

NEVER RECKON YOUR CHICKENS

&c.

An Original Farce,

IN ONE ACT.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"*Not so Bad after all;*" "*Pike O'Callaghan;*" "*Supper Gratis;*"
"*Anna of Norway;*" "*Dead Witness;*" "*Match for a
Mother-in-Law;*" "*Little Red Riding Hood;*"
"*Robinson Crusoe;*" "*Won at Last;*"
"*Better Angel*" "*True as Steel;*"

&c., &c.

LONDON:

S A M U E L F R E N C H ,
PUBLISHER,
89, STRAND.

NEW YORK:

S A M U E L F R E N C H & S O N .
PUBLISHERS,
38, EAST 14TH STREET.

NEVER RECKON YOUR CHICKENS.

First produced at the Olympic Theatre (under the management of Mr. W. H. Liston) Boxing Night, December, 1871.



Characters.



MR. JONATHAN GLUBB (*Patentee of
Glubb's Tallow*) Mr. BLAKELEY.

MR. JOHN TINKLER (*Patentee of
Tinkler's Soap*) Mr. PEVERILL.

SIMON (*re-christened Julius, and transformed from an errand boy to a page*) Mr. F. ROBSON.

*MISS JANE GLUBB (*affecting Fashion*) Miss ALICE COOK.

*MISS SARAH GLUBB (*affecting Poetry*) Mrs. F. ROBSON.

*MAGGIE GLUBB (*a Romp*) ... Miss AMY STEINBERG.

MARY (*a Servant, with the proverbial weaknesses of her sex and position*) Miss SUTHERLAND.



Time—Forty Minutes.



* It is necessary the ladies playing these characters should distinctly mark their peculiarities in the acting.

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SCENE.—*A Room, comfortably furnished. Folding doors, c., and doors, R. and L.; chairs; sideboard, R. C.; footstool; dining table, a little to the L. C.*

MARY discovered, dusting the furniture, and SIMON assisting her.

MARY. Now, do make haste! You are the slowest boy that ever I saw.

SIMON. Boy, indeed! Where do you get your men, I should like to know?

MARY. Call yourself a man? Where's your beard?

SIMON. It's coming; I feel it growing every day.

MARY. Sprouting, you mean. You are an impudent monkey; and what a guy you do look in those clothes!

SIMON. I knows it; it's all Miss Jane's doings—a-shoving me into this second-hand suit, belonging to some dead and gone Buttons. I was a deal happier a-taking out candles to the customers. Them gals have got sich high notions, it's disgustin'. 'Cos Simon is common, they've re-christened me Julius. I wonder what the row's about to-day.

MARY. Why, the young ladies have met with a young man— (*leaning over R. of table*)

SIMON. A very common case. (*leaning over L. of table*)

MARY. And they're spoony on him, and think he's going to propose.

SIMON. That's natural.

MARY. And marry—

SIMON. That's unnatural—if they means all on 'em.

MARY. All on 'em—no! It's only the Mormons as is allowed any amount of wives, and they're being put a stop to. They sets their face against it in England. (*advancing*)

SIMON. Wery proper, too. Which of the gals is it?

MARY. Well, that's the puzzle; they don't know.

SIMON. That's awk'ard.

MARY. Very. You see, they met him at their Aunt

Barkins's house, when they were stopping there. He showed all those little delicate attentions which we women understands and appreciates. Miss Jane and Miss Sarah have done nothing but quarrel ever since the letter came. Miss Jane's certain it's for her; Miss Sarah says it's her.

SIMON. What a lark if it's Miss Maggie, and they're reckoning their chickens a bit too soon!

MARY. Rubbish! She's a child; nobody would think of her for the next five years.

SIMON. Men and women differ in them matters. All I thinks is this—Master be pretty well worried out of his life atween them all. He'd better have stuck to tallow; for tallow will always stick to him.

MAGGIE runs on from L. C.

MAGGIE. Oh, Mary—such fun! They're at it again.

MARY. What, quarrelling?

MAGGIE. Yes; and what do you think I have done? I have got Jane's best chignon, that she wanted to wear to-day; and she's in such a rage. Here it is. (*showing it*)

MARY. You naughty girl, the house won't be able to hold her. Give it me.

MAGGIE. Oh! wouldn't you like to have it? Catch me, and you shall. (*MAGGIE runs round stage, MARY after her*)

SIMON. (*stands laughing, L.*) Two to one on the filly!

Enter JANE, L. C.—MAGGIE runs against her, nearly knocking her down—SIMON suddenly stops laughing on seeing her.

JANE. How dare you! you naughty girl! What is the meaning of this disgraceful disturbance? Mary, your conduct is most reprehensible!

MAGGIE. No, don't blame her, sister, it is all my fault.

JANE. You are a very bad girl, and ought to be kept at school. I shall tell your papa so! Mary, have you seen my hair improver?

MARY. Lor, no miss. I'd have known it in a minute, if I had.

MAGGIE. (*aside*) Simon, take it and put in your pocket.

(*SIMON takes it—pretends to be looking the other way, and forces it into his pocket*)

JANE. I should like to know who has dared to take it? I would discharge them instantly.

SIMON. (*aside to MAGGIE*) Oh, lord, I shall lose my place!

MAGGIE. (*aside to him*) No, you won't—it's all right!

JANE. Does cook understand about the dinner?

MARY. Yes miss—I think so.

JANE. (*giving a paper*) Tell her that is the menu, as the

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shes are to be served; and you, Julius, recollect that everything you bring into the room is brought on the salver. Now go about your work.

(MARY crosses to SIMON—SIMON speaks aside to her as they go off)

SIMON. If this here shig-non is found on me, I am a dead buttons.

Exeunt, L.

JANE. I request, Margaret, that you behave yourself before Mr. Tinkler, he is a gentleman, and not used to foolish, giddy girls.

MAGGIE. I dare say he likes them better than stiff, conceited old maids.

JANE. You impertinent minx!

Enter SARAH and MR. GLUBB, door, R.—the former is dressed in white, her hair hanging loosely down her back, she has a book of poetry in her hand—the latter has very old-fashioned cut breeches and gaiters on, and waistcoat, a modern white necktie with large bow to it, and a perfectly modern and fashionably-cut dress coat.

GLUBB. Now, Sally, do let me alone! I tell you I ain't a-going to take off my gaiters, and wear them trowser things for nobody. I'm an old fool to give way as I have done, and put on this fine coat. I feels like a pig in armour.

MAGGIE. Oh, what a Guy! Daddy, I wish it was the fifth of November—I'd make lots of money with you. (crossing to him)

Please to remember the fifth of November, &c.

GLUBB. Be quiet, you young monkey, calling your father a Guy. What do you mean by it?

JANE. Miss Margaret, hold your tongue immediately! (MAGGIE makes grimace at her and turns up stage)

SARAH. But, papa, Jane and I wish you to appear the pink of fashion, and the mould of form.

GLUBB. Drat the fashion, and as for moulds, I'd back mine again any in the City.

MAGGIE. (advancing) Oh, there is a conceited old daddy! (JANE and SARAH look at her—she makes a grimace and turns away)

GLUBB. It aint every chandler as know's the real moulds, from the sham 'uns, when they see's em.

JANE. We are not talking of candles, but of your figure, papa. Your waistcoat and etcetera are most *outré*.

GLUBB. I don't see what a tray has got to do with me or my clothes either, my dear. They are a precious deal more comfortable than this coat, which I feel I shall bust out of every minute.

MAGGIE. Oh, what fun if you did ! (*laughing and clapping her hands*)

JANE. Your elder sister is speaking, miss, hold your tongue !

MAGGIE. Bother ! my tongue was made to speak with, not to hold !

SARAH. (*crossing and pushing MAGGIE aside*) Papa, Margaret had better leave the room, and I will read Mr. Tinkler's charming letter. She is too young to hear a declaration which

“ Like the lava flood,”

“ That burns in Etna’s breast of flame,”

now rages in his bosom.

GLUBB. He’ll be burnt to a cinder if he goes on blazing like that ; so I suppose we’d better hear him. (*sitting down, R.*) Oh, drat this coat ! I know I shall bust out on it.

MAGGIE. Mayn’t I stay, daddy ?

GLUBB. Yes, you may stay. I suppose you wouldn’t be long afore you found out all about love an’ marriage, an’ all such nonsense. It’s the first thing gals really think about, and you may as well begin to learn now.

JANE. Papa—remember, she is but a child ! (*L. of table*)

GLUBB. What o’ that ? children be often a precious sight wiser than older folks ! Let’s hear t’ chap’s letter—I suppose it’s a long ‘un ; young fellows in love are devils to talk.

(MAGGIE sits on stool near her father—SARAH at back of table)

SARAH. (*reading very affectedly*) “ My fondest Rose,—How pathetic !

JANE. Entrancingly so—I feel it deeply !

SARAH. You ? how absurd—he addresses me !

JANE. What vanity ! (*aside*) A gawky creature.

SARAH. To think he could love such a full-blown rose as you are.

GLUBB. (*interrupting them*) There, there, that’ll do—don’t reckon your chickens afore they’re hatched. Read the letter first, we’ll settle who it is for, afterwards. If I don’t like the young fellow, neither of you gets him—so go on !

SARAH. (*reading*) “ My fondest Rose—my Rose without a “ thorn, I love you — the gaiety and simplicity of your “ nature”—I told you it was for me !—“ has conquered your “ Tinkler. I intend calling to see the Governor to-day.—I “ remain, my Passion Flower, yours till death, and after.—“ JOHN TINKLER.”

JANE. How beautifully he expresses himself !

SARAH. His meaning lies deep, like the language of flowers.

GLUBB. Yes—he’s very flowery. But I don’t see as he’s a boiling over like Etna’s crater—as you talked about, his

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letter don't say so. What does he call one of my gals Rose for?

SARAH. A delicate compliment—he told me he was a poet.

GLUBB. A poet won't do for my son-in-law—poetry and tallow don't amalgamate.

JANE. He told me he was an officer.

GLUBB. Worse still, tallow and red cloth don't amalgamate—it always shows the grease spots!

MAGGIE. He told me he was a merchant!

GLUBB. That be better—but he can't be all three. Has he got any money?

SARAH. What is money? (*starting up, all do the same*)

GLUBB. What is money? Why, money's money. The world don't believe in anybody without it; no more do I—'specially as a husband for one of my daughters. (*they advance*)

JANE. He is a gentleman, papa; unquestionably rich; so you will receive him like one—won't you? And you understand, we dine à la Russe.

GLUBB. Aye! I don't know what that be. I'd sooner a deal have dined off a goose; but, for once, thou mun have thy way. (*a loud knocking*)

SARAH. (*..eaturally, R.*) He comes—he comes.

MAGGIE. (*imitating her, L.*) He do—he do!

JANE. Papa, retire into the other room.

GLUBB. Nay, nay! this'll do.

JANE. No; this must be the reception room. He must not be found here.

GLUBB. What does it matter where we're found, if we want to give him a hearty welcome?

JANE. It is not the fashion. We must be announced in the usual way. Retire to this room. (*pointing, R.*)

SARAH. Begone! His steps I hear. (*pulling him*)

MAGGIE. Gee—wo, daddy! (*holding his coat tails*)

GLUBB. (*as he is pushed off*) But, gals—I say, gals! Oh, Lord a-mercy me! I'll ne'er be a pink o' fashion agin, as long as I live!

Exeunt, R.—JANE follows with dignity.

Enter TINKLER and MARY from L. C.

TINKLER. I say, Mary, you are a very pretty girl.

MARY. Oh, don't, sir!

TINK. You mean, Oh, do! You know you like being told so; all girls do.

MARY. I never said so.

TINK. But you thought it—it's all the same. Old women like it as well. Can't be too old, either; it's the nature of your sex. Where are the young ladies?

MARY. They were here just now, with master.

TINK. What is he ?

MARY. A very particular old gentleman.

TINK. (*aside*) Is he, by Jove ? Then I must put on my best behaviour. (*aloud*) How long has he been a gentleman ?

MARY. Ever since he gave up business

TINK. What business ?

MARY. Tallow.

TINK. By Jove, how odd !

MARY. What is odd ?

TINK. Nothing. (*kissing her twice*) That's even.

MARY. Oh, sir—don't !

TINK. Nonsense ! You like it ; all the girls do ; so do the ol' dwomen ; can't be too old either. I say, what sort of young ladies are yours, when they are at home ?

MARY. Same sort as when they are out, sir ?

TINK. Mary, you got out the right side of the bed this morning. You are too sharp. You won't be communicative ?

MARY. No—can't.

TINK. Why not ?

MARY. My conscience won't let me.

TINK. What's the price of your conscience ?

MARY. Half-a-crown ; cheap on this occasion.

TINK. Because you admire the purchaser. I buy it. Going—going — gone ! (*imitating auctioneer*) Your conscience is knocked down to me. There is the money. (*giving it*) Now unburthen.

MARY. Well, sir, first and foremost—do you know their names ?

TINK. Not exactly. When I wrote I addressed "My Rose." If not correct, it sounded poetical. One of them goes in for that sort of thing—doesn't she ?

MARY. Yes ; Miss Sarah, she's always a-spouting poetry—play-acting, master calls it. Then she's awful careless about her hair ; goes about with it hanging down her back, and says it's *negligée*, and betokens genius ; all poets and poetesses does it. She's what they call moon-struck.

TINK. No wonder,—there's a man in it. I thought I took her measure. Another one goes in for fashion ?

MARY. That is Miss Jane—she's awful disagreeable, and upsets the house and everybody in it with her fine notions.

TINK. How about the young daughter ?

MARY. Miss Maggie—she's the best and the cleverest—no nonsense about her—a bit rompish, that's all.

TINK. I like her all the better for that. I say, Mary, is your master warm ?

MARY. Depends on the state of the weather.

TINK. No, no—how will he cut up ?

MARY. Good gracious! You ain't going to 'natomize him?

TINK. No, no—has he got much money?

MARY. Oh, lots!

TINK. That will do. There is another half-crown—go and tell the ladies I am here.

MARY. (*aside*) Well, he's the most genteel young man I've seen for many day. I'd have him myself if he'd ax me.

Exit, R.

TINK. The girls cannot deceive me. I read them like a book. Your blue stockings are all very well to talk to as curiosities, but they make very bad wives. It was all gammon when I said—

Enter JANE GLUBB, R.

How do you do? Delighted, Miss Jane, to see you!

JANE. The pleasure is reciprocated. I have great satisfaction in welcoming you to the house of my papa. Pray be seated. (*they sit at table, R. and L.*)

TINK. Thank you. (*slight pause*) Delightful day.

JANE. Yes, except for the rain.

TINK. Exactly—except for the rain; but rain, I believe, is necessary to fertilize the earth?

JANE. (*aside*) Exceedingly well informed young man. (*aloud, after a pause*) How is the army, Mr. Tinkler?

TINK. Slightly disaffected at the present moment.

JANE. Indeed—the men?

TINK. No, the officers. Before they purchased rank, now they have to earn it, and serves them right.

JANE. (*aside*) I wonder if he has seen our page. (*rings bell*) Yet, Mr. Tinkler, it is much to be regretted that a privilege so long accorded to the sons of the aristocracy should be interfered with. What is better than blue blood?

TINK. Red, I should say—it's more natural.

JANE. But use leads to—

TINK. Abuse very often, Miss Glubb.

Enter SIMON, L.

JANE. Exactly. (*to JOHN*) Julius, bring me—dear me, I really quite forgot what I rang for—bring up immediately, Julius—you know what I mean. (*as if trying to recollect*)

SIMON. (*aside*) She's found out I got it—I knows she has. She wants to show it to the gent, I suppose. Miss Maggie must get me out o' this scrape. (*aloud*) All right, Miss, it ain't my fault. I'll bring it up. *Exit, L.*

JANE. What stupid people servants are, Mr. Tinklhe; they never recollect anything. I was remarking, I admirer blue

blood of the aristocracy. I admire the army—officers are a noble race.

Enter SIMON with chignon on silver salver; she does not notice him; he crosses to back of table.

They are the ornaments of English Society—their virtues may be summed up in—

SIMON. (*putting it on table*) Your chig-non, miss.

JANE. (*starts up with a slight scream, and in a passion takes stage, R.—TINKLER goes laughing to L.*) How dare you enter the room in that manner! Take it away, sir—take it away, you know it does not belong to me, you impudent fellow!

SIMON. Not yours, miss; why you lost your'n, didn't you?

JANE. The man has been drinking. Take it away instantly!

SIMON. (*taking it up on salver*) Well, all I know is, it ain't mine. (*aside*) I'll give it to Mary, I know she wants one—it ain't her colour, but that don't matter, natur has nought to do with gal's heads now-a-days, they're as waregated as a chameleon.

Exit, L.

Enter GLUBB and SARAH, R. (SARAH has a book in her hand still); MAGGIE runs on after them; TINKLER is up stage a little, trying to pacify JANE, they advance as the others enter.

JANE. My papa, Mr. Tinkler—let me introduce you to my papa.

GLUBB. (*aside to SARAH*) What be I to do to the gentleman?

TINK. (*aside*) He's a careful old swell—must mind what I'm about.

SARAH. (*aside*) Bow to him, papa, with grace. (*they bow to each other several times, GLUBB very awkwardly*)

GLUBB. (*aside to JANE*) I shall either break my back or bust my coat if he goes on with much o' this.

TINK. How do you do, sir? Very pleased indeed to make your acquaintance. (*crossing to each and shaking hands*) How do you do, Miss Sarah? Ah, Miss Maggie, my young friend, very pleased to meet you again.

MAGGIE I'm glad to hear it, for you're a very nice young man. (*shaking his hands heartily*)

JANE. } SARAH. } (*interrupting her*) Margaret, for shame!

MAGGIE. Shame for what? If I like him, there is no harm in saying so, is there, daddy?

GLUBB. Quite right, Maggie, to speak your mind and be truthful, but sartingly when a young man is concerned—

TINK. (*interrupting*) It's equally the right thing to do in my opinion. Miss Maggie, I am much obliged to you.

JANE. (*indignantly*) Papa, Margaret had better leave the room, don't you think so?

MAGGIE. No, he does not, and if he did I shouldn't go.

JANE. Mr. Tinkler, you will stay to dinner of course; we dine at six. (*crossing to him*)

GLUBB. To-day, because you've come—t'other days we dines at one.

JANE. } SARAH. } (*indignantly*) Papa!

GLUBB. Well, my dears, I don't want the young man to think we are such fools as not to know tea from dinner time.

SARAH. Mr. Tinkler, pardon my papa—

“ His tastes are moulded by an age that's past.”

GLUBB. And a very sensible mould it was. (L. C.)

TINK. I agree with you, Mr. Glubb. Will you allow me a tête-à-tête? (*crossing to him*)

GLUBB. Sartingly—would you like it boiled or baked? (*about to ring bell on table*)

JANE. } SARAH. } Papa! papa!

GLUBB. Well, my dears, how is one to know—he's like me, he wants his dinner at the right time, an' if he like's a tater to stay his stomach, why shouldn't he have it?

TINK. (*aside*) What an ignorant old chap it is. (*aloud*) I beg your pardon, I forgot, Mr. Glubb, you don't speak French?

GLUBB. I don't, and very glad I am for it—here's Jane talks enough of it for all on us put together.

TINK. I meant, could I have a little talk with you alone?

GLUBB. Why didn't you say so—of course you can—gals, get out.

SARAH. (*going, R.*) Heavens! the fatal hour has come! Ah, he gazes on me—my fate is sealed!

Exits, R. C.—TINKLER bows to each as they go off.

JANE. (*aside*) Papa, mind what I told you, and behave like a gentleman! (*aloud—crossing*) Mr. Tinkler, the interview over, we shall expect you. (*aside to herself as she is going*) Be still, my fluttering heart—my Tinkler—I am thine for ever!

Exit, R. C.—TINKLER has been speaking to MAGGIE during the aside speeches.

MAGGIE. Oh you wicked, nice man!

GLUBB. Eh! what's he wicked, and what's he nice about?

MAGGIE. Oh, you'll hear, daddy—such fun—I'm so glad!

Runs off, laughing, R.

Enter SIMON, L. C., a piece of paper in his hand with writing on it; GLUBB is seated L. of table, TINKLER, R.

SIMON. Is Miss Jane here, sir?

GLUBB. Don't you see—she is not. What do you want?

SIMON. Cook says it ain't no use—she's in a reg'lar quandary.

GLUBB. What about?

SIMON. This here—men-u-e.

GLUBB. What the devil's that?

SIMON. Good French for a bad dinner, sir, I think—Miss Jane told us all to do French to-day.

GLUBB. Did she—it's my opinion, you'd better larn to do English first, Simon—like a good many more.

SIMON. Well, sir—cook can't exactly regelate things—there's the—(*reading from the paper JANE gave in previous scene*) "Les cot-e-let-tes de mou-tong, a 'la pro-van-cel-les;" and then there's "Pul-lets rô-tis." We don't know whether they're served up arterwards or afore, and she wants to know if she's done right in making the "Pu 'ree de gib-i-er aux quer-rells" of giblets?

GLUBB. Tell cook to serve up the dinner quick, and anyhow, as long as we get it. Drat my lass and her French ways, I wish I'd never been fool enough to let her larn any language but her own.

SIMON. (*aside*) So do I—if ever I has a gal, she gets no French parlez vous out of me—I shall be a maniac buttons afore I gets this into my head—(*goes off L. C., muttering*) "Pu 'ree de gib-i-er aux qar-rells.

GLUBB. If ever you get married, Mr. Tinkler, take my advice, and don't have any gals, they're no end o' trouble.

TINK. "When seen, make a note of"—I will bear that fact in mind, and try and arrange accordingly.

GLUBB. They gets all sorts of outlandish and fine notions in their heads, 'specially if you let 'em larn French—they wouldn't be half so bad, gals wouldn't, if it wasn't for French—Do you know why them names are put to them things to-day?" (*they have advanced*)

SIMON and MARY have entered, and are laying the cloth.

TINK. I have not the least idea?

GLUBB. Then I'll tell you, it's because of you're coming—I ain't got patience with it. I used to think when we Tallow Chandlers dined together in the City, it were bad enough, to put down a lot o' names for the dishes, as not one on us could read; much less tell what they were made on—it's downright humbug, a-doing it—mutton is mutton—fowls is fowls—and

beef is beef—and why can't they call 'em so—them's my sentiments, and I sticks to 'em.

TINK. I agree with those sentiments!

GLUBB. Then you are a sensible young man.

TINK. I flatter myself, I am!

GLUBB. Happy to hear it—only as you have come arter one of my daughters, I must know more about you; one of my gals tells me you're a officer—now you see tallow don't amalgamate with a scarlet coat, it leaves a stain behind, as you can't well get rid on.

TINK. Don't alarm yourself; true, I am an officer, but it's in the Volunteers!

GLUBB. A feather-bed soldier, that's all right; I agree with volunteering, it does young men a deal of good. Then Sally says you're a poet—poetry and tallow don't amalgamate.

TINK. Listen to one of my effusions!

Takes out paper, and reads—SIMON and MARY have laid the cloth and gone off.

"The world's ungrateful, that's a truth
 "I've thought of since my early youth;
 "For though most folks like to be clean,
 "How difficult the task has been
 "To make all people glad with hope
 "On Tinkler's Patent Windsor Soap."

GLUBB. Eh! what! you don't mean to say you're Tinkler's Soap.

TINK. With pleasure I acknowledge myself that illustrious individual.

GLUBB. You've a right to be proud on it—it's the best thing o' the kind ever invented, and I—I am Glubb's Tallow.

TINK. Is it possible? I congratulate you, tallow and soap, we do amalgamate. (*they shake hands heartily*)

GLUBB. We do, and I shall be glad to have thee for a son-in-law. Which of my daughters do you want?

TINK. Maggie, the youngest Grubb, I mean Glubb, from the parent tree. (*bowing*)

GLUBB. Maggie? Well this is the best thing I ever heard. (*laughing*) Why both the other gals are pulling caps for thee! (*sitting L. of table*)

TINK. Then I fear they'll have to continue pulling. Maggie is the girl for me. (*R. of table*)

GLUBB. So she is! she's a bit too young.

TINK. That she will get over in time.

GLUBB. So she will, if she likes you. I'll give her to thee, but we won't say aught to the other gals till they've had

their dinner, for it'll spoil it for 'em. Give us thy hand upon the bargain. (*they shake hands warmly, at that moment SIMON who has entered just previously door, c., carrying a gong or large bell—strikes on it or rings it very loudly—both GLUBB and TINKLER jump away from each other startled*) What the devil's that? (*SIMON begins beating again—GLUBB looks round and sees him—TINKLER goes to corner, R., putting his fingers in his ears to lessen the sound*) Stop that row. Do you hear me? Stop, I say. (*SIMON stops at length*) You young vagabond, what d'ye mean making that noise?

SIMON. I am only doing what I was ordered. Miss Jane, told me to borrow this here thing from the ironmonger's over the way, and whack it when the dinner was ready. (*strikes it again*)

GLUBB. Be quiet, you scoundrel, or I'll whack you!

Runs towards him—Exit SIMON, hastily, c.

Enter MISS JANE, SARAH, and MAGGIE, door, R.

JANE. I thought I heard the dinner gong? (*very dignified*)

GLUBB. Heard it; you must have been precious deaf if you didn't. I shall have this house complained of as a nuisance, you'll frighten all the neighbourhood. I won't have such nonsense.

JANE. (*aside*) Hush, papa; remember your promise to be good for once, and let us have our way.

Enter MARY and SIMON, c.—SIMON has white cotton gloves on, much too large for him.

GLUBB. Well, I'll say no more. Sit thee down, Mr. Tinkler

(*GLUBB sits at head of table—TINKLER is going to sit, R.—*

JANE and SARAH cough—he immediately recollects himself, and goes towards them)

TINK. A thousand pardons! Allow me—(*he is about to offer his arm to SARAH, who is just taking it, when JANE comes quickly between them and takes his arm, and TINKLER leads her to a seat, R. of table, and seats himself, L.*)

SARAH. (*indignantly*) An impudent creature! (*aloud*) Papa, papa, come and lead me to a seat.

GLUBB. What for? Hast fallen lame? Can't you lead yourself?

JANE. (*aside*) Papa, it's the fashion; do it directly.

GLUBB. (*getting up and going to her—aside*) Well, this fashion be a ruin thing. Gals have got legs, and they can't use them.

MAGGIE. (*calling SIMON aside*) Here, Julius Cæsar, conduc

me to a seat. (*imitating her sisters—SIMON gives her his arm awkwardly—SARAH and JANE do not see it until they get near the table—when they do they start up—the soup by this time is served by MARY and SIMON, a little in each plate—GLUBB tucks his napkin under his chin*)

JANE. } (speaking together) Maggie—Maggie, what are SARAH. } you about?

MAGGIE. I don't see why I shouldn't have some one to lead me, as well as you. (*sits L., next to TINKLER*)

GLUBB. This be a little drop—not a spoonfull! What is it?

SIMON. (*aside to MARY*) He wants to know what it is. Whisper. (*she takes out paper, and prompts him, as he says*) Pu'ree de gib-i-er aux quarrells.

JANE. It's soup, papa.

GLUBB. Soup! It's enough to make any one quarrel over it. Why, it ain't enough for a babby—much less a man. Bring it all up, Simon.

SIMON. Please, sir—

JANE. Papa!

GLUBB. I will have it! I must have my food, Jane.

SIMON runs off, c.

You may do what you like, but I'm not going to be starved, after waiting until tea-time for my dinner.

Enter SIMON, c., bringing soup in a large common washhand basin.

MARY. (*stopping him*) What are you doing?

SIMON. What master tells me.

GLUBB. Quite right! Bring it here. What's this? Does the cook make the soup in a washhand basin?

JANE. (*seeing it*) Good gracious!

SARAH. Oh, heavens!

SIMON. Cook wasn't looking, or she'd have stopped me. You told me to bring it, so 'tain't my fault.

JANE. How dare she make it in such a thing?

SIMON. Well, miss, I suppose it's French fashion. She said it didn't matter what it was made in, as long as you didn't see it, and the washhand basin was handiest at the time. (*they all make grimaces, and put down their spoons*)

JANE. Take it away. (*MARY and SIMON clear away soup plates*)

GLUBB. Take all the plates away, and bring us something else. It'll be lucky if we get anything for dinner with all these fine-fangled notions. I hope you're not hungry, Mr. Tinkler?

TINK. Not at all. (*aside*) I am as hungry as an alligator.

GLUBB. That's lucky, because you ain't likely to get much, if the rest of the dishes are served à la goose, like the soup.

TINK. The pleasure of making your acquaintance, and being introduced to your charming family circle (*they all bow*) is enough to make one say—

(*by this time SIMON and MARY have served round fresh plates—SIMON is handing the cutlets, and is standing to help TINKLER—he is bowing as others are, and upsets the cutlets into TINKLER's lap, who starts up, exclaiming, "Confound it!"*)

JANE. You awkward booby—what are you doing?

SARAH. There was a fall indeed! (*tragically*)

GLUBB. Mr. Tinkler, that fool of a fellow has helped you a bit too plentifully this time.

TINK. (*who has been wiping the grease off*) Oh, never mind, accidents will happen in the best regulated family.

GLUBB. Or the worst—as mine is at present. You clumsy blockhead, go and get some more.

(SIMON runs out, c., having picked up cutlets with his fingers, and put them on dish)

JANE. Don't lose your temper, papa; it's really most annoying. I do hope, Mr. Tinkler, your clothes are not damaged.

TINK. Oh, not at all. (*aside*) My last new guinea's worth spoilt. (*intimating his trowsers*)

Re-enter SIMON, c.

SIMON. Please, sir, there ain't any more—(*aside*)—what was it, Mary?—(*she prompts him*) cot-e-let-tes de moutong, so cook's sent up the pul-lets ro-tis.

GLUBB. And what on earth is that?

JANE. (*aside to him*) Roast chicken, papa. How can you be so stupid as to expose us as you do? He'll be disgusted and won't have either of us, if you don't be quiet.

GLUBB. (*aside*) Well, lass, I can't help it. (*aloud*) Simon, bring up the pul-lets ro-tis! *Exit SIMON, c.* If we can't eat, let us drink. Mr. Tinkler, your very good health—I am glad to see you!

TINK. Mr. Grub—I mean Giubb—I reciprocate the feeling. (*fills his glass—GLUBB has poured his out in champagne glass, and is just drinking*) *MARY exits.*

SARAH. (*seeing him, seizes his hand, and speaks aside*) Hold—forgive!

GLUBB. (*frightened*) What's the matter—is it poison?

SARAH. You are drinking out of the champagne glass.

GLUBB. Whooes that matter, ain't it made to be drank out on?

JANE. The custom of drinking healths is out of fashion, papa.

GLUBB. Not in my house—it's a good old custom, and I sticks to it.

Enter SIMON, c. with a dish of roast chickens cut up, and in putting it on table, pushes GLUBB.

What are you about, Simon? You take off them gloves, or you'll be a dropping something else. Never mind the gals, Mr. Tinkler, your health again.

TINK. Yours ditto. (*they are bowing—SIMON has taken off gloves—MARY has entered, carrying plates with napkin—SIMON takes them from her—they burn his fingers—he lets them drop—they break—all start up*)

GLUBB. There, I knew he'd do it.

SIMON. The plate was so hot, sir, I couldn't help it. (*picking up the pieces*)

JANE. Was there ever anything so provoking?

SARAH. Never—it's disgusting! (*they all sit again*)

MARY. (*aside*) How can you be so stupid?

SIMON. (*aside*) Couldn't help it. Burn your own fingers, and see how you like it.

JANE. Julius, hand the champagne.

(*SIMON gets champagne bottle off sideboard—he opens it near GLUBB—ALL are talking and eating, not noticing what he is doing—it opens with a loud report, and the cork is supposed to strike GLUBB in the face—the champagne flies out over the table—JANE, in rising, knocks over her chair—general commotion*)

GLUBB. You scoundrel, you've knocked my eye out! (*runs after SIMON round stage—the ladies cry out “Papa! papa!”—SIMON falls over chair—JANE and SARAH run after GLUBB, and catch hold of his coat tails—as he gets c., his back towards the audience, it tears up the back*) I know'd it would bust up—let me get at him—I'll be the death of him.

SIMON. Keep him off; or, I'm a murdered buttons. (*getting up, assisted by MARY*)

TINK. No, no. Never mind, Mr. Glubb; he couldn't help it.

GLUBB. I shall have a black eye—I know I shall. (*JANE and SARAH hold him in corner, n.*)

SIMON. I'm broken all to little bits, in every part of my body.

MARY. Poor Simon, he has broken his leg, see how he stands on it.

GLUBB. Serves the rascal right. (*crossing, c.*) Listen to me, you gals. I'll have no more of your fine ways in my house

NEVER RECKON YOUR CHICKENS.

as dinner is all bust up like my coat—now I'll have one of my own choosing. Simon, Mary, go and tell Cook to do three pounds of rump steak, and onions directly—do you hear? be quick.

MARY. I fly, sir! (*running out, L. C.*)

SIMON. (*hobbling after her*) I shall never fly again. *Exit, L.C.*

GLUBB. Mr. Tinkler, you have chosen the right gal; she's a bit skittish, but there's none of your fine rubbishing notions about her.

TINK. (L.) You hear that, Maggie?

JANE. } SARAH. } (*astonished*) Maggie!

MAGGIE. It is really me you are spoony on. Oh, what fun. (*TINKLER kisses her*)

JANE. } SARAH. } We are disgusted!

GLUBB. Of course you are, because you ain't in Maggie's place. When you have got rid of your fine nonsensical poetry and fashionable notions, you may get a sensible husband as well as Maggie; and the sooner you get one, the better I shall like it.

SARAH. } JANE. } But, Mr. Tinkler, we thought—

GLUBB. That he was in love with one of you, but he wasn't. For the future, remember an old proverb, and a very good one, "NEVER RECKON YOUR CHICKENS BEFORE THEY'RE HATCHED."

SARAH and JANE, R.

GLUBB, C.

MAGGIE and TINKLER, L.

Curtain.