

THE
WOMAN OF THE
WORLD.

A Comedy,

IN THREE ACTS.

BY
J. STIRLING COYNE.

AUTHOR OF

Nothing Venture Nothing Win, Separate Maintenance, Vicar of Wakefield, The Love-knot, Presented at Court, What will they say at Brompton? Man of Many Friends, Box and Cox Married and Settled, Binks the Bagman, How to Settle Accounts with your Laundress, Did you ever send your wife to Camberwell, A Duel in the Dark, Leo the Terrible, Mrs. Bunbury's Spoons, The Water Witches, An Unprotected Female, The Pas de Fascination, The Hope of the Family, Willikins and his Dinah, The Old Chateau, Fraud and its Victims, Catching a Mermaid, The Secret Agent, Samuel in Search of Himself, A Terrible Secret, Broken-hearted Club, The Queer Subject, Queen of the Abruzzi, Satanus, Valsha, Trumpeter's Daughter, Our National Defences, Wanted 1,000 Milliners, Everybody's Friend, Little Rebel, Pets of the Parterre, etc., etc., etc.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
89, STRAND, LONDON.

WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

*First performed at the Royal Olympic Theatre, under the management of Mr. B. Webster,
on Monday February 17th, 1868, a Comedy in Three Acts, entitled the*

WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

GIDEON GOLDENBIRD	(a Millionaire)	Mr. HORACE WIGAN
SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH, M.P.		Mr. ADDISON
FRANK MERRITON		Mr. CHARLES MATHEWS
SHERIDAN JONES	Mr. R. SOUTAR	MORDEN
PROFESSOR MUDDIMAN		Mr. ASHLEY
ADMIRAL YELLOWLEES		Mr. COWDERT
GROUSE	Mr. G. VINCENT	Mr. FRANKS
MRS. EDDYSTONE		Mr. F. COOPER
ALICE BRANDON		Mrs. STIRLING
LADY PENFEATHER		Miss LOUISA MOORE
PRISCILLA PRANKS	Miss E. FARREN	Mrs. CAULFIELD
	GUESTS, SERVANTS, ETC.	MARTHA
		Miss SCHAVEY

THE NEW SCENERY BY MR. HAWES CRAVEN.

The Piece produced under the Direction of Mr. HORACE WIGAN.

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GIDEON GOLDENBIRD'S VILLA AT SYDENHAM.

ACT I.

ACT II.

MRS. EDDYSTONNE'S BOUDOIR.

ACT III.

A P A R T M E N T IN M E R R I T O N ' S H O U S E , M A Y F A I R .

HALL IN MERRITON'S HOUSE.

JONES'S LODGING S.

Time - - - - 1860.

AN INTERVAL OF TWELVE MONTHS BETWEEN THE SECOND AND THIRD ACTS.

WOMAN OF THE WORLD.

ACT I.

SCENE.—A richly-furnished apartment on the ground floor of Gideon Goldenbird's villa at Sydenham—a conservatory R. U. E. filled with plants and flowers, divided from the apartment by light pillars, around which are trained climbing plants—window R. and L. flat. Door of entrance L. U. E., smoking-room door L. 1 E., door to interior of house R. 2 E. A causeuse for four persons c. a little way up stage. Two small tables, R. and L., near front of stage. On the rising of the curtain all the persons on the stage, with the exception of SHERIDAN JONES, are asleep. On the L. GIDEON GOLDENBIRD sleeps in an easy chair, his head thrown back, next to him on L. LADY PENFEATHER, on the same side ALICE BRANDON near the piano, MRS. EDDYSTONE seated on causeuse c. facing audience, ADMIRAL YELLOWLEES on causeuse, R. SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH, R. front, his head resting on small table on which the "Times," which he has been reading, is spread. MISS FLITTERLY in an easy chair next to SIR JOHN, PROFESSOR MUDDIMAN on same side nodding and recovering himself continually. SHERIDAN JONES seated at table c. facing audience and reading a manuscript play.

Enter FRANK MERRITON, L. U. E.

MERRI. Nobody to announce me, then I must present myself. (coming down bows to MUDDIMAN, who nods heavily) Excuse me—I—oh! Pardon (to YELLOWLEES) Oh!—allow me to — (to LADY PENFEATHER) Eh!—may I be permitted (to SIR JOHN) Fast!—I hope, madam, I — (to MRS. EDDYSTONE) Good gracious, here I am transported unawares into the dominions of the Sleeping Beauty in the

Wood. Everybody seems buried in profound slumber (*looks at his watch*) yet 'tis only five and a half minutes past four. It can't be bed-time yet.

JONES. Asleep. (*rising*) Every one of them has fallen asleep while I was reading the first act of my play. (*GOLDENBIRD snores*) The brute is snoring. Psha! genius is wasted upon them. (*sits sulkily next to ADMIRAL YELLOWLEES on causeuse, R.*) If they had kept awake till the third act.

MERRI. Hey, somebody has resisted the soporific spell! (*JONES rises and each recognise the other.*)

JONES. Hey, Merriton!

MERRI. Sheridan Jones, old fellow.

JONES. Devilish glad to see you. But, excuse my curiosity, what brings you here? (*confidentially*) Have you a play to read?

MERRI. Play? Not I.

JONES. I congratulate you. I was invited to read my drama, "The Three Spectres of the Drachenfels," to a select circle, and there's the result, every one of them asleep.

MERRI. May your three spectres haunt their guilty consciences. Don't awake them, I want to relate to you a curious history. (*JONES yawns*) You need not yawn, it won't be as tedious as your drama.

JONES. Go on.

MERRI. The hero is myself, I may, therefore, with becoming modesty say the subject is interesting. Three months ago I was a barrister living in peaceful retirement, undisturbed by clients or solicitors, third floor, South-square, Gray's-inn. By the death of an unexpected uncle—I mean by the unexpected death of an uncle who had amassed several bungalows full of Indian rupees, I became the enormous possessor—I mean the possessor of the enormous wealth of my deceased relative.

JONES. Lucky dog!

MERRI. In the helpless confusion of my mind, struggling with millions of rupees—I applied to my friend Jack Capel, the stock-broker, who recommended me to invest my money in consols and my affections in a wife.

JONES. A wife!

MERRI. He has even negotiated a match for me with the niece of Gideon Goldenbird, the millionaire of the Stock Exchange.

JONES. (*aside*) Ah, her uncle! Alice Brandon, the adored

of my heart!—we have long loved in secret,—but he must not perceive my agitation. (*pointing to GOLDENBIRD*) There he sleeps, the sweet sleep of a bull in a field of rising shares. Placid happiness—well?

MERRI. Jack Capel took all the trouble off my hands, arranged the whole affair, so that I should have nothing to do but drive down here to Sydenham, introduce myself to Goldenbird, and marry the girl if I like her.

JONES. Then you have not yet seen your intended.

MERRI. Not yet, but our fortunes have had an interview which has been perfectly satisfactory on both sides;—as for the lady, I am to be married to her for life, (*sighs*) so I shall have time enough to contemplate her at leisure. Ah! by Jove! I say, Jones (*indicating MRS. EDDYSTONE*) that's a fine, intellectual head—I love intellect in woman. Look here, I'm a bit of a phrenologist, and I can see at a glance this is not an ordinary head—all the organs denoting strength of will and intellectual power largely developed. Who is she?

JONES. Mrs. Eddystone, a clever widow, a female diplomatist who fascinates men of every political creed, and, it is said, contrives to make fools of them all.

MERRI. I dare say Nature has anticipated her in most cases.

JONES. Hush! she may not be asleep. (*in an undertone*) She has even managed to entangle the great Opposition Leader, Sir John Moleborough. He who sleeps there over the parliamentary debates.

MERRI. (*surprised*) Moleborough! you don't mean the celebrated orator who makes such powerful speeches in the House, and is known to be the author of the letters signed "Timon."

JONES. The very man.

MERRI. Good gracious; can that be the tremendous "Timon" whose fierce denunciations make ministers tremble on the Treasury benches. See, if his fiery intellect hasn't singed the hair from the crown of his head.

JONES. Oh! he's a man of immense capacity.

MERRI. A sort of mental reservoir that may burst upon you and overwhelm you in a moment. Do you know I can never speak to one of those political giants without stammering. Singular effect, isn't it?

JONES. Very.

MERRI. And these other figures in the picture, who are they?

JONES. All guests invited to hear me read my drama. Admiral Yellowlees, the oracle of the Jockey Club. Lady Penfeather, the kindest of women, who kills characters that she may drop a tear over them in their grave. Professor Muddiman, who has been trying for twenty years to understand his own system of political economy. Miss Flitterly the sensational novelist; Colonel Stormount who devotes his great military genius to hatching silkworms' eggs.

MERRI. Ha! ha! ha! ha! (*trying to stifle his laughter he inadvertently treads on SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH's toes, the latter, with a cry of pain, springs to his feet, overturning the table on which he has been resting, and jumping about in extreme pain.*)

SIR J. Oh! oh! oh! oh! Who the devil— Oh! oh! (*all the other sleepers awake, and endeavour to collect their senses.*)

GOLDEN. (*applauding*) Bravo! bravo! very fine!

JONES. (*aside to MERRITON*) Applause for my drama.

MERRI. (*aside to JONES*) Through which they slept so comfortably.

MRS. E. Charming! charming! the characters are so admirably drawn, the dialogue so sparkling, the wit so brilliant, and the situations so powerful, that it can't fail being an enormous success when it comes out.

LADY P. It must be good—for it's remarkably like a famous comedy I once witnessed.

SIR J. (*dancing about*) But who the devil took the liberty— Ah! ah!

MERRI. (*taking up table, and holding it*) I beg—pa—pa—pap — (*aside to JONES*) I knew I should stammer when I spoke to him.

GOLDEN. A stranger! (*to MERRITON*) Allow me to observe, sir, I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance. (*SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH, L., endeavouring to recover his composure.*)

MERRI. (*still holding the table*) Permit me then to introduce myself. Frank Merriton!

GOLDEN. A thousand pardons, Mr. Merriton, delighted to see you in my humble cottage. Let me shake your hand, my dear sir.

MERRI. Certainly, shake my hand with all my heart.

GOLDEN. But — (*pointing to table, which MERRITON holds.*)

MERRI. Oh! ah! the table, I'll put it away. (*while*

speaking to GOLDENBIRD crosses to L., and without seeing SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH, puts down the table on his foot.)

SIR J. (*starting back*) Sir! sir! this conduct is not to be tolerated.

MERRI. I b-b-beg to ap-p-p-p-ologise—I really d-d-d-didn't see you.

SIR J. Not see me, sir? I fancied I was a man not to be altogether overlooked in the world.

MRS. E. Pray don't be angry, Sir John. (*aside to him*) You must forgive him, young men are so awkward, you know. (*aloud, and looking at MERRITON*) I dare say the gentleman regrets the pain he has given you.

MERRI. Exceedingly, exceedingly, and 'tis very kind of you to express what I meant so much better than I could.

MRS. E. No thanks; I'm always happy to help a struggling fellow creature.

MERRI. I understand; the natural goodness of your heart, and—a—the—a—the —

MRS. E. The previous good character of the prisoner recommends him to mercy.

MERRI. Precisely. (*aside*) Now is she laughing at me—or —

GOLDEN. (*coming to c.*) Come, come, allow me to say that Mr. Merriton is my friend, my particular friend, (*takes his hand*) whom I feel proud to introduce to my friends as the future husband of my niece, Miss Brandon. (*ALICE utters a slight exclamation of alarm and runs off R. 2 E., followed by SHERIDAN JONES. All the GUESTS, except SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH and MRS. EDDYSTONE, come down and look curiously at MERRITON.*)

LADY P. (*aside to one of the GUESTS*) Poor victim!

MRS. E. (*laughing*) Ha! ha! ha! ha! Entered for the matrimonial stakes, Mr. Merriton? I wish you joy. (*half aside to him*) Miss Brandon is rich enough to smooth the course of true love with bushels of gold dust.

MERRI. (*in an under tone*) Yes, yes; but has she intellect? is she clever? witty? fascinating? Can she turn the heads of every man she meets, (*laughing*) as I'm told you do?

MRS. E. (*half apart*) Oh, what a horrid calumny—I turn no heads, Mr. Merriton, but those that are too weak to resist a breath of flattery.

SIR J. (*aside*) I should like to know what they are whispering about.

GOLDEN. Mr. Merriton, you have not been presented to my niece yet. (*calls*) Alice! She was here a minute ago!

MRS. E. The poor thing fled like a frightened lapwing when she heard you speak of an intended husband. The natural timidity of a girl of eighteen.

LADY P. But when we become widows of a certain age, (*looking steadily at Mrs. EDDYSTONE*) our sex grows more courageous.

MRS. E. My dear Lady Penfeather, courage is unnecessary to some women; Nature has kindly given them faces that are their best defence.

GOLDEN. (*apart to MERRITON*) I can feel for your impatience, my young friend, but Alice will soon be here. (*aside*) I told her this morning to put on all her fine clothes and jewelry.

MERRI. (*to GOLDENBIRD*) Pray don't let her hurry, I'm not impatient, and while you have such charming society here, (*bowing to Mrs. EDDYSTONE*) time cannot pass slowly.

MRS. E. (*slightly inclining her head*) But there may be danger of its passing too rapidly when we like our company.

MERRI. True. As some poet says, "time never travels faster than—than—a—"

MRS. E. "Than when his path lies amongst flowers."

MERRI. That's the line. (*aside*) Wonderfully clever woman, just the sort of wife to quicken a man's intellectual powers.

GOLDEN. How do you like the improvements I have made in the house and grounds, Mrs. Eddystone?

MRS. E. So well that I have taken a villa in your neighbourhood, where I propose giving, during the season, little soireés, to a select circle of poets, painters, writers, and orators; and hope to draw around me all that is clever, witty, and agreeable in town.

MERRI. All madam?

MRS. E. All—including Mr. Merriton, if he will so far honour me. (*gives him a card*)

MERRI. (*bowing*) Oh, madam! (*aside*) She has certainly a most fascinating manner.

SIR J. (*aside*) She's coquetting now with that fellow who crushed my gouty toe.

GOLDEN. We shall have time for a walk round the garden before dinner. I want to show Mr. Merriton my new fish pond. Will you come, Sir John?

SIR J. I have no objection. I can think while I walk. There's a leader in "The Times" this morning that means something—I won't say what—but I'll stake my sagacity I'm right.

MERRI. (*apart to MRS. EDDYSTONE*) He's a prudent gambler, and only ventures a small stake. (*SIR JOHN takes "The Times" under his arm, and is marching off majestically, when MERRITON, who finds himself in SIR JOHN's way, draws back, and bows deferentially.*)

MERRI. Sir J-j-j-john, I hope I havn't g-g-g-g-gig—
SIR J. (*pompously*) Good morning sir.

MERRI. (*aside*) Pompous ass! (*SIR JOHN makes a slight acknowledgment with his hand, and walks majestically into conservatory, R. U. E., followed by GOLDENBIRD.*)

MUDDI. Will you take my arm and allow me to explain to you the laws of affinity and selection.

LADY P. Thanks dear professor; but every woman understands those laws thoroughly. (*she takes ADMIRAL YELLOWLEES' arm—they exeunt into the conservatory, R. U. E., followed by the other GUESTS, except MRS. EDDYSTONE and MERRITON.*)

MRS. E. Come, Mr. Merriton, lend me your arm. You look as if you could be amusing if you liked. What shall we talk about? I want something to laugh at.

MERRI. Then we'll talk about our friends.

MRS. E. I've got none. I have admirers, followers, adorers, flatterers—as many as any reasonable woman can desire; but amidst the crowd of worshippers who praise my wit or laugh at my satire—when it don't touch themselves—can the woman of the world find *one* true friend? No—not one. (*laughing*) Come, I have been too candid. Let us go and moralize by the fish ponds.

MERRI. And carp at the world.

(*exeunt MRS. EDDYSTONE and MERRITON, C.*

Enter from L. 2 E., ALICE BRANDON and SHERIDAN JONES.

JONES. The dream of happiness is over, dear Alice; and, according to all the rules of the drama, we must part.

ALICE. Don't say we must part. You remember that night when with the pale moon and stars for our witnesses, we swore eternal fidelity.

JONES. Oh, I shall never forget it; the situation was so dramatic that I've brought it into my comedy.

ALICE. All my fortune, as you know, depends on my uncle who has destined my hand to this rich stranger; but he may relent when he knows how miserable the match would make me.

JONES. An uncle never relents till the fifth act, just before the curtain comes down. Hey, what do you say to

our running away together—eloping—they do so in several popular comedies, and always successfully. All my worldly possessions consist of an unacted drama.

ALICE. Or stay—I have a better idea. Suppose I try to make this Mr. Merriton refuse to marry me?

JONES. Refuse to marry you! the man's not a fool.

ALICE. Never mind, I'll assume a character and make him imagine that I'm a vulgar, impudent, country girl. If the man has taste, sense or feeling, he'll declare the match off.

JONES. Hey, good! There's originality in the design. Have you courage to play the part?

ALICE. You shall see. (*making a sign of silence*) Hush! somebody coming. (*they exit R. 2 E.*

Enter from L. U. E., MORDEN, he has a haggard, dissipated look, his clothes are shabby but he wears them with a gentlemanly air.

MORDEN. (*coming down L.*) She is here amongst the swarm of summer flies whom I hear buzzing yonder. (*looks off R., into conservatory*) Ah! she sees me. Her eyes flashed as they met mine—she comes. (*he comes down to R. c.*—

Then enter MRS. EDDYSTONE from the conservatory to L. C., speaking in angry, but suppressed tones.

MRS. E. Mr. Morden, what brings you here?

MORDEN. Business—Mrs. Eddystone—and—a—in fact, I heard you were spending the day here, so I followed you, as all the world follows you. By-the-bye, I want you to introduce me to old Mammon, your host; he might—ha! ha! ha! ha!—lend me ten pounds.

MRS. E. (*aside*) What on earth shall I do?

MORDEN. Perhaps I've taken a liberty, and you don't care to introduce a shabby Bohemian to your friends.

MRS. E. No—no, I'm always delighted to see you—but at this moment—

MORDEN. You'd excuse my company. That's unkind, for I came to speak to you about the next letter you want from "Timon."

MRS. E. Hush! for heaven's sake hush! there are ears not far off that may catch your words. Those letters are of more importance to me than you suspect, they are the wings upon which I hope to soar to the summit of my wishes. I am a woman of the world, and I have a part to play in it. I am ambitious and long for power and rank—

wealth and honour ; there is one way only by which I may attain them—and that way is to marry Sir John Moleborough.

MORDEN. Marry him ?

MRS. E. Yes, I have become necessary to his political existence ; the letters he publishes, and the speeches he makes—

MORDEN. Are all written by me.

MRS. E. True, but I pay you liberally for your work, do I not ?

MORDEN. Oh yes, you pay for a man's brains as you do for your wax lights, and you watch them wasting away hour by hour, till they expire in the socket. I am your slave and servant. I write those speeches and letters for you, and you pay me for them with your gold—which brings me mad excitement.

MRS. E. Ah, Morden, how you are changed ! Ten years ago—when I first knew you, you were the brightest, gayest, and most genial of our circle.

MORDEN. Ten years ago ! I remember I was in love with you then. I could no more live without the light of your smile, than the flowers in your garden can without sunshine. But that dream is past. I laugh at my folly, and can stoop to be paid by the hand which I would once have given years of my life to kiss.

MRS. E. You are a gentleman, and should fill a gentleman's place in society.

MORDEN. Pooh ! the only place I am fit for is the chairman's perch of the "Convivial Owls" :—there I am king amongst my joyous companions.

MRS. E. (*aside*) He has sunk past hope.

MORDEN. Don't think of my bitter words, Mrs. Eddystone. Lend me a sovereign in advance on "Timon's" next letter.

MRS. E. (*perceiving SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH in conservatory*) Hush—begone ! (MORDEN goes up and sits L.—*Then enter from conservatory SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH.* MRS. EDDYSTONE crosses to meet him.)

SIR J. At last I have the happiness of a moment's conversation with you. (*she indicates MORDEN by a gesture*) Ah ! (*apart to her*) Who is that low looking person ?

MRS. E. (*apart to SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH*) A young fellow named Morden, who came to London from college to fight the battle of life at the bar. It was too much for him, he fell into habits of idleness and dissipation, and

there he is. I employ him confidentially to copy my manuscripts—you know I write a wretched hand.

SIR J. (*aside to MRS. EDDYSTONE*) Can he be trusted? will he be secret?

MRS. E. (*aside to SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH*) As a woman with her age. You must do something for the poor fellow when your party gets into power.

SIR J. (*aside to MRS. EDDYSTONE*) When we get in, you may command me. And that reminds me to ask my dear friend "Timon," to write another letter:—we shall want a stinger this time.

MRS. E. (*aside to SIR JOHN*) It shall be bitter enough:—I can dip my pen in gall, for a friend.

SIR J. Ha! ha! ha! For a friend. (*aside*) Clever creature, I've almost a mind to—Hem! a wife who could write my speeches and air my flannels would be a treasure.

MRS. E. You look pale and delicate, Sir John. You overwork yourself, indeed you do; you need rest, and care—come and take a turn in the garden, the fresh air will do you good.

SIR J. (*aside*) How soothing is the tender solicitude of woman. (*he offers her his arm, which she accepts, looking at MORDEN*. *Exeunt SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH and MRS. EDDYSTONE into conservatory, R. U. E., at the same time GOLDENBIRD enters L. U. E., holding an open telegram in his hand. A TELEGRAPH BOY comes on with him; GOLDENBIRD signs the receipt at table and gives it to TELEGRAPH BOY, who exits L. U. E.*)

GOLDEN. The marriage must be concluded before this news becomes public. My confidential clerk whom I left in the city to watch the storm, is getting alarmed, and sends me this telegram. (*reads*) "Two more banks gone this morning, for three millions—credit paralysed—a panic on 'Change.' Hm! 'tis come at last. Already my creditors begin to suspect that the lofty edifice of my fortunes is tottering to its fall; and my solicitor warns me that Hardman, the billdiscounter, is going to put in an execution. That must be prevented; an exposure would destroy all my plans. (*perceives MORDEN*) Who is this man? Hush! I know by instinct he's a sheriff's officer, he must be propitiated. (*aloud to MORDEN*) Hem! hem! I beg your pardon, my friend. (*MORDEN starts*) Keep your seat, don't move, I know your business.

MORDEN. You know it?

GOLDEN. Perfectly, I have been expecting you all the morning.

MORDEN. Indeed! (*aside*) For whom does he take me?

GOLDEN. As a private individual I admire you, but in your professional capacity your presence here at this moment is rather embarrassing.

MORDEN. (*moving off*) In that case, I know my duty.

GOLDEN. Stay, don't be offended, my dear sir, sit down. (*pushes him back in chair, L., and sits opposite him*) Duty should be the guiding star in every English bosom, but circumstances may justify us in pausing—I say pausing—

MORDEN. Then you are not an advocate for immediate execution.

GOLDEN. (*alarmed*) Certainly not. Ha! ha! ha! I perceive you comprehend me; one day's grace is all I require, and as nobody knows you here you shall stay to dinner as one of my guests.

MORDEN. (*to GOLDENBIRD*) One day!—you shall have it. (*aside*) He might have had twelve months.

GOLDEN. Thanks, thanks. (*shakes his hand warmly in both his*) You will not find me ungrateful. But—a—hem! your costume is scarcely suitable for the society you will meet at my table, I will direct my servant to find you a suit of my clothes—quite equal to new.

MORDEN. (*proudly*) Give your cast off attire to your valet, Mr. Goldenbird; I don't wish to be mistaken for a secondhand gentleman.

GOLDEN. No offence I hope. (*aside*) What is the world coming to when sheriff's officers stand upon their dignity. (*to MORDEN*) Hush!

Enter SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH, MRS. EDDYSTONE and MERRITON, from conservatory, R.

MRS. E. We have had a delightful walk. (*sees MORDEN*) Here, still! (*aside*)

GOLDEN. (*introducing him*) My friend, Mr.—a, Mr.—a—*a*— (*aside to MORDEN*) Any name?

MORDEN. (*aside to GOLDENBIRD*) Morden.

GOLDEN. Ah, yes, Morden—my friend Morden.

SIR J. (*aside to GOLDENBIRD*) A most remarkable specimen of a friend.

GOLDEN. (*aside to them*) Yes, Sir John—singular character, and very eccentric in his habits.

MERRI. (*apart to them*) He might have said very seedy. (*they laugh*)

MORD. (*aside*) They are laughing at me, and I havn't the spirit to face them. I want the courage that brandy gives

to the coward. (*speaks apart to GOLDENBIRD*) I feel rather low and disgusted with the world—might I request a glass of brandy.

GOLDEN. (*aside to him*) Brandy! certainly, you will find a spirit stand in my smoking room there. (*points to door, L. 1 E.*) Take what you like. (*moves towards L.*)

MORD. Thanks, thanks!

(*exit into room, L. 1 E.*, GOLDENBIRD returns to c.)

MRS. E. Do you know, Mr. Goldenbird, we are all enchanted with your villa and grounds.

SIR J. And your fish pond—the carp are enormous.

GOLDEN. Well—a—it is a pretty spot, but small—small. My niece took a fancy to the place, and it only cost ten thousand pounds.

Enter ALICE BRANDON, R. 2 E., she is dressed richly, but tawdrily, and wears a quantity of jewelry.

Ah! here she comes. (*apart to MERRITON*) Now prepare to be dazzled. (*GOLDENBIRD goes up and conducts ALICE down R., she appears awkward in her gait and carriage.*)

MERRI. (*aside*) Dazzled! Yes, she should be looked at through a smoked glass to protect the eyes.

GOLDEN. (*apart to ALICE*) Hold up your head and look him in the face, he won't swallow you. (*aloud*) Miss Brandon, Mr. Merriton. (*introduces them, MERRITON bows formally, GOLDENBIRD pulls ALICE by the dress, she curtseys awakrdly, in rising treads on her dress and nearly falls—the GUESTS laugh aside, MERRITON prevents her from falling.*)

ALICE. Oh! If you hadn't caught me I should have been down, but it wasn't my fault, it's the dress that keeps tripping me up at every step.

GOLDEN. (*aside to MERRITON*) She hasn't quite got over her country simplicity yet, but that will rub off. Observe what a lovely complexion she has.

MERRI. (*aside to GOLDENBIRD*) Will that rub off too?

GOLDEN. (*aside to MERRITON*) No, no! Every article warranted genuine.

MERRI. (*aside to GOLDENBIRD*) Jewelry included?

GOLDEN. (*aside to MERRITON*) Jewelry included.

MERRI. That, at least, is encouraging.

Enter GROUSE, R. 2 E.

GROUSE. Lunch is laid under the tent on the lawn, sir!

GOLDEN. Very well. (*exit GROUSE, R. 2 E.; GOLDENBIRD beckons SIR JOHN and LADY PENFEATHER to R., and speaks to them aside*) Let us leave the young people to themselves,

they may have some confidential communications to make.

LADY P. The sooner we get away then, the better. I hate to see young people making fools of themselves. Give me your arm, Mr. Goldenbird; thank heaven, you and I have outlived such nonsense.

MRS. E. (*laughing and taking SIR JOHN's arm, half aside to him*) Have we passed the age of folly, Sir John?

SIR J. (*laughing, to her, aside*) Enchantress! Ask me have we passed the age of love!

(*exit GOLDENBIRD and LADY PENFEATHER and SIR JOHN and MRS. EDDYSTONE to R.*)

MERRI. (*aside*) How shall I begin? (*coughs sharply*) Hem!

ALICE. (*starts and gives a little scream*) Ha! you brought my heart to my mouth.

MERRI. I wish I could bring mine to meet it there, dear Alice.

ALICE. That would be impossible you know.

MERRI. (*aside*) Bah! She's a literal idiot; but she has twenty thousand pounds. (*to her*) Miss Brandon I have been impatiently expecting the pleasure of making your acquaintance.

ALICE. Oh, yes they brought me up from Devonshire to be married to you. I wish they had left me there.

MERRI. (*aside*) Flattering! (*to her*) You are fond of pastoral life, I presume?

ALICE. (*puzzled*) Pass—what?

MERRI. Country life?

ALICE. Oh, I just am—especially in the hay season when I have such fun with Dick and Tom, and Willy—

MERRI. In the hay?

ALICE. In the hay, to be sure; when we get tired we sing songs and drink syllabub, and come home by moonlight.

MERRI. With Dick and Tom, and Willy?

ALICE. And Ned as well.

MERRI. Oh, ah, hem! There are other amusements though, to which you are partial?

ALICE. Ah, bless you, yes! I'm main fond of rolling down a hill wi' Dick—and there's hop-scotch—you should see me playing hop-scotch. (*she gives an imitation of the game.*)

MERRI. I perceive you like the vigorous exercises of the rural population, but you have other more—a—refined tastes? You play or sing?

ALICE. They say I sing desperate pretty—just you listen.
(sings in country style)

“One morning very early,
 One morning in the spring,
 I walked into the meadows,
 To hear the small birds sing.

MERRI. There, there, that will do, I’m perfectly convinced of your vocal abilities; but I must be candid with you, and as your future husband, express my disapproval of the general result of your country education.

ALICE. Who asked for your approval? I didn’t. I’m come to London to marry you, but if you wish to be off the bargain, I’m not a bit anxious for it; there’s as good fish in the sea, as ever was caught, and in my mind, a deal better.

MERRI. *(aside)* Here’s country simplicity with a vengeance. What a contrast between her and that splendid intellectual woman, Mrs. Eddystone. *(glancing at her)* Bah!

ALICE. I’m going to lunch. If you like you may follow me, if you don’t, I shan’t spoil my eyes crying for you.

(exit, singing a country song, R.)

MERRI. Follow her! I’ll see her —. Never mind—an ill-bred, awkward country wench. If I could find any decent pretext for breaking off the match—I’d do it.

(exit R., into conservatory.)

Enter GOLDENBIRD, R.—A TELEGRAPH BOY enters, L. U. E.

Boy. Gideon Goldenbird—telegram.

GOLDEN. Give it me. *(takes the telegram, the TELEGRAPH Boy exits, L. U. E., GOLDENBIRD reads telegram)* “Panic increasing. Bears driving all before them—shares going down—two more banks gone—prepare for the worst.” Prepare for the worst. *(takes a bank book and memorandum book from his pocket, and turns over leaves)* I am prepared. When a man owes, let me see—*(looking at his memorandum book)*—a round sum of one hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds, and has nothing to pay it with but a bundle of waste paper, the preparation for a smash is not difficult.

Enter GROUSE, R. 2 E., and advances cautiously, listening.
 The girl’s fortune is gone—not a shilling left—but if she marries this rich fellow, who don’t seem overburdened

with brains, I may squeeze him for a few thousands. (*sees GROUSE, who pretends to be arranging papers on table at back*). Grouse, what are you doing there?

GROUSE. Putting your table to rights, sir.

GOLDEN. Humph! (*aside*) He's too stupid to be dangerous. Have the cards for the *fête* on the 16th been sent out?

GROUSE. Every one, sir.

GOLDEN. And the orders to the confectioners, florists, and fruiterers?

GROUSE. They have gone, sir.

GOLDEN. Let no cost be spared—money is no object to me. By the way Grouse, I have been for some time thinking of raising my faithful servants' wages, and you may tell them I have done so from this date.

GROUSE. Ah, sir, you are all that is kind and noble and generous. (*exit GOLDENBIRD, R. 2 E.*) A rascally rogue and swindler. (*MERRITON is seen re-entering from conservatory*.

GROUSE. Ah, here's Mr. Merriton, who is going to marry master's niece. He little knows the doom that awaits him. I've a good mind to warn him of his danger—I'll do it—why shouldn't I? It will make him my friend.

Enter MERRITON, R.

Mr. Merriton (*beckons to him mysteriously*) may I have a word with you?

MERRI. Certainly, Grouse, what is it? (*comes down to c.*)

GROUSE. Humph! (*looks off R. returns to c.*) Shall I tell you something?

MERRI. If it be any relief to your mind, do.

GROUSE. (*looks off L. returns to c.*) You're a victim.

MERRI. Am I? Then I'm a remarkably cheerful one.

GROUSE. (*looks off R. comes to c.*) You're going to marry Mr. Goldenbird's niece.

MERRI. Perhaps!

GROUSE. Don't!

MERRI. Why not?

GROUSE. Because (*looking off on every side, coming to c.*) he's ruined—she's ruined—I'm ruined—we're all ruined, and you'll be ruined if you marry her.

MERRI. Hey, ruined—Mr. Goldenbird!

GROUSE. Teetotally smashed. Look here, sir (*takes a bundle of accounts from table*) these tradesmen's bills—coachmaker—upholsterer—livery-stable keeper—wine

merchant—tailor—not a receipt to one of them, and three quarters wages due in the servant's hall.

MERRI. Still that don't prove a man to be ruined.

GROUSE. No, sir, no. Some gentlemen don't feel comfortable without debts. Serve them as ballast and keep them steady. But that's not all! Hush! (*looks off R. and L. and returns to C.*) I'm a going to confide in your honour, Mr. Merriton. This letter fell by accident into my hands this morning (*produces a letter*) while I was brushing master's clothes. It's from Cursitor, master's confidential solicitor; read it, sir, and blush for the British lion.

MERRI. (*reads*) "Dear G.—Impossible to raise a loan on the shares. Hardman has issued execution against your effects at Sydenham, you may expect the bailiffs to pay you an early visit. The fellows must be bribed to keep quiet for a few days. Have you secured that rich husband for your niece? He is your only hope now to weather the storm!"

GROUSE. What do you think of that?

MERRI. Think? Why, that I've had a lucky escape from the old impostor.

GROUSE. Isn't it disgusting, Mr. Merriton, that human nature should go into the Bankruptcy Court with three quarters' servants wages hanging on the neck of his conscience?

MERRI. You, at least, shall not suffer, Grouse. You have rendered me an essential service, and if you have no objection to take me as a master call me yours from this day.

GROUSE. Oh, sir, there's a Providence that watches over livery in distress. I'm deeply grateful, sir.

MERRI. Give me those papers. I'll go this instant and tax the old rascal with his roguery.

GROUSE. (*giving him the papers*) Ah, sir, if the Chancellor of the Exchequer could only tax roguery what a hincome it would be to the country. (*MERRITON is going*) I beg your pardon, Mr. Merriton, but I don't mind telling you, I've an idea.

MERRI. Then welcome the little stranger.

GROUSE. My idea is — Hush! (*same business as before*) My idea is, that there's a sheriff's officer in the house—I've seen him.

MERRI. And how do you know a sheriff's officer?

GROUSE. Oh, Mr. Merriton, I've lived too long in fashionable houses not to be familiar with the species

(in an under tone) There's one of them at this moment in that room. (goes to door L. 1 E. peeps through keyhole) There—I see him enjoying himself over master's brandy and cigars.

MERRI. Well, well, you may go now. (exit GROUSE R. 2 E.) So the gigantic speculator turns out to be a man of straw—the millionaire, a pitiful swindler, who neither pays his tradesmen nor his servants, and who tried to lure me into the pitfall of matrimony with his vulgar niece! Ha! (puts the papers hastily into his pocket.)

Enter GOLDENBIRD R., with parchments in his hands.

GOLDEN. Ah, you are here as I wished. I have just received the settlements from my lawyer ready for signature. (he places the parchments on the table R. C. and passes his arm within MERRITON's arm) My dear Merriton, I'm not ashamed to acknowledge that I have formed a very high opinion of you. It is not your fortune that makes me like you. I don't value a man that (snaps his fingers) for his money. I may be rich, sir, or I may not be rich, but if I am rich I have not been spoiled by riches. I don't forget that I came to London forty years ago with half-a-crown in my pocket and breakfasted on a half-penny roll rubbed against the window pane of a cook shop.

MERRI. (aside) He might have been choked by that roll if Fate had not hemp in store for him.

GOLDEN. My sole ambition now is to see my niece married to an honest man.

MERRI. Ah, but where can you find one?

GOLDEN. Here. (placing his hand on MERRITON's shoulder)

MERRI. (looks round with a comic expression) Where?

GOLDEN. Your modesty charms me, but to prove how much I esteem you I have added two thousand pounds to my niece's fortune out of my own pocket.

MERRI. Out of your own pocket. By the bye, Mr. Goldenbird, would it not be more honest to pay some of your creditors first?

GOLDEN. (confused) My creditors?

MERRI. (taking the accounts out of his pocket) Here are their accounts, wine merchant, coach builder, livery-stable keeper, silk mercer, upholsterer, besides servants wages, amounting in the whole to —

Enter ALICE, R. from conservatory unperceived, she hears what follows.

GOLDEN. (supplicating) Mr. Merriton, for heaven's sake

do not expose me in the presence of my guests and my niece.

MERRI. As to your niece, sir, I feel myself at perfect liberty to say that I can never marry her. (*ALICE dressed plainly, comes down R. at the same moment that all the other GUESTS re-enter from conservatory, R. MORDEN appears at door of smoking-room, L. He smokes a cigar and appears half intoxicated.*)

ALICE. Do you really refuse to marry me, Mr. Merriton?

MERRI. (*starts*) Miss Brandon—I—I wasn't aware—hem! (*aside*) I must be cruel.

ALICE. Answer me; here, in the presence of our friends. Do you refuse to marry me?

MERRI. (*aside*) Ah! poor girl, how she adores me. If I say yes, she'll faint. Fainting is the normal condition of her sex. (*to MRS. EDDYSTONE, apart*) Lend me your vinagrette. (*she gives him her vinagrette*) Thanks.

ALICE. I am waiting for your reply.

MERRI. (*embarrassed—aside*) She doesn't look or speak like the same girl. Hem! I am deeply concerned, Miss Brandon, but reasons that I need not explain compel me to—Smell these salts. (*she puts the bottle aside*) Oh!—I say, compel me to decline—(*he puts the bottle to her nose—she puts it away impatiently*) Oh!—not yet?—to decline the honour of our proposed alliance. (*he again puts the bottle to her nose, she puts it away. Aside, astonished*) She won't faint:—a most insensible young woman.

LADY P. This will be damages for a broken heart.

MRS. E. (*aside*) He has rejected her—but what is that to me?

SIR J. (*aside to MRS. EDDYSTONE*) My dear Mrs. Eddy-stone, don't you think —

MRS. E. (*pettishly*) Don't talk to me now, Sir John. (*as if suddenly recollecting herself, and turning to him with a reproachful smile*) Yours is a cruel sex. (*looking at MERRITON.*)

ALICE. Mr. Merriton, the pleasure of breaking this match is mutual; I honour you for your candour, and thank you for your kindness. (*offers her hand*) Shall we part friends?

MERRI. Friends! Delighted, I'm sure. Had you rather not faint? (*offering her the vinagrette, she declines it and makes a graceful curtsey.*)

MRS. E. (*aside, and taking SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH's arm*) Conceited coxcomb! I hate him! (*JONES crosses to ALICE.*)

ALICE. Having lost my fortune, I unhesitatingly bestow my hand, where I have long given my heart. (*gives her hand to JONES.*)

JONES. And I accept it with the utmost disregard to worldly prudence. (*all express surprise*) Lovers are never expected to be reasonable in a comedy.

MERRI. Quite right, my dear Jones. (*shakes his hand*) Marry the girl you adore, and, take my word for it, in twelve months time —

MRS. E. (*interrupting him*) Never anticipate events—we are as yet only in the first act of our comedy—wait and see what will happen in the next.

END OF ACT FIRST.

A C T I I.

SCENE FIRST.—*Mrs. Eddystone's dressing-room, elegantly furnished and decorated. A French window to open, R. U. E. Door of entrance, l. 3 e. Door of Mrs. Eddystone's room, r. 1 e. Fire-place, l. 2 e. Two closets R. and L. flat with curtain to each door—a toilet-table, r. 2 e., with mirror and other accessories, a fan and pair of lady's gloves—an engagement card for a ball—a book—paper of cigarettes, and visiting card case on table—a lady's satin slipper on the carpet near the toilet—flowers in vases on the chimney-piece—couch near the fire-place, on which is a lady's driving whip and gloves; other articles of lady's attire thrown carelessly on chairs about the room.*

Enter PRISCILLA PRANKS, *hastily, door l. 3 e., she appears out of breath and slightly agitated.*

PRISCIL. Bless me! I'm quite out of breath. Hah, what a run I've had to escape from that audacious fellow who has been following me across the park. I tried all I could to get rid of him, but the more I frowned the more he laughed, and when I told him I had no mind for his company he said he knew my mind better than I did myself. I warned him not to follow me, which, of course, he did, and —. Hah! dear! I'm so flustered, (*bell in room, R.*) and there's mistress's bell—to dress her. He was un-

common good-looking and a real gentleman too. I know he was a gentleman by his impudence and his lovely hair. (bell again) Ugh ! she's in a precious hurry. (exit into room, R. 1 E. *The door, L. 3 E., then opens gradually, MERRITON first puts in his head, and then enters cautiously.*)

MERRI. The little gipsey who led me a wild goose chase half over the town ran to cover in this house, and leaving the hall door open, I ventured to follow, and here I am ; but whether in the den of some terrible ogre or the retreat of a benevolent fairy I can't tell. (*looking round the apartment*) A—ah ! fortune has been propitious to my daring spirit of discovery—I am in the shrine of some female divinity. (*at toilet-table*) And here is the altar on which she renews her charms. That she is a woman there can be no doubt, and (*taking a fan from toilet*) this exquisite fan, with a group of laughing Cupids holding up a mirror, proves she's a coquette. (*taking up a satin shoe*) This satin slipper indicates a foot that might make Cinderella herself die with envy, (*takes up a kid glove*) and this glove—Jouvin's "sixes" by Jove ! what a delicious hand to fit that glove. (*kisses it rapturously*) What's this ? (*takes an engagement card from table*) An engagement card for a ball. Dances of course ! (*takes up a lady's driving whip*) Drives a pony phaeton—breaks hearts and horses in Hyde Park. (*takes a book from table*) Ah ! here's a book, she has been reading ! Poetry, I'll wager ! something tender and passionate. (*opens book*) What ! "Two Hundred Ways of Subduing a Man." Good heavens, what an abominable book for any woman to read "How dreadful to think that there are two hundred ways of cooking a man as well as a rabbit." (*takes up a paper of cigarettes*) She is evidently a woman who (*opens the paper*) smokes cigarettes ! Slightly eccentric in her tastes ! but I am dying with curiosity to know who this mysterious being can be. (*seeing a card case which he takes from table*) Ah ! her card case. (*opening it, taking out card*) Here I shall find a solution of the mystery. (*reads*) "Mrs. Eddystone." Eddystone ! why that's the clever widow I met yesterday at Goldenbird's. Egad ! here's a lucky adventure. But I must invent some plausible excuse for my unceremonious intrusion ; I'll say I was hunted by bailiffs, or that there was a mad bull in the street, or that I am the water-rate ; yes, the water-rate and the fire-escape. (*knock at door, L. 3 E.*) Hey ! who the deuce can that be ? another visitor—where shall I conceal myself ? (*perceives the closet L. flat, opens the door and looks in*) A

china closet—never mind. The brightest star may be eclipsed. (*he goes into china closet, L. flat—another knock at door, L. 3 E., at the same moment, enter PRISCILLA, R.*)

PRISCIL. If it should be that good-looking young man with the curly hair, he shan't come in. (*she crosses to L. 3 E. and partly opens door so as to see who is outside, then shuts it.*)

Enter MRS. EDDYSTONE, from R., she wears a white dressing-gown.

PRISCIL. (*in a suppressed voice to MRS. EDDYSTONE*) It's that shabby-looking man, mem—Mr. Morden, will you see him?

MRS. E. Morden! yes; admit him. (*PRISCILLA opens door L. 3 E., MORDEN enters. PRISCILLA closes door, crosses to R. and exit door R.*)

MORDEN. (*who is partly intoxicated*) You look as fresh and blooming this morning, Mrs. Eddystone, as if you had been robbing Aurora of her roses.

MRS. E. (*pettishly*) Psha! I want no compliments; I'm out of temper, and very angry with you for the annoyance you caused me at Goldenbird's yesterday.

MORDEN. Ha! ha! ha! There's nothing gives such charm to a woman's face as anger—I protest, Mrs. Eddy-stone, you look as imperiously beautiful as you did ten years ago.

MRS. E. (*aside*) He has been drinking. What have you been doing, Morden?

MORDEN. Doing? Ha! ha! ha! I've been talking wisdom—all night—to the "Convivial Owls." Glorious birds—to chirp are these Owls! When I loved you, Mrs. Eddystone, I was not an Owl. Ha! ha! ha! I was only a fool.

MRS. E. (*aside*) I must not quarrel with him for I need his services—and he possesses the secret of those letters which would ruin me if discovered. You have got the manuscript?

MORDEN. Oh, yes, it's here. (*touching his breast pocket*) Here—"Timon to the British Nation." Ha! ha! ha! By the bye, what a capital joke it would be to let the world know that I am the real "Timon," and pluck my borrowed feathers from the old impostor's back.

MRS. E. (*insinuatingly*) Would you betray the woman who has confided in your honour, Morden?

MORDEN. There's something in your voice that reminds

me of ten years ago. D'ye know I've a strange fancy to try if I could make love to you as I once did. Ha! ha! ha! What fun it will be raking up the old fire—out of its ashes.

MRS. E. (*smiling*) Perhaps we might burn our fingers amongst the embers.

MORDEN. It will only be in jest, you know—just to tell you how I adore you—I mean how I once adored you. (*takes her hand and kisses it.*)

MRS. E. (*impatiently*) There—there—give me the manuscript.

MORDEN. Wait till I have thrown myself at your feet. (*MERRITON coughs in closet L. flat. MRS. EDDYSTONE starts.*)

MRS. E. (*startled*) You heard?

MORDEN. Yes.

MRS. E. Somebody?

MORDEN. Cats. (*knock L.*

MRS. E. (*aside*) Sir John Moleborough! (*to MORDEN*) You must go instantly. A visitor—whom I would not wish should meet you—is at the door.

MORDEN. Then I'll go. (*crosses to door, L.*) This way?

MRS. E. Good Heavens, no, that's my room. (*he crosses to L. door*) No, no, my visitor is coming that way. Here, the bath-room—in there—and don't breathe or move till I call you. (*she pushes him to the door of bath-room R. flat.*)

MORDEN. But my dear Mrs. Eddystone, a bath-room—

MRS. E. Not another word. (*pushes him in, and shuts door, she then returns to toilet-table and sits—knock outside L. U. E.*) Come in! (*SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH enters; she affects to be startled on seeing him*) Ah! Sir John. How strange I should have been thinking of you the moment you knocked.

SIR J. Have I indeed been so happy as to occupy your thoughts for a moment?

MRS. E. (*sighing tenderly*) You know not how often you occupy them. (*to SIR JOHN*) But—bless me, Sir John, how you are dressed to-day!

SIR J. (*smiling*) Ah! you've noticed my costume—it's a—it's—a—

MRS. E. Grand yet simple, like the wearer's mind.

SIR J. Hem! you really think I look imposing in it.

MRS. E. Never saw a more imposing figure in my life, when I look at you I can't help—but you might take what I was going to say for flattery.

SIR J. No, no, not from you. (*aside*) She positively is enamoured of me. (*MRS. EDDYSTONE selects a rose from the vase on the toilet table, returns to R. of SIR JOHN.*) c

MRS. E. I cannot invest you with the order of the Garter, Sir John, but I can bestow on you the decoration of the Rose. (*she places the rose in a button-hole of his coat*) I intended to have worn the flower myself this evening, but I prefer seeing it where it is.

SIR J. (*flattered*) Thanks, a thousand thanks, Mrs. Eddy-stone, I feel myself unworthy of such a favour. (*aside*) Her fascinating manners would secure me at least twenty votes amongst the bachelor members. Hem! My dear madam, let me request you to be seated. (*places a chair for her R. C., and another for himself L. c.*) There is a subject upon which I should like to open negotiations with you—if permitted.

MRS. E. (*sits*) By all means. (*formally*) I'm prepared to give them my severe attention.

SIR J. When a man arrives at my age—

MRS. E. What age did you say, Sir John?

SIR J. Hem! the age at which a man best appreciates the good qualities of a woman.

MRS. E. I understand you. Like wines, you don't get our full flavour until after the third course.

SIR J. Precisely, and I may confess that the choice I have made only requires your approval to render me supremely happy.

MRS. E. (*aside*) I don't quite comprehend you, Sir John.

SIR J. Let me be more explicit then. I offer you my hand, my heart, and myself.

MRS. E. (*aside*) At last!

SIR J. With fame, rank, fortune, honours —

MRS. E. Stop, stop—you take away my breath. Heaven could never intend that all your brilliant possessions should fall to the lot of one poor woman.

SIR J. I lay all at your feet, most lovely of your sex; a brilliant future is before you—the popularity which I have gained by my speeches in parliament—

MRS. E. (*smiling*) Your speeches?

SIR J. Mine or yours, 'tis all the same you know.

MRS. E. True. No difference whatever.

SIR J. Those speeches have given me a colossal reputation. When I rise in the House and throw myself into a dignified pose—so—(*poses himself*)—a hum of admiration thrills the assembly, followed by profound silence. I commence and pour forth a flood of eloquence that astonishes everybody, and nobody more than myself. (*sits.*)

MRS. E. I suppose you sometimes feel inclined to interrupt yourself and cry "hear, hear."

SIR J. Frequently. I am even startled by the brilliancy of my language and the grandeur of my ideas.

MRS. E. That's because you're not quite familiar with your own ideas.

SIR J. And next morning I see two columns of my speech in the papers. Of course you read my speeches in the papers.

MRS. E. No, I read them all before they appear there.

SIR J. (*laughing*) Oh, aye, ha, ha, ha! I forgot, to be sure—yes—well; with your grace, wit, and accomplishments,—and my—my—ahem! my talent for making use of them, we may mount the ladder of fame and reach the top together.

MRS. E. You and I Sir John, mounting a ladder together! don't you think we should look rather ridiculous?

SIR J. Ha, ha, ha! literally we might, but my ladder was a metaphor.

MRS. E. A metaphor! Then let me tell you the strongest metaphor that ever was made could not support us both.

SIR J. Let us be serious for one moment, my dear Mrs. Eddystone. Think of my proposal, and make me happy by accepting it.

MRS. E. (*aside*) If I could accept the proposal without the proposer, I would not hesitate. (*to him*) You must give me time to reflect. (*sighs*) What a flutter you have put my poor heart into; you naughty, naughty man to disturb the tranquility of my life. (*table clock strikes*) Six o'clock, how time flies.

SIR J. And I had nearly forgotten to ask you for the speech I have to make on the Want of Confidence debate. It will be the most important one of the session.

MRS. E. It shall be ready for you in less than an hour. It requires a few corrections which I can make in ten minutes.

SIR J. And while you do so, I can stroll into Regent-street. By the way, Mrs. Eddystone, I saw yesterday in Howell and James's window an India shawl that I want to have your opinion of.

MRS. E. Oh dear, Sir John; I really have no taste in shawls. India, you say?

SIR J. Real India, with a rich scarlet ground.

MRS. E. I adore scarlet.

SIR J. And a palm-leaf border.

MRS. E. A palm-leaf border! how delicious it must look: but you must not think of buying it for me; if you do I shall positively—

SIR J. Refuse it?

MRS. E. I don't say *that*; but I shall be so angry—so very angry. (*laying her hand on his arm*) The Want of Confidence speech shall be ready for you when you return.

SIR J. Ah, let it be annihilating.

MRS. E. It shall be what you call a smasher—your taste is exquisite, Sir John.

SIR J. Nothing like an Indian shawl to subdue a woman! (*SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH kisses her hand, and exits L.*)

MRS. E. (*calls loudly*) Come out, prisoner—come out! (*she sits at toilet table, R., facing the audience, with her back towards the doors in flat. Then enter MORDEN from bathroom, R. flat. Immediately after MORDEN has come out MERRITON puts his head out of china-closet, L. flat.*)

MERRI. (*aside*) Hah! there are two prisoners here. (*he retires precipitately.*)

MORDEN. Phew! (*he takes the MS. from his pocket and places it on a chair, then takes a handkerchief from the same pocket, with which he wipes his face*) I've been nearly stifled in there.

MRS. E. Sit down, my dear Morden, sit down. Now we are alone, we can resume our conversation. (*he sits on the chair in which he has placed the MS., to L. of MRS. EDDY-STONE*) At what point were we interrupted?

MORDEN. At the point of my throwing myself at your feet.

MRS. E. We'll omit that incident, if you please.

MORDEN. No, no. I remember I once knelt before you in earnest, and you laughed at me—now laugh at me if you like, when I am in jest. (*he drops on his knees before her—at that moment PRISCILLA enters from room, R., perceiving MORDEN on his knees, she utters an exclamation of surprise and is about to retire. MORDEN remains kneeling in confusion. MRS. EDDYSTONE takes the MS., from the hair unobserved by MORDEN.*)

MRS. E. What is it, Priscilla?

PRISCIL. (*confused*) Your dress, madam—I—I—didn't know —

MRS. E. Oh, never mind; Mr. Morden and I were going through an unrehearsed scene in the "Belle's Stratagem." (*MORDEN rises*) I have to dress for dinner—so must beg you to excuse my leaving you. Call to-morrow, and you shall be paid. (*exit into room, R.—he attempts to follow her but is stopped by PRISCILLA.*)

PRISCIL. Stop! you need not be alarmed, my good man,

your money's quite safe. Call to-morrow and we'll pay you.

(exit R.)

MORDEN. So! she treats me like a common scribbler. "Call to-morrow." The chairman of the "Convivial Owls" to call to-morrow. No, no, my proud lady, here I'll perch, at your door, till you come out. (he takes a chair and is about to place it close to door, R., when a crash is heard in china-closet, L. flat, he drops the chair) Somebody there, (points to china-closet, L.) making an awful smash, I'll go back to my bath-room, till the coast's clear. (exit into bath-room, R. flat—door R. is then opened, and PRISCILLA looks in.)

PRISCIL. (entering R. and speaking off) He's gone, ma'am.

MRS. E. (entering R.) See if the hairdresser has come, Priscilla, I must hasten to dress for dinner. (PRISCILLA crosses and exits door L. U. E. At toilet table, R.) I thought I never should have shaken off that unfortunate fellow. But I've got the draft of "Timon's" letter for Sir John. (she sits at toilet table, R. PRISCILLA re-enters L. U. E.) Where is the Eau de Cologne, Priscilla?

PRISCIL. In this closet, ma'am. I'll fetch it directly. (she runs to china-closet, L. flat, opens the door hastily, and seeing MERRITON inside gives a sharp little scream, and closes it hastily. Aside) Oh! the young man!

MRS. E. What is the matter, Priscilla?

PRISCIL. (agitated, and standing with her back to the closet door, L. flat) Oh, m'm! nothing, m'm.

MRS. E. Do you scream for nothing?

PRISCIL. That is to say, m'm, nothing but a mouse, m'm, in the closet.

MRS. E. What a silly girl you are to be frightened by a poor little mouse. (rising.)

PRISCIL. Oh, m'm, but this is a very big one, and a very wicked one, I'm sure, by the way he looked at me.

MRS. E. I must see this formidable creature. (going towards closet, L. flat, PRISCILLA stops her.)

PRISCIL. Oh don't, m'm. If you open the door he'll rush out, and I shall faint.

MRS. E. (laughing, resumes her seat) Ha! ha! ha! Well I never thought you were such a timid fool. (looking at herself in the mirror) Can that be a grey hair? Ah! a silent warning that I have no time to lose.

MERRI. (coming softly out of the closet, L. flat—aside) I can't stand it any longer. The destruction of china is complete.

PRISCIL. (*running to him, and endeavouring to push him back into the closet—aside*) What are you about? go back!

MERRI. (*aside to PRISCILLA*) Thank you, I didn't come out to go back.

PRISCIL. (*aside*) Hush! my mistress.

MERRI. (*aside*) She's not ferocious?

MRS. E. (*still looking in the mirror*) Who is there, Priscilla?

PRISCIL. (*embarrassed*) Here, m'm? The—the—the hairdresser's young man, m'm.

MERRI. (*aside to PRISCILLA*) Me a hairdresser!

MRS. E. Let him do up my hair a little.

PRISCIL. Yes, m'm. (*she gives MERRITON a curling tongs—aside to him*) Here, take these.

MERRI. (*aside to PRISCILLA*) I don't know how to use this weapon.

PRISCIL. Hush! (*she takes off the white apron she wears, and ties it on MERRITON, and then gives him a comb—aside*) What lovely hair he has.

MRS. E. Well, is the young man ready?

PRISCIL. In a moment, m'm, he's heating his irons—he's heating his irons. (*pushing MERRITON to the fire place, and aside to him*) Do something, will you.

MRS. E. Give him my chignon, Priscilla. (*PRISCILLA takes a chignon out of a box on the toilet table.*)

MERRI. (*at the fire place*) Her chignon! (*PRISCILLA brings him the chignon, he takes it from her and examines it with surprise—aside*) Oh! Mystery of woman!

MRS. E. (*impatiently*) What is the man about, why does he not commence?

MERRI. Now, madam, if you please. (*he attempts to place the chignon on her head, but turns it wrong side up.*)

MRS. E. Good gracious, it's all wrong, don't you see. (*suddenly recognising him in the mirror and rising in alarm*) Mr. Merriton!—was it to insult and compromise me, that you have intruded thus?

MERRI. No, believe me, Mrs. Eddystone, the object of my visit was purely artistic. I was curious to examine the structure of the magnificent—a—a—supplement with which nature—I mean art—has adorned that intellectual head, and—fearing to interrupt you in the delicate operations of the toilet—I was compelled—I say compelled—(*knock outside, L. U. E., he conceals the chignon under his coat.*)

MRS. E. (*aside*) Heavens! There's Sir John returned. (*to MERRITON*) If you are discovered here, my character will be utterly compromised.

MERRI. And I should feel myself utterly unworthy of your favour. Shall I jump out of the window to save your reputation.

MRS. E. (*alarmed*) No, no, you would be killed. In the china closet—there—you may conceal yourself. (*knock again, L. U. E., outside*) There, again! Go to the door, Priscilla. (*MRS. EDDYSTONE goes hastily into room, R.*)

MERRI. (*in an undertone to PRISCILLA*) I've smashed all the old china, there; a shelf full of it came tumbling on my devoted head. (*pointing to closet, L. flat*) Can't venture amongst the wrecks.

PRISCIL. There, then, the bath room will do. (*exit, L. U. E.*)

MERITON enters bath room, R. flat; two exclamations from MERRITON and MORDEN, are heard inside—knock at door L. U. E., then enter SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH, carrying a paper parcel.

SIR J. I've been to Howell and James's, and—she's not here. (*calls*) Mrs. Eddystone. (*MERRITON puts out his head, R. flat.*)

MRS. EDDYSTONE. (*entering from R.*) Sir John!

SIR J. I have lost no time. (*opens the paper parcel and displays a rich Indian shawl*) The India shawl.

MRS. E. Oh, charming! charming!

SIR J. (*putting it on MRS. EDDYSTONE's shoulders*) Let me have the pleasure of placing it on these fair shoulders, and make me happy by wearing it for my sake.

MRS. E. (*delighted*) You have laid an obligation on me, that I can never sufficiently repay, my dear Mole.

SIR J. (*aside*) She calls me Mole. Don't mention it, pray; but, tell me, is my speech ready?

MRS. E. Quite ready. I'll fetch it in a moment, my Moley.

SIR J. (*aside*) She calls me her Moley.

MRS. E. (*going off R., she turns to admire herself*) Ah! manners make the man, but an India shawl makes the woman. (*exit R.*)

The moment she is off, PRISCILLA enters, L. U. E.

PRISCIL. (*speaking as she enters*) Oh, m'm! Lady Penfeather has called, and is coming up stairs. Oh, I beg pardon, I thought mistress was here. (*crosses to door R. which she opens and exits, speaking*) Please m'm, Lady Penfeather has called— (*door R. is closed.*)

SIR J. (*disturbed*) Lady Penfeather! the devil! I wouldn't have that scandal monger find me here for fifty

pounds. Where shall I get out of her way? Ah! there's a room. (*he opens the door of bath room, R. flat, and plunges in, immediately a clamor of voices and stamping of feet are heard inside.* SIR JOHN puts his head out of the door, but appears to be pulled back from inside. PRISCILLA enters hastily, R.)

PRISCIL. Sir John gone--then I may have time to let that audacious young man escape. (*she opens door of closet, R., screams and retreats in alarm*) Bless me, there are three mice in the trap. (SIR JOHN makes a rush from bath room, R. flat, but is again pulled back by MERRITON and MORDEN—he succeeds after a struggle in breaking from them, and comes down stage; his hat, which has fallen from his head, is crushed—MORDEN throws himself into an arm chair and laughs, while SIR JOHN and MERRITON walk to and fro in a rage. On passing each other the first and second time, they interchange fierce looks—the third time they stop and face each other.)

SIR J. Well, sir!

MERRI. Well, sir!

SIR J. What were you doing there, sir?

MERRI. And you Mole, what where you doing there, eh? (*aside*) I don't stammer when I speak to him now.

SIR J. (*aside indignantly*) He calls me Mole. Sir, this is shirking the question. I ask you again what were you doing there? And mind, sir, I am not a man to be trifled with.

MERRI. Nothing but an elephant in a playful mood, could attempt to trifle with you;—I shouldn't think of it Moley.

SIR J. (*indignantly, aside*) He calls me Moley.

MERRI. Don't excite yourself; see how cool I am. You want to know what I was doing there. (*points to closet, R. flat*) Shall I speak the truth, Mole?

SIR J. If not inconvenient, sir, and oblige me by not calling me Mole again.

MERRI. Not if you object, Moley.

SIR J. (*in a rage and stamping*) Don't call me Moley, sir.

MERRI. Oh, I thought you liked it. Well, I'll tell you the truth Mole. (*SIR JOHN restrains himself*) I came here to study the art of writing letters, of which I am not the author, and making speeches which somebody else has written.

MORDEN. Good! a double hazard off the red ball, by Jove!

SIR J. (*in a rage*) Sir, your insolence is—is astounding.

Enter MRS. EDDYSTONE, R., who starts on seeing the hostile attitude of the parties.

Mrs. Eddystone, madam, will you have the kindness to explain—why—how—these—a—a—persons, came to be concealed in your apartments.

MRS. E. (*aside*) No weakness before him. Sir John this is an insult—an indignity. Here I am Lady Paramount, and answer no questions.

MORDEN. Brava!

MERRI. Mrs. Eddystone, is quite right; let us have no questions, no explanations, no clearing up—

SIR J. But I protest—

MERRI. You shall do nothing of the kind, Moley—a man of your years and gravity.

MRS. E. Of your dignity, Sir John—

MERRI. 'Twould be absurd.

SIR J. But I *must* speak.

MERRI. No, no, you don't know what you might say. A man in your state—

SIR J. In my state! What do you mean, sir? Am I mad?

MERRI. Decidedly! raving mad.

MRS. E. Uncommonly mad, Sir John.

MERRI. Mad as a march hare.

PRISCIL. Never saw anyone madder in my life.

MERRI. Look at his eyes—staring mad. (*all but SIR JOHN laugh.*)

SIR J. Zounds, madam—Mrs. Eddystone, I'll not stop another minute to be insulted—laughed at—a—a good morning, madam. (*going, L.*)

MERRI. Your hat, Moley, don't forget your hat. (*claps SIR JOHN's hat on his head.*)

SIR J. Bah! (*all laugh except SIR JOHN, he exits in a rage, L. U. E.*)

(▲ LAPSE OF TWELVE MONTHS BETWEEN THE SECOND AND THIRD ACTS.)

ACT III.

SCENE FIRST.—*An apartment in Merriton's house, Mayfair, handsomely furnished—window, c. flat, overlooking Hyde Park. Door of entrance, l. 2 E. Door of Merriton's chamber, r. 1 E. Fire-place r. 2 E., with a mirror over it—console table with clock, r. U. E.—round table, c.—lounge, chairs, &c. Small occasional table near fire, on which is a tray, with coffee-pot, one cup and saucer, &c., for breakfast. GROUSE sitting opposite the fire with his feet on the fender, sleeping, a newspaper on his knees. PRISCILLA engaged at the breakfast table—clock strikes twelve.*

PRISCIL. Twelve o'clock! and master not out of his room yet. (*GROUSE snores*) If the man isn't asleep. (*calling loudly*) Grouse!

GROUSE. (*starting*) Hey! what! what is it? aw! I really believe I've been—taking forty winks.

PRISCIL. Yes, and they were the loudest winks I ever heard.

GROUSE. Exhausted nature, my dear—must be restored—Mr. Merriton came home so late last night.

PRISCIL. Ah! if I'd a-known when I left Mrs. Eddystone to marry you, what I've had to bear, I'd never have been Mrs. Grouse.

GROUSE. Good 'eavens, Priscilla, what have you to complain of?

PRISCIL. More than enough. Didn't you and your master go to Paris a few days after our marriage—and didn't you both remain away twelve months, leaving me here with old Mrs. Jellicoe to look after the house.

GROUSE. Well, my dear, it was not my fault. Our master says to me, says he, "Grouse, old fellow, you must come with me to Paris"—so I went.

PRISCIL. And a pretty life he led there, I'm told.

GROUSE. We certainly were *fast*—I mean my master—he went a killing pace there—and I don't perceive any improvement in his habits since his return to London. I says to him, says I, "Mr. Merriton, if our constitootions was as strong as the British Constitootion, they'd break down under these hours. I do assure you my appetite's falling away visibly, I don't feel competent of a morning

for more than a couple of mutton chops and three or four heggs."

PRISCIL. I shouldn't mind his stopping out all night if you had not to sit up for him.

GROUSE. Ah! yes, it's doosed hard, my dear, but as the confidential valet of Mr. Merriton, it's my dooty to do so.

PRISCIL. But what can have made master take to this way of life; he didn't always turn day into night?

GROUSE. Disappointment in love! a blighted passion that brings so many of our weak sex to a early grave.

Mrs. Eddystone —

PRISCIL. Oh! yes, he was all to pieces about her; however, there was a rival in the case—Sir John Moleborough. Everybody said it was to be a match between her and Sir John.

GROUSE. But it wasn't.

PRISCIL. No, she's a widow still.

GROUSE. Well, she has much to answer for; she has destroyed my master's peace of mind, and broken my natural rest. (MERRITON's bell rings in room R.) Master's bell. (*folds up the newspaper hastily*) Pour out his coffee, Priscilla. (*she pours out coffee, GROUSE pokes the fire. Then enter MERRITON, R., in a dressing-gown, slippers, and velvet cap. The two SERVANTS salute him, but he seems scarcely to notice them*) You don't seem very well, this morning, sir. Out of spirits?

MERRI. (*gloomily*) A-ah! life's a dull game, and those that play at it are fools. Is my coffee ready?

PRISCIL. (*at table*) Quite ready, sir.

MERRI. Thanks. (*tastes coffee*) More sugar—to sweeten the bitter pill of retrospection. I went to the ball at Covent Garden last night.

GROUSE. An amoosing place I dare say, sir?

MERRI. I didn't go to amuse myself. Feeling disgusted with the hollowness of the human heart, I thought to indulge my melancholy at the ball.

PRISCIL. A masked ball I suppose, sir?

MERRI. (*sits at table*) Completely masked, like everything and everybody in this deceitful world. I sought for solitude amidst the giddy throng with an arrow sticking in my heart. I drank champagne of pure Whitechapel vintage to lose the memory of the past:—I lost nothing, but my hat and watch; and was conveyed home at five o'clock by an intelligent policeman, with an arrow sticking in my heart.

GROUSE. You did look dreadfully knocked up, sir.

MERRI. Don't mention it; I caught a glimpse of myself in the glass, and I must confess that the pleasures of the night did not bear the morning's reflection.

PRISCIL. Ha! sir, you speak like a perfect mizzlethorpe.

MERRI. Misanthrope, Priscilla! Despise your unhappy master, if you will, but respect the memory of the lamented Walker.

PRISCIL. I hope, sir, I havn't offended.

MERRI. By no means; you did not engage for orthography.

PRISCIL. No, sir, not for twelve pounds a-year.

MERRI. You may go, Priscilla.

PRISCIL. (*going R.—stops*) Mizzlethorpe!

(*curtseys and exits R.*)

MERRI. I find I can't stand these nights of recklessness so well as I once could. There's a touch of rheumatism in my shoulder this morning. Grouse, what news have you? What has been going on in London for the last year? Of course you have picked up all the gossip?

GROUSE. Well, sir, according to the best information from the "Yellowplush Club" I understand there has been six divorces, nine elopements, thirteen busts up, besides several cases of entertaining scandal in fashionable quarters.

MERRI. Nothing new in that—even vice has lost the charm of novelty. I must reform, Grouse, I must positively reform.

GROUSE. Not a day too soon, sir. Are you going to marry?

MERRI. Me marry? No, I shall never marry; I detest the world, and hate the sex. There was only one woman in existence who could have induced me to give up my freedom—but she didn't value my devotion, so I left her—with an arrow sticking in my heart.

GROUSE. Quite right, sir. Excuse my freedom, but I thought you might have an idea of matrimony, by the pains you take to make the ladies admire you. (*at window, flat*) Oh! sir, look here, please; look at that seedy old swell on the opposite side of the street.

MERRI. (*at window*) Why it's my once intended uncle, Goldenbird. How the man is changed.

GROUSE. Aye, sir, he's come down sadly in the world; the millionaire speculator is now the manager of a swindling loan company.

MERRI. He's crossing the street—coming this way—I won't see him. I've got to call on an old friend this morning. (*searching his pockets*) Where's his card? (*takes card out of his pocket*) Here it is. (*reads*) "Mr. Sheridan Jones." You know him?

GROUSE. The gentleman who used to write plays?

MERRI. Yes. He's married, poor fellow, and is lodging—a—a—(*looks at the card*) lodging at 266, Stamford-street. Not a highly aristocratic address; never mind, I'll find him out. Capital fellow was Jones, if he would not insist upon reading his plays to his friends. (*exit into room, R., followed by Grouse with boots.*)

SCENE SECOND.—(1st Grooves.) Hall in Merriton's House. Entrance to street, L. 1 E. Entrance to interior, R. 1 E. Hall door bell rings outside, L. A SERVANT in livery crosses from R. to L., meeting GOLDENBIRD who enters L. 1 E.

GOLDEN. Mr. Merriton at home?

SERV. (*eyeing him doubtfully*) Um—m—a! Don't know. Got a card?

GOLDEN. Card? of course. When one gentleman calls on another. (*gives SERVANT a card.*)

SERV. Humph! (*looking at card, and apart*) "Goldenbird." I'll inquire.

Enter Grouse, r., SERVANT gives him the card.

Party wants to see master, Mr. Grouse.

GROUSE. (*glancing at card*) "Goldenbird." Not at home. (*exit SERVANT, R.*)

GOLDEN. Grouse, my good fellow, how d'ye do?

GROUSE. I can dispense with famil'arity. (*in a loud tone*) What's your business?

GOLDEN. Why surely your name is Grouse?

GROUSE. Samuel Grouse—it is my name.

GOLDEN. And you formerly lived with me as my servant?

GROUSE. That was my misfortune.

GOLDEN. Ha! I understand; there was a trifle of wages due to you when I collapsed.

GROUSE. Three quarters—hope you've come to pay them.

GOLDEN. Don't be impatient, it's all right. I know of a safe speculation—I'm in it—wait a little—pay everybody twenty shillings in the pound. Come, there's a good fellow, take me to your master.

GROUSE. Not at home, I tell you.

GOLDEN. Pooh! pooh! I know what that means. (*searching his pockets*) It's very remarkable, I had a half-crown somewhere, very strange, I must have dropped it, or given it to a crossing-sweeper. But it don't so much matter, I shan't forget I owe you half-a-crown.

GROUSE. And don't forget that I owe you something I mean to pay (*shaking his fist*) if ever you show your face here again.

GOLDEN. Ha! ha! ha! you're fond of a joke, Grouse. But the fact is, I must see Mr. Merriton, I want to put him up to a good thing in Baltic bonds.

GROUSE. (*calling off*, L.) John, open the door for Mr. Goldenbird.

GOLDEN. If fifty or a hundred shares in the Coromandel Pearl Diving Company would suit you, you shall have them as a favour, for sixpence a share.

GROUSE. No, no, I'll have nothing to do with them.

GOLDEN. (*confidentially*) Harkye, Mr. Grouse. Gentlemen in your position are sometimes in want of a little temporary accomodation —

GROUSE. Hey! well, I confess money is rather tight at present—there's to be a ball and supper given shortly by the "Yellowplush Club" to a select number of fashionable ladies' maids, it will cost me a matter of five puns at least, and where the doose the money's to come from, I don't know.

GOLDEN. Let me introduce you to the "Universal and Unlimited Loan Company," they'll do your business at once on the most liberal terms, to any amount.

GROUSE. Thank you, I'd prefer not having my business done at once. (*calls*) John, show Mr. Goldenbird the door.

GOLDEN. The company's perfectly safe and honourable.

GROUSE. Oh, perfectly, since *you* recommend it. (*calls*) Show Mr. Goldenbird to the door, John.

GOLDEN. No hurry. I've a prospectus here, I should like to draw Mr. Merriton's attention to.

GROUSE. Can't be done. You mustn't stop here any longer—and allow me to say, Goldenbird, before we part, that you're the most unliquidated scoundrel I ever had the pleasure of knowing.

GOLDEN. (*enraged*) Confound you, you mean, pitiful, dastardly cur, I should like to strangle you. (*advancing on GROUSE, who retreats in alarm to R.*)

GROUSE. (*calling*) John, John, let out that madman. (*he exits hastily, R., GOLDENBIRD slowly L.*)

SCENE THIRD.—*An apartment on the second floor of a lodging-house in Stamford-street. Door of entrance, L. 1 E., door to an inner room, R. 1 E. A window with flower pots c. flat. Close to the window a sewing machine. Fire-place, L. 2 E., and higher up the stage, L., a stand, on which hangs ladies' new dresses. A cradle, with child sleeping in it, R. U. E. Table, R. C., cane chairs. Dutch clock at back; coloured prints hang round the walls.*

SHERIDAN JONES discovered writing at table, R. C., ALICE working at the sewing machine at back.

JONES. There, I think that scene can't fail to produce an effect. The dialogue never flags, and the situations are so good, that if managers be not blind to their own interests, they will be scrambling to get hold of the piece. Now here's a passage that particularly pleases me: (*reads*) "The man is to be pitied who, deafened by the din and clamour of the world, cannot hear the sweet voice of nature—" (*child cries in the cradle.*)

ALICE. (*starts, runs to the cradle*) Is my angel awake?

JONES. (*resuming*) " Cannot hear the sweet voice—"

ALICE. How beautiful he is. Do, Sheridan, come and look at the darling. (*JONES rises, goes to the cradle, and bends with ALICE over the child*) I declare he is laughing at you.

JONES. Is he? an impudent young rogue, like the rest of the world who take me for a fool.

ALICE. He grows more like you every day. (*rising and placing her arm in his*) By the way, do you know this is the anniversary of our marriage? Just twelve months since we pledged our hearts at the altar.

JONES. I remember on that occasion, I endowed you with all my worldly goods—a tooth pick, a pair of razors, and a manuscript drama, which the stupid managers declined with thanks.

ALICE. And I was quite as poor as you. My uncle Goldenbird's bankruptcy left me penniless.

JONES. It's painful to allude to the miserable swindler—excuse the epithet, I don't wish to hurt your feelings by speaking disrespectfully of the old impostor who comes regularly at dinner time to share our humble repast—but we might have been rolling in the lap of luxury, if he had not robbed you.

Alice. You must forgive him, Sheridan; forgive him, and say you bear no ill will to him.

Jones. For your sake, Alice, I try to forget how he has wronged you; but when he comes in to dinner with an appetite like an ostrich, I feel how hard it is to forgive.

Alice. Let us struggle on cheerfully, for at least we are not without the means of existence. My skill in dress-making has procured me plenty of work; and the generous kindness of Mrs. Eddystone, who pays the rent of these lodgings, enables us to live till brighter days come.

Jones. You're a brave, good little wife, Alice; but while you toil and work from morning till night to keep the wolf from the door, what good am I? what can I do?

Alice. (*laughing*) You can write comedies.

Jones. (*joyfully*) Hey, so I can. I've just put the finishing touch to one, and if I can only persuade some enterprising manager to produce it, my fortune is made. (*takes manuscript from table*) Would you like me to read you a scene or two? you'll be pleased, I'm sure.

Alice. Well—a—no dear, not this morning; I have a dress of Mrs. Eddystone's to finish, but another time.

(*exit ALICE, R.*

Jones. There! Even the wife of my bosom flies from my comedy.

Enter MARTHA, L. 1 E.

MARTHA. Please sir, would you wish the cold mutton 'ashed or briled, for dinner?

Jones. 'Ashed or briled? It's a delicate question! (*aside*) Happy thought! Moliere read his comedies to his cook. I'll read mine to our Cinderella. Sit down, Martha.

(*places two chairs, c.*

MARTHA. La! Mr. Jones —

Jones. Sit down, Martha. (*both sit*) Hem! Do you relish Dramatic Literature?

MARTHA. Never tasted it, sir.

Jones. Oh! (*aside*) A fine dense intellect to test the penetrating power of a joke. You know what a comedy is, Martha?

MARTHA. Not in the least, sir, I don't hold with French dishes.

Jones. No more do I. You have been brought up in the school of the good old English drama?

MARTHA. I was brought in a charity school, sir, and the Westry made me a plain cook.

JONES. (*looking at her*) There can be no doubt about the plainness, Martha. (*rising and aside*) I'll not read my original comedy to this lump of kitchen stuff—brile the mutton and go.

MARTHA. Thankye, sir. A plain cook I am—I'll never deny it.

(*exit L.*

JONES. By the bye! this is the morning I am to call on the manager of the Paragon Theatre, who promised to read my last drama. (*puts on his hat, and takes umbrella from corner*) Oh! if my genius should ever burst upon an admiring world!

(*exit R.*

MERRITON. (*putting in his head at door, L.*) Mr. Sheridan Jones! (*enters*) Lodgers are as thick in this house as rabbits in a warren—(*looking round*)—but I can't be wrong—I asked a dingy female I met on the stairs which were Mr. Sheridan Jones's apartments—"2nd back"—she replied, and acting on that parsimonious information—here I am. (*child's cries in cradle*) Hey, what's that? Child somewhere about. (*perceives the cradle, and goes to it*) Ah! here's the young disturber. Good gracious I never remembered that Jones had committed matrimony—and that his wife is the woman who might have been my wife. Here's the result—a nice dimpled-cheeked cherub. (*child cries*) I wish cherubs wouldn't make such a disagreeable noise. Hush! hush! hush! hush! (*rocks the cradle*) It wants its mother—you need not look at me—I'm perfectly incompetent to the task—hush-a-hush, hush, there. (*kneels beside the cradle, rocking it—sings*) "Peaceful slumbering on the Ocean," that's all I know of it. (*sings*) "Peaceful slumbering." (*child cries—he rocks the cradle*) The idea of peaceful slumber to a demon that never sleeps—there—there, toodlem, toodlem, toodlem, boo!—and to fancy that I might have been the father of that demon—a-ah! now young fellow, I'm going to speak to you calmly and rationally. (*Mrs. EDDYSTONE is heard speaking outside, L.—he jumps up*) Somebody coming—they think I'm murdering the demon. (*Mrs. EDDYSTONE speaking nearer outside*) Hey! surely I know that voice—(*listens at door L.—Mrs. EDDYSTONE speaks again outside*) Mrs. Eddystone! good heavens! what brings her here? (*conceals himself hastily behind the dresses which hang on the stand, L. U. E., then*

Enter MRS. EDDYSTONE, L. 1 E., carrying two parcels which she places on table, R.

ALICE. (*re-enters R.*) My dear Mrs. Eddystone—

MRS. E. (*looking at clock*) Ten minutes after my time, Alice; but I've been visiting a poor woman, whose husband died in hospital yesterday, leaving her with six young orphans.

MERRI. (*aside—peeping out*) I can feel for them! I'm an orphan myself.

MRS. E. I have brought you a flannel vest which I made for poor old Baxter the gardener, who suffered so much from rheumatism last winter.

MERRI. (*aside*) Even rheumatism, has its blessings—I'll give old Baxter ten guineas for the vest.

MRS. E. (*opening one of the parcels*) And here are a pair of boots for the widow Mason's little boy.

MERRI. In those boots little Mason will walk in virtue's paths all the days of his life. I wish they fitted me.

MRS. E. Have you sent the wine to the invalid up-stairs?

ALICE. Mr. Morden? Yes, I took it to him myself; but I fear the poor man is dying.

MRS. E. Dying, Alice! poor Morden! It is sad to see life's sunset so soon. Can nothing be done to save him? If money may do it—here is my purse. (*taking purse from her pocket*.)

MERRI. (*aside*) And mine. (*pulling his purse from his pocket, then recollecting himself*) Ah! I forget.

ALICE. Your kindness, Mrs. Eddystone has provided him with all the comforts he requires. He is very grateful, and prays continually for you.

MERRI. (*aside*) So do I, so do I.

MRS. E. Here's a trifle for the poor needlewoman to pay for the rent of her room. (*gives her money*) That is all I have to trouble you with this morning, dear Alice.

ALICE. You think so much of the wants of the others, that you quite forget—you have to fit on the dress I am making for you. It is finished in the work-room—I'll fetch it in a moment. (*exit ALICE, R.* MRS. EDDYSTONE goes up to window at back.)

MRS. E. What beautiful flowers Alice has here—I do love flowers.

MERRI. (*coming out a little way—speaking in an under tone*) Love flowers! Can this be the woman of the world, the dazzling, brilliant Mrs. Eddystone, I knew twelve months ago, who preferred that pompous wind bag, Sir John Moleborough, to me? She did not marry him though! and I've been mistaken in her character all along. (*the child cries in the cradle*.)

MRS. E. Ah! Alice's baby is awake. (*she goes to cradle*) What a dear little fellow he is, with those bright eyes of his shining through his tears. I dote on children.

MERRI. (*aside*) She dotes on children! O-oh, I've been an idiot. (*child cries*.)

MRS. E. There, there, my baby, hush! (*kneels by the cradle, and kisses the child*.)

MERRI. (*aside*) O-oh! oh, that I were that little demon.

MRS. E. (*sings*)

Sleep darling, sleep,
In peaceful slumber bound ;
While guardian angels keep
Their Heav'nly watch around.
Sleep, darling sleep.

MERRI. (*aside*) She sings too. O-oh!

MRS. E. (*sings*)

O'er thy rosy mouth,
Angel smiles are wreathing ;
Odours of the south
Through thy lips are breathing.

Sleep darling, sleep.

(MERRITON is about to quit his place of concealment, when ALICE enters R. with a silk dress on her arm.)

MRS. E. (*rising*) He's asleep now. (*looks at clock*) How time flies. Make haste, Alice, and help me off with the dress. (ALICE commences unfastening MRS. EDDYSTONE'S dress.)

MERRI. (*agitated*) Stop, don't, don't—I'm here. (MERRITON discovers himself. Both LADIES scream and retreat.)

ALICE. Shall I call the police?

MERRI. Pray don't—I believe I have the pleasure of addressing an old acquaintance—the wife of my friend Sheridan Jones? (*she curtsies gracefully in assent—aside*) Now this is too bad! Here's a woman that once made me shudder by her vulgarity and awkwardness. Why she has the grace and manners of a queen—I've been a double idiot. (*bowing to ALICE*) If Mrs. Jones will permit me to have five minutes conversation in private with this lady, I hope to satisfy her—that my appearance here has no improper object. (MRS. EDDYSTONE makes signs to ALICE to assent.)

ALICE. I can have no possible objection, Mr. Merriton.
(**MERRITON bows, and conducts her to door R. she exits.**)

MRS. E. Now, Mr. Merriton, what have you to say?

MERRI. Pardon me, the lady has the right of precedence —you commence.

MRS. E. No, you have asked for this interview—to explain, or to defend yourself.

MERRI. In that case I'll resort to Irish tactics and defend myself by attacking you.

MRS. E. (*laughing*) Well, I am prepared for any act of audacity on your part. (*sits R. C.—MERRITON sits L. C.*)

MERRI. You have deceived me, Mrs. Eddystone.

MRS. E. Have I, indeed? Well, it's a common charge against our sex.

MERRI. What business have you to be kind, generous and tender-hearted, after making me believe you were a cold, unfeeling, and selfish woman.

MRS. E. And why were you twelve months ago one of the most ardent admirers of this unamiable woman.

MERRI. I can't tell; all I know is that from the moment I first met you, I was attracted to you by an irresistible influence. You possessed that intellectual superiority which charmed and fascinated me.

MRS. E. Poor fellow!

MERRI. It seems ridiculous, don't it?

MRS. E. Intensely!

MERRI. Never mind. I loved you, and I might have committed the weakness of marrying you.

MRS. E. Dreadful! What prevented the deplorable sacrifice?

MERRI. Yourself—I discovered, or thought I discovered that you possessed all that makes your sex perfect, except a heart.

MRS. E. An old-fashioned trifle, not worth mentioning.

MERRI. No, no, we'll put the heart out of question, but my pride was hurt to find that you openly encouraged the addresses of my pompous rival, Sir John Moleborough.

MRS. E. (*laughs*) Inclination on one hand—ambition on the other: how was I to decide? I admit the ruling passion of my life has been ambition; to obtain distinction I would even have married Sir John Moleborough. He proposed to me, and I was on the point of accepting him, when you crossed my path and somehow, my resolution began to falter.

MERRI. Ah! you perceived I was fascinated by you, and were flattered by your conquest.

MRS. E. (*smiling*) No woman is displeased by a man's homage, even though she may not love him.

MERRI. Yes, yes; but you know you loved me, that is, you might have loved me, ought to have loved me; and now that I find you capable of loving even a demon—I mean a sweet cherub, (*indicates the cradle*) will you not extend a hand to pluck out the arrow, which has been so long sticking in my heart?

MRS. E. Mr. Merriton, I will frankly confess that I might be disposed to listen to you, but for one serious obstacle.

MERRI. An obstacle! What is it?

MRS. E. I was piqued by your sudden retreat at the time I had made up my mind to dismiss Sir John, but I flattered myself a few days would bring you back to your allegiance. Month after month passed away, I grew weary of waiting for your return—you seemed to have forgotten me, and then, with my wounded pride, came back the power of the world over me. Sir John Moleborough presented himself;—again offered me his hand, and I accepted him only on last Monday.

MERRI. Monday! may the day be blotted from Cupid's calendar! There's nothing then left for me, but to bury myself in the gloomy depths of Mayfair. Adieu, Mrs. Eddystone, but before we part—for ever—I wish to restore you a *souvenir* of yours which I possess. If you wait here I'll fetch it—don't go till I return—with an arrow sticking in my heart.

(exit hastily, L.)

MRS. E. A *souvenir* of mine! A glove, ribbon, or a broken fan—a faded rose or some of those precious trifles which love consecrates. Heigho! poor fellow! I wish—but wishing's vain—my engagement with Sir John is irrevocable,—and the Woman of the World must play out her part.

(knock at door, L.)

Enter SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH, L.

MRS. E. (*surprised*) Sir John! you here?

SIR J. As you perceive, my dear lady. I trust the tender relations in which we now stand, may excuse my having followed you to your dressmaker's. (*looking round the apartment*) Not a very stylish place for a fashionable modiste.

MRS. E. But she is an old friend of mine. You may remember Alice Brandon, the niece of Goldenbird, the ruined speculator.

SIR J. Oh—ah! indeed. I hear she married a young fellow named Jones, a sort of literary play writing character. I don't think I ever had in my life a more comfortable nap than once at the reading of a comedy of his—slept as if I'd been in church.

MRS. E. I'm sorry to say the poor things are not in the most flourishing circumstances; they made an imprudent match.

SIR J. And they are now suffering for it?

MRS. E. Yes; but we, I mean *you*, can do something for them. You have interest to get Jones an easy place under Government, where he'll have nothing to do but pare his nails and draw his salary.

SIR J. My dear Mrs. Eddystone, I can deny you nothing. You have laid me under an obligation which I can never forget, were I to live to an hundred.

MRS. E. Heavens! don't anticipate anything so dreadful.

SIR J. Your friend shall be provided for.

MRS. E. (*shaking his hand*) Thanks, thanks.

SIR J. And now to speak of a matter of immediate interest. I may tell you confidentially that I'm in a very awkward position. There's to be an important debate in the House to-morrow night, upon which my friends expect me to speak.

MRS. E. Of course, then you must speak.

SIR J. Yes, I'm aware of that; but when I speak I must say something, and what am I to say?

MRS. E. Anything. Talk about blue books and red tape, statistical facts, and political figures.

SIR J. Oh! I've exhausted all that kind of parliamentary ammunition, and—a—people say that my speeches have lost their brilliancy of late. Now my dear Mrs. Eddystone, if you would resume your pen, and write me one of those splendid speeches which you used to dash off for me last year, I should recover my popularity in the House.

MRS. E. (*seriously*) Impossible, Sir John.

SIR J. How, impossible?

MRS. E. Because the head that informed, and the hand that traced those speeches have lost their power. The spirit that animated them is now fluttering on life's threshold.

SIR J. Good heavens! you alarm me; yet you look very well.

MRS. E. Let me explain. You may remember a young man named Morden—a broken down barrister?

SIR J. Perfectly ; a shabby fellow whom you employed as a confidential copyist.

MRS. E. Now learn a secret—it was that shabby fellow who wrote the speeches and letters that have made you famous.

SIR J. How ! were not you their author ?

MRS. E. In truth Sir John, I was not. You once asserted that no woman could write a speech that might be spoken in parliament. Zealous for the honour of my sex, I engaged Morden to write one, and I gave it to you as mine.

SIR J. And I delivered it as mine. It produced a powerful impression on the House.

MRS. E. So powerful that you entreated me to continue to supply you with speeches and letters. I was already compromised, and vanity, or some other motive, tempted me to continue the imposture.

SIR J. Am I to understand then, madam, that you cannot write my speeches ?

MRS. E. I regret to say, Sir John, I am quite incompetent to the task ; but, to an unselfish and generous nature like yours, such a deficiency would not lessen your affection for a wife.

SIR J. Who talks of affection, madam ? When I solicited the honour of your hand, I imagined—

MRS. E. That you were securing the services of the pen that had given you celebrity.

SIR J. I don't deny that I thought I had found a lady of high intellectual gifts, and rare political ability.

MRS. E. (*laughing*) Instead of which I turn out to be a very ordinary woman, with a sort of talent for making fools believe me clever. (*aside*) If I can but make him angry.

SIR J. Zounds, madam ! do you mean to say that I'm a fool ?

MRS. E. Swearing won't make you wise, Sir John.

SIR J. Mrs. Eddystone—madam—I have been deceived, and betrayed into a hasty declaration of my sentiments.

MRS. E. And I have been guilty of obtaining your heart under false pretences. You have made a bad bargain, and now you are sorry for it.

SIR J. I have been deceived, madam.

MRS. E. Well, I'll be generous. I'll release you from your engagement, and restore the letter in which you make me a formal offer of your hand.

SIR J. Very kind of you indeed. The letter, hem! I wish it had never been written—it was imprudent.

MRS. E. But youthful lovers are so passionate and indiscreet. However, there—I return it to you—(*gives SIR JOHN MOLEBOROUGH the letter*)—with your preferred love, which can be of no value to anybody but the owner.

SIR J. Too flattering, I'm sure. (*aside*) Thank heaven! Silly woman! Good day, Mrs. Eddystone.

MRS. E. Good day, Sir John. (*SIR JOHN exits L.*) There goes "my ladyship." I've thrown up my cards when the game was in my hands. Once I should have laughed at myself for such weakness, but heigho! I begin to feel that the heart is stronger than the world. (*exit R.—then re-enter SIR JOHN, L.*)

SIR J. Mrs. Eddystone, pardon my re-appearance. Hey! not here. That impudent fellow, Merriton, who crunched my gouty toe at Goldenbird's, and insulted me at Mrs. Eddystone's is coming up stairs. I don't want to come into collision with him a third time. Ah, here's a convenient shelter. (*gets hastily behind the dresses on the stand*)

Enter MERRITON L., carrying a small box, at the same moment re-enter MRS. EDDYSTONE, R.

MERRI. Here it is; the souvenir I spoke of; I have carried it about with me in all my wanderings—with an arrow sticking in my heart. The lovely object has lain on my pillow at night.

MRS. E. What lovely object?

MERRI. Your lovely supplement, here. (*takes chignon from box*)

MRS. E. My chignon!

MERRI. Your beauteous chignon, which in a moment of infatuation, I purloined, the day I found myself accidentally in your china closet. (*MRS. EDDYSTONE and MERRITON laugh and are joined in their laughter by SIR JOHN behind the stand, the former two stop suddenly*)

MERRI. Hah! eavesdroppers! (*he runs to the window c. and throws out the chignon—MRS. EDDYSTONE pulls the dresses off the stand and discovers SIR JOHN, who comes down laughing*)

MRS. E. Sir John!

MERRI. Moley!

SIR J. Don't call me Moley, sir. (*the three laugh together—a knock outside at door L., they cease laughing.*)

Enter GOLDENBIRD, L.

GOLDEN. (*entering*) Here I am, my dear Jones, true as the needle to the pole. What's for dinner, eh? (*perceives the others*) I beg pardon, I thought to find my friend Jones at an early peck. (*recognising the others*) But—bless me—can it be—Mrs. Eddystone—Mr. Merriton—Sir John Moleborough—all my old friends, if they'll permit me to call them so.

SIR J. No, sir, I will not permit you. (*he turns away*)

GOLDEN. Oh, never mind. You think I'm a ruined man and you very properly turn your back upon me. Ha! ha! ha! ha! And you, Mr. Merriton? (*MERRITON turns off to speak aside to MRS. EDDYSTONE*) You too, believe that I went to the bottom in that financial storm last year. So I did—I went down like a stone and came up like a cork. Ha! ha! ha! ha! Feel all the better for the plunge. The wheel of fortune has turned, and I am now at the top of it. (*MERRITON turns*) Yes, my dear Merriton, the friend who now grasps your hand (*offers to take MERRITON's hand, he puts it behind his back*) a—a—the friend who would have grasped your hand—is again a millionaire.

MERRI. (*half aside to MRS. EDDYSTONE*) Astounding impudence!

GOLDEN. (*aside*) They don't seem astonished. (*goes to SIR JOHN and speaks to him in a confidential undertone*) Sir John—may I request your attention—for a moment—gentlemen in high official positions like yourself, Sir John—are sometimes in want of temporary accommodation.

SIR J. (*puzzled*) Sir?

GOLDEN. Pecuniary assistance. Nothing more common, Sir John. Now I can help you to get a strap for a few hundreds done on liberal terms.

SIR J. A strap.

GOLDEN. Your bill!

SIR J. My bill! Fellow, you are insolent!

GOLDEN. Oh, I press my services on nobody. By the bye, Mr. Merriton, I should like you to cast your eye over this prospectus—capital investment. (*produces a prospectus*) Let me put you down for five hundred ten pound shares.

MERRI. Mr. Goldenbird, you fancy I'm a lamb or a pigeon, that I am to be shorn or plucked with impunity.

GOLDEN. Your wool—or your feathers are perfectly safe, Mr. Merriton. I would merely observe —

MERRI. I don't wish to use harsh language, sir, but if you do not instantly decamp I shall take the liberty of kicking you down stairs.

GOLDEN. Ha! ha! ha! ha! Did any one ever hear of a millionaire being kicked down stairs?

Enter ALICE, R.

Ah, here's my niece? (*crosses to ALICE*) She knows I'm as rich as that fellow who ate gold (*ALICE shakes her head*) and here's evidence of the fact. (*produces a large, well-filled pocket-book*) Look at that pocket-book—stuffed with—what do you think? (*MRS. EDDYSTONE crosses to ALICE, they converse apart.*)

MERRI. Bank of England notes?

GOLDEN. Notes? pooh! rubbish! No, sir, shares! (*the others turn away contemptuously*) Preference shares in the Great Tubular Trunk Railway through the Rocky Mountains, limited. Stupendous project. I've secured ten thousand fifty pound shares. Good as gold—if not better.

SIR J. (*half aside*) Plausible rascal!

Enter SHERIDAN JONES, L.

JONES. Hey! (*aside*) What a rush of visitors! (*salutes the company, shakes MERRITON's hand*) This was kind of you, Merriton. (*crosses to ALICE*) Sunshine at last, my dear girl; my drama has been accepted and is to be produced immediately by an intelligent manager.

MERRI. Where did you find him? Never mind, I congratulate you on your good fortune.

MRS. E. We all congratulate you, Mr. Jones.

ALICE. I always told you, dear, that a bright day would dawn upon us at last.

MERRI. It's sure to come if we wait for it.

Enter MARTHA, L.

MARTHA. Oh! see—look what I found under the window in the airey. (*exhibiting the chignon which MERRITON has thrown out of the window*) Whose is it? (*all look at it with real or affected surprise and turn away.*)

MERRI. Let me see. (*takes the chignon from MARTHA, and holding it up*) Will nobody acknowledge the lost hair? (*to GOLDBIRD*) Will the millionaire?

GOLDEN. (*turning away*) Bah!

MERRI. (*to SIR JOHN*) Moley, hey, will you?

SIR J. No, sir, and don't call me Moley again!

MERRI. Mrs. Eddystone? Mrs. Jones? (*both ladies reject the chignon by a gesture*) Jones, you are my last resource, say 'tis yours, there. (*tries to thrust it under his coat*)

JONES. Declined with thanks.

MERRI. Then I accept the responsibility myself. (*thrusts the chignon into his breast and buttons his coat over it*) There it shall rest while I live—with an arrow sticking in my heart.

MRS. E. (*coming down r. of MERRITON and apart to him*) Had you not better take another serious responsibility with it?

MERRI. Hey?

MRS. E. (*apart to him and offering her hand*) A wife?

MERRI. (*apart to her*) You? eh, and Moley?

MRS. E. (*apart to him*) That's all off.

MERRI. Bravo! (*kisses her hand*) You have plucked the arrow from my heart and made me the proudest of men—the accepted husband of an intellectual woman.

JONES. That's right—just as it should be. And now, as we are so happy, you'll not go till I read my comedy to you.

MRS. E. No, no, my dear sir, we are playing here the comedy of real life, with all its plots and stratagems—its gaieties and gravities—its whims and follies —

MERRI. In which some actors have good parts and some very small ones.

MRS. E. (*to the Audience*)

Our play is play'd—but keep your places pray,
“The Woman of the World” must have her say.

Here on our little stage, as you may see

We've not got elbow-room for Tragedy.

No scenes of deep distress, or poignant woe,

No perilous gymnastics here we show,

No thrilling horrors to create sensation,

Or freeze you mute in breathless expectation.

The hideous photographs of vice we shun,

And paint your follies and your faults in fun.

Accept the portraits which our author sends

As cartes de visites of yourselves and friends.

CURTAIN.