

THE
STOCK EXCHANGE

OR

THE GREEN BUSINESS

A COMIC DRAMA

IN

ONE ACT

BY

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AUTHOR OF

*Marriage a Lottery—A Wonderful Woman—The Victor Vanquished
—Delicate Ground—A Morning Call—Alive and Merry—
A Dream of the Future—Who Speaks First—The
Enchanted Forest, &c. &c. &c.*

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STOCK EXCHANGE 2000

THE STOCK EXCHANGE.

*First produced at the Royal Princess's Theatre,
On Monday, April 5th, 1858.*

Theophilus Grasshopper	Mr. WALTER LACY.
Thomas Gresham	Mr. MEADOWS.
Cæsarewitch St. Leger Derby Oaks	Mr. DAVID FISHER.
Mrs. Theophilus Grasshopper	Miss HEATH.
Mrs. Early Free, a Young Widow	Miss MURRAY.
Catherine, a Maid Servant	Miss DALY.

COSTUMES.

THEOPHILUS GRASSHOPPER.—Frock coat, light trousers and vest, hat, &c.
THOMAS GRESHAM.—Brown dress coat, grey trousers, vest, white neck-cloth, grey hair.

OAKS.—Brown Newmarket coat and vest, riding pantaloons, high boots, light hair, whiskers and moustache.

Mrs. GRASSHOPPER.—Green silk morning dress.

Mrs. EARLY FREE.—Fawn silk walking dress, bonnet, black silk mantle.

CATHERINE.—Maid's dress.

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THE STOCK EXCHANGE.

SCENE.—A Handsomely Furnished Apartment in Grasshopper's House. *Doors, c., door, l. 2 e., doors, r. 2 e., and r. 3 e.—table, two chairs at back, r., ditto, l., table, r., between doors, with vase of flowers, ditto, l., ottoman, l., small table with books, l., two chairs, l., round table, r., chair l. of table, ottoman behind table, arm chair r. of table, chair, r. 1 e., basket with worsted and knitting needles on r.*

GRASSHOPPER discovered putting on his gloves—**MRS.**
GRASSHOPPER seated at table, r.

MRS G. Nay, Theophilus, there can be no occasion for your going out so very early.

GRASS. Indeed, my dear, there is, *this morning.*

MRS. G. But it's every morning, now.

GRASS. Don't you think it annoys me quite as much as you?

MRS. G. Indeed I don't think anything of the sort.

GRASS. Now why not?

MRS. G. Because I am beginning to learn what men are, and I'm quite sure if it annoyed you half as much, you wouldn't do it.

GRASS. Now don't say that—think of the object—the great Green Business draws to a close, and then—

MRS. G. And then you'll embark in some other. Come, take a holiday to-day—you know you owe me a white bait dinner.

GRASS. My dear Ellen, I assure you I have other fish to fry.

MRS. G. Not half such nice little fish as white bait, I'm sure.

GRASS. (*aside.*) And those fellows waiting for me at this very moment. (*aloud.*) My dear, I should like it of all things, but if I don't keep an appointment I have made, I can't tell you what I may lose. (*aside.*) Not to mention that I daren't tell you.

MRS. G. Go along, faithless man.

(sits down on R. ottoman.)

GRASS. Faithless, Ellen?

MRS. G. You didn't think me serious, did you?

GRASS. (*aside.*) Upon my life, she makes me feel very sneaking. (*goes behind ottoman, leans over and speaks coaxingly.*) Come, Ellen, I promise you this shall be the last business of the kind I will undertake.

MRS. G. It's so pleasant to be left constantly alone.

GRASS. Well, you won't be alone this morning, at all events, for here comes my dear friend Oaks.

MRS. G. Worse still—I'm not very fond of him, I can tell you.

GRASS. Fond? No, I hope not—but you must like him, he's a capital fellow.

Enter OAKS, c. d., from L.

OAKS. (L.) If you mean me, I beg to return thanks. Mrs. Grasshopper, your most obedient. Grassy, old fellow, how are you? What, hat and gloves on! I'll bet ten to one you're going out.

GRASS. (C.) You'll win—

MRS. G. (R.) And I shall lose—

OAKS. Much?

MRS. G. Everything—my husband. I wish him to remain at home.

OAKS. Praiseworthy, but old-fashioned. Men are horrid bores in doors in the morning.

MRS. G. Some men.

OAKS. Well, I mean *some* men. Now if I had such a charming wife as you, I positively should never go out.

MRS. G. In that case, I'm afraid my sentiments might cease to be either praiseworthy, or old-fashioned.

GRASS. My dear Ellen, really—

OAKS. Bless your heart, she doesn't mean a word of it. Now you be off to your business, and I will endeavour, with Mrs. Grasshopper's kind permission, to make myself agreeable to her in your absence. (*goes up, puts hat on table, L.*)

GRASS. We shall both be obliged to you.

MRS. G. (*aside to GRASSHOPPER.*) Speak for yourself, if you please.

OAKS. Not a word about obligation, Grassy—you have got fair warning, and if I should prove too winning, blame yourself.

GRASS. Do your worst—I'm not at all alarmed. Ellen, once more, "good bye."

MRS. G. Come home as soon as you can.

GRASS. I hope you don't doubt me? (*aside.*) Though I'm sorry to observe I have no right to expect it.

Exit c., off L.

OAKS. (*looking after him, then after a pause, turning to MRS GRASSHOPPER.*) Grasshopper is an excellent fellow.

MRS. G. (*seated at table, R.*) There I quite agree with you.

OAKS. No, no, but I really mean he *is*—I'm serious.

MRS. G. So am I—I married him.

OAKS. Ah! there you see the picture changes by being viewed in a different light. He's an excellent fellow—but I can't say he is exactly the sort of man I should have married.

MRS. G. (*smiling.*) Well, perhaps not.

OAKS. No, no, but I mean if I had been a woman—for who can be young and lovely, and bear neglect?

MRS. G. If you had been a woman then, you are of opinion that you would have been young and lovely?

OAKS. No, no, but if I had been *you* I should

MRS. G. I hate empty compliments. I want to know on what grounds you venture to accuse my husband of neglecting me?

OAKS. Now, really, it's very hard to be forced to point out the blemishes in a friend's horse, even when honesty to the purchaser requires it; but since you insist, it seems to me that he is always making some trumpery excuse to

leave you; whereas, had I married you, I should never for one instant—

Mrs. G. (*rising and coming forward.*) You need not go any further—you have not married me. My husband's leaving me so much alone is in compliance with my own wish.

Oaks. Your own wish? (*aside.*) Now what does she mean by that?

Mrs. G. You, his early friend, must well know the readiness with which on marrying me, he gave up all his old pursuits—horse racing, gambling, clubs, and smoking.

Oaks. Oh, I know he said he would.

Mrs. G. And he has done it. It became my duty to see that he did not suffer from too sudden a change in his habits. I therefore induced him to enter into a business (the same by the bye as yours, only that he seems to attend to it and you don't) which should keep his mind actively employed, and prevent his being tied all day long to his wife's apron strings.

Oaks. And he made the sacrifice willingly?

Mrs. G. Most willingly,

Oaks. (*aside.*) Then there's something behind it. I know my man, if he's tired of making love to his wife, he must be making love to somebody else. (*aloud.*) Don't you sometimes think you may have carried your advice too far?

Mrs. G. Well, he has been away a little more than usual, lately, but that he can't help. You know, of course, that he's engaged in the celebrated "Green Business?"

Oaks. The Green Business?—the Green Business? There have been plenty of Green Businesses on 'Change lately, but no one so particularly green as to be called "*The Green Business,*" *par excellence.* It's very extraordinary.

Mrs. G. What is?

Oaks. That a man with so lovely and loveable a wife—

Mrs. G. Mr. Oaks! (*goes up to table, R.*)

Oaks. Oh, I have no hesitation in saying that anyone who could duly and properly appreciate such attractions would sooner—

STOCK EXCHANGE.

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GRESHAM *peeps in, c. d.*

GRESHAM. I beg pardon—

OAKS. (*aside.*) Confound the fellow, whoever he is.

GRESHAM. Is Mr. Grasshopper within?

MRS. G. Not at this moment, sir—do you want him?

GRESHAM. Well, I did, ma'am; but it's very little use wanting what you can't have, is it, ma'am? and I can't see him because he is not here—is he, ma'am?

MRS. G. He has gone out on important business.

GRESHAM. Dear me! *I* wanted to see him on important business.

MRS. G. Can I give him any message?

GRESHAM. No, thank you, ma'am—you'll excuse me, ma'am, but I always think ladies are not good men of business. As Mr. Grasshopper is not at home, I'd better call again—hadn't I, ma'am? *Exit c., off L.*

OAKS. Who on earth is that brute?

MRS. G. You know more about him than I do.

OAKS. I never saw him before.

MRS. G. And yet you call him brute.

OAKS. And so he is. Could anything be more brutish than his interrupting me at the very moment when I was just going to say—(*aside.*) What the deuce *was* I going to say?

MRS. G. When you were going to say—(*sitting, R.*)

OAKS. Exactly; when I was going to say—that is, I mean to say—if my heart—or I would rather say, if your heart—perhaps it would be more proper to say, if *a* heart—

MRS. G. After all, Mr. Oaks, I think rather favourably of you in one respect.

OAKS. (*eagerly.*) You do?

MRS. G. Yes; you are not a practised shuffler—all your hearts come together.

OAKS. (*aside.*) Then I'll shuffle no longer, even though I should be forced to cut at once. (*aloud—sitting on chair by ottoman.*) Madam, hear me, when a husband—as it might be Grasshopper)—neglects a lovely wife—(you, for example)—can he wonder that any one—(myself, for in-

instance)—should feel, as it were, called upon to supply his deficiencies?

MRS. G. (*rising.*) Mr. Oaks! this is language—

OAKS. (*rising.*) Which you cannot misunderstand.

MRS. G. Which, for my husband's sake, not yours, I shall try, this once, to misunderstand—but this once only. I hope, sir, you don't misunderstand me. (*crosses R.*)

Enter CATHERINE, C. from L.

CATHERINE. Mrs. Early Free, Ma'am!

OAKS. (*aside.*) More interruption!

MRS. G. Shew her in. *Exit CATHERINE, C. D.*
An old schoolfellow, Mr. Oaks, whom I met yesterday for the first time since our school days—a very nice person, but, it is fit I should tell you, a married woman, and *not* neglected by her husband, that I am aware of

OAKS. I beg I may not interrupt so interesting a *tête-à-tête*—I have business on 'Change, where I shall soon learn if there be any truth in this Green Business, for I should be sorry to see you deceived.

MRS. G. Oh, sir, I'm sure you would.

OAKS. And I must say I doubt the truth of the story.

MRS. G. Doubt it, Mr. Oaks? doubt what my husband has said?

OAKS. Do you believe everything he tells you?

MRS. G. I did till this morning, when he told me—

OAKS. What?

MRS. G. That *you* were his friend!

OAKS. You're awfully severe; but I'll bet seven to four there's no Green Business, for all that.

(*bows to her, and exits, previously bowing in passing MRS. FREE.*)

MRS. G. It's very kind of you to come so soon.

MRS. F. My dear, I'm charmed to come; but who was that gentleman? not your husband, surely.

MRS. G. No! only a friend of his, who considers it one proof of friendship to be here as much as possible when he is away.

MRS. F. Take care, Ellen—take care.

MRS. G. Don't be alarmed ; to say nothing of principle, I dislike him.

MRS. F. Don't build upon that.

MRS. G. Well, then, I love my husband.

MRS. F. That's a better foundation ; you are happy, then ? (*sighs.*)

MRS. G. (*taking her hand.*) Come and sit down by me this moment. (*they sit.*) Explain that sigh—are *you* not happy ?

MRS. F. Perfectly !

MRS. G. Then what did you sigh for ?

MRS. F. I was thinking of my first marriage.

MRS. G. Ah ! there you're wrong, my dear ; you should never rake up old grievances !

MRS. F. That's very true.

MRS. G. But only think of your having been twice married already ; what an industrious little body you must be.

MRS. F. My father, having no money to give me, caused me to marry a man who turned out to be selfish, tyrannical, and violent.

MRS. G. Poor thing !

MRS. F. But his violence was destined to compensate for his other bad qualities.

MRS. G. How so ?

MRS. F. Why, giving way to one of his fits of passion at dinner, he choked himself with a fish bone.

MRS. G. How very dreadful ! What did he leave you ?

MRS. F. You may well say dreadful, my dear—he left me very little.

MRS. G. So ended your first marriage—now for your second.

MRS. F. I have a rich uncle who has resolved to guard against my being ill-treated a second time ; and so he has fairly told me that if I remain a widow he will leave me all his money, but that if I marry again I shall not have a farthing.

MRS. G. And yet, as the children say, " You've gone and done it." Ha, ha ! you're very imprudent to annoy your rich uncle.

MRS. F. My dear, I wouldn't annoy him for the world. I don't mean him to *know* it, and he never will unless you tell him, for though several of our male friends are aware of the fact, no woman knows it but you.

MRS. G. You needn't fear me!

MRS. F. Then I'm safe—men never betray secrets unless there is something to be gained by it.

MRS. G. I hope your new husband is young, handsome, and rich?

MRS. F. Neither of the three; he is even quaint and odd in his appearance; but then he has no bad habits—he never gambles—never drinks—never smokes—

MRS. G. These are his negative good qualities—tell me his positive?

MRS. F. Kindheartedness and jealousy.

MRS. G. Jealousy! oh, the horror!

MRS. F. Quite the contrary; I consider it a compliment which contrasts most favourably with the insulting indifference of my first husband. Rather than give up his jealousy, I would resign all hope of our ever living together.

MRS. G. (*rising and coming forward, followed by MRS. FREE.*) Good gracious! what, don't you live together?

MRS. F. (L.) How can we, when our marriage is a secret?

MRS. G. (R.) True, I forgot. Then you meet upon the sly?

MRS. F. There's nothing sly—he comes to see me every day.

MRS. G. How romantic; and yet, how suspicious.

MRS. F. There's no suspicion, either, for his appearance, as I told you, is anything but romantic.

MRS. G. Well, it's very inconvenient, then—you can't contradict that.

MRS. F. No; there you are right! I don't mean to say I'm pretty; but men choose to fancy me so; and considering me a single woman, I assure you they worry me to death.

MRS. G. That's soon settled; you needn't encourage them.

MRS. F. I don't; but there is one so much more persevering and impudent than all the rest—

MRS. G. That you consider him entitled to some attention.

MRS. F. For shame! you are too bad; but fancy, he has actually had the impudence to write me a note, asking me to dine with him.

MRS. G. Upon my word! Hadn't you better invite him to dine with you?

MRS. F. That's just what I have done.

MRS. G. You must be mad.

MRS. F. Not at all; I mean you and your husband to come and meet him—and, with your assistance, I'll read this young gentleman a lesson that shall last him for one while.

MRS. G. I begin to see your plan.

MRS. F. Of course you do—you wouldn't be a woman if you didn't—so, for the present, good bye—at five o'clock I'll call for you—no excuses—no ceremony—no dress.

MRS. G. I will be ready—but I am not sure that my husband will be home by that time—and if not—

MRS. F. You'll jump into my brougham, and leave word for him to follow us.

MRS. G. My dear child, I never took such a liberty with him yet.

MRS. F. Then it's high time you began; farewell, and, as Belvidera says, "Remember five."

MRS. G. Belvidera says, "Remember twelve."

MRS. F. Very likely—but hours are changed since her time—and I say, remember five. *Exit, L. C.*

MRS. G. I shall enjoy helping her to punish this coxcomb, whoever he may be, I must say—for unless we poor weak creatures assist one another, how are we to be protected against such wretches as men are? I don't mean all men, and I should be very ungrateful if I did; for has not my husband, for my sake, given up all his objectionable habits, drinking, gambling, horse racing, and, worse than all, smoking—ugh, smoking!

Enter CATHERINE, L.

CATHERINE. (*holding out a cigar case.*) A servant, mum, brought master's cigar case, that he says he left behind him somewhere.

MRS. G. Master's what?

CATHERINE. Cigar case, mum.

MRS. G. No such thing.

CATHERINE. Oh, yes, mum, it *is* a cigar case.

MRS. G. Very likely—but it's not your master's?

CATHERINE. Can't say, I'm sure, ma'am.

MRS. G. Yes, you *can* say—you *can* say, Catherine! you know very well that your master never smokes.

CATHERINE. I know master never smokes at home, ma'am.

MRS. G. Nor out.

CATHERINE. I don't pretend to know what master does when he's out, ma'am.

MRS. G. Then I do!

CATHERINE. Sorry for it, ma'am.

MRS. G. What do you mean by that? What does he do when he's out?

CATHERINE. La, ma'am! I don't know; I never caught him out—only I've heard tell it isn't a good plan, as a general rule, for ladies to inquire too particular into such matters.

MRS. G. Give me the case, and leave the room.

CATHERINE. (*giving case.*) Yes, ma'am. (*aside.*) If master does smoke cigars it's to be hoped that missus won't smoke him. *Exit L. C.*

MRS. G. This case can't belong to Theophilus; and yet it's very odd—here are the initials, "T. G." upon it, sure enough. (*turning it over.*) "T. G.—T. G.—T. G."

Exit, L. 2 E.

Enter GRASSHOPPER, reading a note.

GRASS. I can scarcely believe it; yet, here it is—in black and white—actually an invitation to dine with her at half-past five to-day. Well, if women will be such fools, they have no right to complain of us. The question is, am I to go or not? Oh, by George, I must go, that's

the worst of it—in affairs of this sort there's no retreating, though all one's better senses counsel one to do so. Man mounts the box of folly, and woman, who holds the check string

Re-enter MRS. GRASSHOPPER, L. 2 E.

in her hand, is mentally too weak to pull it. (*seeing his wife, and concealing note.*) Ellen!

MRS. G. (R.) You may well say "Ellen."

GRASS. (*confused.*) Of course I may—it's your name, isn't it? (*aside.*) Does she suspect anything?

MRS. G. I have a crow to pluck with you, sir.

GRASS. A what? a crow?

MRS. G. (*holding up cigar case.*) Look at this!

GRASS. That?

MRS. G. This—What is it?

GRASS. How can I tell at that distance?

MRS. G. It's a cigar case, sir—and it is yours.

GRASS. Yes—no, no, no!

MRS. G. (*giving it to him.*) Your initials are on it.

GRASS. No, no, no! (*looking at it.*) Yes, indeed—yes!

MRS. G. You left it behind you somewhere, and a servant brought it home.

GRASS. There must be some mistake—you know very well that I've left off smoking.

MRS. G. I hoped you had; but those initials rather stagger me.

GRASS. Well, I confess they rather staggered me at first; but, my dear, I'm not the only person in the world whose name begins with a G. For instance, now, amongst our immediate friends and acquaintances—there's Oaks, Edwards, Arkwright, Unwin—

MRS. G. You don't mean to say that any of those begin with a G?

GRASS. Certainly not—certainly not—I was coming to them.

MRS. G. Well, I can't recollect one, unless it be this Mr. Green, of the "Green Business."

GRASS. The very man—Green to be sure. T. G.—Timothy Green, one of the most inveterate smokers in London. We were at a committee together an hour ago,

and as he was heard to say he would call on me to-day, no doubt they thought he might be here, and sent his cigar case after him.

MRS. G. Well, somebody did call just now.

GRASS. Green, for a hundred!

MRS. G. Gambling?

GRASS. No; just a way of speaking; but about this Green—a short fat man, wasn't it?

MRS. G. By no means—rather tall and thin.

GRASS. When I say short, I mean middle-sized tallish—not tall; and as to fat, one says a man is *fatish* compared to a very thin man, or *thinish* compared to a very fat one—dark hair, hadn't he?

MRS. G. Quite the contrary—grey!

GRASS. Now, doesn't that shew how silly it was of me to call it dark? I declare I often think that the colour of a thing is determined by some peculiar formation in the eyes of the person who looks at it—he wore spectacles.

MRS. G. Wrong again!

GRASS. Not at all, my dear, I said did he—did he wear spectacles!

MRS. G. I beg your pardon—you said he did.

GRASS. Well, it's no matter—he must have had them in his pocket. (*aside.*) I'll say no more, I'm only getting deeper into the mire. (GRESHAM *peeps in as before*, c.)

MRS. G. Here he comes again.

GRASS. He? who?

MRS. G. Mr. Green!

GRASS. (*aside, and seeing him.*) Gresham! what on earth can he want?

GRESHAM enters, c., bowing to MRS. GRASSHOPPER—she advances, holding out the cigar case.

MRS. G. (*crosses, c.*) You came too soon just now, sir. This case of yours, which I suppose you were in search of, was brought just as you left.

GRESHAM. I beg pardon—there must be some mistake—it can't be mine—I don't smoke!

MRS. G. What times we live in. (*aside.*) Every man smokes, and almost every man denies it. (*aloud.*) You know the letters T. G., I suppose, when you see them?

GRESHAM. Yes, ma'am, I know all the letters, of course.

MRS. G. And you know that T. G. are the initial letters of your name?

GRESHAM. Well, ma'am, that they certainly are.

MRS. G. (*aside.*) Come, Theophilus *has* told me the truth. (*goes up and sits.*)

GRASS. I should rather think so. (*forcing a laugh.*) Why, you abominable old hypocrite—you for whom twenty cigars per diem are hardly sufficient.

GRESHAM. (*aside to him.*) What in the world do you mean?

GRASS. (*aside to him.*) Own it—own it—it can't signify to you, and you'll save me from an awful scrape. (*aloud.*) Come, sir, own the truth.

GRESHAM. Well, ma'am, when I said I didn't smoke, I must own that if I thought it would have annoyed—

GRASS. That will do, your apology is accepted.

GRESHAM. Upon my life, this is a little too—

GRASS. (*aside.*) Hold your tongue! (*aloud*) The idea of a man pretending he doesn't smoke, whose clothes smell like a stale tobacco pipe. (*taking case from his wife.*) There, take your cigar case and put it in your pocket along with your spectacles!

GRESHAM. My spectacles!

MRS. G. Yes, sir, your spectacles.

GRESHAM. Well, I declare, I really cannot see—

(*crosses to c.*

GRASS. Can't see; of course you can't, or you wouldn't want spectacles.

GRESHAM. I don't exactly know what it all means; but this I know, if I were half as dull of comprehension on 'Change, everybody would salute me with "How d'ye do, Mr. Green!"'

MRS. G. My good sir, if they knew you, of course they would.

GRESHAM. Much obliged to you, ma'am for your good opinion.

MRS. G. (*aside.*) Now, I don't know what *he* means. (*aloud.*) However, Mr. Green—

GRESHAM. I'm not Mr. Green, ma'am.

MR. G. Oh, then, you have an elder brother—I beg pardon, Mr. Timothy Green.

GRASS. (*aside.*) Your name is Timothy Green—don't deny it.

GRESHAM. (*aside.*) I haven't called here for nothing, it seems; I've got a pair of spectacles, a cigar case, and a new name. What next?

MRS. G. I want to know when you mean to let my husband keep regular hours again.

GRESHAM. Good gracious, ma'am, I don't interfere with your husband's hours.

GRASS. There, my dear, there's a lesson—listen to that dear Timothy, and learn from him how well a *man* can keep a secret—Timothy!

GRESHAM. Oh, nonsense!

GRASS. Your caution does you honour; but concealment is no longer necessary—she knows all.

GRESHAM. Does she really? then she has greatly the advantage of me—I know nothing.

MRS. G. At least, sir, you know, I presume, when the Green Business is likely to come to an end?

GRESHAM. My dear madam, you might as well ask me when the world is likely to come to an end. What is the Green Business?

MRS. G. This is really quite absurd; do you expect to make as much money by it, as my husband does?

GRASS. (*aside to him.*) I don't expect to make a farthing.

GRESHAM. Yes, ma'am, quite as much.

Re-enter OAKS, L. 1 E.

MRS. G. Well, then, why couldn't you say so at once?

OAKS. Grasshopper, my boy, I give you joy: your horse has won. (*all rise.*)

GRASS. My horse! I haven't got a horse. (*aside to OAKS.*) I wish you would hold your tongue.

OAKS. (*aside.*) I know you do. (*aloud.*) I mean the horse you took five to one about in hundreds for the Chester Cup. Upon my life, you're in luck, he only won by a neck.

GRASS. (*aside to him.*) I wish you were hanged by the neck.

MRS. G. Is it possible you have deceived me—are you still a gambler? (OAKS gets round to R.)

GRASS. (c.) A gambler, my dear! ask Green!

GRESHAM. How should I know?

GRASS. Come, come, I can bear a good deal, but I can't stand this. I didn't mind you employing me to make the bet for you; but I am not going to carry *all* your sins upon my shoulders.

GRESHAM. You don't mean to stand there and tell me that I have won five hundred pounds by horse racing? there was no such luck in store for me.

GRASS. (to MRS. G.) His good fortune has turned his head! (to GRESHAM.) My dear fellow, I wish you had lost it with all my heart; I am so afraid this winning will tempt you to go on. It is quite melancholy to see a man turn gambler at your time of life.

GRESHAM. Mr. Grasshopper, I mean to say this, if ever I made that bet, I must have been downright tipsy.

MRS. G. What, drink too, Mr. Green—oh, shocking!

(sits R.)

(GRASSHOPPER leads GRESHAM to sofa, L., laughing at him—GRESHAM remonstrating.

OAKS. (R., aside to MRS. GRASSHOPPER.) Your husband is deceiving you.

MRS. G. How very kind of you to tell me of it.

OAKS. I'm ready to bet you five to one that those two fellows are now plotting something against you.

MRS. G. It is almost beneath me to notice your insinuations; but I cannot resist endeavouring to make you ashamed of yourself. (calling.) Theophilus, dear!

GRASS. (hastening to her.) What say, love?

MRS. G. (aside to OAKS.) A most inattentive husband! (aloud.) I forgot to tell you, dear, that I have accepted an invitation for us both to dine to-day with an old school-fellow of mine.

GRASS. How very unlucky! I have an engagement which I can't break.

OAKS. I'll bet you seven to two you break if Mrs. Grasshopper wishes it.

GRASS. Done.

MRS. G. Betting, Theophilus?

GRASS. No, I don't bet—only I knew I couldn't go and so I thought I might as well win his money.

MRS. G. I'm sure you can go if you like.

GRASS. I can't indeed—ask Green. Green, can I dine out to-day?

GRESHAM. Certainly, you can.

OAKS. (R.) That's a good witness!

GRASS. I can? You forget!

GRESHAM. Oh, yes, I remember—I forgot.

OAKS. (aside to MRS. GRASSHOPPER.) This must open your eyes, surely. (*goes up, R.*)

MRS. G. (aside.) He shan't discover my doubts, at all events. (aloud.) Women are too selfish, and do not make sufficient allowance for business. Go, dear, to your engagement, and I will go to mine.

GRASS. (aside.) She makes me dreadfully ashamed of myself.

MRS. G. You'll fetch me home?

GRASS. To be sure I will; where is it?

MRS. G. Great Guildford Street.

GRASS. (starting.) What street?

MRS. G. (c.) Dear me—Great Guildford Street.

GRASS. (agitated.) Make haste and tell me the number.

MRS. G. What a hurry you're in! Upon second thoughts, I won't tell you the number—I'll come home alone—you have your secrets, and I'll have mine.

(crosses, R.)

GRASS. (L. C.—aside.) Hollo! I don't like that.

OAKS. As I am an idle man—

GRESHAM. A very idle one seemingly.

OAKS. Sir, do you wish to quarrel?

GRESHAM. No, sir—I'm a member of the Peace Society, and I agree with everybody—I agreed with you when you said you were idle.

OAKS. I was going to say, when this gentleman thought fit to interrupt me—that as I am an idle man, I will call, with your permission, and escort you.

MRS. G. No, I thank you, you are too kind.

GRESHAM. (aside.) Much too kind I should say. I should like to catch him escorting my wife!

MRS. G. Good bye, Theophilus, I must go and dress.

GRASS. Good bye, dear.

MRS. G. Good day, Mr. Green. (*louder.*) Good day, Mr. Green.

GRESHAM. (*starting, and aside.*) I forgot my name again. (*aloud.*) Madam, your most obedient.

OAKS. Mrs. Grasshopper, one word. (*aside to her.*) I don't mind betting you a new hat that your friend's name is not Green.

MRS. G. He is not my friend, sir, and I don't wear hats. (*curseys.*) Good day. *Exit, R. D. 1 E.*

OAKS. Grassy, old fellow, I'll be hanged if I know what to make of your wife.

GRASS. What did she say to you?

OAKS. Oh nothing, just then, but good day.

GRASS. Is that all? I must say the same, for I want a few words in private with my friend Green—so good day, Oaks. (*Oaks hesitates to go.*)

GRESHAM. My friend said good day, Mr. Oaks.

OAKS. I heard him, sir—you needn't repeat it.

(*goes up, c.*)

GRESHAM. I didn't think there could be any offence.

OAKS. Perhaps not, sir; but allow me to remark, that some people are not so *green* as they pretend to be.

Exit, c. to L.

GRASS. Green, he smokes you.

GRESHAM. I'm glad he's gone, at any rate—I don't like him; and now, be so good as to tell me, why my name is Green? why I smoke cigars? and what I want with spectacles?

GRASS. To oblige me and help me out of a scrape; I'm ashamed to say, that I have a little flirtation on hand, with a pretty widow, who lives not far off—and to account for my occasional absence, I have been obliged to tell my poor dear wife, that a speculation, which I have named "The Green Business," calls me away. I wanted a head to this great concern, and you popped in your head—

GRESHAM. To my own great concern.

GRASS. Nonsense! I'll do as much for you, when— But I forgot, you're not married!

GRESHAM. Say as far as you know—but it seems to me that you are a very naughty man.

GRASS. Now don't lecture, but listen. I am going to dine, tête-a-tête, with this pretty widow.

GRESHAM. You! with such a nice wife, playing such scampish tricks?

GRASS. You don't understand these little matters. I love my wife extremely—properly—but that need not interfere with a little innocent flirtation.

GRESHAM. Oh, it needn't! Does your wife love you?

GRASS. Undoubtedly.

GRESHAM. But that, I suppose, need not interfere with her indulging in a little innocent flirtation?

GRASS. Gresham—I mean Green, you mean something!

GRESHAM. Well, I usually do, when I say something; suppose, now, your wife should be rather glad to get rid of you for awhile?

GRASS. Green—I mean Gresham—you'll drive me mad! What is it you allude to?

GRESHAM. I'll give him a tickler! (*aloud.*) It isn't *what*, it's *who*!

GRASS. Well, who, then?

GRESHAM. I've seen him here twice to-day.

GRASS. Pooh, pooh! you mean my friend, Derby Oaks.

GRESHAM. *I do* mean *him*—but without the pooh, pooh!

GRASS. Ha, ha, ha! You have made a wonderful discovery! Why, he's here half a dozen times a day. Ha, ha, ha!

GRESHAM. Laugh away—but I should recommend you to reduce those *six* visits per diem, to *one*.

GRASS. Ha, ha! What a suspicious old fellow you are. Ha, ha!

GRESHAM. And then to take remarkably good care that that one don't turn out one too many.

GRASS. Ha, ha! you're a sort of comic Iago—you want to make me jealous—ha, ha! but you won't succeed—ha, ha! (*changing his tone.*) It's just as well he shouldn't come quite so often, though—ha, ha! (*again, more seriously.*) And what was that you said about one being one too many? By George, if I could imagine that Master Oaks dared to— But it's perfectly absurd—it's not worth a second thought. Ha, ha, ha! (*ceasing to laugh—very*

seriously.) Do you think he's likely to come here again to-day?

GRESHAM. I have no doubt of it.

GRASS. Then I'll watch for him.

GRESHAM. You can't—you dine out.

GRASS. I'll give that up, and come home to dinner.

GRESHAM. That's no use ; your wife dines out !

GRASS. That's true—with an old schoolfellow !

GRESHAM. (*aside.*) I'll give him some more Iago. (*aloud.*) So she said.

GRASS. You don't mean to doubt her word ?

GRESHAM. Oh dear, no ! Only *is* it a lady ?

GRASS. How can a schoolfellow of hers be anything else ?

GRESHAM. Don't you know, that sometimes, at a very tender age, little boys and girls go to school together.

GRASS. Now you are too ridiculous, and I shall think no more about it ; the fact is, you are no judge of these matters, you are not married as I said before.

GRESHAM. As far as you know, as *I* said before. Now as far as I know, I am.

GRASS. Married ?

GRESHAM. Yes, and jealous as Othello.

GRASS. What ! are you going to play Othello, and Iago, both ?

GRESHAM. Be quiet, and listen to me—for reasons which I can't explain now, I don't go regularly home to my wife.

GRASS. Capital ! What, *you* have got a Green Business on hand, too ? Gresham, I'm ashamed of you.

GRESHAM. Have done with your nonsense—I want your advice, for they say an experienced thief makes the best police officer.

GRASS. Thank you.

GRESHAM. A good-for-nothing fellow is persecuting my wife with his attentions.

GRASS. Thinking her, no doubt, a single woman.

GRESHAM. I suspect he doesn't think about it, for I am told, the unprincipled scamp is a married man. (GRASS-HOPPER coughs, turns away from him, and fidgets with his boots.) Isn't that scandalous ?

GRASS. What a nuisance a tight boot is. Hem!

GRESHAM. I say, isn't that scandalous?

GRASS. Certainly—of course—naturally—by all means—you shock me!

GRESHAM. What had I better do?

GRASS. I don't know—I can't tell—I'm bothered—I'll think of it—I'll tell you presently—I must try and find my wife—I've something to say to her before I go out. Just go into that room, and wait for me—and hark ye, Gresham, if that Mr. Oaks should return, keep your eye upon him; if necessary, even through the keyhole. If I find that he is trying to play me any trick, he shall feel the weight of a husband's indignation. I'll kick him.

GRESHAM. Oh, you recommend kicking in such cases, do you?

GRASS. I don't know—perhaps not always—but go in—I'll be back shortly. (*aside.*) Fortune, take me out of this scrape, and I'll never get into another. *Exit, R. U. E.*

GRESHAM. I shall be curious to know what his plan is; but, whatever it may be, I'm determined that my wife shall know nothing about it. *Exit into room, L.*

Re-enter MRS. GRASSHOPPER from R. D., and MRS. FREE, C.

MRS. G. What has brought you back so soon dear? It's not near five.

MRS. F. I came to look for my husband, who, I heard, had been here this half hour.

MRS. G. What! was that old gentleman your husband?

MRS. F. Certainly.

MRS. G. What, the one you told me of?

MRS. F. How many husbands do you suppose I have?

MRS. G. Well, then, I am sorry for you—men are hypocrites, indeed!

MRS. F. (L.) That can't concern me; my husband is no hypocrite. (*aside.*) At least, I don't know, but I hope not.

MRS. G. (R.) He never smokes, you told me?

MRS. F. Never!

MRS. G. Only about twenty cigars a-day.

MRS. F. Nonsense! *one* would make him ill for a week.

MRS. G. He never bets, I think?

MRS. F. Never!

MRS. G. That is to say, not more than a few hundreds on one race.

MRS. F. I need not be annoyed at what you say, because there is not a word of truth in it.

MRS. G. That's not very civil, dear; and for one who needn't be annoyed, I must say you seem very much so.

MRS. F. Well, true or false, one doesn't like to hear one's husband attacked.

MRS. G. I'm sure if my husband had such failings, and any one were to put me on my guard, I should consider it most kind—and he had them all once.

MRS. F. Had he? Then, take my word for it, he has got them all now!

MRS. G. My dear, you are *rather* going beyond the mark.

MRS. F. Pray who made you so knowing about my husband's sins.

MRS. G. My husband.

MRS. F. What reason had you for suspecting him?

MRS. G. Oh, plenty. A cigar case was sent here, under the idea that it belonged to my husband—but it turned out that it belonged to yours.

MRS. F. Oh, Thomas! Thomas!

MRS. G. Timothy, you mean.

MRS. F. No I don't, I mean Thomas.

MRS. G. Thomas?

MRS. F. Certainly—Thomas, I say. Pray how was this cigar case proved to be my husband's?

MRS. G. By the initials on it—T. G., which stand, I believe, for Timothy Green!

MRS. F. What if they do? my husband's name is not Timothy Green.

MRS. G. You don't mean to say you have been married three times?

MRS. F. Goodness, me! I never heard of such a person as Timothy Green.

MRS. G. Now don't tell me that, because he answered to the name—and my husband made him own to the cigar case, the smoking, and the betting.

MRS. F. I have no doubt of it—he's just the good natured, easy going, kind hearted person, who would bear any blame to screen another! Even though that other should be a more wicked monster than he is himself.

MRS. G. I should like to know who you mean by "that other?"

MRS. F. Then, you shall. I mean Mr. Grasshopper.

MRS. G. I won't hear a word against my husband.

MRS. F. Indeed! I thought you would consider it most kind.

MRS. G. And so I should, if there was any truth in it.

MRS. F. Come, come, be reasonable. My husband's name is not Timothy Green—I *must* know that. Your husband told you it was. It's clear that he has deceived you on one point—is it not likely he may have done so on others?

MRS. G. I can't believe it. (*aside.*) And yet these dreadful doubts must be cleared up.

OAKS. (*without.*) Never mind me, I'll find my way up.

MRS. G. Mr. Oaks, again!

MRS. F. The young man who was with you this morning?

MRS. G. The same. (*aside.*) He said, "your husband is deceiving you."

MRS. F. (*aside.*) She seems agitated. (*aloud.*) This morning you said you disliked him.

MRS. G. And now I wish to see him, beyond everything. Just go into that room. (*pointing R. 1 E.*)

MRS. F. And leave you alone with him?

MRS. G. Don't be alarmed. You may listen, if you like—indeed, I wish you would.

Puts her in, and shuts door, R. 1 E.

Enter OAKS, c. from L.

OAKS. (R.) Am I so fortunate as to find you alone?

MRS. G. (L.) Yes, sir: and most anxious to see you.

OAKS. (*aside.*) So, so, here's an improvement. (*aloud.*) Inspired by the warmest devotion to your interests, I have made every effort to verify my suspicions.

MRS. G. And the result is—?

OAKS. That no such speculation as the "Green Busi-

ness" is known on 'Change. It is clear, therefore, that the whole thing is a base scheme to deceive you—got up between your husband and that smooth faced hypocrite who was here just now.

MRS. G. How shocking.

OAKS. Shocking, indeed!

MRS. G. You have made me a wretched woman, Mr. Oaks; but you have taken much trouble on my account, and I am bound to thank you. (*gives him her hand.*)

OAKS. No thanks, I pray; from this moment I make common cause with you; and here, on this fair hand, I swear!

(*kissing her hand, which he forcibly retains, although she struggles to release it.*)

MRS. G. Release my hand, sir, this instant!

OAKS. Never! most injured of women!

MRS. G. Release me, I say!

Enter GRASSHOPPER, R. U. E.

Madman! here's my husband!

OAKS. (*aside.*) Then I must change my tactics. (*aloud.*) I only wish your poor dear husband was here!

GRASS. (*coming forward, c.*) You have your wish!

MRS. GRASSHOPPER goes up, L.

OAKS. Grassy, old boy!

GRASS. Villain!

OAKS. Well, that's gratitude, certainly. Hadn't I—

GRASS. Silence, sir! Hadn't you hold of my wife's hand, sir?

OAKS. You finish my sentence for me. I was going to say, "Hadn't I hold of your wife's hand, and didn't I respectfully raise it to my lips?"

GRASS. Death and furies! you did.

OAKS. Exactly! Now, what for?

GRASS. I ask, what for?

OAKS. (*putting his hand on his shoulder.*) My dear fellow!

GRASS. (*shaking it off.*) Don't touch me!

OAKS. (*aside to him.*) Be cautious, you'll betray yourself.

GRASS. (*doubtfully, and aside to him.*) What do you mean?

OAKS. (*aside to him.*) She has discovered your tricks, and I was trying to persuade her to forgive you.

GRASS. (*to OAKS.*) I don't believe it. (*aside.*) And yet I fear I am in his power. (*aloud.*) I'll settle with you presently, sir; in the mean time, Mrs. Grasshopper will explain her conduct.

Mrs. G. Theophilus, if you have any unworthy suspicions about me, I can dispel them instantly. Luckily, I have a witness. (*goes towards R. D.*)

GRASS. And, luckily, so have I.

(*goes towards room where GRESHAM is.*)

OAKS. Confound it all! Witnesses! (*turns up stage.*) (GRASSHOPPER returns with GRESHAM; MRS. GRASSHOPPER with MRS. FREE—the four come successively face to face.)

MRS. F. (*seeing GRESHAM.*) My husband!

GRESHAM. (*seeing her.*) My wife!

GRASS. (*aside.*) My widow!

MRS. F. My persecutor!

OAKS. Capital! They all seem as much confused as I am.

MRS. G. (*to MRS. FREE.*) You have heard all that passed, and you can convince my husband.

GRASS. I don't want to hear anything that lady has to say.

OAKS. (*to GRASSHOPPER.*) How very rude!

GRASS. Silence, sir!

OAKS. Be civil, (*aside to GRASSHOPPER.*) or I'll expose you!

GRASS. (*aside to OAKS.*) For mercy's sake—

OAKS. (*aside.*) Not that I have the least idea what he has done.

MRS. G. I must first introduce you to my old school-fellow.

(GRASSHOPPER shrinks back—OAKS pushes him forward.)

OAKS. (*aside to him.*) Put a good face on it; you'll betray yourself.

GRASS. (*aside to him.*) D—n it, sir, I will not put up

with—(*changing his tone.*) Don't say anything, there's a good fellow.

(*advances awkwardly—OAKS goes up to sofa, L.*

MRS. G. Mr. Grasshopper, Mrs. Early Free.

(*putting MRS. FREE across to R. C., they bow and curtsey in an embarrassed manner.*)

GRESHAM. (c., aside.) What the deuce does this mean? they both seem confused.

MRS. G. And now, my dear, state all that has taken place!

GRASS. Stay—my honour, as a husband, requires that such an explanation should be confidential. That lady and I must retire.

GRESHAM. I can't say I see the slightest occasion for that.

MRS. F. Nor do I. (*goes up with MRS. GRASSHOPPER, and sits.*)

OAKS. (*aside to GRASSHOPPER.*) Stick to it—I'll back you.

GRASS. (*aside.*) Hateful puppy! (*goes up c.*)

OAKS. Here, we'll soon settle it. I see, you wish to be alone with that lady—Green's a good-natured fellow, he'll take a walk. (*putting GRESHAM across to L.*)

GRESHAM. "Green," as you call him, will see you remarkably — first.

OAKS. Yes, do take a walk, and Mrs. Grasshopper and I can go into the next room.

GRASS. You'll do nothing of the sort. Mrs. Grasshopper, I certainly will not allow you to go with that—

OAKS. (*aside to him.*) Take care, or I'll tell.

GRASS. (*aside to him.*) Merciless monster! (*changing his tone.*) Don't, Oaks, don't. (*goes up c.*)

MRS. G. You need not be alarmed, I have no wish to be alone with that gentleman.

MRS. F. (*aside to her.*) But you had just now, and if I were your husband—

MRS. G. (*aside to her.*) Hush, I entreat you!

OAKS. (*aside.*) Those two are whispering now. (*aloud.*) You had better speak out, ladies!

MRS. F. (*crossing to c.*) Oh, by all means! I was sug-

gesting that under all circumstances, sir, perhaps you would think it right to retire.

GRESHAM. (*aside.*) Well said, wife; there's a slap on the head for that coxcomb.

OAKS. Indeed! (*aside to her.*) I know your secret!

MRS. F. (*aside to him.*) You do?

OAKS. (*aside.*) I thought there was a secret.

MRS. F. (*anxiously, and aside to him.*) What is it?

GRESHAM. (L.) If you have anything to say to that lady, I'll thank you to let it be out loud.

OAKS. Green, don't interrupt.

GRESHAM. Confound his impudence! (*goes up, L.*)

OAKS. (*aside to MRS. FREE.*) Now don't affect ignorance—you are married.

MRS. F. (*aside to him.*) And what if I am?

OAKS. (*aside.*) Now for a venture. (*aside to her.*) Withdraw your proposal for me to retire, or I'll tell your father.

MRS. F. (*aside.*) I breathe again. (*to him.*) I have no father.

OAKS. (*aside to her.*) Then I'll tell your uncle.

MRS. F. (*aside to him.*) My uncle! Oh, I beseech you spare me!

OAKS. (*aside.*) Come, she has got an uncle, that's evident. (*sits, L.*)

MRS. F. I don't see, after all, why Mr. Oaks should be asked to retire—there really is nothing to tell!

GRESHAM. (*to MRS. FREE.*) I'd thank you just to step this way with me. (*goes up C.*)

MRS. G. (*to GRASSHOPPER.*) If you could have joined us at dinner, as I wished you, all this seeming mystery would have been cleared up.

GRASS. I will join you.

OAKS. (L.—*aside.*) The deuce you will! That will never do! (*aloud.*) You forget the Green Business, and your engagement at half past six.

GRASS. No, I don't, but I don't mean to keep it.

MRS. G. I'm very glad of it—but how does it happen?

GRASS. It's all over my dear, with Green.

MRS. G. I'm sorry for that, I'm sure.

OAKS. So am I—Green, my boy, I pity you!

GRESHAM. (*coming forward.*) I'm not your boy, and I don't want your pity.

MRS. G. I wouldn't insult you with pity, sir: but, as the old friend of my husband, I am grieved to hear of your ruin.

GRESHAM. Upon my word, madam, it's the first I have heard of it; but everybody here seems to know more of other people's affairs than their own.

MRS. G. Why, didn't you say it was all over with Mr. Green?

GRASS. Yes, my dear—but I was putting the person for the thing. The Green Business is at an end—and we say, all over with Green—all over with the business—all over with the business—all over with Green. You understand me, Green?

GRESHAM. Well, I suppose I do.

OAKS. (*aside to Mrs. FREE.*) It's shocking to see how he is deceiving his poor wife!

MRS. F. (*aside to him.*) You would not have her deceived for the world, would you?

OAKS. Confound the women, they tell one another everything.

MRS. G. Your husband's name is Green, then?

(*crossing, R.*

GRESHAM. No, ma'am, Gresham.

MRS. G. But you call yourself Mrs. Early Free!

MRS. F. Yes, dear, on account of my uncle.

MRS. G. Then, in fact, you are Mrs. Gresham!

GRASS. (*aside to GRESHAM.*) Get me out of this.

GRESHAM. No, ma'am, Green.

MRS. G. I declare you said Gresham!

GRESHAM. Yes, ma'am, I did—Green Gresham, or Gesham Green.

MRS. F. But few persons know him by that name.

MRS. G. Oh! (*to OAKS.*) You see, sir, there is a Mr. Green on change.

OAKS. Evidently on 'Change.

MRS. F. And now, as your wife dines with me to-day—

GRASS. With you? gracious goodness, was it with you?

MRS. G. And why not with her, pray?

GRASS. Very true, my dear ; as you very justly observe, why not ?

MRS. F. I wish you wouldn't interfere when I'm making up my party. (*to GRASSHOPPER.*) You will come too ?

GRASS. You're very kind, I'm sure, but—

MRS. F. I'll take no excuse—my husband will come and meet you.

MRS. G. And that poor young man who dines with you—wicked as he is, I really almost pity him.

GRESHAM. Hollo ! what's this, my dear ? a wicked young man going to dine with you ?

MRS. F. No, no—there was a young man, certainly, who rather persecuted me with his attentions—thinking me a single woman. I did intend to read him a lesson by bringing him face to face with my old schoolfellow here, and her husband ; but circumstances have induced me to change my mind—he is now aware that I am married, and he has made me understand that he has seen his folly, and will henceforth confine his attentions to his own most deserving, and most trusting wife.

GRESHAM. Oh, that's it ! well, I think you have managed very well. (*to GRASSHOPPER.*) So do you—don't you ?

GRASS. Yes indeed—yes indeed—yes !

MRS. G. What ! was the creature a married man ? Theophilus, my dear, did you ever in your life hear anything half so dreadful ?

GRASS. Not often !

MRS. G. I'm sure you would never do such a thing.

GRASS. Not often !

MRS. G. Not often, Theophilus ?

GRASS. Did I say often ? when I say often, I often mean never.

OAKS. He's putting his foot in it.

MRS. F. (*aside to GRASSHOPPER.*) I am happy to see you are not an old offender, or you would not be so confused—I must help you out.

GRASS. You are too good to me.

MRS. F. Mr. Grasshopper evidently meant to say that he'd never be guilty of such conduct.

OAKS. He didn't say never—he said, not often.

MRS. F. Pray, Mr. Oaks, are there not people on the Stock Exchange called bears?

GRESHAM. Ha, ha, ha! Oaks, my boy, I pity you.

MRS. F. (*aside to GRASSHOPPER.*) Surely you will never again deceive one who so confides in you?

(*both go up.*

OAKS. (*aside to MRS. GRASSHOPPER.*) Don't you think those two whisper to one another rather too much?

MRS. G. I really don't know, but I'll ask them. Mr. Oaks thinks—

OAKS. (*aside to her.*) Pray don't bring me in!

MRS. G. Don't interrupt me, sir! Mr. Oaks thinks that you two whisper too much, have you any objection to letting him know what you were saying?

GRASS. Not in the least—I was saying that as all business is off my hands, I would take you abroad.

MRS. G. And will you?

GRASS. Yes, we'll start to-morrow, and we'll go to—let me see—by-the-bye, Oaks, you said you were off to-morrow for Ostend, on your way to Brussels.

OAKS. Exactly so!

GRASS. Why must you go to Brussels in particular?

OAKS. (*aside.*) He wants to get rid of me, but it won't do. (*aloud.*) Business—business—unavoidable business.

GRASS. That's a pity, because we shall see nothing of you—we're going to Italy.

OAKS. (*aside.*) Caught, by Jupiter!

GRESHAM. (*to OAKS.*) I'm not much of a betting man, but I don't mind laying five to four you're done—ha, ha, ha! (*all laugh.*) Perhaps, when you return from Ostend you will let Mrs. Grasshopper know the exact market value of butter! (*all laugh.*)

OAKS. (*forcing a laugh.*) You like a joke, sir, seemingly.

GRESHAM. Beyond everything, except seeing a man take one as pleasantly as you do—ha, ha, ha!

GRASS. One word, Oaks—although you're a great courtier, you'll please to remember we'll have no kissing hands on your return. (*all laugh.*)

OAKS. Go on—go on—bait your bull!

GRESHAM. Bull! I thought you were a bear—ha, ha!

OAKS. Laugh while you can, I beg; we shall see how you will laugh when I have informed Mrs. Gresham's uncle of her marriage with you—that will be *my* joke.

MRS. F. If you wouldn't forfeit all claim to the character of a gentleman, you will not even threaten to do so cowardly an act.

OAKS. Good gracious, madam! didn't I say it was only a joke? Hang these married people! I'll have nothing more to do with them. (*crosses R.*)

MRS. G. That, sir, I take to be the most sensible thing you have said yet.

GRASS. For you may depend on it, that, if married people can't "settle their differences," as we say on 'Change, without the assistance of bachelors, they never will settle them with it. (*to AUDIENCE.*) And now, ladies and gentlemen, it behoves us as your appointed brokers, not in the money, but the funny market, to close our little account with you—and we do so, (errors excepted) in hopeful confidence of your approbation. We trust you have no cause to regret your visit to the "Stock Exchange;" and that you will kindly admit that the "Green Business" has yielded you a fair amount of interest for the money you have invested

MRS. G. **GRASS.** **MRS. F.**

OAK.

GRESHAM.

R.

L.

CURTAIN.