly want you to go shopping with me.

PLUMMY. You really must excuse me ! Going shopping is a thing I detest ! The girls look at me so ! 'Pon my life they do ; but there's cousin George, he'll go with you —he don't mind the girls looking at him—he rather likes it.

MRS. P. Henry, remember what I said just now! Without exercise you're sure to be ill! You *never* leave the house except to *dine out*.

PLUMMY. Mary Matilda, there are certain sacred duties we owe to society, and dining out is one of 'em.

MRS. P. Nay, Henry, you must come with me. I have seen such a love of a riding habit, and so cheap.

PLUMMY. Of course, of course! But considering that you're not in the habit of riding, I don't see how you can possibly want a riding habit.

MRS. P. Why for our trip to Switzerland, of course; you've promised to take me for the last three years.

PLUMMY. (*aside.*) There's the old story beginning again!—(*aloud.*) Now Mary Matilda, let me ask you, as a sensible woman, how can I possibly leave my business? Besides, what's the use of going all the way to Switzerland when you can see Mont Blanc without stirring out of Piccadilly, and have a comfortable chair to sit on into the bargain! That's the sort of travelling *I like*.

MRS. P. (*nettled.*) In short, sir, you *refuse* to take me? Very well, Mr. P!

PLUMMY. (*taking a lump of sugar out of basin, and putting it into his mouth.*) Now how can you be so unjust? Knowing your partiality for Switzerland, did'nt I take you last week to the waxwork, and did'nt I show you William Tell, with the identical bow and arrow with which he shot his little boy's head off—I mean something or other off his little boy's head?

MRS. P. Yes, yes! Come, Henry, when shall we start? (*taking his arm, coaxingly.*) This day week?

PLUMMY. This day week! I've business! Important business to attend to.

MRS. P. What business?

PLUMMY. Why I've got to collect my pills! I mean bills.

MRS. P. That's very soon done. You've only got to ask for your money.

PLUMMY. I beg your pardon! I've got to *get* the money after I *have* asked for it. Besides, I must consult our friend, Doctor Dulcet, about you.

MRS. P. About me! I'm perfectly well!

PLUMMY. Exactly! Then as the pure air of Pentonville agrees with you, why leave it? Common sense suggests the question, Why leave it?

MRS. P. Pshaw!

COUSIN GEORGE. (*without.*) This way! This way! Gently with the crockery!

PLUMMY. Crockery! What's the meaning of "Crockery?" (*smash heard.*) Oh, that's what it means!

Enter COUSIN GEORGE at door c., followed by Two Men, carrying a large hamper, which they put down.

GEORGE. (*to PLUMMY, and holding out his hand.*) A shilling!

PLUMMY. (*bewildered, mechanically puts his hand into his pocket, and gives GEORGE money, who gives it to men.*)

MEN. (*to GEORGE.*) Thank your honour!

(*The MEN go out at c. and r.*)

PLUMMY. (*to GEORGE.*) Thank your honour! Considering the shilling came out of *my* pocket, I think he might have thanked my honour! But what does all this mean?

GEORGE. Why, it means that as Mrs. Brittle, round the corner, couldn't pay your little account for medicines, I took it out in crockery—such a bargain! Thirty-nine dozen soup-plates, seventeen tureens, and a salad-bowl—think of that!

PLUMMY. Well, 'pon my life, Mrs. Brittle is a cool sort of a person. She paid my last account with forty-seven dozen pie-plates, and a tea-pot. Never mind, I'll be even with her; I'll go this moment and order the handsomest dessert service she's got in her shop, and pay her out in pills.

MRS. P. Dont! Poor woman, she's a large family. (*puts on her bonnet and shawl.*) By-the-bye, Cousin George, you havn't breakfasted?

GEORGE. Never mind! Are you going out, Cousin?

MRS. P. Yes, when Mr. Plummy's ready; he's only been two hours over his breakfast, that's all!

GEORGE. For shame, Plummy—by-the-bye, how stout

you're getting! (*to MRS. PLUMMY.*) I needn't say how delighted I should feel if you would accept my arm.

PLUMMY. Of course she will, and thank you into the bargain. (*aside.*) And so shall I. I wouldn't be with a cousin in the house for all the world; cousins are such easy, good-natured, useful creatures—poor devils!

MRS. P. Perhaps you will condescend to oblige me by walking as far as Mr. Buffer's? (*to PLUMMY.*)

PLUMMY. Buffer! Buffer! What Buffer? (*crossing c.*)

MRS. P. Why the great Railway Director.

PLUMMY. Yes, of course. I know the Buffer you mean. And what am I to say to the great Buffer?

MRS. P. Why ask him for the situation you promised to obtain for Cousin George.

GEORGE. I'm in no hurry, cousin—on the contrary.

PLUMMY. You hear, he's in no hurry—on the contrary.

MRS. P. But I am: the appointment has been promised for the last three months.

PLUMMY. Well, I'll go: I'll jump into an omnibus directly.

MRS. P. You'd better walk—it'll do you good. You've no idea how stout you're getting!

GEORGE. You are, indeed; everybody says the same thing: go where I will, I've only to mention your name, and the universal remark is "how stout he's getting!"

MRS. P. Ha! ha! Well, good bye, you idle fellow!

GEORGE. Ta-ta, Plummy!

[*Exeunt MRS. PLUMMY and GEORGE, c.*

Enter MARGERY, l. h., and beginning to clear away breakfast.

PLUMMY. Capital fellow, George; if I get him this situation, I shall feel his loss acutely: he manages my business, writes my letters, collects my debts, takes my wife out; in short, I shouldn't know what to do without him. Oh! our new servant of all work: I'll give her a lesson in boiling eggs! Come here! (*louder.*) Come here!

MARG. Did you speak, sir?

PLUMMY. Speak! Yes, I rather think I did! Where did you come from?

MARG. Eh? I'm rather hard of hearing, sir.

PLUMMY. (*shouting.*) Where did you come from?

MARG. Straight up from the kitchen, sir!

PLUMMY. She's a deafy! Fourteen guineas a year, with tea and sugar, to a deafy! If I give her warning, she won't hear it.

PLUMMY. (*shouting.*) I shall want—oh, what's the use of speaking to her! (*tears a leaf out of his pocket-book, and writing.*) "A roast pigeon at two o'clock, with plenty of bread sauce." — There! (*giving MARGERY the paper.*) Well, there—don't you see? (*shouting.*)

MARG. No! 'Tain't a C—it's a Hay! (*reading the paper.*)

PLUMMY. A Hay! (*pointing in dignified manner towards door L. H.*) Quit my sight! (*shouting.*)

MARG. Oh yes, sir, I'll be all right, 'cause I'll get the housemaid to read it to me. (*as she goes out c. spelling the paper.*) "A, r, o,—r, o, a, s, t,—roast, p, i, g,—pig"—oh! a roast pig—very well, sir, very well. [*Exit door L. H.*]

PLUMMY. Phew! how very sultry it is, to be sure. (*sitting down in an easy chair.*) The first inventor of easy chairs deserves to be immortalised: he ought to have a statue erected to him, sitting in his own chair, like the Duke of Bedford in his own square. (*yawns.*) Let me see, I've got to call on the great Buffer. (*yawning again, and ensconcing himself in the chair.*) Then, then I've got to—(*very sleepy.*) to—thirty-nine dozen soup plates—"p, i, g,—pig."

DOCTOR DULCET. (*without.*) At home! Of course he is. When does he ever stir out, I should like to know? (*Enters door c.*) I shall find him fast asleep in his easy chair, I'll be bound. (*seeing PLUMMY.*) I thought so!

PLUMMY. (*asleep.*) Seventeen tureens, "va-ri-ety."

(*singing.*)

DOCTOR D. Plummy! Plummy, I say!

PLUMMY. Eh? What? Ah, Doctor, glad to see you. (*pretending to write hurriedly.*) I was just making up my accounts—7 and 18, 25—25 and 14, 36; no, 38—38 pence, three and four pence—3 and carry 4; no, 4 and carry 3—

pooh ! I defy any man to make up his accounts with such a pen as this !

DOCTOR D. Now, what is it ? You sent for me. Ain't you well ? (*feels his pulse.*)

PLUMMY. Perfectly.

DOCTOR D. And Mrs. Plummy ?

PLUMMY. Never was better.

DOCTOR D. Then what do you want ?

PLUMMY. A favour ! Listen : (*looking about him.*)
Mrs. Plummy is slightly insane ! (*rising.*)

DOCTOR D. Insane !

PLUMMY. Don't be alarmed : only upon one point, and that one point is Switzerland !

DOCTOR D. I see. She wants to go there ; well, it would do her a deal of good.

PLUMMY. I know it would ; but I want you to persuade her it would do her a deal of harm.

DOCTOR D. I shall do no such thing. Besides, it would be a capital thing for *you*. You've no idea how stout you're getting ! Take my advice, put a knapsack on your back, walk through Switzerland, and you'll come home a different man.

PLUMMY. My dear doctor, I never should come back at all. Walk through Switzerland ! I should just as soon think of jumping off the end of Hungerford pier, and swimming to Calcutta ; besides, I've urgent and important business to detain me in town.

DOCTOR D. Laziness ! Sheer idleness ! Hark ye, Plummy, what's your age ?

PLUMMY. Twenty-six.

DOCTOR D. What's your height ?

PLUMMY. Five feet seven.

DOCTOR D. And what's your weight ?

PLUMMY. Well, the last time I was weighed, it was about ten stone.

DOCTOR D. And now it's about thirteen.

PLUMMY. Thirteen ! Pooh ! no such thing !

DOCTOR D. I hope not, for when a little man, like you, reaches that weight, there's no stopping him.

PLUMMY. Go along !

DOCTOR D. I'm serious ! You've probably noticed a species of vegetable they call a pumpkin ?

PLUMMY. Yes; I saw a colossal specimen of it yesterday, in Covent Garden Market.

DOCTOR D. Ha! ha! Well, that's what you'll come to—you'll become a human pumpkin!

PLUMMY. (*trying to laugh.*) Ha! ha! what a funny fellow you are!

DOCTOR D. But that's not the worst of it. Tell me, do you value your domestic happiness?

PLUMMY. Of course I do.

DOCTOR D. Then take more exercise. Is Mrs. Plummy attached to you?

PLUMMY. Devotedly!

DOCTOR D. Then take more exercise. Walk out with your wife, instead of falling asleep at home, or she'll find one who will—some cousin, perhaps. (*goes l. h. and up.*

PLUMMY. Cousin! (*aside.*) He said cousin!

DOCTOR D. Now I've done, so good bye.

PLUMMY. Stop! I want you to explain.

DOCTOR D. I've said quite enough; if you won't take the hint, it's your fault, and not mine. So, as I said before, if you value your *domestic happiness*, take more exercise—walk, run, ride, dance, I don't care what, only keep under thirteen stone, and, above all, remember the pumpkin!

[*Exit door c.*

PLUMMY. Well, but—stop—oh, absurd! He's joking! and yet I don't like that allusion to the pumpkin at all. How people can say I'm getting stout, I can't imagine. I don't mean to say I'm thin—I'm not a skeleton, no! but I still retain all my natural symmetry of form, and elasticity of motion. (*making a jump.*) Wheugh! Mary Matilda certainly *did* say that she couldn't endure a little fat man; but am I fat? That's the question; by-the-bye, I wonder what I do weigh? That stupid old Doctor with his thirteen stone! Absurd! Ah! I quite forgot I had a weighing machine, and there it is. Here, Joe, bring in the weighing machine! (*JOE pushes in weighing machine at door c. then goes out again.*) I'll ascertain my avoirdupoise to four pounds. I should reckon my avoirdupoise at a trifle under eleven stone, certainly not more than eleven—now then! (*heaps up weights into one scale.*) There, that's eleven stone exactly!—now then! (*sits down in the other scale, and pulls it down with a run.*) Holloa! (*getting up*

and taking up another weight.) Fourteen pounds more ; of course I shan't turn the scale now ! (sits down and comes down with a run as before.) Oh, pooh ! pooh ! these weights must be wrong, or else the machine out of order ; no, then I am more than twelve stone ; but how much ? Not more than a pound or two ! (sits down again, and begins putting weights one after another into the other scale ; puts on more weights, and at last it slowly sinks.) At last ! (examining weights and with a violent exclamation.) Thirteen stone all but a pound ! Goodness gracious ! One pound more—one little pound more, and there'll be no stopping me ! (removes weights.)

Enter MARGERY, R. H.

MARG. Please, sir, here's Mr. Slide, the dancing-master, wants to see you. (*goes out again, R. H.*)

PLUMMY. Slide ! dancing-master ! Thirteen stone all but a pound ! Then I am a little fat man, and Mary Matilda—by-the-bye, even now she's gadding about the town with that officious, intrusive puppy of a cousin of her's, and at my particular request, too—that's the delicious part of it—at my particular request—he ! he ! (*laughing hysterically.*)

Enter SLIDE from door R. ; he carries a small violin in a case ; he is very stout ; he also carries a large blue bag.

SLIDE. Mr. Plummy, your most obedient.

(Putting himself in a position, and bowing lowly.)

PLUMMY. (*looks at him, goes to him, stands alongside of him, and measures their respective heights and figures.*)

SLIDE. (*very much astonished at the proceeding.*) What a very peculiar proceeding !

PLUMMY. (*aside.*) We're about the same age and height ; but he'd weigh two of me, if not three !

SLIDE. I repeat, my name is Slide, Professor of Gymnastics, Fencing, Dancing—

PLUMMY. (*quickly.*) Oh ! then you can dance ? I am delighted to hear it.

SLIDE. Oh yes—at least I could before I unfortunately got so stout. (*PLUMMY looks serious.*) I rent a small cot-

tage of yours at Islington, and I've looked in to pay my rent.

PLUMMY. You walked, of course? (*significantly.*)

SLIDE. Walk! (*sighing.*) Look at me! (*crosses L. H.*)

PLUMMY. (*aside.*) I wonder how much he does weigh? Pray, take a seat, Mr. Slide—I really insist upon it. (*edging SLIDE towards weighing machine, and making him sit down in the scale.*) Delighted to possess you as a tenant, I'm sure. (*SLIDE gets up to make a bow; PLUMMY pushes him back again.*) A man of your *European* celebrity! it's an honour, sir, an honour! (*during this, unperceived by SLIDE, he keeps piling up weights in the other scale.*) I repeat, a man of your importance—I may say weight—(*here the scale in which SLIDE is sitting suddenly goes up with a jerk, almost throwing SLIDE out. PLUMMY aside.*) Fourteen stone and a half! Beats me hollow! I knew he would—I wonder if he's married; if he is, and lives happily with Mrs. Slide, it's very clear that *I've* nothing to fear. (*aloud.*) I beg to apologize for not asking after Mrs. Slide, the little Slides. I presume there *is* a Mrs. Slide and—

SLIDE. (*with a deep sigh.*) That's a tender point, sir—but, touching the re-papering the drawing-room.

PLUMMY. (*aside.*) He says Mrs. Slide is a tender point.—(*aloud.*) She's quite well, I hope?

SLIDE. (*solemnly.*) So do I, sir! She was perfectly salubrious when she left me.

PLUMMY. Left you! (*aside.*) Oh, probably gone down to Gravesend with the little Slides, for a day or two, to catch shrimps! (*aloud.*)—Ah! you must be a very happy couple: I should say you're just the sort of man for a woman to be devotedly attached to.

SLIDE. Yes, Sarah was very fond of me before I got so stout! (*PLUMMY looks serious again.*) Ah! it was all my own fault, for if I had listened to what Doctor Dulcet said—"Slide," says he to me, six months ago, "What's your age?" "Twenty-eight," says I. "What's your height?" "Five feet six and a half." "What's your weight?"

PLUMMY. "Fourteen stone and a half!" says you.

SLIDE. Oh dear, no! I was comparatively thin, then! I was only within one pound of thirteen stone!

PLUMMY. (*aside.*) Only one pound ! Just like me ! What a remarkably disagreeable coincidence !—Well ?

(*In a state of great fidget and anxiety.*)

SLIDE. Well. "Take more exercise," says he ; "Keep within thirteen stone," says he, "or there'll be no stopping you," says he.

PLUMMY. Goodness gracious ! Did he make any absurd allusion to a species of vegetable called a pumpkin ?

SLIDE. And his words came true. Only look at me ! (*with a deep sigh.*)

PLUMMY. But Mrs. Slide ! (*anxiously.*) I say, Mrs. Slide !

SLIDE. Left me ! Left me !

PLUMMY. (*horrified.*) Left you ! But not for ever ? The mother of the little Slides could never leave you for ever !

SLIDE. No ! She promised to return when I became a thinner man ! But, alas ! the Rubicon was passed. I had suffered myself to exceed thirteen stone, and then, as the doctor very truly said, there was *no stopping me* ! Only look at me ! See what I have come to, and in six short months ! What shall I be this time twelve months ?

PLUMMY. (*aside with desperation.*) What, indeed ! Sixteen ounces more, and I shall become a wretched, unwieldy pumpkin, like the unhappy Slide, and then, Mary Matilda—there's not a moment to be lost ! What's to be done ? Ah ! (*suddenly seizing SLIDE violently by the arm.*) You're a professor of Gymnastics, eh ? I want to go into active training, immediately—this very moment, you hear ? You must reduce me—reduce me very considerably ! What have you got here ? (SLIDE taking out two pairs of *boxing-gloves from the blue bag.*) Boxing-gloves ! the very thing ! Put 'em on—put 'em on, directly. (*he and SLIDE put on gloves.*) Now then, don't spare me ! (*sparring, PLUMMY gets a crack on nose.*) Never mind ! (*rubs nose.*) Come on again ! (*gets another crack on nose—rubs it.*)

SLIDE. Any more, sir ?

PLUMMY. (*quietly taking off gloves.*) No thank you. I've had enough for the present ! Phew ! it's hard work ! I wonder how much I weigh now ? (*runs and jumps into*

scale c.; weighs himself.) Not an ounce difference! Still thirteen stone all but a pound! Suppose I try dancing—I will! (to SLIDE.) You teach dancing? How much a lesson? How much a lesson? (dancing about in a high state of excitement)

SLIDE. Twelve for a guinea!

PLUMMY. Give me a guinea's worth directly.

SLIDE. What, all at once!

PLUMMY. Where's your fiddle! (taking fiddle out of case.) Where's your bow? Where's your rosin? (plunging his hand into Slide's pocket, and taking out a piece of rosin, with which he begins to rosin the bow with great energy.) There! And now let's begin something quick, very quick, sir! the college hornpipe—I don't care what, only strike up—Why the deuce don't you strike up! Shall I take off my coat? (SLIDE strikes up the college hornpipe, PLUMMY dances energetically, continually crying out "Quicker!" about to take his coat.) Ah! (seeing MARGERY, who enters with small tray, and letting SLIDE go suddenly R. H.) Strike up a polka! why don't you strike up a polka!

PLUMMY. Now, Betsy Dorothy, come along! Pooh! don't be shy! (SLIDE strikes up; PLUMMY seizes MARGERY round the waist, and twirls her rapidly round; the cover of the dish, plate, pigeon, &c., fall one after the other—PLUMMY shouting all the time "Quicker! Quicker!")

Enter MRS. PLUMMY at c. door.

(MARGERY sees her, screams, and runs out at door R. H.; PLUMMY goes on dancing, and SLIDE continues to play the fiddle, neither of them seeing MRS. PLUMMY.

MRS. P. Mr. Plummy! (PLUMMY kisses his hand to his wife, and still goes on dancing; SLIDE, in confusion, pockets his fiddle, goes towards door c., bowing repeatedly to MRS. PLUMMY, goes out c., and falls into basket at back.) Mr. Plummy, I say, what does all this mean?

PLUMMY. (stopping dancing, and walking rapidly to and fro.) It means I am following your advice, my dear; taking exercise, my love.

MRS. P. A pretty sort of exercise, sir, dancing the polka with your servant!

(*Here PLUMMY takes up a pair of dumb-bells, and goes energetically to work.*)

PLUMMY. Yes, my dear, I certainly was practising the polka, for the pleasure of dancing it with you, my love.

(*using the dumb-bells more.*)

MRS. P. You dance!—ha! ha! You're too stout by half!—Ha! ha!

PLUMMY. (*aside.*) She sticks to it! (*using dumb-bells more energetically; sees MARGERY, who enters R. H., carrying two empty pails.*) Where are you going to?

MRS. P. To fetch in the water, I suppose.

PLUMMY. (*aside.*) I should say “fetching water” was capital exercise—here goes!

(*Snatching the pails out of Margery's hands, and running out door c.*)

MARG. Sir! sir! (*runs after PLUMMY.*)

MRS. P. Henry! Henry! What can be the matter with him?

GEORGE. (*without.*) Holloa! mind what you're about!

Enters c. carrying a number of parcels, and a small picture under his arm; his trousers are deluged with water.

Confound it, I'm wet through! (*shaking his legs.*) I just met Plummy with a huge pail in each hand, one of which he upset over me. Look here! Here are your parcels, cousin.

MRS. P. I am sorry to give you so much trouble.

GEORGE. Trouble! It's a pleasure—an unspeakable pleasure! (*drops parcels, &c., &c.*) I repeat, it's the greatest pleasure you could do me! (*dropping and picking up parcels—aside.*) Confound the parcels! Ah! (*with a lack-a-daisical look at Mrs. PLUMMY.*) happy, yet wretched Plummy!—Happy, to possess such a treasure; wretched, not to appreciate it.

MRS. P. (*turning the conversation.*) Where's the picture we just had framed?

GEORGE. Here, under my arm.

(*Dropping more parcels, and presenting the picture to Mrs. PLUMMY; then picking up parcels, and putting them on table, except two, which he lays on the arm chair.*)

MRS. P. A pretty subject, isn't it? Who'd think it was only a coloured engraving?

GEORGE. Interesting to a degree. A cottage on the margin of a murmuring stream, with two cows and a little boy in the foreground bathing. Ah, there's a spot for two loving hearts to dwell in!

MRS. P. Instead of talking nonsense, Cousin George, suppose you hang the picture up.

GEORGE. Of course I will. Where?

MRS. P. I think it will look very well over that door. (*points to door in c.*) You'll find the hammer and nails in that room, (*points L. H.; GEORGE runs in and returns with hammer and nails.*) the steps are in the shop. (*GEORGE disappears at c., and returns with the steps, which he places close to door c.*) Now then! (*takes picture, and climbs up steps; holds picture against wall.*) Will that do?

MARGERY runs in at c.

MARG. Oh, mistress, I do think master's cracked! he'd no sooner fetched in the water—sixteen pails, ma'am—than he met me going into the cellar for coals, and he snatched the scuttle out of my hands, and rushed down, six steps at a time—here he comes!

PLUMMY. (*running in against steps, and upsetting contents of coal-scuttle over the stage.*) Wheugh!—never mind! (*runs to door L. H., and returns with large broom, with which he begins sweeping up the coals.* MARGERY takes up scuttle, and carries it out at door R. H.)

MRS. P. Henry, you should not indulge in such sudden and violent exercise; you're not used to it!

GEORGE. (*on steps.*) Of course you ain't; besides you forget how stout you are!

PLUMMY. (*jumping up.*) Stout again! I must go it again! (*seeing GEORGE on steps.*) Holloa! what are you doing up there?

GEORGE. I'm going to hang up this picture.

PLUMMY. (*aside.*) More gymnastics for me! the more the better—I'll do it, so come down—come down, directly! (*shaking ladder—GEORGE hastily comes down; PLUMMY seizes the picture out of his hands, and runs up the steps.*) Now then! Holloa! where's the hammer? (*looking*

down.) Oh, there it is! (*runs down the steps, takes the hammer, and then runs up steps again.*) Now then, where are the nails? Oh, there they are!

(*Runs down the steps, and is about to go up again—MRS. PLUMMY stops him.*)

MRS. P. No, Henry, I won't allow it! Take away the steps! (*to GEORGE, who removes the steps.*) As George observed, just now, you forget how stout you are!

PLUMMY. Stout! No such thing! I'm as light as a feather—look here! (*places chair where the steps were, gets on to it, the bottom gives way, and he comes through.*) It was cracked before! I'll take my oath it was cracked before! (*falls exhausted in arm chair, on the parcels.*)

MRS. P. Oh! Henry! (*pulling him up.*) You'll spoil my caps!

Enter MARGERY, R.

MARG. Please, ma'am, Doctor Dulcet wants to speak to you.

MRS. P. With me? Very well, I'll come to him.

[*Exit MARGERY, R.—MRS. PLUMMY is about to follow.*]

GEORGE. (*aside to her.*) Don't forget our visit to the National Gallery.

(*MRS. PLUMMY nods to him, and follows MARGERY, R.*)

PLUMMY. (*observing them.*) Ah, whispering! (*coming down—to GEORGE.*) You were observing to Mrs. Plummy that—

GEORGE. I was reminding my cousin that we had arranged to go together to the National Gallery, that's all.

PLUMMY. (*smiling savagely.*) Oh, that's all!

GEORGE. (*aside.*) How he's grinning!—(*aloud.*) Yes, more for the sake of the stroll than anything else.

PLUMMY. Of course! of course! (*grinning again.*)

GEORGE. (*aside.*) I don't like that grin of his at all!

PLUMMY. (*aside.*) You shall have strolling enough before I've done with you, my fine young fellow.—(*aloud.*) George, my boy, (*slapping him familiarly on the back.*) there have been numerous inquiries in the shop all the morning, after lucifer matches, and I find we havn't a single box left: will you order a fresh supply?

GEORGE. Directly ! there's a shop, round the corner, with thousands of 'em.

PRUMMY. Yes, but I prefer them direct from the manufactory at Battersea.

GEORGE. I'll go the first thing to-morrow morning.

PLUMMY. To-day, George, my boy—to-day ; and, if they havn't any at Battersea, you're sure to find plenty in Shoreditch, it's only a little way round—so go !

GEORGE. (*aside.*) I'll get the infernal lucifer matches in the neighbourhood, return in half-an-hour, and persuade him I've got 'em at Battersea ! (*aloud.*) Very well, I'm off —by-the-bye, Mr. Figsby, the grocer, has just settled his little account—six pounds, seventeen shillings and six pence. He apologized for paying it all in silver, but—

(*offers bag.*)

PLUMMY. Never mind ! Go for the lucifers !

GEORGE. Take the bag. (*giving him the bag.*) It weighs at least a pound—I'm not sorry to get rid of it. (*runs out c.*)

PLUMMY. Come, I've got Cousin George out of the way ! I shan't have any more whispering for an hour or two ! (*suddenly.*) 'Pon my life I don't think I'm quite so stout as I was—I am sure I'm not ! That tremendous effort I made with the coal scuttle—yes, that did the trick ! I felt I was rapidly losing flesh the whole time I was lugging it up from the cellar. I'll weigh myself again ; if I have only lost an ounce, I shall be satisfied, perfectly satisfied ! (*not knowing what to do with the bag, puts it in his pocket.*) Let me see, I weighed thirteen stone all but a pound ! There, now then ! (*sits on scale—goes slowly down.*) Holloa ! Pooh ! it can't be—yes it is ! I've reached the fatal point—thirteen stone, and now there'll be no stopping me ! (*jumping up.*) Nature, for some mysterious purpose or other, has made me an exception to the general rule : the more exercise I take the stouter I get ! Ah ! (*seeing DOCTOR, who enters at door R. H., rushes, grasps his hand, and drags him forward.*) Doctor, you told me to take more exercise ; the more I take, the stouter I get ! I've done more in the last half hour than Hercules ever did in his life, and the result is I'm a pound heavier than I was before : I've reached the thirteen stone ! Stop me ! Give me something—I don't care what. I'll swallow a whole

sea of vinegar! Only stop me, if you love me; don't let me go any further!

DOCTOR D. Suppose you diet yourself.

PLUMMY. I will: I'll live entirely upon nothing for the next six months.

DOCTOR. I've known violent emotions, powerful excitements, do wonders in such cases as yours.

PLUMMY. Have you? That's enough—I'll go and kill Joe!

DOCTOR D. Ha! ha! Egad! as you're evidently becoming dangerous, the sooner I get out of your way the better. (*runs out c.*)

PLUMMY. Here! Stop! What shall I do for a violent emotion? Where shall I find a powerful excitement? (*shouting.*) Will anybody tell me where I can find a powerful excitement? Ah! (*seeing SLIDE, who enters c.*)

SLIDE. You are alone, Mr. Plummy? Shall we resume our lessons? (*taking out his fiddle.*) Shall we, Mr. Plummy?

(*Putting himself in a position.*)

PLUMMY. (*aside.*) Here's an opportunity for getting up a powerful excitement; I'll insult him, quietly but grossly! (*aloud, and in a dignified manner.*) Do you know, sir, that you are a very familiar and impudent sort of person, sir?

SLIDE. Impudent! Me! Oh, Mr. Plummy!

PLUMMY. (*aside.*) He don't mind it a bit. (*aloud.*) Don't "Plummy" me, sir! you little, overgrown, corpulent individual!

SLIDE. What's that, sir?

PLUMMY. (*aside.*) All right — he's getting up h's excitement!

SLIDE. Do you mean to insult me, sir?

PLUMMY. Of course I do! In a word, sir, your visits to this house are suspicious, sir—in short, sir, you're not a dancing-master, you're a Russian nobleman in disguise, sir—yes, sir! and you come here to make love to my wife, sir!

SLIDE. No, no!

PLUMMY. Oh, then I tell a falsehood, eh?

SLIDE. No, no!

PLUMMY. Then you *do* come here to make love to my wife! You can't get out of that, so follow me.

SLIDE. (*very quietly, and returning his violin to his pocket.*) Very well, Mr. Plummy; I suppose you thought I was all lamb, Mr. Plummy, but you'll find there's a considerable dash of the lion about me, Mr. Plummy. So as you prefer fighting, we will, if you please, adjourn to my shooting gallery, Mr. Plummy.

PLUMMY. (*aside.*) Holloa!—Your shooting gallery!

SLIDE. Yes, Mr. Plummy, where I will back myself to send a bullet through a shilling at forty yards, nineteen times out of twenty, Mr. Plummy—so come along, Mr. Plummy!

PLUMMY. (*alarmed.*) Don't be in such a confounded hurry! besides, business before pleasure. I see your drift, sir; you owe me a quarter's rent, and if I kill you, you'll make that a paltry excuse for not paying it! Consequently, I don't fight till I am paid.

SLIDE. There's your money. (*offers purse.*)

PLUMMY. (*aside.*) The devil! (*taking purse.*)

SLIDE. I have to apologize for paying you in silver; but you'll find it right to a shilling, Mr. Plummy.

PLUMMY. I don't know that, sir; however, I'll count it sometime between this and the end of the week.

SLIDE. Pooh! I'll give you ten minutes! I'll walk up and down before your house, and if you don't come—

PLUMMY. You'll give me up, and go away.

SLIDE. No! I'll come and fetch you. (*goes out c.*)

PLUMMY. Come, if this isn't a "powerful excitement," I don't know what is; and as for a violent emotion—all I can say is, I never was in such a fright in the whole course of my life! And now—now for the result! (*not knowing what to do with the purse, puts it in his coat pocket—goes to scale.*) I weighed thirteen stone: now how much has my powerful excitement taken out of me? How much have I lost by my violent emotion? (*sits down, and slowly sinks.*) Lost! I'm heavier than ever! I'm like a snow-ball, the more I roll, the bigger I get! Two pounds in half an hour! why, at this rate I shall be bullet-proof in twenty-four hours: a ball may go into me, but I'll defy it to go through me!

JOE runs in c, down L. H.

JOE. Please, sir, here's Mr. Slide, in a fuming rage, wants to know how much longer he's to wait for you.

PLUMMY. Go to him, Joe—tell him I apologize—that I'll re-paper him from top to bottom, and whitewash him into the bargain.

JOE. Please, sir, Missus wants to know what you're going to have for dinner to-day.

PLUMMY. Nothing! And the same to-morrow and the day after, and—

JOE. You'd better eat something, sir, or you'll *be ill*.

PLUMMY. Then get me a crust of bread and a pickle.

(*goes out c.*)

JOE. What a dinner! (*sweeping coals up.*)

Enter MRS. PLUMMY, R. H.

MRS. P. Well, Joe, has your master ordered dinner?

JOE. Yes, ma'am, a crust o' bread and a pickle.

MRS. P. A crust of bread and a pickle! I can't imagine what it means.

JOE. *I can*, mum. Master wants to get thin—I'm sure of it, 'cause I had my ear to the key-hole, quite by accident, the whole time the doctor was with him.

MRS. P. Ah! Well?

JOE. And I heard the doctor tell him that if he once reached thirteen stone, there'd be no stopping of him—that he'd become a pumpkin, and that you wouldn't care a button about him; he's been a weighing himself all the morning.

MRS. P. I see it all, poor dear Henry! Run to him, Joe, and tell him to come to me directly.

JOE. Yes, ma'am. (*runs out door c.*)

Enter GEORGE, R. H.

GEORGE. I've got the lucifers! (*aside.*) I don't see Plummy. (*aloud.*) My dear cousin, beautiful cousin, you're a perfect Lucifer—I mean angel! (*falls on his knees.*)

Enter PLUMMY, c., followed by SLIDE.

(MRS. PLUMMY laughs. GEORGE immediately takes off his hat, and a number of lucifer boxes fall on the stage, which he begins picking up. PLUMMY advances in a slow, stately manner, looking alternately at his wife and GEORGE.)

PLUMMY. Ah! What are you doing on your knees, sir?

GEORGE. On my knees, am I? Yes, I was picking up these lucifer boxes, that's all.

MRS. P. He was thanking me for his appointment. Here it is. (*gives paper to PLUMMY.*)

PLUMMY. (*passing paper to GEORGE.*) There it is. Oh, Mary Matilda—(*about to embrace her.*)

MRS. P. It's more than you deserve after requesting Doctor Dulcet to forbid my going to Switzerland! Fie! Fie! If you had honestly and frankly told me you preferred being stout, and that you feared the air of Switzerland would make you thinner—

PLUMMY. (*suddenly.*) Do you think it would?

MRS. P. Certainly!

PLUMMY. Then we'll start directly, this very moment! Come along! (*turning up with MRS. PLUMMY.*)

MRS. P. The riding habit!

PLUMMY. We'll go and buy it. Come along. (*turning up again.*)

MRS. P. But where's the money to come from? With one thing and another I shall want at least twelve pounds.

PLUMMY. (*suddenly.*) Twelve! Ah! Of course! Here! (*taking bag out of one of his pockets.*) And here! (*taking purse out of the other and giving it to MRS. PLUMMY, who shews how heavy they are.*)

MRS. P. Oh, thanks, Henry dear! Come, confess! Don't you feel your heart all the lighter from having indulged your wife's request?

PLUMMY. (*sighing.*) Ah, my heart's light enough! It isn't my heart that weighs me down, (*falling in scales, and finding he does'nt sink.*) Holloa! Can it be— Yes— Ha! ha! I'm a pound lighter! (*taking up a pound.*) Two pounds! Ha! ha! Two pounds in ten minutes, my love! Think of that, my angel! Ha! ha!

MRS. P. (*smiling, aside, and showing purses.*) No wonder!

PLUMMY. And now—

Enter JOE, carrying a loaf of bread on a small tray.

JOE. Please, sir, what sort of a pickle would you like with your bread?

PLUMMY. Ha! ha! (*aside.*) A brilliant idea! I'll destroy master George's beauty. (*aloud.*) Cousin George, I bear no malice, and to prove it, you'll make this house your home in our absence. You shall live here, and board here.

GEORGE. Plummy, you're a trump!

PLUMMY. I am. Joe, come here. (*aside.*) You see that young man!—nothing but skin and bone, poor fellow; I charge you with the agreeable duty of fattening him up—make a pumpkin of him! in short, for every pound he gains in weight, I'll give you a guinea!

JOE. Thank'ee, sir, thank'ee!

(*Following GEORGE about, and offering him the bread.*

PLUMMY. Now, my dear, hey for Switzerland!

MRS. P. But I'm not packed up!

PLUMMY. Never mind packing up; we'll do that on the road.

MRS. P. What o'clock does the train start?

PLUMMY. Train! Pooh—pooh—we'll walk.

MRS. P. Walk, my dear!

PLUMMY. Yes, every inch of the way, except between Dover and Calais, and that I mean to swim! Slide, my boy, you shall go with us, and what's more, I'll undertake to make a thinner man of you, and restore Mrs. Slide to your arms. I'll tell you how I'll do it—you shall carry me on your back to the top of Mont Blanc three times a day for a fortnight. So let's be off, and when I get back, if ever I do get back, I shall have this satisfaction, at least, that no one will be able to say of me, "How stout you're getting."

MRS. P.

GEORGE. } Ha! ha! (*pointing to PLUMMY.*)
SLIDE.

SLIDE. MRS. P. PLUMMY. GEORGE. JOE.

Curtain.