

"FEARFUL TRAGEDY IN THE SEVEN DIALS."

A FARICAL INTERLUDE

IN
ONE ACT

BY

CHARLES SELBY, COMEDIAN.

[MEMBER OF THE DRAMATIC AUTHORS SOCIETY.]

AUTHOR OF

Captain Stevens—A Day in Paris—Unfinished Gentleman—Catching an Heiress—Married Rake—Widow's Victim—Rifle Brigade—Tutor's Assistant—Jacques Strop—Hunting a Turtle—Dancing Barber—Frederick of Prussia—King's Gardener—Fairy Lake—Lord Bateman—Behind the Scenes—New Footman—Marceline—A Lady and Gentleman in a Peculiarly Perplexing Predicament—Boots at the Swan—Kinge Richard ye Third—Rival Pages—Peggy Green—Mysterious Stranger—Valét de Sham—Irish Dragoon—Lioness of the North—Taming a Tartar—Phantom Breakfast—Antony and Cleopatra—Frank Fox Phipps—Pearl of the Ocean—White Sergeant—Hotel Charges—Phantom Dancers—Husband of my Heart—Taken In and Done For—Chamber Practice—Witch of Windermere—Fire Eater—Ask no Questions—Judgment of Paris—Out on the Sly—The Elves, or the Statue Bride—My Friend the Major—Robert Macaire, &c., &c.

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FEARFUL TRAGEDY IN THE SEVEN DIALS.

*First produced at the Theatre Royal Adelphi,
On Monday, 4th May, 1857.*

CHARACTERS.

Mr. Timothy Slumpington, <i>a retired Butterman</i> - - -	MR. WRIGHT.
Mr. Muggleton Mulligatawney, <i>a Cook and Confectioner</i> - - -	MR. PAUL BEDFORD.
Mr. Twigley, <i>a Cousin</i> - - -	MR. F. HALL.
Jacob Weazle, <i>a Footman</i> - - -	MR. C. J. SMITH.
Mrs. Slumpington, <i>Wife of the Butterman</i> - - -	MISS E. ARDEN.

Time.—PRESENT.

COSTUMES.

SLUMPINGTON.—Drab short jacket, fancy waistcoat, white trousers, black hat.

MULLIGATAWNEY.—Brown frock, silk waistcoat, nankeen trousers, white hat.

JACOB.—Striped servant's waistcoat, black sleeves, dark trousers.

TWIGLEY.—Fashionable morning coat, &c.

MRS. SLUMPINGTON.—Fashionable silk dress, bonnet and shawl.

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FEARFUL TRAGEDY IN THE SEVEN DIALS.



SCENE.—(which remains during the piece)—*A Bed Room* genteely furnished; in the centre, close to the wall, a French Bed, entirely covered with chintz curtains, entrance, L. U. E., doors leading to rooms, R. U. E., and L. 2 E.—R. of bed a small wash-hand-stand, a fire-place, R. 3 E., with ornamental shavings in the grate, a sofa L. 3 E.—chairs, table, &c., &c.—near the R. 1 E. and L. 1 E., chairs, on each of which, are a coat, waistcoat, and hat, and beside them, on the ground, a muddy pair of boots.

Enter JACOB WEAZLE, from door in flat, L. H., he looks cautiously round and advances on tip toe.

JACOB. (*listening at bed.*) Master's still asleep! he's making the most of missis's trip to Brighton any how. (*laughing.*) My eye, how he has been going it since she's been away! out every night till five in the morning, and then coming home so non-composh; what de call it, that he forgets he's got the latch key, and rings for me to let him in. Ha, ha, ha! (*looking at bed.*) You're a pretty bird to be left by yourself, old Slumpy! won't you catch it when the white sergeant comes back—oh, my eye!

Enter MRS. SLUMPTINGTON from door in flat, L. H., *she is in a travelling dress, and carries a small jar of tobacco, and a bottle wrapped in a newspaper.*

MRS. S. Jacob!

JACOB. (*starting.*) Eh? (*aside.*) Oh! talk of the—ahem! Ah, how de do, mum?

MRS. S. Your master's not up yet?

JACOB. No mum! he came—ahem! I mean he went—(*aside.*) No, that's just the same. (*quickly.*) There was a fire somewhere, and you see, mum, the engines—

MRS. S. Disturbed him; poor dear Timothy, I know he's a very light sleeper; he's right to take his proper quantum.

JACOB. Yes, mum—exactly, mum! we're none on us nothing about our squantum. (*aside.*) 'Specially when we begins it with the milkman.

MR. S. (*going to fire place, R. H. and placing jar and bottle upon it.*) As this is your master's birth day, Jacob, I came up by the early train, and have brought him a little surprise—a jar of Turkish tobacco, and a bottle of Irish whiskey.

JACOB. How good of you, mum, to think of us. (*aside.*) Of course, I'll try the flavour of both.

MRS. S. All has gone on well while I've been away, Jacob?

JACOB. Oh yes, mum! master and I have been very regular in everything. (*aside.*) Oh! if she knew how both on us have stepped out.

MRS. S. (*sniffing*) Surely I smell charcoal burning?

JACOB. Yes, mum! the upholsterers have been doing up master's study, (*opening door, L. H 2 E.*) and they have lighted a pan of charcoal to dry the paper.

MRS. S. Oh! (*going to room, R. U. E.*) Tell Jane to get the breakfast ready, and take home the umbrella I borrowed of Mr. Twigley, for your master.

JACOB. Yes, mum! (*going, L.*) The rum looking old green 'un, with the monkey's head?

MRS. S. Yes, and don't wake your master; I wish to surprise him. Poor dear Timothy—he'll be so delighted to see me. *Exit, R. U. E.*

JACOB. Don't be too sure o' that; I've a notion he'd rather you'd kept away. I suppose I'd better brush the old mock-turtle's clothes; (*going to R. H. chair.*) here's his coat, and waistcoat, and boots—hollo! (*holding up boots.*) arn't they muddy! oh, hasn't he been in the gutters; but

where are his trousers? Eh—(*looking about.*) what has he done with them? he can't have come home without them. (*stumbles over boots at chair, L. H.*) Eh, another pair of boots—(*holding them up.*) muddier than the 'others. Eh, why—(*seeing coat and waistcoat.*) and another coat and waistcoat; and (*looking about.*) not a shred of a pair of trousers; it's very odd! Has master turned Highlander? or has he been burnt out, and brought down by the fire escape? Ha, ha, ha!

(*taking a coloured handkerchief from the pocket of the coat on L. H. and blowing his nose violently.*)

SLUMP. (*in the bed.*) Hollo! hollo! who's that playing the trumpet?

JACOB. Oh! I've woke master—I'll skivey. (*puts the handkerchief in his pocket, and steals off, U. E. L., with boots, hat, and both suits of clothes.*)

SLUMP. (*putting his head through curtains.*) Eh, why, it's broad daylight—(*rubbing his eyes.*) and I—(*seeing clock on chimney-piece.*) why, it's one o'clock! Oh! havn't I had a twister! Hollo! I've got my trousers on! (*throwing open curtains, and sitting on bed.*) How very odd—how the deuce did I? Eh—(*putting his hand to his head.*) oh, my head! (*pathetically.*) How I should like a cup of tea, or a bottle of soda water; I must have something. (*going to chimney-piece, and drinking from a water bottle.*) Ah! my mouth's like a lime kiln. (*sitting across a chair.*) Let me see, where did I go yesterday? Oh, I know, to the Social Villagers. (*laughing.*) I was in the chair—the anniversary—capital dinner; turbot and lobster sauce, salmon, fried and stewed eels, white bait plain and devilled—how thirsty I am. (*going to chimney-piece, R. H. and drinking again.*) I've an idea that I got a little—(*laughing.*) humph! yes, I think somehow that I was. (*putting hand to head.*) Dear me, I wish Mrs. S., was at home to get me a cup of tea; I feel quite—(*waving his hand.*) Yes, I must have been, very—(*laughing.*) social. I recollect, I made a speech, and—(*laughing.*) damme, that's all I recollect. (*laughing.*) I know that we were all—Oh, my head—(*drinking again; laughing.*) very social. I think I sang a song; yes, yes, I've no doubt I did, for—(*laughing.*) I always sing when—I'm—Oh, my

head—(*drinking again.*) and—(*laughing.*) social. But, what did I do after dinner? and how did I get home? (*waving his hand.*) Ah, that's a puzzler. I've a vague recollection of being in Holborn, and Whitechapel, and the New Cut; but—(*waving his hand and laughing.*) hang me, if I can fix anything; it's all—(*waving his hand and laughing.*) hip, hip, hip, hurra!

(*a loud snore is heard from the sofa.*)

—Eh—(*starting.*) hollo! what was that?

(*the snore is repeated.*)

—(*astonished.*) Whew! there's somebody asleep on the sofa. Damme! I've brought some one home. Eh—(*alarmed.*) I hope it isn't a—

Enter MRS. SLUMPINGTON, R. U. E.

MRS. S. (*slapping him on the back.*) Well, Timmy, dear?

SLUMP. (*starting.*) Eh? what, Caroline! (*aside, looking uneasily at sofa.*) Oh, dear, here's a pretty scrape.

MRS. S. (*kissing him.*) Many happy returns of the day, dear. I thought you'd be glad to see me, so I've taken you by surprise.

SLUMP. Yes, my dear, yes. (*aside, looking at sofa.*) if it should be a—Oh, I must get her away. (*taking MRS. SLUMPINGTON'S arm.*) Let's go and take a little walk.

MRS. S. (*laughing.*) Pooh! pooh! you're not dressed; wait till after breakfast (*looking at him.*) why, my poor dear, you look quite pale and ill; those fires are dreadful things. You were frightened, I've no doubt?

SLUMP. Yes, yes. (*aside.*) I haven't the slightest idea what she means; was there a fire anywhere *after* the Social Villagers? Oh, my head.

MRS. S. As you are still not quite yourself, dear, and may wish to lie down again, we'll breakfast here. (*crossing to L. and calling.*) Jacob, Jacob.

SLUMP. (*stopping her.*) No, no. (*aside, in an agony of alarm, looking at sofa.*) She'll wake the—(*waving his hand.*) party on the sofa; I must get her away. (*taking her arm.*) Let's go and take a little walk.

MRS. S. Psha! No, finish dressing yourself; I'll see after the breakfast. (*going, L. U. E.*) By-the-bye, I hope

you have taken care of Cousin Twigley's umbrella ; I told Jacob to take it home.

SLUMP. Oh, yes, yes. (*aside.*) I took it with me to the Social Villagers, and of course its—(*waving his hand.*) somewhere, in Holborn, Whitechapel, or the New Cut.

MRS. S. (*finding on the floor a bunch of flaxen ringlets.*) Eh ! what's this ?

SLUMP. What ! (*turning, and seeing ringlets ; aside in horror, looking at sofa.*) then the party on the sofa is—Oh !

MRS. S. Mr. Slumpington ! what is the meaning of this, sir ? (*shaking ringlets.*) To whom do these belong ?

SLUMP. (*in great confusion.*) To—to—to you, my dear, a birth-day present.

MRS. S. "Tis false, sir.

SLUMP. (*looking at ringlets.*) Eh ! yes, I know it's false, but—but—

MRS. S. These ringlets are flaxen, my hair is dark.

SLUMP. Eh—ah, dear me, yes, so it is—I mean, so they are ; but, you see, I got them in the dark, and they deceived me.

MRS. S. Mr. Slumpington, you are agitated ; there's some strange mystery in this. I am determined it shall be cleared up. (*a loud snore from the sofa.*)—Eh, what's that ?

SLUMP. An organ in the street. Bo-o-o ! (*imitating the drone of an organ.*) They've been stunning me all the morning—it's dreadful. (*imitating louder.*) B-o-o-o ! (*aside.*) I'm ruined for life. I must get her away. (*taking her arm.*) Let's go and take a little walk.

MRS. S. (*disengaging her arm.*) No, sir, after breakfast, if you can clear up these.

(*throws ringlets on sofa—another loud snore.*)

SLUMP. (*roaring loudly, rubbing his leg, and thumping a chair on the ground.*) Oh ! oh ! my leg, my leg ; I've got the cramp. (*aside — looking at sofa.*) What I suffer. Oh, my head, my leg, my leg. (*roaring and thumping chair.*) See after the breakfast, if you have any pity ; I'm dying for a cup of tea.

MRS. S. Well, as you're ill, I'll be merciful, but you shall explain the ringlets.

SLUMP. I will, I will. (*pushing her out.*) Go, dear, go,

Exit Mrs. SLUMPTON, L. U. E.

She's gone ! now for the party who has ruined me, (*going to sofa and shaking MUGGLETON, who is completely concealed by a cloak and a large table cover.*) Marm, marm, marm—miss, miss, miss—get up—get up and go away—my wife's come home. (*MUGGLETON moves, puts up his knees and kicks, SLUMPTON holds down his legs.*) Take care, take care, marm, marm, miss, miss—you're in bed—you're in bed.

MUL. (*in a loud bass voice—throwing off the coverings, and appearing in his trousers and shirt sleeves.*) Hollo ! hollo ! What's the matter ? what's your little game ?

SLUMP. (*astonished.*) A man ?

MUL. (*starting up and looking round.*) Eh ? sounds ! where am I, and who the deuce are you ?

SLUMP. You're in King Street, Bloomsbury ; my name is Slumpton—I'm a retired buttermen—now, who are you ?

MUL. My name's Muggleton Mulligatawney ; I'm a cook and confectioner in the New Cut.

SLUMP. How did you come here ?

MUL. I haven't the remotest idea. I dined with the Social Villagers at Highbury Barn, and I remember nothing after the cheese.

SLUMP. Oh ! you're a Villager ?

MUL. Rather—high up in all the mysteries. (*they exchange eccentric shakes of the hand in the freemason style.*) Oh ! how thirsty I am. (*going to chimney-piece and drinking from bottle.*) Ah ! that's nectar. (*laughing.*) It's astonishing how anti-hydrophobic I always am the morning after a great spread. (*drinking.*)

SLUMP. I'll take the bottle after you. (*MUGGLETON gives bottle and SLUMPTON drinks.*) My propensities are somewhat similar ; but I've a preference for green tea and soda water. Have you any recollection of me ?

MUL. No—yet—let me see—you're mug's familiar to me somewhere—are you a villager ?

SLUMP. Rather ! I was your chairman.

MUL. Oh ! I recollect you now. (*laughing.*) You got cloudy before me—you dropped about the ducks and peas.

SLUMP. (*laughing.*) Yes, yes! There or there about; I recollect asking for cayenne and a lemon; but I'm totally unconscious either of sweets or stilton—ha, ha, ha!

(*drinks from bottle.*)

MUL. (*laughing.*) I saw you go—I beat you by half an hour. (*shaking hands.*) Well, and how are you, old fellow? I'll trouble you for the bottle, if you please. (*takes bottle and drinks.*)

SLUMP. Oh! I'm all right—quite right—then you've no recollection of where we went, or what we did after we left the barn?

MUL. No! (*tapping his head.*) All whip sillabub.

SLUMP. The same here!

Enter JACOB, l. u. e., with the coats, waistcoats, boots, and hats.

JACOB. There's your coat, sir, and your—(*seeing MUGGLETON.*) Oh! the proprietor of the other things. How did he get in, I wonder?

SLUMP Tell your mistress to hurry breakfast, and put another cup and saucer—this gentleman will join us.

JACOB. Yes, sir! (*aside.*) My eye! won't missus be savage?
Exit l. u. e.

MUL. Sir, you're very kind! I'm sure I didn't expect—but, as you're so very pressing—

SLUMP. Oh, villagers, villagers, you know. (*aside.*) He looks a thorough blackguard. Delighted to make your acquaintance; sit down and put on your boots.

MUL. Thank you. (*they sit on chairs r. and l. and crush their hats, they then endeavour to put on boots.*) Hollo! hollo! they're very tight. Oh! I suppose they've shrunk with the wet last night. (*tugging at boot.*)

SLUMP. How very odd! These boots pinched me yesterday—now they're like canoes. Oh, I suppose it rained last night and the wet stretched them. (*looking at boots.*) Eh? oh, I see, we've made a mistake—you've got mine and I've got yours.

MUL. So I have; I beg your pardon. (*they throw the boots across to each other, and put them on—they then put on their waistcoats.*)

MUL. Hollo—how I've blown out.

SLUMP. Eh, damme, how I've shrunk. Oh, another mistake. (*they throw over waistcoats and coats.*)

SLUMP. Ah! all right this time.

(*both the coats are very eccentric in cut, and the hats are very much out of shape.*)

MUL. (*feeling in his pockets.*) What's become of my handkerchief? Hollo! what's the matter with my hands? they're as black as a chimney sweep's.

SLUMP. (*rubbing his nose and making it black, then looking at his hands.*) So are mine.

MUL. How very strange! what can we have been up to? (*feeling in his coat pocket and pulling out several pieces of coal.*) Hollo! pieces of coal!

SLUMP. (*feeling in his pocket and pulling out the same.*) Damme! I've had a turn at the scuttle too—how very odd! Can we have been to Wapping, fraternizing with the whippers? (*looking, L. U. E.*) Ahem! my wife—keep it dark.

Enter MRS. SLUMPTON, L. U. E., followed by JACOB, with breakfast tray, cloth, &c., &c.—during the dialogue JACOB places table c., spreads cloth, &c.

MRS. S. (L. H.) What is this I hear, my dear, you've invited a stranger to breakfast?

SLUMP. (c.) No, my sweet, he's an old friend—a Social Villager—no, no—I mean a friend of my father's—a distinguished member of—the bar—a—a—permit me to introduce Mr.—Mr.—(*aside to MUGGLETON.*) What's your infernal name?

MUL. (R. H.) Muggleton Mulligatawny.

SLUMP. Fuggleton, Fuggleton Bullygatawny.

MUL. Cook and—

SLUMP. (*striking him on the stomach with his hat—aside.*) Hold your tongue. Firm of Cook and Swuggleton—Bullygatawny.

MUL. New—

SLUMP. (*striking him again.*) Cut, the Cut—New Inn, Temple. All right, Jacob. Now, my dear. (*pointing to seat, centre of table.*) Wuggleton. (*pointing to seat, L. H.*)

(*they sit.*) MRS. SLUMPTON, C., SLUMPTON, R.

H., and MULLIGATAWNEY, L. H. MRS. SLUMPTON pours out tea.)

Ah, hah ! this is something like ! chops and an omelette. Let me help you, Tawney. (*helps MULLIGATAWNEY.*)

MUL. Thank you ; though I don't much care for *eggeries*, as you see, I'm in the line, and—

SLUMP. (*kicking him under the table*) Sink the shop, will you. (*laughing.*) Nuggleton calls the bar, the *sweet-stuff* line, ha, ha, ha ! That's toothful, isn't it ?

MUL. Pretty well, but it might be better. (*to MRS. SLUMPTINGTON.*) You see, ma'am, it's not well beat up, which makes it lumpy and one of the eggs is not quite—you know—I could show you the French way of doing it. You have your pan with a little rise in the centre, don't spare the butter, candle your eggs, beat 'em up, quick and strong, when frothy, pitch in, shake and toss, serve with jelly or sugar—

SLUMP. (*throwing an egg shell at him, and kicking again.*) Get out of the kitchen, you stupid ass, don't you see you're putting your foot in it. (*to MRS. SLUMPTINGTON.*) Let me help you dear.

MRS. S. (*indignantly.*) No, thank you, I'll wait till your friend, the barrister, makes one. Jacob, give me the newspaper

JACOB. (*R. H.*) The newspaper ; yes, mum, directly mum. (*aside.*) Oh, dear ! I've lent it to the cook next door.

SLUMP. (*aside to MUGGLETON.*) You've made her angry with your infernal cookery ; how could you be so stupid.

MRS. S. (*impatiently.*) Well, Jacob, the paper.

JACOB. Yes, mum. (*aside.*) What shall I do ? (*seeing paper round bottle.*) Ah, she only reads the murders. (*taking paper from bottle, smoothing it, and giving it to MRS. SLUMPTINGTON.*) There, mum.

SLUMP. (*aside.*) The sooner I get my Social Villager away the better ; he seems to be looking after the spoons.

MRS. S. (*reading paper.*) Dear me, what a dreadful calamity !—how shocking !

SLUMP. (*coolly eating his breakfast.*) What, my dear ? A lap dog lost, or an old apple woman run over ? Pepper, Jacob.

MRS. S. No, a cruel murder in the Seven Dials.

SLUMP. Oh! a babby smothered, or a policeman garotted? (*to MUGGLETON, who is eating voraciously.*) Those chops suit you?

MUL. They're the exact ticket; I'll try another.

SLUMP. (*helping him.*) Well, I must say, you've rather a twist. Read the particulars, my dear, they'll amuse us. (*to JACOB.*) Give the gentleman the cayenne.

(JACOB gives pepper, and exits U. E. L.)

MRS. S. (*reading.*) Last night, an atrocious murder was committed in Cross-street, Seven Dials, on the person of a poor woman, who was found in her shop, beaten to death.

SLUMP. How shocking. (*to MULLIGATAWNEY.*) I'll trouble you for the sugar.

MRS. S. (*reading.*) The assassins are supposed to be two in number, from a green umbrella with a monkey's head being found near the body.

SLUMP. (*stopping suddenly in his breakfast, and looking alarmed.*) Eh? a g—r—een u—um—br—el—la with a mung—mung—monkey's he—a—d!

MUL. (*coolly.*) Dear me, how strange; I'll go on with the omelette.

MRS. S. (*reading.*) And a Scotch checked pocket handkerchief, marked M. M.

MUL. (*stopping suddenly, and growing alarmed.*) A Scotch c—checked han—han—kerchief, mum—mum—marked M. M!

MRS. S. (*reading.*) The police are in active pursuit of the villains, and we hope in our next edition to record their capture. The poor woman kept a potatoe and coal shed.

MUL. (*looking at his hands.*) Oh, dear!

SLUMP. (*looking at his hands.*) That accounts for!—Oh!

(*they both show great terror, and put their hands behind them.**)

* From the moment SLUMPTON and MULLIGATAWNEY hear of the umbrella and handkerchief, they firmly believe they have committed the murder. Horror and fear take possession of them, and they continue (to the discovery of the mistake) in a whirl of frantic excitement.

MRS. S. Isn't that dreadful. (*to SLUMPTON.*) Pass me the bread and butter, dear.

SLUMP. Eh? (*looking behind him at his hands.*) The bread and butter! (*calling out in pain.*) Oh, oh, oh! I've got the cramp. (*puts his hands under the table, and wipes them on tablecloth, which they stain with black.*)

MRS. S. (*taking bread and butter.*) Never mind, I'll help myself. (*to MUGGLETON.*) The water cresses, if you please.

MUL. (*looking at his hands the same way as SLUMPTON.*) The w—water cresses—yes. (*calling out.*) Oh, oh, oh! I, too, have got the cramp. (*puts his hands under the table.*)

MRS. S. Dear me, how unpleasant. (*rising and advancing, R. H. to SLUMPTON.*) Let me rub your hands, dear.

SLUMP. (*in terror.*) No, no! (*rising, hastily removing his hands from the table, and putting them in his coat pockets.* MUGGLETON does the same—*aside, seeing stains on tablecloth!* Oh, dear, the tablecloth! (*turns under the end in great agitation.*)

Enter JACOB, L. U. E.

JACOB. (*to MRS. SLUMPTON.*) Your cousin, mum, Mr. Twigley, is in the drawing-room, and he wishes to see you very particularly.

SLUMP. (*aside in agony.*) He's come for his umbrella! His evidence will swing me.

MRS. S. (*to JACOB.*) I'll come to him directly.

Exit JACOB.

Good-bye, dear. (*offering her hand, SLUMPTON is afraid to take his hands from his pockets, and puts forward his face for her to kiss him. She kisses him and goes off, with a stiff bow to MUGGLETON.*)

SLUMP. (*sinking into a chair, R. H.*) What-de-call-'um!

MUL. (*sinking into a chair, L. H.*) Thing-um-e!

SLUMP. There's no doubt—but—we are the—(*looking with horror at his hands, and putting his head on the table and kicking.*)

MUL. (*looking at his hands, &c.*) No doubt, no doubt!

SLUMP. It's horrible!

MUL. I can't say it's pleasant.

SLUMP. (*sentimentally.*) Poor creature! cut off, perhaps, in the flower of her youth. (*crying.*) in the midst of her coals and potatoes—

MUL. (*in the same tone.*) Chopped into bundles like her wood—oh!

SLUMP. (*jumping up.*) I think we'd better remove—(*looking at his hands and shuddering.*) this awful evidence of our guilt.

MUL. (*faintly.*) Yes, yes, soap and water will I hope—(*SLUMPINGTON brings forward a small wash-hand-stand which he places in the centre of the stage, and both wash their hands at the same time in great trepidation,*

SLUMP. Oh, how black the water is, (*groaning.*) like the deed; there's no soap and water for the conscience.

MUL. No, no, that defies the scrubbing brush.

(*they both wipe their hands at the same time on the same towel.*)

SLUMP. (*looking at hands after wiping them in terror.*) It won't do—it won't come out.

MUL. No, no, no! It's ingrained.

SLUMP. (*throwing towel over his arm and plunging his hands in the basin frantically.*) Wash again, wash again. (*they both wash their hands in great alarm.*)

Enter MRS. SLUMPINGTON and MR. TWIGLEY, L. U. E. in flat.

MRS. S. (*starting, astonished at seeing the occupation of SLUMPINGTON and MUGGLETON.*) My dear, my dear! what are you about?

SLUMP. (*hastily withdrawing his hands, and wiping them behind him.*) Nothing, my dear, nothing—we were just washing—(*hastily removing the wash hand stand to R. U. E.*) our hands. (*looking at them, aside in agony.*) It's there still—like Lady Macbeth's little d—d spot.

MRS. S. Cousin Twigley has come after his umbrella—what have you done with it? We can't find it high nor low!

SLUMP. (*aside.*) Oh, dear! (*clutching at MUGGLETON, who has crossed to R. H. corner.*) Don't be frightened; we'll prove an *alibi*!

TWIGLEY. I hope you havn't lost it; it's valuable for its antique head—I can swear to it anywhere.

SLUMP. (*aside to MUGGLETON.*) Old Bailey! oh, (*trembling.*) don't be frightened! don't be frightened!

MUL. We're flummuxed—safe as the bank.

MRS. S. (*pointing to MUGGLETON.*) I hope you and your friend, the barrister, passed a pleasant evening, yesterday.

SLUMP. (*starting.*) Eh? (*aside to MUGGLETON.*) Keep quiet! don't be frightened!

MRS. S. (*gaily.*) Oh, ha! Mr. Sobersides—you see I've received information of your goings on during my absence.

SLUMP. Oh! what! do you know that I—

MRS. S. Yes, sir, Cousin Twigley saw you leave Highbury Barn, and followed you all the evening.

SLUMP. (*staggering across to L. H., to TWIGLEY, quickly.*) Where did we go to? (*with intense anxiety, in a hoarse whisper.*) You did not see us?

TWIGLEY. I did—I never lost sight of you for a moment.

SLUMP. (*returning to R. c., aside in agony.*) A witness before and after the fact.

MRS. S. (*pointedly.*) Delightful theatre, the Victoria.

SLUMP. Eh? yes, yes! (*aside to MUGGLETON.*) Don't be frightened; look innocent, like me. (*goggles idiotically.*)

MRS. S. Caldwell's Bâl Masqué is a charming finish for the chairman of the Social Villagers.

SLUMP. (*crossing again to TWIGLEY, aside.*) What! did you see us there?

TWIGLEY. (*aside to SLUMPTON.*) Yes, yes, and—
(*mysteriously.*) afterwards—

SLUMP. (*returning to R. c., clutching at MUGGLETON, and nearly fainting—MUGGLETON is also in great terror.*) It's all over with me—I feel the rope.

MUL. I feel ropy, too.

Enter JACOB, L. U. E.

JACOB. (*loudly.*) Please, mum, master's wanted.

SLUMP. (*starting in terror.*) No, no, I'm not at home—don't let anybody come up. (*aside.*) I'll jump out of the

back window, on the roof of the wash house, and escape by the next street.

JACOB. It's only the waiter from Highbury Barn, brought home your great coat, which you forgot.

Exit, L. U. E.

SLUMP. Oh! (*laughing hysterically.*) It's not from Bow Street, I'm alive again. (*to MUGGLETON.*) What a coward you are to be so frightened. (*to MRS. SLUMPTINGTON.*) Give him half-a-crown, dear, will you? I want to say a word to Twigley about our railway shares.

MRS. S. Very well; (*going L. U. E.*) Oh, Timothy, you're a terrible villain.

Exit, L. U. E.

(*as soon as she is off, SLUMPTINGTON and MUGGLETON seize the hands of TWIGLEY, and drag him forward, both staring at him in great agitation.*)

SLUMP. (*putting his finger to his lips.*) For mercy's sake, mum.

MUL. (*imitating.*) Yes, yes! mum, mum, mum!

TWIGLEY. (*looking at them, shaking his head with pretended seriousness.*) Oh, you're a pair of beauties. (*crosses to L. H.*)

SLUMP. (*to MUGGLETON.*) We must buy him off, how much money have you?

MUL. (*feeling in his pockets*) Eighteen pence half-penny.

SLUMP. Psha! Cousin Twigley, you say you followed us last night—what do you know?

TWIGLEY. Everything!

SLUMP. (*groaning.*) Oh, don't say a word—forget you saw us—repudiate your umbrella, or say you left it at Exeter Hall—if you have pity, know nothing, nothing—

TWIGLEY. Well, but—

SLUMP. You asked me to lend you twenty pounds last week. (*giving notes.*) There, there, (*frantically.*) we didn't do it, (*pathetically.*) we didn't, indeed!

TWIGLEY. Oh yes, you did—I saw you—

SLUMP. (*in agony.*) Horror! what? (*using extravagant action of beating with umbrella.*) Oh, no, no! or—(*suddenly changing his tone.*) if you did, you don't recollect it.

TWIGLEY. Why how can—

SLUMP. (*pointedly.*) The memory's wonderfully elastic

when we like to stretch it ; think it's a British Bank affair—and forget everything.

TWIGLEY. I understand—I'll be discreet.

SLUMP. (*shaking his hand violently.*) Good fellow ! Good fellow !

MUL. (*shaking the other hand.*) A brick ! a brick ! A real Social Villager !

TWIGLEY. I'll give you a memorandum for the twenty. Where shall I find pen and ink ?

SLUMP. (*opening door, L. H.*) Here—here, in my study —*non mi ricordo*—you know—you saw nothing—nothing.

(*pushing him, L. H.*)

MUL. Nothing, nothing—you're stone blind.

TWIGLEY. (*shaking his head at them, and laughing.*) Oh ! you're a pair of beauties. *Exit into room, L.H.*

SLUMP. He laughs at our agonies ! thinks it a good joke, no doubt—the cold blooded villain—we shall never be safe with him. Now, let us sit down and coolly reflect on our awful position. Eh ? what's that on the chimney-piece ? (*crossing to R. H.*) a bottle of LL whisky ! Ah ! a little drop would raise our spirits, and give us energy. (*takes corkscrew from his pocket and opens bottle.*) There's no glass, so we must manage with an egg cup. (*pours whisky into an egg cup, drinks, and hands the bottle to MUGGLETON.*) Ah ! that's bottled velvet. (*they sit, SLUMPTINGTON, R. H., MUGGLETON, L.*)

MUL. (*smacking his lips.*) Otto of roses.

SLUMP. Our first care must be to suppress all kinds of evidence. (*drinks, passes the bottle, and looks at his hands.*) Our hands—we must wash them until every trace is gone. (*they go up R. H. to wash hand stand and both wash together as before.*)

Enter JACOB, L. U. E.

JACOB. (*seeing them—aside.*) Hollo ! that's rum—what's up now, I wonder. (*loudly.*) Please, sir—

SLUMP. (*starting.*) Eh ? what ? (*in great confusion, holding his hands behind him and snatching the towel from MUGGLETON—both wiping their hands at the same time—pulling the towel, &c.*) Oh, dear ! here's another witness ! he'll swear he saw us washing our hands. he'll see the

black. (*throws the towel over the basin.*) Now, what do you want?

JACOB. Nothing very pertickler, (*mysteriously, looking off, L. U. E.*) 'cept to give you summut (*lowering his voice and speaking very pointedly and mysteriously.*) which I took out of your two coat pockets; summut, which I don't think you'd like *everybody* to see.

SLUMP. (*trembling.*) Eh? is—what—what?

JACOB. (*producing a woman's shoe and cap.*) These here, which I took out of your pockets when I brushed 'em. (*giving cap to SLUMPTON.*) This war in yourn, and (*giving shoe to MUGGLETON.*) this in yourn.

SLUMP. The evidence is increasing like an avalanche—what shall we do? buy him off. (*giving money.*) There, Jacob, is a sovereign.

MUL. (*feeling in his pockets and giving money.*) And there's eighteen pence half penny.

SLUMP. If you're asked any questions—recollect nothing.

JACOB, (*laughing knowingly.*) I'm fly! whenever I'm spoke to in this way, (*showing money and winking.*) my memory's as soft as mashed potatoes.

SLUMP. (*starting and looking at MUGGLETON.*) Mashed potatoes; can he know? No, no! (*waving to JACOB to go.*) Go, go!

JACOB. Yes, sir. (*aside.*) What a pucker master be in, surely—they've been up to precious gammocks.

Exit, L. U. E.

SLUMP. What are we to do now? the evidence thickens every moment. We must get rid of these—burn them—burn them.

MUL. Where is there a fire?

SLUMP. Oh, it's summer, and there's none but in the kitchen.

MUL. (*snatching cap from SLUMPTON.*) I'll just step down there, then.

SLUMP. (*catching him by the tails of his coat and bringing him back.*) No, no. (*aside.*) I won't trust him out of my sight. We'll burn them here. (*pulls an ornamental paper out of the grate, puts the cap and shoe on the fire, which is prepared, strikes a lucifer and lights it—thumping*

cap and shoe with poker, and thrusting them between bars, &c., MUGGLETON blows with bellows.) There, there—down, down—blaze, blaze—they're safe—now then, let's sit down and calmly reflect again. (*drinks and passes the bottle.*) Take another sip.

MUL. (*drinking.*) Quite agreeable.

SLUMP. Our hands, and the cap and shoe being disposed of, we must suppress the principal witness. (*drinking and getting intoxicated.*)

MUL. What, (*pointing L. H.*) that young fellow?

SLUMP. Yes. (*drinking.*) Quietly—quietly—I know how—there's a pan of charcoal alight in the study to dry the paper. (*drinking.*) The windows are closed, I'll shut the door—and—he's gone. (*getting up and staggering across to L. H. D. and shutting it.*) There—now—we must. (*looking at MUGGLETON—aside.*) Suppose—suppose, to make all secure, I suppress my accomplice. A Social Villager; more or less, in the world is nothing. (*drinks.*) I'll do it, then go by express to Liverpool and be in America in half-an-hour.

MUL. (*aside.*) I'm in a very ticklish situation here—I don't like the looks of my friend—if he should turn sneak and split. (*drinks.*) Suppose I suppress him—a buttermen, more or less, in the world is nothing.

SLUMP. (*aside.*) How shall I do it? (*crossing in front of MUGGLETON to the fire-place, looking earnestly at him, his back to the fire.*) It will require a deal of coolness—damme, how hot the fire is. (*jumps away from fire and crosses back to L. H.*) And my head, somehow, has got a kind of a swimming (*looking round.*) What shall I do for—(*taking up a bootjack.*) ah! the very identical flute. (*buttons bootjack under his coat—loudly.*) Ahem! Thingumy—sit down.

MUL. Certainly—certainly. (*aside.*) If I could find something to—ah! this will do. (*buttons the bellows under his coat—both sit and look at each other with intensity, both being very drunk.*)

SLUMP. You're a good fellow, Thingumy! (*shaking hands and staring.*)

MUL. So are you, what de call 'em. (*shaking hands, &c.*)

SLUMP. Ahem! (*aside, taking out bootjack.*) If he would turn his back.

MUL. (*aside-taking out bellows.*) If I could get a fair lick at him!

SLUMP. (*drinking.*) Your health! *as he drinks,* MUGGLETON *lifts the bellows aside,* SLUMPTON *keeps his eye on him, then passes the bottle.*)

MUL. Yours! (*same business with bootjack.*)

SLUMP. (*aside.*) There's no getting a chance; he's as wide awake as a weazle. (*giving newspaper.*) See if there are any more particulars about our little affair—I've lost my spectacles.

MUL. Certainly. (*aside.*) His eyes have a very strange twist.

SLUMP. (*aside.*) If I could get him to sleep. I wonder if I could mesmerise him. (*makes ridiculous passes—MUGGLETON turns and sees him.*)

MUL. Hollo! what's the matter?

SLUMP. Nothing, nothing—a twinge of the rheumatism.

MUL. Ah! I must divert his attention somehow. (*suddenly pointing L. H.*) Ah! listen, listen.

SLUMP. (*turning.*) Ah! what?

MUL. (*aside.*) Now for it (*just as he is raising bellows* SLUMPTON *turns.*)

SLUMP. Hollo!

MUL. (*concealing bellows and flourishing his arm.*) Nothing, nothing, a touch of the hydrostatics.

SLUMP. Go on with the paper.

MUL. (*reading.*) On Monday next all the world will be in Hyde Park, to witness—

SLUMP. Our execution—

MUL. No! the inauguration of the Crystal Palace by her Majesty and Prince Albert. Eh! hollo! what's this?

SLUMP (*snatching the paper and looking at date.*) May, 1851! (*with a burst of joy.*) 1851—why, it's six years old—hurra! hurra! we're innocent—oh, my dear friend! (*they hug each other and dance, in wild delight.*) And I was going (*showing bootjack.*) to—suppress you.

MUL. (*showing bellows.*) Same here.

SLUMP. Oh my, joy has sobered me in an instant; but (*suddenly becoming serious.*) Cousin Twigley—Oh I'm

afraid— (*going to L. H., and calling in a faint voice.*)
Twigley! Cousin Twigley!

Enter TWIGLEY from room, 2 E. L.

TWIGLEY. (*giving paper.*) There's the I.O.U. cousin; I'm very much obliged to you.

SLUMP. What! not suppressed. Oh, what a lucky escape for all parties; I'm the happiest dog alive.

Enter MRS. SLUMPPINGTON, L. U. E.

MRS. S. Oh Timothy, Timothy, you're a sad villain; cousin Twigley has told me your adventures; but for him you would have passed the night in the station house.

SLUMP. Indeed! (*quickly, aside to TWIGLEY.*) Where did we go to?

TWIGLEY. I told your wife you were turned out of the Bâl Masqué for knocking people about and making a riot, but (*in a whisper.*) you went out to supper in the Haymarket with a couple of Débardeurs; there's a little bill I paid for you.

SLUMP. (*reading.*) Devilled oysters, 14s.; mulled claret, £1 10s.; Punch à la Romaine £1.; broken glass, 10s.; compensation to barmaid for loss of cap, crls, and shoe, in her endeavour to turn the gent with the umbrella out of bar, where he had intruded himself with felonious intentions, £2 10s.; Total £6 4s. Well that's a pretty dear spree—but how came our pockets full of coals?

TWIGLEY. When you left the Haymarket, you made a voyage to Chelsea, in a coal barge; and as you yawed a trifle in your sailing, your amiable friends, the Débardeurs, filled your pockets with diamonds, to keep you steady.

SLUMP. I see, I was a shade too social. Mum, to Mrs. S.—it's well it's no worse. Christmas comes but once a-year; the next time, I'll be more prudent. (*to MRS. SLUMPPINGTON, who is talking at back with MUGGLETON.*) Well, my dear, (*MRS. SLUMPPINGTON advances with MUGGLETON.*) all is now, I hope, satisfactorily cleared up, and I only want—

Enter JACOB, L. U. E., with an umbrella.

JACOB. (*giving umbrella.*) Your umbrella, sir. (*aside to SLUMPPINGTON.*) A young lady brought it home, and—

SLUMP. (*stopping his mouth.*) Hush! hush! (*giving money.*) send her away. *Exit JACOB.*
 The harmony of the Social Villagers mustn't be disturbed by a bit of gingham. (*taking the hand of Mrs. SLUMPTINGTON.*) Henceforth I'll be more select in my society; I'll never—

MUL. Allow me to explain.

SLUMP. No, no—don't interrupt the chairman. Remove the Mulligatawny. And now, (*advancing to AUDIENCE.*) a word with you in private. Should any of you be Social Villagers, and dine at Highbury or Blackwall, take warning from my sufferings—and when you feel yourselves getting a little—hazy—as Lady Macbeth pithily remarks, “Stand not on the order of your going, but send for a cab and go at once.” You understand—a word to the wise, as Julius Cæsar said to Mark Antony—

Never go sky-larking, or dance the tarantella,
 Or you'll lose your money, watch, and umbrella.

CURTAIN.

R.

L.

MUGGLETON. MRS. SLUMP. SLUMP. TWIGLEY.

EXPLANATION OF THE STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R.	R. C.	C.	L. C.	L.
Right.	Right Centre.	Centre.	Left Centre.	Left.

FACING THE AUDIENCE.