

117, ARUNDEL STREET,
STRAND.

A Farce,

IN ONE ACT.

BY

LIEUT.-COL. H. R. ADDISON,

AUTHOR OF

"*Tam O'Shanter*," "*Abraham Parker*," "*The Abbé Vaudreuil*,"
etc. etc. etc.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,

89, STRAND,

(Opposite Southampton Street, Covent Garden Market,)

LONDON.

913664

117, ARUNDEL STREET, STRAND.

First performed at the Royal Lyceum Theatre (under the management of MADAME CELESTE), on Saturday, March 24th, 1860.

Characters.

CHARLES LUDLOW (*a Married Bachelor*) Mr. WALTER LACY
BELTON (*a Railway Lover*) Mr. J. ROUSE.
LOUISA LUDLOW (*an Unmarried Wife*)... Miss K. SAVILLE.
BETSY PRIM (*a Lodging-house Maid*) MRS. KEELEY.
MRS. SMITH (*a Lodging-house Keeper*)..... MRS. CAMPBELL.

Period—1859.

SCENE.—No. 117, ARUNDEL STREET, STRAND.

Costumes of the day.

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117, ARUNDEL STREET, STRAND.

SCENE.—*A well furnished Bachelor's Lodging; a chimneypiece and door, R. C.; door, L.; a practicable window, L.; door in flat, c.; table; chairs; a buffet, &c. As the curtain rises, a loud ringing heard; the stage is clear; CHARLES rushes in from door, L., in his dressing gown.*

CHARLES. Bless my soul, what a peal they are ringing at the door. Who can it be at this early hour? (*calls*) Betsy, Betsy! where are you? Why don't you open the door?

BETSY. (*without, R. D. C., peeping out for a moment, and quickly closing the door as if undressed*) I'm not dressed yet! But as you are there, will you open the door! (*closes door again*)

CHARLES. Tolerably cool, upon my life. I must really read her a lecture. But never mind. (*opens the door in c., which is supposed to lead to the landing place*) Come in, whoever you are.

Enter MRS. SMITH, C. D.

MRS. S. Good morning, sir—heavenly weather, sir.

CHARLES. My good woman—you have the advantage of me.

MRS. S. You are werry kind to say so, sir; but I doesn't quite see how.

CHARLES. I mean to say, I don't know you. I mean to ask you—who the devil you are?

MRS. S. (*R.*) Oh, I beg your pardon, I understand—I am Mrs. Smith—the person in charge of this house. (*sits*) Miss Penrice doesn't live here herself you see, so she puts me in to see to the comforts of the lodgers, to get them what they wants, and to do any little odd job for 'em—that's who I am.

CHARLES. I don't suppose you came here at 7 o'clock in the morning, and made all this noise merely for the pleasure of telling me this.

MRS. S. Not by no means.

CHARLES. Then may I ask why you have roused me out of my bed at this hour?

MRS. S. I didn't mean that. (*looks round*) I never expects gentlemen to get up when they keeps servants. (*rises and looks round*) But I suppose, sir, Betsy is out.

CHARLES. (*crosses to R.*) Perhaps she is.

MRS. S. But then, sir, you see—she is not; for the hall door has not been opened this morning. So I think it more likely she is a-bed, sir.

CHARLES. Mrs. Smith—may I ask—may I take the liberty of asking what the devil business it is of yours?

MRS. S. Oh, sir, to be sure, sir—you've every right to ask, but you see, sir, Miss Penrice is so very particular and—

CHARLES. And what has Miss Penrice to do with my maid's rising?

MRS. S. Why you see, sir, as the keeper of a respectable lodging house—you see, sir, she can't be too particular. Her letting entirely depends upon the respectability of her house, and as she said to me—when she engaged me—says she—

CHARLES. Will you hold your tongue and tell me what do you want with me?

MRS. S. (*very quickly*) Oh, to be sure I will—why you see—when single gentlemen—Oh, don't be angry, sir—I was a going to say—but never mind, sir—I will tell you what I comed for. Miss Penrice hasn't the smallest fear of you—but as you are a perfect stranger, sir, and Miss Betsy told me—

CHARLES. Who's Miss Betsy?

MRS. S. Your new maid, sir—a most innocent girl as ever was when I recommended her to you last week.

CHARLES. Well.

MRS. S. Well, I don't say nothing—Oh! lor, no—I hope she's still so—only you see, sir, I spoke to her last night and she said she thought as you was a stranger, you wouldn't mind paying of a week in advance—it is always the custom I can assure you.

CHARLES. Oh, with all my heart! (*takes out purse, and pays her*) There it is; but in future I'll trouble you to come at a more reasonable hour.

MRS. S. (*aside*) She's right, he's rich. (*aloud*) Yes, sir, only I thought Miss Betsy would be up.

CHARLES. I'll trouble you to call my servant Betsy; simple Betsy. (*sits R. of table*)

MRS. S. (*aside*) She ain't so simple as she looks, but I'll watch her close, she shan't inviggle a lodger of mine into marriage without paying me the fees. (*looking about*)

CHARLES. Are you waiting for anything, Mrs. Smith?

MRS. S. No, sir, unless you wants something. (*aside*) I hear her a moving in her room.

CHARLES. I want nothing, but to be alone. You understand, Mrs. Smith?

MRS. S. Perfectly, sir. (*aside*) He wants to be left to a tit-a-tit. (*aloud*) Good morning, sir—good morning! (CHARLES stamps) If you want anything you've only to touch the bell twice; the gentleman on the first floor rings once; and Mr. Brown above three times; the second floor lodger always rings twice, and—

CHARLES. Will you begone?

MRS. S. Oh, to be sure, sir. (*aside*) I should have liked to see her come out. (*aloud*) Good morning, sir—good morning.

Exit, C. D. F.

CHARLES. Get along—get along, "do. That woman's tongue has deafened me. Now then to breakfast. (*calls*) Betsy, Betsy!

BETSY. (*without, D. R. C.*) Wait a little, I'll be out directly.

CHARLES. Upon my life, I'm in a strange situation! but after all it is not my fault; my wife is alone to blame for it. If she would have remained quietly in town, it might have been avoided. But, no—no—she must, forsooth, go down to Brighton, because it's fashionable, and to do this, lets our comfortable house in Sussex Gardens; and desires me to take a bachelor's lodging for a month, because my business detains me in London. I am next ordered to take a maid servant who can wait on me till her return, and then to take charge of the children when she comes back to town. Well, after all, I've only done as she told me. I've taken a very proper lodging and a servant to wait upon me. (*BETSY is heard singing loud*) Ah, there she is, singing again; it's not quite respectful, and I must break her of it—she is so young, and apparently so innocent—I don't like being too harsh at first, but I really must teach her her duty.

BETSY. (*putting her arm through door*) I say, do go to the buffet, and give me the cap you will find there.

CHARLES. Me—me—I'd have you to know—

BETSY. Oh, do make haste!

CHARLES. Well, this time I will. (*gives it her and kisses her hand—she draws in her arm, and closes the door*) Yes, I'll check this familiarity—but after all it is my fault. I told her I was a bachelor, just because I didn't like being teased with questions, and perhaps I have been a little too indulgent. It is, indeed, hard to check one so lovely and so guileless. But I will draw up, and teach her the respect due to her master and her mistress. (*knock*) Come in.

Enter MRS. SMITH, with a basket, D. in C. F.

MRS. S. A letter, sir, and a basket—brought by a milliner's girl—we never lets no females up stairs, so I took in the basket and here it is.

CHARLES. As I live, a letter from my dear little wife. (*reads*) "Very happy—very well. Hope you'll come down to the ball on Monday, at Mr. Clare's. I've desired my milliner to send home a dress—take care of it for me; and if possible, bring it down." Hem! "ever affectionately and fondly—Louise." Bless her. (*kisses the letter*) Yes—yes—I'll go down.

MRS. S. (*watching him closely*) Any answer, sir?

CHARLES. None—none: here, put the dress into my room, and give the basket back to the girl who brought it. (*Mrs. S. puts them into room, L., and returns*)

MRS. S. (*aside*) Well, I wonder what this means? I'll find out.

CHARLES. If you've done, begone.

MRS. S. Yes, sir. (*aside*) What a brute it is, to speak to one of the fair sex in that manner. *Exit, D. C.*

CHARLES. Well, this is a reprieve; I feared she might be coming up: this will give me time. I'll explain my situation

to Betsy, and either teach her her proper place, or get rid of her at once.

Enter BETSY from R. F., dressed as a maid-servant, but very coquettishly: she comes in singing, and nods familiarly to CHARLES.

CHARLES. (L., coldly) Good morning to you, Betsy. I hope your early rising won't hurt you?

BETSY. (R.) I am sure it is quite early enough, considering that you kept me up waiting for you to return from your supper party till two o'clock this morning.

CHARLES. (gravely) Betsy, I must tell you I have reasons for saying that your present manners will never do; they don't suit me.

BETSY. And I must tell you, those rakish ways of yours don't suit me.

CHARLES. (sternly) Betsy!

BETSY. (*going to him caressingly*) Come, come, don't be cross—frowns don't become you—there, I won't scold you again, and I'll do all you tell me.

CHARLES. (*softening*) But still, Betsy, my dear—

BETSY. Ah, now you speak like yourself. I'll get you your coat. (*runs to fetch his coat off table, L.*)

CHARLES. I believe I may as well put off my lecture till to-morrow. Poor girl—I don't like to vex her—she is so much attached to me, I'm sure she'll make a good servant.

BETSY. (*putting on his coat*) Here it is—I can't bear that nasty dressing gown—it hides your beautiful figure.

CHARLES. (*aside*) She's decidedly a fine girl. I'm certain my wife will like her—her eyes are so bright, I won't scold her to-day at all events. (*aloud*) Betsy, I have not had my breakfast—lay the cloth.

BETSY. With pleasure. (*she begins to do so—suddenly stops*) But, I say, what are you going to have for breakfast?

CHARLES. Oh, anything—some eggs and a few slices of bacon.

BETSY. Nothing can be nicer.

CHARLES. Well then, make haste and run for them, while I go and drop a letter into the post.

BETSY. Why, I was thinking—

CHARLES. What?

BETSY. Why, as you have to go out—there don't look cross again—only as you have to go out (*coaxing*) if you would just bring in the eggs and bacon yourself.

CHARLES. Me!—no, it's your duty.

BETSY. Yes, yes, I know; but I've to iron out my best cap for this evening, and a white waistcoat for you.

CHARLES. Oh—hem—yes—as you have another duty to perform for me, of course it is as well I do this for myself, otherwise you know— (*takes his hat*)

BETSY. (*to him as he is going*) Stay! just like a dear good

creature, tell Mrs. Smith to take in the milk, we have more.
(gives him milk can)

CHARLES. Upon my honour.

BETSY. There, get along, that's a good boy—get along.

CHARLES. (aside) I shall speak seriously to her to-morrow.

Exit, c. door.

BETSY. (advancing) Don't forget the milk. What a duck of a man it is. Oh, how happy I shall be. To be sure, it may be a little awkward at first. His relations may be proud stuck-up people for aught I know, and give themselves airs about our marriage, but it will only be a nine day's wonder. La, bless my soul! we hear of these things every day. I've quite good looks enough to win a gentleman, and manners enough to keep him when I have got him. After all a pretty girl is a match for any one. (*looks in glass over mantel shelf, L.—a knock*)—MRS. SMITH *peeps in door, L. F.*

MRS. S. (R.) Can I come in?

BETSY. (L.) Yes, come in. What do you want?

MRS. S. Not much; I only came, because you dropped the clothes brush out of the window into the area, and it might have hurt some one.

BETSY. Mrs. Smith! It must have been Mr. Ludlow; I have not touched or seen the brush this morning.

MRS. S. Hum! do you mean to say Mr. Ludlow brushes his own clothes, with a servant, and—

BETSY. And pray what's that to you?

MRS. S. Nothing, my dear, nothing at all—but I can't help thinking, if Mr. Ludlow is a married man, and his wife hears of it—

BETSY. Married indeed! he! No such thing.

MRS. S. Oh, then it's all right; but still you see men are very fickle, and a friend sometimes has an opportunity to serve, and as I am sure he would not miss a bottle of wine sometimes, or a spare half-crown; and as I have a large family of nephews and nieces, and as he seems very rich, and as I recommended you—

BETSY. (R.) I understand you—believe me I will do all I can; (*looking about*) but where can he have put this waistcoat; I must set about it. (*crossing*)

MRS. S. (L.) Depend on it, my dear, it is in his room.

BETSY. I should not wonder—how provoking.

MRS. S. Why?

BETSY. Because he always keeps his room locked, and so you see, I can't get in.

MRS. S. Betsy, love, look, the key is in the door.

BETSY. Bless me, so it is. (*opens it*) Ah, what is that? (*runs in, and brings in a shawl, a dress, and hat*) Oh, good gracious! Well I never did in all my life—What loves—and all this for me—dear, dear, Charles! Oh, how proud he will be to see me

in them!—dress after all is not to be despised. He promised me a new dress, and he wishes to surprise me. I told him I wished to be smart in order to accompany him to the theatre this evening.

MRS. S. You are going to the play with him?

BETSY. To be sure I am, to-night.

MRS. S. (*aside*) Oh, dear! who would have thought it: then it is a case. (a noise heard)

BETSY. Hush! I hear some one coming; run in with the things—run in, and don't be caught here.

MRS. S. To be sure, dear child—to be sure. I'm always—you understand—I'm a moral of discretion.

Exit with things into room, R. C.—BETSY affects to be busy.

Enter CHARLES, with several packages, c. door.

CHARLES. (*throwing off his coat*) Pheugh! I'm out of breath. I saw old Barkem, the attorney, coming along this way, so I dodged into the first shop I saw, and have bought a wreath of artificial flowers as an excuse. I feared he was coming here.

BETSY. (L.) How quick you are back: let me help you to put down the things.

CHARLES. (R.) Here, take them, but never trouble me in this way again. (*gives them*)

BETSY. And what's that little parcel?

CHARLES. Ah, I forgot!—a wreath of artificial flowers.

BETSY. (*delighted*) For me?

CHARLES. To be sure. (*he puts it on her head—she runs to the glass with joy as MRS. SMITH enters, door R. C.*)

MRS. S. (R.) Well, I must say it is remarkably becoming.

CHARLES. (*horrified and annoyed*) And where did you come from, you infernal old meddler.

MRS. S. I was only putting clean towels into Betsy's room, sir—that was all. Here's a card—yours, sir—perhaps you dropped it. Mrs. Ludlow, Sussex Gardens.

BETSY. (L.) Mrs. Ludlow!

CHARLES. (*after a moment's hesitation*) Yes, Mrs. Ludlow, my mother.

BETSY. La, what a fright it did give me.

CHARLES. And now, Betsy, to breakfast; and you, Mother Smith, or whatever's your name, perhaps you'll do me the favour to walk off, and never again intrude in my absence.

MRS. S. To be sure, sir, to be sure. (*aside*) He is dying for a tit a tit; but I'll keep my eye on him. I know he is a gay gallant Lutheran, but he shan't do me.

Exit, taking eggs from BETSY, c.

CHARLES. (*aside*) This will never do. I'll at once teach her her duty, or dismiss her. (*aloud*) Betsy!

BETSY. Sir!

CHARLES. (*sternly*) The moment has arrived, when——

BETSY. You should sit down to breakfast.

CHARLES. (*aside*) Yes, to-morrow will do. I'll consider how best to tell her—to point out to her—the impropriety of her present conduct.

BETSY. (*near the table*) Come and sit down.

CHARLES. (*approaching*) Why, you have laid two places.

BETSY. (*smiling*) Oh, you see how I think of all you say. Yesterday, at dinner, you said you could not eat alone, and made me sit down beside you; and so, to-day, I laid a second place for myself.

CHARLES. (*aside, hesitating*) What shall I do?

BETSY. (*annoyed*) Ah! you don't seem pleased; perhaps you are too proud.

CHARLES. Do I look proud?

BETSY. Not always; you are not always as you are now, or you would not have promised to take me to the play this evening.

CHARLES. Me! Did I indeed? (*aside*) I'll take her to the Victoria, I shall see no one there that I know.

BETSY. (*pouting*) Perhaps though, you'll be ashamed of me.

CHARLES. Not at all—only—however becoming that style of dress may be—(*caresses her*)

BETSY. Oh don't do that. Be quiet, do.

CHARLES. (*aside*) Well there's no great harm, for all this shall cease to-morrow.

BETSY. After all, if I had only fashionable clothes I think I should look as well as the best of them.

CHARLES. I'll give you a dress.

BETSY. (*eagerly*) I knew you would.

CHARLES. Just as a Christmas box.

BETSY. (*aside*) Ah! he won't tell me he's already bought one. He still wants to surprise me, but I'll surprise him.

CHARLES. Come, sit down—let us breakfast.

BETSY. (*coquettishly*) Well, as you order, I am bound to obey. (*sits*)

CHARLES. (*aside*) Yes, all this shall end to-morrow. (*aloud*) What will you have?

BETSY. Whatever you like, I am sure will suit me.

LOUISA. (*outside, c.*) This door, I think you said?

CHARLES. (*starting up, aside*) Gracious! 'tis the voice of my wife!—'tis Louisa!

BETSY. La! what is the matter? Do sit down.

CHARLES. (*violently*) Get up, I say!

BETSY. Eh?

CHARLES. Get up—quick! (*drags the chair from under her*)

Enter LOUISA, c. door, going down, R.

LOUISA. Thank you—I'm right. Ah, Charles!

CHARLES. (c.) How are you, Louisa? (*aside*) Only just in time.

BETSY. (L., *aside*) Who can this woman be?

LOUISA. Charles, dear, how surprised you seem?

BETSY. (*aside*) She calls him dear—what can this mean?

CHARLES. No wonder—you take me so by surprise. (*aside*) I'd give the surplus revenue to be in California at this moment.

BETSY. (*aside to him*) Who is this lady? Who is she?

CHARLES. (*aside to her*) My cousin—a young widow—we were brought up together. (BETSY goes up)

LOUISA. (*taking off her hat and shawl*) It appears you did not expect me?

CHARLES. (*aside*) That's very true.

LOUISA. Who's that young person?

CHARLES. (*confused*) The maid-servant, my dear, you desired me to hire.

LOUISA. Does she suit you?

CHARLES. (*hesitating*) Why, yes, tolerably—that is, tolerably well.

LOUISA. Breakfast already laid. How very convenient, Charles—it just suits me—I've not breakfasted—I came up by the express, and I am really very hungry.

BETSY. (*aside—crossing to CHARLES*) I don't suppose she's going coolly to take my place.

LOUISA. What, two places laid; have you any one coming to breakfast?

CHARLES. Why, my old brother officer, Stapleton, said he might come in some of these days. (*both sit*)

LOUISA. So you have two places laid every morning.—Ha, ha! famous.

CHARLES. (*aside*) Upon my life, I wish I could laugh.

LOUISA. What's the name of the maid?

CHARLES. (*with affected indifference*) Betsy, I believe.

LOUISA. Is the tea made, Betsy?

BETSY. (*aside*) One would suppose she was my mistress, she speaks so proudly.

LOUISA. Give me another knife, Betsy.

BETSY. I shan't! (*aside*) I'm not going to be treated so.

LOUISA. Did you hear me speak?

BETSY. Yes!

LOUISA. But never mind, I've got one.

BETSY. (*aside*) I shall soon be her equal, and I won't be put down.

LOUISA. Pour out the tea.

BETSY. (*aside*) Won't I? (*pours out the tea, and in doing so, pours it over—CHARLES in vain tries to make her more respectful*)

LOUISA. How awkward you are—this will never do.

BETSY. Then help it yourself. (*puts down tea, draws a chair on the opposite side and sits with her back towards the breakfast table*)

LOUISA. What's that she says?

CHARLES. I heard nothing, my love.

LOUISA. She seems the most rude uncouth—

CHARLES. My dear, she is unaccustomed to you, but she flies when I order her. You shall see. (*to her*) Betsy, may I trouble you to have the goodness to give me my hat, it is in yonder corner.

BETSY. It is close to you—you can reach it yourself—I have my ironing to do. (*rises, aside*) Proud stuck-up thing, she may help herself (*goes into room, L. re-enters with vest, then exits at D. R. C.*)

LOUISA. (*laughing*) Upon my honour, you have picked up a perfect model maid-servant.

Enter MRS. SMITH, with eggs and bacon and two French rolls, c.

MRS. SMITH. The eggs and bacon, sir. (*placing them on table*)

CHARLES. Talk of a man saving his bacon—the bacon has saved me.

MRS. S. I wonder who *she* is? (*looking at LOUISA, exit D. C.*)

LOUISA. How is it that you don't ask me why I came up this morning?

CHARLES. Oh, by-the-bye—why? I had really forgotten to ask.

LOUISA. How strange you seem! Come, if you give me one kiss I'll tell you.

CHARLES. Not at all—not at all,—Oh, do tell me. There—there's the kiss (*kisses her abruptly*)—there—(*aside*) What a mess I should be in if Betsy happened to come in.

LOUISA. You must know that a grand pic-nic at Shoreham is to take place to-morrow: it was only determined on last night, so I came up post haste to get the few things I want—especially the dress I ordered home; has it come, Charles?

CHARLES. It has, love—take an egg, love?

LOUISA. Then I've little or nothing to keep me, and I'll return by the Express at three o'clock.

CHARLES. (*involuntary*) Thank heaven!

LOUISA. (*surprised*) Eh!

CHARLES. I was thinking at that moment, that this separation must end next week, and expressing my delight at it—for you must know, love, without you I am soulless.

LOUISA. Then you are not happy without me?

CHARLES. I am miserable.

LOUISA. Then what prevents you from returning with me to-day?

CHARLES. Why, you see—that is—you don't see—I mean you don't know, there is a Chancery suit pending, and if the senior counsel—that is—(*quickly*) It's quite impossible—you understand.

LOUISA. How annoying; I had hoped you would have come—at all events you might have gone down with me: it's really very disagreeable travelling alone—one gets stared at—and—

CHARLES. People regard you with looks of admiration.

LOUISA. Exactly so.

CHARLES. Can you wonder at it, dear Louisa—were I a bachelor, I'm sure I should do so.

LOUISA. Well, I suppose that was the feeling of the gentleman who sat opposite me, and would address me.

CHARLES. I trust you had prudence enough not to answer him, and that you left the carriage.

LOUISA. On its arrival at the London Bridge Station, not before.

CHARLES. Really, I think you might have done so sooner—a modest woman, unless she likes indeed admiration, can always—

LOUISA. I couldn't help his speaking or looking; besides after all it was flattering.

CHARLES. (*annoyed*) Flattering! An impudent scoundrel!
(*both rise*)

LOUISA. Come, come, I am glad to see I can make you jealous. Now, Charles, take care you never give me cause to play you off. If you deceive me—

CHARLES. Me! me! deceive you?—ridiculous!

LOUISA. Well I hope—nay, I am sure you do not.

CHARLES. (*aside*) I'm afraid she's rather too sure.

LOUISA. But come, I must lose no time. Where's this pert maid of yours?

CHARLES. What do you want with her, my love?

LOUISA. To go instantly to my dressmaker's.

CHARLES. (*aside*) She won't stir a foot, I'll be sworn.

LOUISA. (*calls at the door*) Betsy! Betsy! (*coming down*) Where can she be?

CHARLES. Perhaps she has gone out, love. (*aside*) What a bright—what a sudden thought; yes I have it, I'll send her into the city on some imaginary errand, she will not return till my wife's gone, and then all will be right. (*aloud*) I'll run, love.

LOUISA. Where?

CHARLES. To the dressmaker's—I'll bring her here.

LOUISA. Thank you, Charles, thank you—I never saw you so gallant before.

CHARLES. I never saw you look so pretty before.

LOUISA. Get along, you flatterer—get along, but make haste back. (*he embraces her and exits quickly, c. door*) How very odd! he generally hates going to milliners—how very active and obliging he has suddenly grown. (*noise as if some one had fallen down stairs*) Heaven's! what's that? (*looks out*)

BELTON. (*without, c. door*) I only slipped—it was nothing.

LOUISA. (*coming forward*) What a fright it gave me. But now let me see I must at once do my commissions and return; though really I feel a sort of presentiment I shall again fall in with

the gentleman who uttered such nonsensical rhapsodies as I came up; and I do positively believe proposed for me. (*laughs*) But if he is there—I'll cheat him—I'll go back in the ladies' carriage. Silly goose—getting out of the train, watching the cab I got in, and uttering his preposterous protestations.

Enter BELTON, C. D., cautiously and unseen.

BELTON. (*aside*) Yes, I've tracked her, lovely angel, there she is.

LOUISA. (*continuing*) I saw him jump into a cab to follow me; but fortunately he lost sight of me in Cheapside, where his vehicle got entangled in the crowd and—

BELTON. (*advancing with gallantry*) He sprang out, and jumped up behind your cab, lovely angel.

LOUISA. You here, sir—I'm surprised.

BELTON. (*smiling*) Agreeably so, I hope.

LOUISA. How dare you follow me, sir—who gave you permission?

BELTON. Love, madam—omnipotent love—look at me, madam—behold me I say—behold me. Belton, who never knelt before created being. (*theatrically throwing himself on one knee*)

LOUISA. (L.) Rise instantly, sir—and cease this absurdity. (*she gives him a slight push, he falls, and rises with difficulty*)

BELTON. (R.) Madam, allow me to say this is no absurdity. When I saw you this morning my fate was for ever sealed—my intentions, lovely syren, are honourable.

LOUISA. Sir, I'm a married woman.

BELTON. Married! Impossible! impossible.

LOUISA. It's perfectly true.

BELTON. Then why the deuce did you not tell me so when you were with me in the train—You might have perceived that I meant to marry you.

LOUISA. (*laughing*) Indeed!

BELTON. Yes, madam—you may smile, but it's no joke to me—I've almost a mind to commit suicide, you suited me so exactly; but never mind, I'll be off by the express at 3 o'clock—and travel till I forget you. Oh, wretched woman, to be the wife of another!

Enter BETSY, c.

BETSY. (*without noticing them*) What a stupid wretch Mrs. Smith was not to tell him where I was gone—I'm certain he has started off to try and find me.

BELTON. (*to LOUISA*) Madam, I wish you good morning, you have wounded my too susceptible heart, but I pardon you and bless you.

BETSY. (*who has gone over and is already clearing away the things perceiving him for the first time, aside*) Ah! who have we here, making love to Charles's cousin.

BELTON. (*having gone half out, returns and speaks with animation*) Give me some hope, adorable.

LOUISA. Leave the room, sir.

BELTON. Madam, only allow me.

LOUISA. (*perceiving BETSY, speaks to her*) Betsy, shew this gentleman out. *Exit into chamber, L.*

BETSY. (*aside*) Upon my word! why don't you order me about a little more?—one would think she was at home.

BELTON. (*going up to BETSY and pulling out his purse*) Ah, my dear—the servant I suppose, pretty girl upon my life—looks amiable—here's a crown for you.

BETSY. Thank you.

BELTON. What's your name?

BETSY. Betsy.

BELTON. Well then, Betsy, tell me who's that lady married to?

BETSY. La, what a queer question! I thought you knew her—she's a widow.

BELTON. (*aside*) Second-hand furniture—ah, never mind—I am not afraid of them.

BETSY. (*aside*) I always hate widows myself, they seem always so proud.

BELTON. (*aside*) Ah—ah. I was perhaps a little too abrupt—so she punished me by this fair equivocation.

BETSY. Yes. By-the-bye, sir, are you waiting for anything? Are you waiting to see my master?

BELTON. Your master?

BETSY. Yes, that lady's cousin, to whom she has just paid a most unwelcome visit.

BELTON. (*mysteriously*) I say Betsy, are you sure he is her cousin—you understand, cousins in London are sometimes rather conhexions than relations, eh?

BETSY. (c.) Oh, as to that, you may rest contented—I take care of my master's morals.

BELTON. (L.—*aside*) Now comes my turn, my fine lady; I'll not give you up—no—no. At my school they used to say, Belton and obstinacy meant the same. Yes, my name's Belton.

BETSY. (*aside*) What is the little fool muttering about?

Enter CHARLES, C.

CHARLES. (R.) Where the devil can this girl have gone?

BETSY. (*aside to BELTON*) This is my master, sir.

CHARLES. (*not perceiving them*) I've let the infernal parcel fall into the gutter, so I may expect a rare scolding.

BELTON. (*approaching with ceremony*) My dear sir.

CHARLES. Holloa! who have we here?

BELTON. I have seen her, sir—and to see her is to love.

CHARLES. (*aside*) Is the kangaroo mad?

BELTON. And I now seriously ask your permission to address

her. Yes, sir, my intentions are honorable. I offer her, through you, my hand.

BETSY. (*aside to him*) That's right, persevere.

CHARLES. And may I take the liberty of asking of whom do you speak?

BELTON. (*vehemently*) Your adorable cousin. Ah, you hesitate.

CHARLES. Indeed, I do, for two most excellent reasons. In the first place, she has nearer relatives than myself; and in the second, she is rather young.

BELTON. Young—it is true—but not too young for me.

CHARLES. Why she is only four years old.

BELTON. (*astounded*) What! that young lady I saw here only four years old? Impossible!

BETSY. What, the lady who breakfasted here this morning only four years old?—ha, ha, ha!—add thirty to it.

CHARLES. (*suddenly*) What, are you speaking of—

BETSY. Exactly so. (*crossing to L.*)

CHARLES. (*to BELTON*) And you came to me, sir, for my consent to your marriage—(*aside*) to her own husband. 'Pon my life, this is too good!

BELTON. Yes; but you'll allow she is rather more than four years old.

CHARLES. Yes—yes.

BELTON. I knew she was.

CHARLES. (*aside*) What an ass the fellow is.

BELTON. May I then hope?

CHARLES. Impossible!

BETSY. (*interfering*) Perhaps you admire her yourself?

(*crossing to L.*)

CHARLES. Don't interfere. (*aside*) If I say a word or explain she'll burst out, and then we shall have a scene; Louisa must not know, decidedly not. (*aloud*) I don't decidedly say no—I must consider—

BELTON. Oh, sir, my gratitude—

CHARLES. (*trying to push out*) On a future occasion—on a future occasion—maybe—we'll talk about it.

BETSY. Why not now?

BELTON. Yes, sir—why not now? I go back by the evening train, and it's—

CHARLES. My dear, sir—I'll call on you.

BELTON. Not at all—I'll come back.

CHARLES. My dear sir—I really prefer—

BELTON. Oh, I couldn't think of giving you the trouble.

Enter LOUISA with a cap in her hand, L. door.

LOUISA. Whose cap can this possibly be?

CHARLES. (*aside*) Gracious, my wife.

BELTON. (*delighted*) 'Tis she!

LOUISA. (*aside*) This man not gone.

BELTON. (*crosses to L. C.*) Yes, adorable angel, you will yet be mine.

LOUISA. (*astounded*) What do you say?

BELTON. (*pointing to CHARLES*) Yes—he has blessed me with a hope of possessing you. *Exit, D. L. F.*

LOUISA. What can this man mean?

CHARLES. I did not hear him, love.

LOUISA. Whose cap is this?

BETSY. (*aside*) Oh! lor, it's my cap—I left it there when I took off the wreath. I wish she would leave it alone.

CHARLES. (*aside*) It's Betsy's.

LOUISA. I found it in our room.

CHARLES. I bought it for *you*—pray accept it.

BETSY. (*aside*) Rather cool, on my word, giving away my best cap before my very eyes. (*to him*) I say, sir—

CHARLES. (*aside to her*) Hush—hold your tongue—I'll buy you a better one—half-a-dozen—but hold your tongue.

LOUISA. It's a frightful cap.

BETSY. Come, that's too bad.

LOUISA. (*to BETSY, crosses to R. C.*) Did you speak?

BETSY. Yes I did, mum.

LOUISA. May I beg that another time you'll only do so when you are spoken to. Go away now—when I want you, I'll ring. (*advancing, c., aside to her*) Run after that little man who was here just now; find out who he is, and I'll give you a nice shawl for your pains.

BETSY. (*as she exits, aside*) Hang her bribes!—I ain't going to run after the men for her!—her airs don't suit me, and I won't stand them. *Exit, C. D.*

CHARLES. (*aside*) I breathe again—she's gone. (*aloud, with severity*) My dear, that girl's a savage—we must part with her!

LOUISA. My dear, you are too severe with her, your severity frightens her; and as you say she is an unsophisticated rustic, you see she must be trained gently. But tell me, Charles, what made you buy me this cap?—it don't seem new—I'm sure it has been worn.

CHARLES. Then I'll return it: it's a rascally take in. (*aside*) Oh, law!—I wish it was at the bottom of the Artesian well in Trafalgar Square. (*thrusts it hurriedly into his waistcoat pocket*)

LOUISA. And tell me, dear Charles—what did that scarecrow mean about your having encouraged his admiration of me?

CHARLES. Why you see the fact is—that is to say—the truth is—How the devil came he to follow you in here?

LOUISA. Charles, your manner is insufferable.

CHARLES. (*aside*) Yes—I have it—a good row—it's the best chance of avoiding an explanation. (*aloud, violently*) Yes, madam, I say that the impropriety—

LOUISA. (*alarmed*) What is the matter? I merely—

CHARLES. (*still violently*) Yes, travelling about in this giddy way. Picking up admirers, and—

LOUISA. Dear Charles, do be calm, I'll not do so again—I'll not go—I'll remain till you can return with me.

CHARLES. (*aside*) Oh, that will never do. (*aloud, more quietly*) No—no—I was too violent—no you shall go—I insist on it. I wish to shew my confidence in you—(*looking at his watch*) By-the-bye, you've no time to lose.

LOUISA. Well, dearest, if you wish it I'll return at once—I'll just go in and get some little things, and be ready in ten minutes.

CHARLES. Dearest Louisa, it will seem an age till you finally return. (*aside*) Oh, how I wish she would go. (*aloud*) One parting kiss, dearest, and then make haste—I fear you will really be too late. (*embraces her, but as he does so, looks round to see that he is not seen*)

LOUISA. (*half pouting and half laughing*) Really, Charles, your manner to-day is so strange—so— (*hurries her off*)

CHARLES. Oh what a shock she gave me, when she talked of remaining; but they shan't meet again for above a minute.

Enter BETSY, c.

Ah, Betsy, is that you?

BETSY. Oh, sir, I ran back quickly to tell you—I've just seen the gentleman who was here, and he says he will be here again almost immediately to know your decision.

CHARLES. What? (*puts on his hat*) Come back here—no—that will never do. Betsy, where's my hat? (*looking about*)

BETSY. Why, on your head to be sure.

CHARLES. Right! (*suddenly*) Run and get me an ounce of snuff at Pontests, in the Haymarket.

BETSY. La, what do you want with it, you never take the nasty stuff: indeed you shan't have any.

CHARLES. (*aside*) Yes, by the time she's back Louisa will have gone. (*aloud*) You must go.

BETSY. (*anxious*) Well, then, if I do, will you take me to the play to-night as you promised.

CHARLES. (*quickly*) Certainly, certainly!

BETSY. I may dress myself smart.

CHARLES. (*aside*) There's some one coming up the stairs.

BETSY. May I put on those smart clothes?

CHARLES. (*pushing her off as she exits, by f.*) Yes, yes—anything—but be off.

BETSY. La, how nice—I should not have dared put them on without his leave. How spicry I shall be.

MRS. S. (*without*) Take care, sir—I'm neither stock nor stone, that you should push me aside in that manner.

Enter MRS. SMITH, C.

MRS. S. Why, Betsy, what have you been doing to your master? I met him on the stairs just now, asked him a civil question, he gave me a push and told me to go to the devil—calls *hisself* a gentleman indeed! Who's the lady that's been with you all day?

BETSY. It is his cousin!

MRS. S. (c.) Is she going to remain?

BETSY. I'll take care of that.

Enter LOUISA from room, L.

LOUISA. (l.) Where can my husband have put away these things—I can neither find the dress, the shawl, or the bonnet; and yet he said they had come.

BETSY. (*aside to MRS. S.*) Now speak to her yourself.

MRS. S. Won't I—and soundly too—that's all.

LOUISA. (*to BETSY*) I want you to help me to find some things.

BETSY. I've no time. I want to go and dress—it's getting late.

LOUISA. (*astonished*) What do you say?

BETSY. (*perily*) That I must go and dress, that's all. The doors open at half-past six, begin at seven. *Exit, R. D.*

LOUISA. (*very angry*) What is the meaning of this—how dare you?

MRS. S. Pooh! pooh! You won't frighten me—though you may come sneaking after your cousin, Mr. Ludlow.

LOUISA. What do I hear—what's all this? Madam, I am the wife of Mr. Ludlow.

MRS. S. I'm too old for that, it won't do.

LOUISA. And I insist on your treating me with proper respect.

MRS. S. Well if that be the truth, then, I suppose it's your card I found—though he told me it was his mother—

LOUISA. Mr. Ludlow, has no mother alive.

MRS. S. Then all I can say is, he's a worse Lutherian than I took him to be, for to go and deceive a young girl—upon my honour it's too bad—a good-for-nothing— *Exit, C. D.*

LOUISA. (*much excited*) Well this is the most strange, the most abominable—but—but I'll not be hasty—I'll not believe—no—I'll have an explanation with him—I'll tear his eyes out—no—I won't—I'll wait till he comes in—I don't understand it.

Exit, D. L.

Enter BETSY, R. D. F., dressed in full dress in the clothes brought in by the Milliner in the opening scene.

BETSY. They're rather tight—I've burst some of the hooks and eyes, but considering they were made by guess they really fit very tidily. (*hums an air and goes before the looking glass, L.*)

Enter CHARLES, C.

CHARLES. How provoking—I could not find the fool to stop him (*starting*) Ah ! Louisa ! (*taking her by the waist*)

BETSY. (*turning round and awkwardly curtseying*) Charles ! don't I look lovely.

CHARLES. (*recoiling*) Betsy. (*aside*) As I live she has Louisa's dress on.

BETSY. I look pretty spicy—eh ! (*crossing to L.*)

CHARLES. Take off this trumpery. Quick, I say—if Louisa saw you in them.

BETSY. I mean her to see me in them. I'm now going to walk round the square, and shew them off a little before we start for the theatre.

CHARLES. This crowns all !

Enter BELTON, with a parcel, C. D.

BELTON. I've not lost a single moment—I have brought a nuptial present.

CHARLES. For whom ?

BELTON. For your fair cousin.

CHARLES. Pooh ! My cousin's dead.

BELTON. (*in a high voice of despair*) You don't say so.

Enter LOUISA, L.

LOUISA. What's the matter here ?

BELTON. (*crossing to L. C.*) My angel alive ?

CHARLES. (*aside*) Louisa—I'm petrified !

BELTON. (*pompously*) Adorable lady ! My motto has ever been truth and promptitude ; so, without further circumvention, I beg you to accept these trifles, and with them, the hand of the most affectionate of men.

LOUISA. What ?—eh ?—what do I see ?—this girl in my best bonnet and dress, and my husband standing by. It is infamous !

CHARLES. (*aside*) Oh, I wish the earth would swallow me only for half an hour.

LOUISA. Really, sir, it is not for me to reply, this gentleman (*pointing to CHARLES*) will reply for me.

BELTON. Thank heaven, then all is safe ! He has already consented.

LOUISA. Eh ? (*appeals to CHARLES*)

BELTON. (*to CHARLES*) Did you not consent ?

CHARLES. Decidedly not.

BELTON. Decidedly you did.

BETSY. (*to CHARLES*) Do you refuse now ?

BELTON. May I ask do you refuse—and why ?

CHARLES. (*with the calmness of despair*) Simply, because this lady is my wife.

BELTON. } His wife! (BETSY falls into BELTON's arms)
BETSY. }

BELTON. Young woman?

LOUISA. (aside) What can this mean?

BETSY. His wife? then he is married. (*throws herself into chair*)

BELTON. (to LOUISA) If this be true, why did not you tell me so before? (*pulls him from LOUISA*)

LOUISA. (to CHARLES) From this moment we separate. You have deceived me, and I'll never live with you again.

CHARLES. Anything you like.

BETSY. Deceiver, I quit you for ever!

Exit, R. D.

CHARLES. Thank heaven!

LOUISA. You've taken your course, I'll take mine.

BELTON. With me, my angel.

LOUISA. Idiot—

BELTON. Adorable, I'll run and call a cab.

Exit, C.

LOUISA. Sir, I shall leave you for ever.

Exit, L.

CHARLES. I can bear this no longer. (*rain heard*) I can never look upon Betsy—I mean Louisa again. I will at once end this. (*looks out of window*) It's pouring with rain—if I throw myself out I shall get wet. No!—I'll live—I'll live to repent. (*throws himself in chair*) I know her heart—it will melt—and I'll send away Betsy—pretty as she is, and she is devilish pretty!—and for my wife, I'll approach her—I'll fall on my knees—I'll throw myself at her feet.

Enter LOUISA, L. D.

(he seizes her hand) My dream is realized—you forgive me?

LOUISA. Nay, I was wrong—I should not have left you, and never have driven my husband into bachelor's lodgings. (*they embrace*)

Enter BELTON, C.

BELTON. The cab's at the door, to convey you, my charmer, and me to—

LOUISA. Will you go with us, Charles? (*both laugh*)

BELTON. Laughed at! What am I to do?

CHARLES. Go to Bedlam!

Enter BETSY, R.

BETSY. I want my wages. I'll get another place!

BELTON. I'll give you one—I'm desperately in want of a housekeeper.

CHARLES. No, no, Betsy—you had better make another trial here; that is, (*to AUDIENCE*) with your kind approval! Will you give her another trial?

Curtain.