

THE
RIGHTS AND WRONGS
OF
W O M A N
A Farce
IN
O N E A C T
BY
JOHN MADDISON MORTON.

AUTHOR OF

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

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
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LONDON.

909653

THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF WOMAN.

*First performed at the Theatre Royal Haymarket
on Saturday, May 24th, 1856.*

CHARACTERS.

COLONEL MARCHMONT . MR. HOWE.

SIR BRIAN DE BEAUSEX. MR. BUCKSTONE.

RICHARDS. MASTER. DICK CARROLL.

MRS. MARCHMONT MISS TALBOT.

STACEY MISS B. COPELAND.

TIME—40 minutes.

COSTUMES.

COLONEL.—Modern suit.

SIR BRIAN.—Buff breeches and waistcoat, brown shooting coat.

RICHARDS.—Black coat and belt, buff breeches, top boots, hat, cockade.

MRS. M.—Flowered silk; 2nd dress, handsome silk walking dress.

STACEY.—Coloured muslin, black apron.

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THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF WOMAN.

SCENE.—*An elegantly furnished sitting room. At back in c. a fireplace, with mantel-piece, and handsome looking-glass over it. Ornaments on the mantel-piece. A small fire in the grate. On each side of fire-place is a door—one of which, at r., when open, shows the landing-place, and stairs beyond. The door on l. leads to Mrs. Marchmont's boudoir. Doors also at r. and l. 1 e. At l. c., near the side, a small marble table, on which is a small box, work-table, chairs, sofa, &c.; on a chair r. c. is thrown a livery coat—on the same chair is a clothes brush.*

At the rising of the curtain, STACEY, with a light feather broom, is dusting the ornaments, &c. Bell rings l. h. c.

STACEY. Missus's bell! (*bell rings again violently.*) I know what that means! Missus is trying on a new dress, and can't get it to meet, by ever so much! (*bell rings again still more violently.*) Ha! ha! so much the better for me—for I shall have to let that dress out a little—instead of which I shall let that dress out a good deal, and then she'll say to me—"Take that ugly, odious thing away, and never let me see it again!"—and I never will.

MRS. MARCHMONT appears at door, l. c.

MRS. M. At last! (*coming down and arranging the folds of her dress.*) Ah, Stacey, I didn't require your assistance, because I always will have my dresses made loose and comfortable.

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STACEY. Yes, madam, you look very loose and comfortable.

MRS. M. Well, what do you think of my new dress? This is what I call a fit.

STACEY. So do I, madam—and rather a tight one.

MRS. M. Oh, dear no! of the two it rather wants taking in. (*aside.*) I've scarcely room to breathe! (*aloud.*) You're quite sure it sets well in the back? not the slightest particle of a wrinkle?

(*trying to see herself in the glass, and turning from side to side.*)

Enter COLONEL MARCHMONT at door, L. 1 E.

COL. M. Heyday! (*to STACEY.*) What can your mistress mean by those extraordinary evolutions? (*imitating.*)

STACEY. She's only looking if it's all right behind.

COL. M. (*astonished.*) "All right behind!" Leave the room!
Exit STACEY, R. 1 E.
Ahem!

MRS. M. (*looking round.*) Ah! is that you, Charles? (*aside.*) If he doesn't instantly go into extacies I'll never forgive him! (*coming forward.*)

COL. M. (*looking at her.*) Ha! ha! ha! Excuse my smiling, my dear Mary—but surely your present costume, although it makes you appear very lovely, is not exactly what a lady would select for the country.

MRS. M. The country! certainly not, Charles! but we happen to be in the Parish of St. George's, Hanover Square, London.

COL. M. Yes! and here we shall be for the next forty-seven minutes and a half! (*looking at his watch.*) And then we start for Lincolnshire.

MRS. M. Lincolnshire!

COL. M. Yes, my dear! are you quite packed up, and all that sort of thing, eh?

MRS. M. No! I'm not at all packed up, and all that sort of thing!

COL. M. Then make haste about it, my dear! Depend upon it, you'll be quite enchanted with the little paradise I've just bought for you.

MRS. M. Bought for *yourself*, you mean, my dear !

COL. M. For both of us, my love ! the price was rather high—fifteen thousand pounds—but I didn't hesitate—how could I, when you seem'd as anxious for the pure air of the country as I was.

MRS. M. Yes, very true ; there's nobody enjoys the country more than I do—when the London season is over. But who ever heard of going into the country in May ?

COL. M. Ah, Mary, you never saw the country on a beautiful May morning at sunrise !

MRS. M. I never saw the sun rise at all—yes, I did once—going home from a ball—and then he looked as if he'd have given anything to have lain in bed a little longer ! ha ! ha ! ha !

COL. M. And then to hear the feathered songsters of the grove chirping their welcome to the coming day !

MRS. M. Yes—and all whistling different tunes at the same time ! very beautiful, no doubt—but, for my part, I've the bad taste to be satisfied with Grisi.

COL. M. (*irritated.*) Pshaw ! you're not an admirer of nature, my dear !

MRS. M. Of *good* nature I am, my love ! besides, if you are agriculturally inclined, that's no reason I should be ! I take no interest in turnips !

COL. M. Turnips ! pshaw !

MRS. M. Now, do be amiable, if you possibly can, and let us start for our little paradise, in Lincolnshire, to-morrow. The fact is, I've promised to attend a concert this morning with Mrs. General Briggs.

COL. M. My dear, everyone to their taste—yours is not agricultural—mine is not musical—you take no interest in turnips, I am indifferent to fiddles !

MRS. M. Fiddles ! pshaw ! there are other inducements to visit a concert room besides fiddles.

COL. M. And there are other attractions in the country besides turnips.

MRS. M. Come, Charles, say you will accompany me to this concert.

COL. B. Impossible ! I have to pay the purchase money for our little paradise this morning—the funds are ready, and the lawyers waiting.

MRS. M. (*annoyed.*) Then I need not have put on this

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beautiful new dress, which I did, only to please you; it takes two hours to put it on.

COL. M. And two minutes to take it off. Shall I? (*offering to undo her gown—she turns away impatiently.*) Really, my dear, if I were a suspicious husband, I might imagine that this concert possess'd some attractions independent of the music.

MRS. M. You're not jealous, Charles? Ha, ha, ha!

COL. M. Why not, madam? you are fond of gaiety, parties, balls, concerts. I am not. You are young and lovely, and—

MRS. M. (*smiling.*) And you are not. Ha, ha, ha!

COL. M. In a word, madam, I have lately observed that the admiration you excite is anything but distasteful to you.

MRS. M. And therefore, to remove me from such a dangerous atmosphere, you condemn me to solitary confinement in Lincolnshire.

COL. M. Not solitary confinement, madam, since I shall be with you.

MRS. M. Oh, the *jailor* counts for nothing.

COL. M. (*angrily.*) Madam!

MRS. M. (*seeing that her husband is really hurt.*) I beg your pardon, Charles—I spoke unguardedly—I did, indeed, and now (*putting her arm in his arm.*) can you, will you refuse to accompany me to this concert?

COL. M. I can—I do—for besides my business with my lawyer, I have several farewell visits to pay.

MRS. M. Send your cards by your footman.

COL. M. You know I haven't got one; that saucy fellow, John, left me suddenly last night, under the pretence that his physician had told him that the air of Lincolnshire would not agree with him.

MRS. M. What a clever doctor he must be. Tell me where he lives, that I may go and consult him instantly.

COL. M. Luckily, however, I expect a young man to apply for the vacant place this very morning, and as I must have some one to take charge of the house in our absence, I shall engage the fellow, whoever he is. So good bye, my dear, and as I said before—pack up!

Exit COLONEL MARCHMONT, R. C.

MRS. M. Pack up! Heigho! my poor beautiful dress! and must I consign you, unseen and unadmir'd, to the depths of a travelling trunk? It's too bad of Charles—it's downright tyranny—besides Mrs. General Briggs is expecting me, and I've paid for the ticket. Are these times to throw money away? No. So I will go! I feel it my duty to go! (*rings a small hand bell.*)

Enter STACEY, R. 1 E.

STACEY. Did you ring, madam?

MRS. M. Yes—my mantle.

STACEY. Yes, madam. (*goes to couch, L. C., and returns with mantle.*) Going out, madam? (*putting the mantle on MRS. MARCHMONT.*) Shall I order the carriage, madam?

MRS. M. Yes—no.

STACEY. It's raining cats and dogs, madam.

MRS. M. Indeed? Where is the nearest—cab stand? I believe that's what they call it?

STACEY. At the corner of the street, madam.

MRS. M. Fetch one.

STACEY. A hansom one, ma'am—or a four wheeler?

MRS. M. I presume I can have a "four wheeler," as you call it, and a handsome one, too?

STACEY. Two cabs, ma'am?

MRS. M. Pshaw! I'll walk as far, and should your master come back, tell him—no—nothing. (*aside.*) I shall be at home before he returns. *Exit at door, R. C.*

STACEY. Missus in cab, on the sly—master out—in a beautiful new dress. What's in the wind, I wonder? What's this? (*seeing the livery coat.*) John's best livery coat—poor John—I hope our next young man will be as amiable as he was.

Re-enter MRS. MARCHMONT hurriedly, R. C.

MRS. M. (*as she enters—with great excitement and indignation.*) The stupid, awkward, clumsy creature!

STACEY. Lor! ma'am—nothing happened, I hope?

MRS. M. (*half crying.*) Nothing! do you call this nothing? (*shewing a large splash of mud on her dress.*) And this? (*shewing another.*) And this? (*shewing another.*) Oh! I could kill him.

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STACEY. Who?

MRS. M. A gentleman—no not a gentleman! a man—a creature—I had just stept on to the pavement, when he came galloping up the street on horseback—there was only *one* heap of mud, and of course he put his foot in it.

STACEY. The man?

MRS. M. The horse—and this is the result!

STACEY. Three large splotches of mud.

MRS. M. You may well call them “splotches!” The dress is spoilt—ruin’d—Oh! if I had him here! (*stamping her foot.*) I really think I should beat him!

Enter SIR BRIAN, hurriedly, at door, r. c. He carries a small riding whip.

SIR B. (*seeing MRS. MARCHMONT.*) Madam—(*MRS. MARCHMONT turns—sees him, and starts.*) I’ve found you at last!

MRS. M. ’Tis he! (*indignantly to SIR BRIAN, who stands in a most penitential attitude.*) And you dare come into my presence! to feast your eyes, no doubt, on the devastation you have caused! Look here, barbarian! (*shewing dress.*)

SIR B. (*with great commiseration.*) Poor lady!—poor lady! Yes, madam, I see them!—Three of ‘em!—Two large ones, and a little one! I feel the full enormity of my offence—it’s one of the deepest dye!

MRS. M. Yes—I’m afraid it will never come out.

SIR B. Poor lady!—Poor lady! And therefore I am here, to offer you the only expiation in my power; I’ve brought you my head! I place my head at your disposal—what can I do more?

MRS. M. Your head! what should I do with your head? It doesn’t seem to be of much use to you.

STACEY. Ha! ha! ha! ha!

MRS. M. (*to STACEY.*) Leave the room!

SIR B. Yes, young woman, leave the room!

Exit STACEY, l. c.

MRS. M. Now, sir, may I inquire your motive for this most unwarrantable intrusion!

SIR B. (*very pathetically.*) Your forgiveness! let me

read it in a look—let me see it in a smile! Oh, smile if you love me!

MRS. M. Sir! I'm in a nice humour for smiling! my indignation is sufficiently evident, I presume.

SIR B. Yes—but when it's dry and ironed out it will all disappear.

MRS. M. My indignation?

SIR B. No, the mud.

MRS. M. Not it—my poor dress is utterly, hopelessly spoilt! eighteen yards, at twelve and sixpence per yard—think of that!

SIR B. Poor lady!—poor lady!—(*taking out a pocket-book.*) this pocket-book, ma'am, which contains three or four ten pound notes—

MRS. M. How, sir, do you dare to insult me, by offering me money?

SIR B. No—no—then all I can do is to throw myself on your mercy—headlong—in the dust of your carpet—at your feet! (*about to take a plunge.*)

MRS. M. Leave the house this moment, sir!

SIR B. Without your forgiveness? Never! besides I'm not wholly to blame after all—for you'll allow me to observe that the street you inhabit, a very charming street, because you *do* inhabit it—(*very tenderly.*)

MRS. M. (*very coldly.*) Well, Sir?

SIR B. Is neither remarkably wide, nor particularly clean—in other words, it's decidedly narrow, and unquestionably dirty.

MRS. M. Then you might have chose some other thoroughfare, sir, for your equestrian performance.

SIR B. If I had, madam, I should have lost the unspeakable felicity of—

MRS. M. Of splashing me with mud from head to foot.

SIR B. (*as before, in a tone of deep commiseration.*) Poor lady!—poor lady! Stay, I have it—if the stain of mud can't be taken out of the dress—suppose you have the dress dyed the colour of the mud! That's not a bad idea? I flatter myself, that's several degrees removed from a bad idea.

MRS. M. (*impatiently.*) Once more, sir, leave the house.

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SIR B. I obey, madam; I have the honour to wish you a very good morning! (*he bows, and exits at R. C., then immediately returns.*)

MRS. M. He's gone at last. (*seeing SIR BRIAN.*) Here again, sir?

SIR B. Merely to observe, that if ever you should require my humble services—(*MRS. MARCHMONT points to the door.*) I wish you a very good morning! (*he bows, goes out, and immediately returns.*)

MRS. M. What a very extraordinary person! (*seeing SIR BRIAN.*) Here again, sir?

SIR B. I forgot to leave my name and address. (*presents a card.*) "Sir Brian de Beausex, Baronet, 92, Mount Street, Grosvenor Square." I wish you a very good morning. (*he bows, goes out, and again returns.*)

MRS. M. What does he imagine I can possibly want his name and address for? (*seeing SIR BRIAN.*) Again?

SIR B. Just to mention that whenever you are pleased to send for me, morning, noon, or night, even the middle of the night—I'll instantly fly to your rescue.

MRS. M. Rescue?

SIR B. I wish you a very good morning! (*bowing and going, then returning.*)

MRS. M. What can he mean by "Flying to my rescue?" (*sees SIR BRIAN.*) This is downright persecution, sir!

SIR B. Persecution—from me—me, Sir Brian de Beausex, the champion of the fair sex in general, and of married women in particular.

MRS. M. You, sir?

SIR B. Yes, ma'am, that's the sole business, profession, and occupation of my sublunary existence. In me you behold the last solitary remaining relic of the days of chivalry. No sooner do I hear that a married woman is unhappy in her home, than I rush to her assistance. If she's indignant I pacify her—if she weeps I console her—if her husband ill-treats her I sympathize with her—if he beats her, I thump her—I mean I thump him!

MRS. M. I see, a modern Don Quixote.

SIR B. Exactly! except that I don't wage war against windmills; but against tyranical husbands. I don't deny that I might have selected an occupation more consistent

with my personal dignity, and personal comfort—for if I were to enumerate the number of houses I have been kicked out of you would be astonished! nay, in some instances the injured wife has been so ungrateful as to assist her tyrant husband by pulling my hair and scratching my face while he has forcibly ejected me. Now, you will naturally ask why I persevere in this course—my answer is, I can't help it—it's a sort of romantic, and philanthropic monomania—and I can't help it.

MRS. M. Pray, sir, may I inquire if you yourself are a married man?

SIR B. No, I am not—I have always been afraid to marry.

MRS. M. Afraid?

SIR B. Yes, for if in an unguarded moment I discovered I was ill-treating my wife, the thrashing I should immediately give myself would be something awful. No, I am quite pleased and satisfied with my mission—for instance, I should be the happiest man alive if you were to tell me that you are the most miserable woman in existence—say your husband's a brute to you, and make me happy—ah! you smile—you forgive me!

MRS. M. (*drawing herself up and pointing to the door, R. C.*) There lies your road, sir—here lies mine! (*makes a low, ceremonious curtsey, and goes out at door, L. C.*)

SIR B. (*looking first at one door and then the other.*) I don't know how I may look, but I feel excessively small. What a deplorable adventure! Eighteen yards of—something or other, at twelve and sixpence a yard utterly spoiled, and by me—or rather, my horse; for, after all, it *was* my horse.

Enter STACEY, L. C.

STACEY. Not gone yet? A pretty piece of business you've made of it; for if my master should happen to see the splotches of mud on missus's gown, he'll know that she's been out against his express commands.

SIR B. His commands? Do you mean to say that he presumes to interfere with the liberty of the subject? that he won't allow his wife to go out whenever she thinks proper? Then he's a tyrant—a despot—and she's his

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poor wretched, suffering victim. Tell me she's a suffering victim, and I'll give you a guinea.

STACEY. Master's certainly *reyther* jealous.

SIR B. Jealous? so much the better—a regular Othello, I'll be bound. I'm delighted to hear it. I think I see him now, with a dagger in one hand, and a feather bed in the other—I mean a bolster. But don't be alarmed—he shan't smother her.

STACEY. (*alarmed.*) Lor', sir—smother who?

SIR B. Desdemona—I mean your mistress. No, here I am, and here I'll stop; I'll be her protector—her guardian angel. Like the faithful Newfoundland dog, she'll only have to whistle, and "I will come to her, my lad."

COLONEL MARCHMONT. (*without, r. c.*) Stacey! Stacey!

STACEY. Oh, lud! here's master come back.

COLONEL MARCHMONT. (*without.*) Where's your mistress?

SIR B. He's calling for Desdemona.

STACEY. If he finds you here, there's no saying what he might suspect.

SIR B. True; he might take me for some sort of Cassio.

STACEY. Then slip out the back way, or hide somewhere or other—under the table, or up the chimney—

SIR B. Thank ye!

COLONEL MARCHMONT. (*again.*) Stacey, I say—

SIR B. What the devil's to be done? Ah! what's this? (*taking up the livery coat.*) The very thing. (*hurriedly taking off his coat, and putting on the livery.*) Leave all to me. (*flings his coat on the chair, and retires to one side of the stage, l.*)

Enter COLONEL, hurriedly, and wiping his coat with his pocket handkerchief, r. c.

COL. M. I'm soaked to the very skin. Stacey, make up the fire. I'm perfectly chilled.

(*he turns and sees STACEY making signs to SIR BRIAN to go; turns the other way, and finds himself face to face with SIR BRIAN, who was making his way up the stage to go off.*)

Heyday! and, pray, who are you?

SIR B. (*bothered.*) Who am I? I'm pretty well, I thank you, sir. (*going.*)

COL. M. Stop! (*remembering.*) Oh, of course. Now I remember all about it. (*aside.*) This is the young man for the place, I suppose.

SIR B. (*aside.*) He remembers all about it.

COL. M. I've been expecting you all the morning. Now tell me, how long did you live in your last place?

SIR B. Last place?

COL. M. Yes—and what wages do you expect?

SIR B. Wages? Sir, you'll allow me to observe—

COL. B. That'll do. To save time, young man—I give fifteen guineas a year, two suits of clothes, and you find your own gloves and gaiters. Now, do you take the situation or not?

SIR B. Situation—gaiters!

COL. B. I presume you are the young man who has been recommended to me as a footman?

SIR B. (*indignantly.*) Footman?

STACEY. (*to COLONEL.*) Yes, this is the young man, sir. (*aside to SIR BRIAN.*) Oh, sir, think of my poor missus.

Exit, L. C.

SIR B. Yes, I am the young man. (*sulkily, aside.*) A footman! Here's a let down for the last remaining relic of the days of chivalry.

COL. M. I presume you are honest, industrious, sober, and so on?

SIR B. Sober? Let me tell you, sir, that my character—

COL. B. By-the-bye, I should like to see it. No—never mind. There's a stupid look about you that I rather like. What's your name? (*SIR BRIAN takes a card from his case and presents it to COLONEL.*) A footman with a card-case, ha, ha, ha! What next, I wonder? Harkye, young fellow, if ever you have the impertinence to make use of that card-case again while in my service, I'll pay you your month's wages and kick you out of the house.

SIR B. Kick! (*aside.*) Oh, hang it, I can't stand that.

(*he is about to remonstrate.*)

COL. M. Once more—what's your name?

SIR B. (*aside.*) What the deuce shall I say? (*aloud, and deliberately.*) Horatio Timothy Spriggins.

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COL. M. Zounds! that won't do at all.

SIR B. (*aside.*) I thought it wouldn't. (*aloud.*) Then, as I don't suit you, perhaps I had better—(*going.*)

COL. M. Stop! I'll call you Tim. Here, Tim, take my hat. (*SIR BRIAN pays no attention.*) Tim! (*very loud.*) take my hat and wipe it; don't you see it's wringing wet.

(*SIR BRIAN wipes the hat the wrong way with the sleeve of his coat.*)

COL. M. (*angrily.*) Pshaw! you're brushing it the wrong way of the nap! put it down. (*SIR BRIAN looks about him, and seeing nothing near him, deposits the hat on the floor.*) Pshaw! you're even more stupid than you look. (*crosses to L. corner.*)

SIR B. I am; and, therefore, as it is evident I don't suit you, perhaps I'd better—

(*SIR BRIAN, going up, finds himself face to face with MRS. MARCHMONT, who comes in L. She is in a travelling dress, bonnet, &c.*)

MRS. M. Ah! (*seeing SIR BRIAN and starting.*)

COL. M. What's the matter, my dear? (*turning.*)

MRS. M. Nothing—nothing. (*aside.*) Here again, and in our livery! What can it mean?

(*The COLONEL turns and sees SIR BRIAN making energetic signals to MRS. MARCHMONT, with the Colonel's hat in one hand and a brush in the other.*)

COL. M. Holloa! what the deuce are you about?

SIR B. Eh? Merely brushing your honour's hat.

(*brushing the hat again very violently the wrong way.*)

COL. M. Oh, by-the-bye, you've probably seen Tim before, in my absence?

MRS. M. (*astonished.*) Tim?

COL. M. Yes, our new footman there. (*pointing to SIR BRIAN who is again telegraphing MRS. MARCHMONT with the hat and brush.*)

SIR B. (*advancing.*) Yes, sir, your poor victim—I mean your good lady—was kind enough to receive me, and she said she thought I should exactly suit her—I mean, suit you.

MRS. M. (*aside.*) What unblushing effrontery! And to think I don't dare contradict him.

COL. M. (*looking at his watch.*) Past one! By-the-bye, Tim, have you had your dinner?

SIR B. Thank you, I had my usual allowance of turtle soup and burgundy at twelve o'clock. I shall do very well till seven.

COL. M. Ha, ha, ha! better and better. You'll get no turtle soup here, my fine fellow.

SIR B. In that case, sir, it's evident I don't suit you—so, perhaps, I'd better—(*going.*)

COL. M. Stop. Of course, Mary, you asked this young man the usual necessary questions?

MRS. M. Not I. You know I never interfere in these matters; besides, I was busy.

SIR B. Yes, sir, the lady was very busy—working you a pair of slippers; the most beautiful pattern I ever saw.

COL. M. Thank you, my dear, thank you. (*leads MRS. MARCHMONT to sofa—they seat themselves.* (Tim! (SIR BRIAN pays no attention.) Tim, come here!

SIR B. Yes, sir. (*goes to sofa, sits down by the side of the COLONEL, crossing his legs, &c.*)

COL. M. How dare you, sir? Get up, sir!

SIR B. I beg your pardon, I'm sure. (*sits down in the arm chair.*)

COL. M. Will you get up, sir? (SIR BRIAN rises.) Tell me—have you been in the habit of waiting at dinner?

SIR B. I never wait for anybody. As the clock strikes, up it comes.

COL. M. We agree upon that point, at any rate.

SIR B. I'm delighted to hear it. (*sitting down in the chair again.*)

COL. M. Will you get up, sir? (SIR BRIAN jumps up.) Now, one more question—

RICHARDS. (*without, R. c.*) Don't tell me, old fellow!

Enters and speaking off.

I saw him enter this house, and as he's not gone out of this house, he must be in this house. (*he is in a very smart livery.*)

SIR B. My rascal of a tiger! (*retires, takes up the feather broom and begins dusting the things on the mantelpiece.*)

COL. M. (*to RICHARDS.*) Well, what do you want, little boy?

RICHARDS. I'm looking for my governor. He was

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cantering up the street on his grey mare—and a terrible skittish thing she is ; requires a precious strong hand to keep her in—I can manage her. Well, sir, as ill-luck would have it, she pops her near hind foot into a heap of mud, and splashes it all over a lady as was quietly walking along. Such a fine woman, sir ! a regular thorough-bred ! Such a shape ! such action !—oh, my stars ! (SIR BRIAN *all this time is in agony, and making frantic endeavours to catch RICHARDS' attention.*) Well, the lady screams, of course, and runs into the house—as I thought ; and master, jumping off the mare, and flinging the reins to me, pops in after her—as I thought. (*seeing MRS MARCHMONT.*) I thought as much. (COLONEL looks at MRS MARCHMONT, who assumes an indifferent manner.)

SIR B. (*grasping his arm, and aside.*) Hold your infernal tongue, or I'll drag you out of your boots by the hair of your head.

RICHARDS. (*recognising SIR BRIAN.*) Lor', sir ! is that—

COL. M. (*turning.*) What's the matter ?

RICHARDS. N—othing, sir ! I'm mistaken, sir ; it wasn't here, sir ; it was—number—twenty seven—sir.

(*backing out and exit, R. C.*)

COL. M. A saucy young rascal—but, zounds ! here I am standing all this while in wet clothes. Tim ! (SIR BRIAN *pays no attention.*) Tim ! (*shouting.*) I want to change my coat.

SIR B. Well—I don't prevent you—do I ?

COL. M. Pshaw ! get me a coat, and follow me to my dressing room. (*Exit at door, R. H.*)

SIR B. (*watching the COLONEL out, and rapidly coming down to MRS. MARCHMONT.*) Now, madam—

MRS. M. Now, sir, what means this masquerade ? and why, why are you thus determined to compromise me, and expose me to my husband's suspicions ?

SIR B. Expose you ! my object is to protect you ! Poor lady ! poor lady ! you can't deceive me, I know all about you—your husband's a domestic tyrant—locks you up—deprives you of that fresh air and exercise so necessary to the elasticity of the mind, and the salubrity of the body. But let him beware ! I'm here—

MRS. M. Sir, I beg you will not interfere in a matter in which you cannot possibly take any interest !

SIR B. But I can—I do!—I take an interest in every poor suffering wife—young and lovely ones especially!

MRS. M. You are mistaken, sir—I am as happy as the day is long.

SIR B. Yes, poor lady—why? because your husband goes out the first thing in the morning, and comes home the last thing at night. Happy! no, what woman can be happy who is deprived of that fresh air and exercise so necessary to the elasticity of the body, and the salubrity of the—

MRS. M. Hear me, sir! when you were in the garb of a gentleman, I appealed to your delicacy to relieve me of your presence—but, now, since you have chosen to assume my husband's livery I will speak to you in a different tone, and command you to leave the house.

SIR B. I obey! (*slowly and unconsciously buttoning up his livery coat.*) I obey! (*taking the Colonel's hat off the table.*) It is hard, painful, to be so misunderstood—very hard, indeed! (*putting his hand into the pocket of his livery coat, and pulling out a footman's white apron, with which he wipes his eyes.*)

MRS. M. (*aside.*) I do declare the creature's beginning to cry.

SIR B. (*finding that he is holding an apron to his eyes, and flinging it away indignantly.*) Farewell, madam!

(*he bows, goes out, r. c. and immediately returns.*)

MRS. M. At last! (*seeing SIR BRIAN.*) Again!

SIR B. Merely to observe, madam, that when your eyes are opened, as I trust they soon will be, to your present sad and deplorable situation, I shall no longer be at hand. In twelve hours and a half I shall be in Lincolnshire.

MRS. M. (*somewhat surprised.*) Lincolnshire!

SIR B. Yes, ma'am, I shall be exploring that extensive and ague-ish county, in search of a young and much commiserated wife—I don't mention her name—first, because it would be obviously indiscreet—and secondly, because I don't know it. However thus far I may mention, that before her marriage with her present tyrant, she had had the indiscretion to write three and thirty epistles, more or less tender, to a particular friend of mine.

MRS. M. (*aside.*) How very singular! (*aloud and anxiously.*) Well?

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SIR B. Well—what did I do? I determined to find the poor lady, and restore her the fatal documents, and her peace of mind into the bargain—I went to my friend—his name, of course, I shall not mention—“Tomkins,” said I—

MRS. M. (*aside, and starting.*) “Tomkins!”

SIR B. “You possess certain letters from a lady who is now a wife, and probably a mother.” “I do,” says Tomkins. “Give them to me,” said I. “I won’t,” says he. “Then you must fight,” said I. “I will,” says he, and the next morning we met.

MRS. M. And fought?

SIR B. No, he gave up the letters, on condition that I lent him a thousand pounds—which I did.

MRS. M. (*anxiously.*) And the letters?

SIR B. Will accompany me into Lincolnshire.

MRS. M. You may spare yourself a useless journey, sir, for the lady in whose behalf you have so generously exerted yourself is still in London,—in short (*with hesitation.*) she stands before you!

SIR B. You?

MRS. M. I am Mrs. Colonel Marchmont; but the letters—quick—where are they?

SIR B. In my pocket book. (*mechanically feeling in the pockets of his livery coat.*) Three and thirty of them—in a bundle, under cover. (*continuing to rummage his pockets.*) This is the happiest day of my life! thanks to me, peace will be restored to your mind—slumber to your eyelids—you’ll be able to embrace your child.

MRS. M. I haven’t got one—but the letters—quick!

SIR B. Pshaw I forgot. (*recollecting he has got on the livery coat, and taking his own coat off the chair, and feeling outside the pockets.*) Yes, here they are

Enter COLONEL in his shirt sleeves, R. H.

COL. M. I thought I told you to bring the coat to me? (*snatching coat from SIR BRIAN, before he has had time to remove the pocket book.*)

SIR B. Allow me—(*trying to get the coat back again.*)

COL. M. What the deuce are you about, sir? I shall be back in five minutes my dear! it’s all right—it’s all right.

Exit, R. H.

SIR B. All right. He walks off with my coat and says it's all right!

MRS. M. Oh! sir—he'll open your pocket book—he'll find those letters and I shall be exposed to endless suspicions! What—what is to be done?

SIR B. (*suddenly.*) There's only one hope, madam, and here it is—the clothes brush! (*seizes clothes brush and rushes after COLONEL, R. H.*)

MRS. M. What is he going to do?

COL. M. (*without.*) What the devil are you about, sir?

SIR B. (*without.*) I tell you you can't go out in that state! you shan't go out in that state!

The COLONEL re-enters with SIR BRIAN's coat on trying to avoid SIR BRIAN, who keeps turning him round and brushing his coat.

COL. M. Zounds! I tell you that'll do!

SIR B. Dear—dear! you must have been leaning up against something black—you're all over white! (*twisting the COLONEL round, and brushing him, while, with the other hand he tries to remove the pocket book.*)

COL. M. (*impatiently.*) Zounds! you keep turning me round and round like a teetotum! That'll do, I say! (*going.*)

SIR B. I must do something desperate! I'll lacerate his coat! (*laying hold of one of the hind buttons and pulling it off.*) There—there goes a button; of course you can't go out now!

MRS. M. (*eagerly.*) Oh, no! of course not, Charles!

SIR B. Who ever heard of any one going out in a coat with a button off behind before? (*during this he is dragging off the Colonel's coat.*)

MRS. M. I'll fetch another. (*goes for a moment off, and returns with a coat, which she hands to COLONEL.*) There, Charles! (*while the COLONEL is putting on the coat, SIR BRIAN extracts the pocket book from the other coat, and holds it up to MRS. MARCHMONT in triumph.*)

COL. M. (*turning round.*) Ah! my pocket book! Thank ye, Tim! (*snatching pocket book from SIR BRIAN.*) very thoughtful of you, indeed, Tim! (*SIR BRIAN and MRS. MARCHMONT look utterly confounded.*)

SIR B. Better leave it with me, sir—you might have

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your pocket picked. (*making sundry snatches at pocket book.*)

COL. M. Very thoughtful of you again, Tim. How very odd! I could have sworn that I had locked my pocket book up in that strong box. How very imprudent of me; for its contents are of very great importance; however, I'll lock it up in my box now. (*opens the iron box on the table, with a small key attached to his watch—puts in pocket book—and locks it again.*) There! And now I really must finish packing up. Follow me, Tim. *Exit, R. H.*

MRS. M. That key I must have. (*hurries out after the COLONEL, R. H.*)

SIR B. (*hurrying up to the table, and seizing the strong box.*) How the deuce shall I open this infernal machine? I must have the letters—I will have the letters. Ah! perhaps one of my own keys will fit! (*plunging his hand into his livery coat, and pulling out an enormous street door key.*) What's this? By its dimension I should say it was the key of a neighbouring turnpike gate. Confound it, I'm always forgetting I'm in livery! ugh! (*shakes the box with redoubled violence.*) RICHARDS peeps in, at door, R. C.)

RICHARDS. Sir—sir—hadn't I better take the horses home.

SIR B. (*still minutely examining the box*) Hang the horses.

RICHARDS. Because, sir, if we're a'going to start for Lincolnshire—

SIR B. Bother Lincolnshire! (*giving the box another desperate shake.*) Begone! Stop! have you got such a thing as a chisel, or a pickaxe about you?

RICHARDS. (*alarmed.*) Lor, sir, not I!

SIR B. (*imitating.*) "Lor, sir, not I!" Hark'ye—if ever you presume to come into my presence again without a chisel or a pickaxe about you, I'll murder you! Begone! stop! a capital idea! Here! run with this box to the nearest locksmith—or blacksmith—I don't care which—tell him to pick the lock, or smash the whole concern into ever so many bits—I don't care which. Begone! fly!

RICHARDS runs out, R. C.

Re-enter MRS. MARCHMONT hurriedly, with the Colonel's watch, &c.

MRS. M. I've contrived to secure my husband's watch under the pretence of regulating it—here is the key.

SIR B. Key?

MRS. M. Yes, the key of the strong box, which contains those fatal letters. But where is it? (*looking at table.*) It was there.

SIR B. Eh? (*bothered.*) Yes! as you very properly observe it was there—but—

MRS. M. But what?

SIR B. Why I've just sent it to the nearest locksmith's to be opened.

MRS. M. Pshaw! you'll drive me mad!

SIR B. I'm getting slightly frantic myself. I did it all for the best.

MRS. M. Pshaw! run for the box this minute.

SIR B. I will—but—

MRS. M. Not a moment must be lost. Go—go. (*SIR BRIAN snatches up the Colonel's hat, puts it on, and rushes out. The hat must be either too large or too small for him.*) What a dreadful man!

Enter COLONEL, R. H.

COL. M. My dear, Mr. Shaw, the lawyer, has just arrived, and the purchase money for our little paradise—fifteen thousand pounds—must be paid at once. Heyday! I left it here on this table, I'm sure I did!

MRS. M. It! what?

COL. M. My strong box,

MRS. M. (*with pretended ignorance.*) What strong box?

COL. M. Pshaw! this is a more serious matter, madam, than you imagine! Ring for the servants!

MRS. M. I thought you took it with you when you went into your dressing room.

COL. M. Impossible! at any rate I'll see!

Exit hurriedly, R.

SIR BRIAN runs in, very much out of breath, with the box under his arm.

SIR B. Wheugh! I've got it! I was just in time—the brawny blacksmith was just going to fracture it!

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MRS. M. Thanks, thanks, now quick, the letters !

SIR B. (*hitting the box.*) Here they are, safe and sound. Where's the key. Give me the key?

MRS. M. (*in despair.*) Why—you don't mean to say you haven't had the lock picked ?

SIR B. Why should I have the lock picked when you've got the key ?

MRS. M. But I *haven't* got the key—my husband has just taken it from me.

SIR B. (*laughing hysterically.*) Ha, ha, ha ! It never rains but it pours.

COLONEL MARCHMONT. (*without.*) Mary—Mary, I say !

MRS. M. My husband's voice ! he is now searching in every direction for that dreadful box ! if he finds it I'm lost ; hide it—destroy it ! My future happiness is in you hands.

(*runs out, R. H.*)

SIR B. Yes, and so is the box ! it's very easy to say "hide it." I can't swallow it. What's to be done ? With all my admiration of the fair sex, I can't divide the remainder of my existence between a box without a key, or a key without a box. Ah ! (*seeing the fire place, in which there is a bright fire burning.*) I'll burn it—the fire invites me—stop—though ! there's a matter of forty pounds of my own money in it. Pshaw ! what of that, where the happiness of a woman is concerned. There ! (*flinging the box on the fire.*) And there—and there. Where's the coal skuttle ? (*snatches up the coal scuttle and empties coal on the fire.*) Where's the poker ? (*seizes the poker and stirs the fire violently.*) Where's the bellows ? (*seizes bellows, goes on his knees, and blows the fire.*) That'll do. (*jumps up, and hurriedly places a screen before the fire.*)

Enter COLONEL hurriedly, and in great agitation—followed by MRS. MARCHMONT, R. 1 E.

COL. M. This must be inquired into.

SIR B. (*hastily aside to MRS. MARCHMONT.*) It's all right !

MRS. M. (*aside to SIR BRYAN.*) The letters ?

SIR B. Are on the fire—box and all.

MRS. M. (*to COLONEL.*) Really, my dear Charles, if I

were a suspicious wife, (*imitating the Colonel's former manner.*) I might imagine that this strong box of yours contained matters of a very interesting nature, indeed!

COL. M. Madam !

MRS. M. Love letters, perhaps—and sundry locks of hair.

COL. M. (*annoyed.*) Pshaw ! That box, madam, contained the purchase money of our Lincolnshire estate—fifteen thousand pounds in bank notes.

(MRS. MARCHMONT falls into a chair and SIR BRIAN at full length on the sofa.)

COL. M. (*looking from one to the other.*) What's the use of your sitting there ?

SIR B. (*not moving.*) Yes, that's what I want to know —what's the use of our sitting here ?

COL. M. Every room must be searched !

SIR B. (*not moving.*) Of course, every room must be searched.

COL. M. (*to MRS. MARCHMONT, who is half fainting.*) What is the meaning of this apathy ? 'Sdeath, madam, do you hear me ?

SIR B. (*jumping up.*) Holloa ! holloa ! Marchmont, that won't do, Marchmont—keep you temper, Marchmont !

COL. M. (*furious.*) Hold your impudent tongue, sir ! (*then suddenly.*) Hark'ye, Wiggins, or Figgins, or whatever your confounded name is—you're a new servant—I know nothing of you—if that strong box isn't found in three minutes, I'll give you in charge of the police ! You hear—three minutes ! (*lays his watch on the table and goes out hurriedly, R. H.*)

SIR B. "In charge of the police !" There's another let down for the last remaining relic of the days of chivalry.

MRS. M. (*hysterically.*) You hear, sir ? fifteen thousand pounds !

SIR B. And forty pounds of my own—total, fifteen thousand and forty !

MRS. M. We're ruined—ruined, sir—and by you !

SIR B. (*half crying.*) I did it all for the best.

MRS. M. Pshaw !

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During the above STACEY enters, R. C. and goes to fire place.

STACEY. Dear—dear—I declare the fire's gone out.

SIR B. (with a jump.) Gone out? (rushes up to fire place, and knocks screen on one side.)

STACEY. Why—I do declare—there's a box.

SIR B. (furiously.) Hold your tongue. Leave the room—leave the room, I say! (STACEY screams, and runs out alarmed, L. H.—SIR BRIAN takes the tongs and lifts the box off the fire.) It's all right. (takes it in his hands, and hurries down with it—it is so hot, he can hardly hold it—he deposits it on the table.) Now, the key—quick!

MRS. M. (giving him the Colonel's watch.) Here, here—

SIR B. (fumbling away at the lock—at last opens the box, and takes out the pocket book, which he flourishes in triumph.) No!—this isn't mine, this is full of bank notes. (puts it back again.) Ah! here, madam, here's my pocket book, and in it are the letters. (giving pocket book to MRS. MARCHMONT.)

MRS. M. (taking a paper parcel out of pocket book, and opening it, hurriedly.) There are no letters here!

SIR B. No letters? (rushing down.)

MRS. M. It's only an old newspaper! (SIR BRIAN falls into chair.) But what's this? a note addressed to me—(reads.) "Mr. Tomkins regrets he cannot return Mrs. Marchmont's letters—"

SIR B. The villain.

MRS. M. "For the simple reason that he destroyed them all five years ago," (joyfully.) Destroyed them? (reading.) "but being in particular want of a thousand pounds, he persuaded his chivalrous friend, Sir Brian—"

SIR B. That'll do, I've been swindled.

MRS. M. Ha, ha, ha! We might have spared ourselves a great deal of anxiety—but, believe me, I fully appreciate the generous motive which has dictated your conduct.

(holding out her hand.)

SIR B. (kissing her hand respectfully.) I am more than repaid. (aside.) I'll kill that Tomkins.

MRS. M. Well thought of—that box must be locked again. (takes the watch, and goes to the table, turning her back to SIR BRIAN.)

SIR B. (*slowly buttoning up his livery coat.*) My task is now accomplished—and having restored peace of mind to an interesting female, and been swindled out of a thousand pounds, I think I have every reason to be perfectly satisfied. (*perceiving he is in livery—drags the coat off, and puts on his own, which is upon the chair.*)

Enter COLONEL, R. H.

COL. M. The three minutes have elapsed. (*seeing SIR BRIAN, who is making a profound bow to MRS MARCHMONT, who makes a low curtsey in return.*)

SIR B. Madam, I respectfully take my leave. (*turns and finds himself nose to nose with the COLONEL.*) Wheugh!—

COL. M. (*very quietly and coldly.*) That bow has betrayed you, sir, you are not a servant!

MRS. M. Charles!

COL. M. Silence, madam—this person requires no prompting, for you are doubtless perfectly agreed upon the explanation to be given. Who are you, sir?

SIR B. Why, at present, sir, I can only say that I wish you a very good morning.

COL. M. One moment, sir. You enter my house, under an assumed character—your motive *may* be a very innocent one—but I, sir, look upon you as one of two equally disreputable characters—a lover, in disguise—or what—

SIR B. Or one of the swell mob. Sir, I will not insult the lady by disproving your first charge—with respect to the second, I'll simply ask you, if you ever knew a member of that numerous fraternity restore stolen property to the amount of fifteen thousand pounds. (*flinging the box to the COLONEL.*)

COL. M. Zounds! It's quite hot!

SIR B. Yes! I've been sitting on it—to take care of it! you'll find it all right!

COL. M. I'll soon ascertain! (*opening box.*) Yes, yes, here is my pocket book sure enough. Ah, I see it all—(*looking at the notes—then suddenly to SIR BRIAN, with intention, and good humouredly.*) Perhaps you are here to protect my property, eh?

SIR B. (*with a look at MRS. MARCHMONT.*) Perhaps!

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COL. M. In short—(*with a familiar tap on Sir Brian's shoulder.*) You're a policeman in plain clothes, eh?

SIR B. (*indignantly.*) A policeman ! (MRS. MARCHMONT looks imploringly at him. *Bluntly to COLONEL.*) Yes, your honour—I'm a detective. You've heard of Inspector Field ? Well, his aunt's mother married my second cousin's uncle. (*aside.*) A detective ! to think of the last remaining relic of the days of chivalry coming to that.

COL. M. Then you had grounds to suspect my property was in danger.

SIR B. (*with another look at MRS. MARCHMONT.*) Yes—I heard that you didn't take as much care of it as you ought—so I came to look after it !

COL. M. Thank you—there's a guinea for you.

SIR B. We're not allowed to take money ; but I'll tell you what to do with it, pay it at the doors of the Haymarket Theatre, then it will sure to come to me ; and—(*to audience.*) and perhaps you'll do the same. You especially ladies, whose husbands are not quite so indulgent as they ought to be—so extend your powers, yourselves—and come out as often as you like ! but mind you come here : your husbands will be sure to follow you—then the last remaining relic of the days of chivalry will have his full reward for advocating the Rights and redressing the Wrongs of Woman.

CURTAIN.