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“STILL WATERS RUN DEEP”

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY

IN THREE ACTS

BY

TOM TAYLOR ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

A Blighted Being; A Trip to Kissengen; Diogenes and his Lantern; The Philosopher's Stone; The Vicar of Wakefield; To Parents and Guardians; Our Clerks; Little Red Riding Hood; &c. &c. &c.: and one of the Authors of Masks and Faces; Plot and Passion; Slave Life; Two Loves and a Life; The King's Rival; &c. &c. &c.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,

WELLINGTON STREET, STRAND,

LONDON.

209602
"STILL WATERS RUN DEEP."

First Performed at the Royal Olympic Theatre, on Monday, May 14th 1855.

CHARACTERS.

MR. POTTER	MR. EMERY.
CAPTAIN HAWKSLEY	MR. GEORGE Vining.
JOHN MILDmay	MR. ALFRED WIGAN.
DUNBILK	MR. DANVERS.
LANGFORD	MR. GLADSTONE.
MARKHAM	MR. J. H. WHITE.
GIMLET	MR. H. COOPER.
JESSOP	MR. FRANKS.
SERVANT	MR. MOORE.
MRS. MILDmay	MISS MASKELL.
MRS. HECTOR STERNHOLD	MRS. MELFORT.

From May 28th, MRS. A. WIGAN.

COSTUMES.

MR. POTTER.—1st dress, Old fashioned brown coat, light silk vest, drab trousers, black cravat; 2nd dress, Blue coat, nankeen trousers; 3rd dress, Black coat, white vest, black trousers.

CAPTAIN HAWKSLEY.—1st dress, Fashionable frock coat, fancy tweed trousers, drab vest, fancy cravat; 2nd dress, Drab over coat; 3rd dress, Fancy morning coat and smoking cap, buff jean trousers, fancy vest and cravat; 4th dress, Dinner dress.

JOHN MILDmay.—1st dress, Black frock coat, check trousers and vest, black cravat; 2nd dress, Great coat, hat, and silk handkerchief; 3rd dress, Dinner dress.

DUNBILK.—1st dress, Brown coat, white vest black cravat, plaid trousers; 2nd dress, Dinner dress.

LANGFORD, MARKHAM, GIMLET.—Dinner dresses.

JESSOP.—Black dress coat, striped livery vest, black trousers.

SERVANT.—Dark blue livery coat and breeches, striped vest, white stockings, and shoes.

MRS. STERNHOLD.—1st dress, Silk dinner dress; 2nd dress, White muslin morning dress; 3rd dress, Pink silk dinner dress, trimmed with black lace.

MRS. MILDmay.—1st dress, Blue striped silk dinner dress; 2nd dress, Green and white silk dinner dress.

PERIOD.—1851.

SCENE.—1st and 3rd Act, Mildmay's villa at Brompton, drawing-room opening to conservatory; 2nd Act, Scene 1, Mrs. Sternhold's breakfast parlour; Scene 2, Captain Hawksley's Office.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—1st Act, 50 minutes; 2nd Act, 36 minutes; 3rd Act, 25 minutes.

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This Comedy is founded on Charles de Bernard's Novel of le Gendre.

“STILL WATERS RUN DEEP.”

ACT I.

SCENE.—A drawing-room in Mildmay's villa, at Brompton. L. 3 E. a door communicating with Mrs. Mildmay's room; R. 1 E. a door leading to Mrs. Sternhold's apartment; fire-place, &c., R. 2 E.; French windows, with curtains, opening to gardens, R. and L. 4 E.; L. 4 E. door to Mildmay's dressing-room; L. 1 E. door to library, and the rest of the house. Across the stage, at back, a conservatory, communicating with garden by large folding glass doors; stages of plants, &c., in the conservatory.

TIME.—A Summer Evening.

A round table, R. c., in front; easy chair by fire R.; piano up stage, R.; a large ottoman, at back, L. c.; a small writing table, L. h.; couch by writing table, L.

MR. POTTER, in easy chair, by fire; **MRS. MILDMA**Y on ottoman; **MRS. STERNHOLD**, seated by table, R.c.; and **MILDMA**Y seated, looking at book, by writing table, L., discovered.

MILDMAY. Suppose, Emily, you gave us a little music.
MRS. S. Music! Nonsense! That you may have the opportunity of snoring without détection, Mr. Mildmay?

MILDMAY. I thought, perhaps, Emily might indulge me with “Auld Robin Gray.”

MRS. M. “Auld Robin Gray!” Now, aunt, only conceive his asking for a stupid old melody like that.

MILD MAY. You used to like playing it to me before we were married.

MRS. M. Before we were married! When you know I adore Beethoven.

MRS. S. To appreciate Beethoven, Emily, requires a soul for music: Mr. Mildmay has no soul for music.

POTTER. No, no, John, you know you havn't. You've no soul for anything.

MILD MAY. Very well. By-the-bye, Emily, what do you say to a quiet little dinner at Richmond, to-morrow?

MRS. S. It's quite out of the question, Mr. Mildmay; I can't allow Emily to go. I've issued invitations for a dinner here.

MILD MAY. Oh! I thought, as it was the anniversary of our wedding-day, Emily, you might like a tête-à-tête with me at the Star and Garter.

MRS. M. But you hear it's quite impossible, and that my aunt has made a party at home.

MILD MAY. Very well; I shan't be missed, I dare say. I shall probably dine at my club.

MRS. S. On the anniversary of your wedding-day! I'm surprised you should not see the want of proper feeling, the indecency, I may say, of such an arrangement. I shall certainly expect you to dine with us.

MILD MAY. As you please. (rises.) Well, as we're not to have any music, I may as well go and earth up my celery.

MRS. S. Is it such a tax to give us half an hour of your company after dinner?

MRS. M. Of course, aunt, if Mr. Mildmay prefers his vegetables to our company, I should be the last person in the world to detain him.

MILD MAY. If you wish me to stay with you, Emily, you've only to say so.

MRS. M. Oh, it's perfectly indifferent to me.

MRS. S. I'm sure your wife would be the last person to thwart your wishes.

MILD MAY. Oh, I've no particular wish on the subject. I can make myself comfortable here.

(he settles himself on the sofa, L.)

Mrs. M. (to Mrs. S.) There, aunt, did you ever see anything so provokingly indifferent?

Mrs. S. My poor child! But don't distress yourself about him. Suppose you give me a little music.

Mrs. M. With pleasure. What shall I play you?

Mrs. S. Anything you like.

(Mrs. MILDWAY sits at piano, up R. H., and begins to play; glancing over her shoulder at MILDWAY, who falls asleep; after a while she stops.

Mrs. S. Well, Emmy, why don't you go on?

Mrs. M. Dear me, aunt, (angrily) you surely would not have me disturb Mr. Mildmay. (rises.) It's quite enough to play him to sleep, I should think, without playing him awake again.

POTTER. (soothingly.) Come, come, Emmy, he's been working in the garden all day, you know.

Mrs. S. (sharply.) Nonsense, Mr. Potter, you know you both always fall fast asleep after dinner, though you never will allow it.

POTTER. Well, but sister—

Mrs. S. I beg we may have no discussion on the matter, brother Potter. I hate discussion. Emily has very good reason to be angry—not a year married yet. However, there's one comfort, niece, you might be a great deal worse off.

(Mr. POTTER leans back in his chair, and falls into a doze.)

Mrs. M. Worse off! Now, aunt, what could be worse than a husband without the least spirit, life, enthusiasm—not enough to keep himself awake, even, through a sonata of Beethoven?

Mrs. S. Pooh, pooh, child, what do you know about it? It is quite true Mr. Mildmay is dull—stupid, if you like—but then, remember, he has none of those ridiculous pretensions, which most men set up, to a will of his own. That is the great point. You can do what you like with him, if you'll only take the trouble.

Mrs. M. Yes, aunt, but I hate taking trouble. I want a husband to interest me, to share my feelings, to invest life with something of poetry—of romance.

MRS. S. Nonsense! Poetry and romance are not half such safe investments as the three per cents.

MRS. M. Oh, look! there's a wasp, right on Mildmay's nose. I'll kill it.

(*She knots her handkerchief, and brings it smartly down on MILDMAJ'S face.*)

MILDMAJ. (*opening his eyes.*) Eh?

MRS. M. It was only a wasp. I missed it.

MILDMAJ. Oh, thank you. Don't try to kill the next, please. Of the two, I'd rather be stung. (MRS. MILDMAJ gets towards L. U. E.) Going into the garden?

MRS. M. No, I'm going into my own room.

MILDMAJ. Oh! then I'll go and earth up the celery. (*rises, and goes up c., stops.*) By the way, would you tell Jessop to pack me up a clean shirt? I'm going to Manchester to-night, by the mail train.

MRS. M. To-night! Why you never said a word about it till now.

MILDMAJ. No. Why should I? I shall return by the express to-morrow. I shall see you again before I start.

[*Exit MILDMAJ, leisurely, through c., to conservatory.*

MRS. M. (*aside.*) Provoking! But I'm glad I hurt him a little. Good night, papa; good night, aunt Jane.

MRS. S. Why, you're not going to bed—child, it's hardly nine o'clock.

MRS. M. Isn't it? I'm sure the day's been long enough. (*looking for a book on table L.*) Did you see my Tennyson, aunt?

MRS. S. Tennyson! Nonsense! Always at that ridiculous poetry of yours.

MRS. M. Oh, aunt, if you knew the comfort it brings to my withered heart. (*going up L. C.*)

"She only said the day is dreary.

He cometh not, she said.

She said, I am weary—a-weary—

I wish that I were dead."

(*looking off, through conservatory.*) There's Mildmay, with his coat off, just like a common market gardener. Oh! what a contrast to Hawksley! Heigho!

[*Exit MRS. MILDMAJ, D. L. 3, E.*

MRS. S. (*rises and goes up c.*) Here's that brother of mine, snoring now. Brother Potter. (*bawling in his ear.*)

POTTER. (*waking suddenly.*) Eh? my dear. Did you speak?

MRS. S. Did I speak? Did you hear? Now Emily's gone, perhaps you will inform me, yes or no, whether you mean to do what I asked you to do before dinner?

(MRS. STERNHOLD *resumes her seat; POTTER rises, comes down, and sits R. of table L.*

POTTER. But, my dear sister, its impossible.

MRS. S. Nothing is impossible, brother Potter.

POTTER. But you won't understand, that the settlement—

MRS. S. Settlement! Stuff and nonsense!

POTTER. But, you will allow me to observe, it's anything but stuff and nonsense, sister. When Emily married, I settled eight thousand pounds on her, payable to the trustees, six months from the date of the settlement. That's eight months since, and I've not paid a farthing of the money yet.

MRS. S. And what of that, pray? She's your only child: all you have will be hers at your death.

POTTER. At my death! Well, if there is eighteen years difference between your age and mine, Jane, there's no occasion to allude to my death in that cheerful way. But I'm bound to pay that eight thousand pounds over to the trustees under the settlement. Suppose Mildmay asked after this money, some fine morning. A pretty figure I should cut!

MRS. S. Mr. Mildmay knows too well what is due to our position, to do anything of the kind. He's not at all keen in money matters; that I must say for him.

POTTER. No—that's it. It's just because he is such an innocent, unsuspecting lamb of a man—

MRS. S. Nonsense, brother! I don't wish for any discussion; I only want an answer, yes or no. You've already invested one thousand pounds, in shares, in Captain Hawksley's Galvanic Navigation Company, and now he has very kindly offered you twenty more fifty pound shares, and I've promised you will take them up. You surely don't wish me to break my promise?

POTTER. Certainly not, sister, certainly not. It always gives me pleasure to carry out your wishes, but I really don't like to propose the thing to Mildmay.

MRS. S. And why should you say a word to him about it? I suppose you can pay him the interest of the money. The Galvanic Navigation Company guarantees eight per cent.; you pay Mildmay five, and put three per cent. into your pocket by the transaction. You can't deny that.

POTTER. Well, but this Galvanic Company, you know—how can one tell it's quite safe?

MRS. S. Do you consider Captain Hawksley a gentleman?

POTTER. Oh, certainly my dear.

MRS. S. Do you think he would inveigle you into a dangerous speculation?

POTTER. No, I don't believe he would, for a moment, but—

MRS. S. Then what have you to say?

POTTER. Well, my dear, I say—

MRS. S. Black, because I say white! That's always the way. I wonder what would happen if you could once agree with me on any one subject?

POTTER. Well, I'm sure, sister, I always do end by agreeing with you.

MRS. S. Then why not begin with it? It would save so much disagreeable discussion. Then I consider it settled—you take up these shares. The captain promised to call this evening—you can arrange the business with him when he comes.

POTTER. Eh! Hawksley coming here this evening?

MRS. S. Why, have you any objection?

POTTER. No, no, no! He's a very clever fellow, Hawksley—vastly agreeable—vastly—the sort of man one's always glad to see; but still I should be just as well pleased not to see him here quite so often.

MRS. S. Indeed! (*angrily*) May I ask why?

POTTER. Oh, if you're going to lose your temper, sister—

MRS. S. Brother Potter, did you ever see me lose my temper?

POTTER. No, no, my dear.

MRS. S. I wish to know what possible reason you have for objecting to Captain Hawksley's visits?

POTTER. I, sister? I object? On the contrary, I like him... I've every confidence in him, but—

MRS. S. Well?

POTTER. I don't quite like his coming here, on Emmy's account.

MRS. S. On Emmy's account! Oh you may be perfectly easy on that score. I grant you that before her marriage he might have shown some penchant for Emily.

POTTER. So much so that I always fancied, if it had not been for your setting your face against it, he and Emmy might have made a match of it.

MRS. S. Captain Hawksley was not at all the man for Emmy. Besides, I'm sure she never had any fancy for him.

POTTER. Perhaps not; but what I'm afraid of is, she may have some fancy for him now.

MRS. S. Brother Potter!

POTTER. Oh, I know what I'm about, sister; they're afraid of you—nothing goes on when you are there; but they don't mind me—and I've observed more than once—

MRS. S. (*with suppressed but violent agitation*). Well—what—speak out—what have you observed?

POTTER. Well, but sister, don't excite yourself in that manner. You know it always flies to your head. Emmy's your niece, its true—but after all—

MRS. S. No equivocation, brother! What have you observed?

POTTER. Well then, between ourselves, I've observed something—that is—a sort of—you know—in her manner with the captain, and in his manner with her—Emmy's romantic, and the captain insinuating and agreeable, and what you women call interesting—and, in short, sister, there's a sentimental sort of a—flirtation—going on between 'em already—platonic, I've no doubt, but there's no saying where that sort of thing may end—and I don't like it—and I've intended to talk to Emmy about it this ever so long—only I didn't like to—

MRS. S. (*aside*) It cannot be! (*to POTTER*) Don't say a word to Emmy on the matter; you had better leave it all to me (*rises*).

POTTER. Exactly, sister, I thought I had (*rises*).

MRS. S. I tell you, brother, you had better leave it all to me. Hark! There's his cab! (*goes up to window L. and looks eagerly out. Aside.*) Emily is watching for him at her window—he kisses his hand to her—so, so!

POTTER. I told you so. Now just see if she doesn't come down to receive him. Suppose we joined them?

MRS. S. There's the postman with the evening paper. You know you are always anxious about the news. Go and enjoy your "Globe" in the library. Now will you oblige me by going?

POTTER. (*crossing to L.*) Certainly, sister, certainly—
(*aside*) Its a great comfort I've such a superior woman in the house as my sister. She saves one so much trouble in making up one's mind.

[*Exit L. D. 1 E.*

MRS. S. Can this be true, or is it my silly brother's fancy? Ha! as he said, Emily joins him—she takes his arm—she leans upon it fondly, (*convulsively*) He gathers a rose, he gives it to her! Oh, I will not believe it. No, no, no! They are coming into the house. I will be satisfied.

(*Retires behind the screen of plants in the conservatory, R. U. E.*)

Enter MRS. MILDWAY, carrying a rose in her hand, followed by CAPTAIN HAWKSLEY, L. D. 1 E.

HAWKS. (L.) And I am to have nothing for my rose?

MRS. M. (R.) Your rose shall have a glass of water in my dressing room to-night, and I promise you not to fling it away to-morrow till it is withered.

HAWKS. Suppose I offered my heart on the same terms?

MRS. M. Captain Hawksley!

HAWKS. Forgive me; I forgot this was London, and not Seville. I have lived so long in that land of poetry and passion, that my blood has learned its impetuosity, as my tongue its music. But you are offended. Can you wonder if, when I see you unappreciated, respect gives way to sympathy.

Enter JESSOP, with a carpet bag, D. L. U. E.

JESSOP. Master's bag, ma'am. Shall I order a cab ma'am, to take him to the station?

MRS. M. Mr. Mildmay is in the garden, Jessop; you had better ask him.

[*Exit JESSOP c. d. of conservatory.*

HAWKS. Is Mildmay going out of town?

MRS. M. To-night—so he told me half an hour ago, without a word of explanation, or an expression of regret at leaving me.

HAWKS. And to this man you are tied for life! The law has made you his, and love has no rights in this cold, formal England. Oh, why may I not offer you that tenderness, that sympathy of which he is incapable? I ask no more, only to love you. I seek no return of love.

MRS. M. Captain Hawksley, I must not listen to this.
(sits).

HAWKS. Take care; you know not of what a man is capable whose love-code has been learnt in the hot south where passion excuses boldness. Oh, were this but Seville! Sweet Seville!

MRS. M. Well, suppose this were Seville?

HAWKS. Then I would insist upon your hearing an avowal of my love, when there should be none to interrupt us—at the dead of night—here!

MRS. M. You would not dare—(rises).

HAWKS. You had better not defy me; ladies never do in Spain. At midnight I would be under your window.

MRS. M. Indeed! You would actually climb the garden wall!

HAWKS. What need for that when there's a door.

MRS. M. But who would open it?

HAWKS. (*taking a key from his pocket.*) This!

MRS. M. The duplicate key of the garden gate that my aunt lost last week!

HAWKS. It has been found, you see.

MRS. M. Then you took it?

HAWKS. I did.

MRS. M. And you would dare to use it?

HAWKS. This very night—if this were Seville.

MRS. M. Really, this is too absurd to be angry at.

HAWKS. I fear your displeasure more than anything in

the world; but even that would not change my resolution —were we in Seville.

MRS. M. Well, suppose admission secured to the garden, you forget Bran, the savage mastiff; he is let loose after dark.

HAWKS. You forget who gave him to you. Bran knows his old master.

MRS. M. And was it for this you made us a present of him?

HAWKS. Precisely. We lay our plans well in Seville.

MRS. M. Well, suppose you have played the burglar, and Bran the traitor, what then?

HAWKS. I advance on tip-toe—you always sit up late, reading in this room—you start! This room opens on the conservatory—the conservatory on the garden—

MRS. M. What then? (*taking stage backwards and forwards.*)

HAWKS. Then when the moonlight trembled on the trees —when the night winds were hushed in the petals of the flowers—when all slept but love—I would be at your side, breathing low words of passion, and you would listen.

MRS. M. (*R. forcing a laugh.*) Charming! were we in Seville! But here, you forget, windows have bars, and doors have bolts.

HAWKS. There are means to make both useless. *(both going up stage.)*

MRS. M. Better and better! I see you are determined to destroy my night's rest, at all events. I shall be dreaming of nothing but burglary and assassination; imagining a bandit, duly masked, cloaked, and dark-lanterned, breaking into the house, at the least noise. (*seated on ottoman.*)

HAWKS. (*leaning over her.*) Suppose you heard that noise at midnight?

MRS. M. And suppose others heard it besides me? A glass door bolted inside cannot be forced without some noise.

HAWKS. But if the bolt be wanting?

MRS. M. Good gracious! (*starting up and looking at door of conservatory c.*) The inner bolt is removed! (*aside.*)

HAWKS. Well?

MRS. M. You are mad, Captain Hawksley. Ha! ha!

ha ! (*forcing a laugh.*) But I forgot, we are playing Senor and Senora, and all this is not at Brompton, but *might* be in Seville. (*coming down and crossing to L. H.*) But had we not better join papa and my aunt in the library? They must have heard your cab drive up: my aunt will wonder what has become of us.

HAWKS. Your aunt — pooh! I'll take odds she's *adorning* to receive me—putting on the slightest *soupcon* of rouge. It's extraordinary how some women will be young, in spite of nature and their looking glasses.

MRS. M. No, no; you are too severe on poor auntie; she's a great admirer of yours, and if I keep you so long en tête-a-tête, she'll be jealous of me. Ha! ha! ha!

HAWKS. At least, let us walk round by the garden. I wish to congratulate Mildmay on his celery—and then it's so much longer.

[*Exeunt* MRS. MILDWY and CAPTAIN HAWKESLEY,
L. D. 1 E.]

[*Re-enter* MRS. STERNHOLD from behind the screen of plants in conservatory, suppressing signs of the most violent emotion.]

MRS. S. The double-faced villain! Oh, Hawksley! Hawksley! So, I wear rouge, do I?—And false hair, of course—and artificial teeth too, I dare say. And Emily too! They walk smiling in each other's faces. Thank Heaven! I'm not like that raw girl; I can master my emotion until the time comes, and then beware, Captain! You do not know the woman you have trifled with.

[*Exit* L. D. 1 E.]

[*Enter* MILDWY, followed by JESSOP with carpet bag, through c. D. of conservatory.]

MILDWY. (*looking at his watch.*) A quarter past nine! I shan't want the cab for half-an-hour yet. Let's see—yes—I shall have light enough to finish painting that trellis, I think.—Just bring in the ladder, Jessop.

[*Exit* JESSOP, R. U. E.]
Rather a bore this journey to Manchester. I don't like

leaving Emmy—not that she minds. Twelve months to-morrow since we were made one: I little thought we should be so completely two, so soon. Oh, these aunts and mothers-in-law! Well, patience! patience!

Re-enter JESSOP with ladder, paint, &c., R. U. E.

Set it here!

(JESSOP places ladder in c. of trellis, at back of stage.)

MILDMAY takes off his coat, and ascending ladder, begins to paint.

[*Exit JESSOP with carpet bag, L. U. E.*

Enter MR. POTTER followed by CAPTAIN HAWKSLEY.

L. D. 1 E.

HAWKS. (L.) Magnificent celery! I congratulate you, my dear Potter, on so horticultural a son-in-law; it's a pursuit at once innocent and economical.

POTTER. Yes; I calculate every bundle costs only about twice as much as in Covent Garden.

HAWKS. Apropos—did Mrs. Sternhold mention to you that I'd allotted you fifty more galvanies?

POTTER. Ye—es—I think she did mention something of the kind.

HAWKS. There's twenty pounds paid up, you know; I suppose I may rely on the money for to-morrow?

POTTER. Why, you see, my dear Hawksley, I'm extremely obliged to you for letting me have the shares; but, the fact is, there's a leetle difficulty in the way. There is no making women understand money matters, not even my sister—she's a most superior woman, but she's rather of an irritable constitution; the slightest contradiction flies to her head. I'm sure she's a leetle upset at this moment, by a discussion we had together this evening on the subject of these very shares.

HAWKS. (*smiling.*) Do you think the investment isn't a safe one?

POTTER. On the contrary—on the contrary. But, you see, all the ready money I can command, just now, is payable to the trustees under my daughter's settlement. In fact, it belongs not to me, but my son-in-law.

HAWKS. Why, Mildmay must be a greater fool, even, than I take him for, if he objects to an investment guaranteeing eight per cent.

POTTER. Well, I'll tell you what. Let me propose it to Mildmay. If he agrees, it's settled—if not, you must settle the matter with Mrs. Sternhold; not that I have any objection to tell her, only contradiction does so fly to her head.

HAWKS. As you please.

Re-enter MRS. STERNHOLD and MRS. MILD MAY, l. d. 1 e.

Here come the ladies.

POTTER. (*in turning round, sees MILD MAY on ladder, c.*) Egad! there's Mildmay upon the ladder.

MRS. S. (l. c.) Mr. Mildmay? Well, sir, I suppose you don't see us?

MILD MAY. (c. *on ladder.*) Yes, I see you.
(looking down quietly.)

MRS. S. And do you see Captain Hawksley?

MILD MAY. Oh, yes. I don't stand on ceremony with him. I'm sure the captain will allow me to finish my job.
(continues his painting.)

HAWKS. (r. c., *sneering.*) Oh! I never disturb an artist at work. Fresco, I think.

MILD MAY. No—"Flatting"—that's the technical term.

HAWKS. Indeed! A punster might be provoked into saying it was proper work for a flat. (*all laugh.*)

MILD MAY. Flat? Oh! I see. Very good—very good indeed. Would *you* like to try your hand?

HAWKS. No, thank you. I've no talent for the fine arts. Charming colour! isn't it, ladies? One would say Mildmay had a natural eye for green.

MILD MAY. You're very kind. Yes,—I think it's rather a success—and when the creepers come to be trained over it—

HAWKS. Why you don't suppose any creepers will be weak-minded enough to grow there?

MILD MAY. Why not? Parasites thrive uncommonly well in this house, you know, Captain.

HAWKS. Parasites!

MILDMAY. That's the technical name for what you call creepers.

HAWKS. Ah! I forgot how learned you were in the *Gardeners' Chronicle*. But here's a letter for you.

MILDMAY. A letter for me?

HAWKS. Yes. I looked in at the Union, as I passed — there was a letter for you, so I brought it. It's from Manchester.

MILDMAY. (*coming down.*) From Manchester! eh? And you've taken the trouble to bring it? How very kind of you. (*takes letter, and puts it into his coat pocket.*)

POTTER. (R.) Well, if ever I saw a man so destitute of all natural curiosity!

HAWKS. Well, now I've played postman, and done my devoirs to the ladies, I must be off. (*aside to POTTER.*) Let me know how he decides about the shares. (*crosses to L.*) Good night, Mrs. Sternhold—Mrs. Mildmay. (*bows.*)

MRS. M. Adieu, Captain!

HAWKS. No—not Adieu—*Au revoir!*

[*Exit HAWKSEY, L. D. 1 E.*

MRS. S. (*up stage, looking off at window, L. H.*) What a bright moon! I feel rather tired. Good night, Emily. Take care of yourself, and don't sit up late. (*crossing at back, towards R. D. 1 E.*) Good night, Mr. Mildmay. You really must go to-night? Well, take plenty of wraps. Remember, you can't have Jessop, I want him in the morning, so you must carry your carpet bag yourself.

MILDMAY. (C.) Oh, very well.

MRS. S. The unsuspecting fool! But I will watch for him and for myself. [*Exit MRS. STERNHOLD, R. D. 1 E.*

Enter JESSOP, L. D. 1 E., with carcel lamp, which he puts on table R. H.

JESSOP. The cab's at the door, sir.

(*Fetches MILDMAY's great coat and hat from dressing room, L. D. U. E., and places them on ottoman.*

MILDMAY. Very well. Put in my bag.

[*Exit JESSOP, L. D. 1 E., with bag.*
Good night, Emmy! (*kisses her on forehead.*)

MRS. M. Oh ! must you really go, John ? Don't go—not to-night ?

MILDWELL. I must, my dear. I shall be back to-morrow. Why, what's the matter ? Your eyes are full of tears. Don't fret, there's a good girl. Good night.

MRS. M. (*gives a glance at the conservatory, and shudders—aside.*) Oh, no ! He dare not !

[*Exit Mrs. MILDWELL, l. d. 3 e.*

POTTER. (*as MILDWELL is going.*) Stop, Mr. Mildmay. I want to speak to you.

MILDWELL. I'm rather in a hurry. (*going.*)

POTTER. (r.) You *must* stop. I want to speak to you.

MILDWELL. (l. *takes out his watch.*) Well, I can give you five minutes.

POTTER. (*pauses, then looks awkwardly up at trellis.*) An uncommonly neat piece of work ! Do you know, Mildmay, you're a first-rate painter ; and, as for celery—I do believe you'd win the medal at the Horticultural.

MILDWELL. Eh ? That's not what you wanted to say !

POTTER. Eh ? Well—no—you're quite right, Mildmay, that wasn't what I wanted to say, though it's quite true, all the same. But I want to talk to you on a *leettle* matter of business. You're aware I owe your trustees eight thousand pounds, under Emmy's settlement, and that the money should have been paid two months ago.

MILDWELL. I know that.

POTTER. Exactly. Well, it occurred to my sister and me—that is, to me and my sister—that you might have no objection to investing some of the money, under Emmy's settlement, in Galvanics. It's a magnificent speculation—perfectly safe—guarantees eight per cent., and so—to oblige her—I—I've been and taken fifty shares.

MILDWELL. I know that.

POTTER. Good gracious ! Why you know everything !

MILDWELL. Not everything.

POTTER. But who could have told you I'd taken up the shares Captain Hawksley was kind enough to allot me ?

MILDWELL. Captain Hawksley himself ! He thought

the best way to prove to me it was a good investment, was, that you thought so.

POTTER. Eh? Has he been asking you to take shares, too?

MILDWY. Should you have any objection to get rid of yours?

POTTER. Why, the fact is, it's been my sister's doing all along; and now she's undertaken for me to take fifty more shares, and, as they must be paid for out of the money due under Emmy's settlement, she thought you might have no objection to the arrangement, and, meanwhile, to take the interest of Emmy's money, instead of the principal.

MILDWY. I've not the slightest objection.

(*going up for his hat, &c.*)

POTTER. You havn't?

MILDWY. In fact I've a few loose thousands of my own at my bankers, and as you tell me this speculation is such a good one, I should like to put a trifle into it myself, say six or eight thousand.

POTTER. Risk six or eight thousand! (*aside.*) What a noodle he is! Don't be in a hurry, my dear boy! Six or eight thousand is no joke! It's not wise to risk all one's eggs in one basket, you know.

MILDWY. But they're not all my eggs; and then it's clear, from what you say, the basket's a strong one.

POTTER. No doubt—no doubt. A magnificent speculation—as safe as the bank—but—

MILDWY. Well?

POTTER. As a young married man, don't you think, now—a good safe mortgage—though it should only bring you in five per cent—

MILDWY. My dear Mr. Potter, if you think it a good investment, why try to dissuade me from it? If you think it a bubble, why have you put my wife's money into it?

POTTER. Eh? Well—but—Confound it!

Enter JESSOP, L.D. 1 E.

JESSOP. Cabman says he can just save the mail train, sir

MILD MAY. Very well. I'm coming.

[*Exit JESSOP, L. D. 1 E.*

Good night! Tell Hawksley I'll take a couple of hundred shares, if he can spare 'em. I'll call at his chambers to-morrow, as soon as I get back from Manchester. Good night! (*goes up stage.*)

POTTER. (*crossing to L. H.*) Good night! and a pleasant journey. (*aside.*) Oh, dear! oh, dear! My sister is a most superior woman, but she has a great deal to answer for! And contradiction does so fly to her head.

[*Exit POTTER, L. D. 1 E.*

MILD MAY. Now for that letter. (*opens letter given to him by HAWKSLEY, and reads it rapidly.*) So this renders my trip to Manchester unnecessary. I must see Gimlet, at once, and let him know of this discovery. (*smiling.*) It was really very kind of Captain Hawksley to bring this letter.

[*Exit, L. D. 1 E.*

(MRS. STERNHOLD looks out of her door, R. 1 E.

Mrs. S. Hark! the cab drives off!—Footsteps!—'Tis Emily!

(Retires into her room, but comes out again quietly during MRS. MILD MAY's speech; goes up, and crossing at back, comes down on MRS. MILD MAY's left hand.)

Enter MRS. MILD MAY, from her room, L. 3 E.

Mrs. M. Mr. Mildmay! Husband! Ha! wheels! It's too late!—It's too late! Oh, I had made up my mind to tell him all—to own my folly—to ask his pardon. If Hawksley should be so rash—so wicked—so frantic, as to execute his threat, what will become of me? But he dare not! Surely he dare not! But I will be bold. I will wait here, and if he dare come—but shall I ever have the courage—oh, I shall faint—I shall go mad!

(Sinks into chair R. of table R. H., and presses her head with her hands. MRS. STERNHOLD advances on her L., surveys her fiercely, then puts her hand on her shoulder.

MRS. S. Mrs. Mildmay!

Mrs. S. Aunt Jane! How pale you are! What is the matter? Are you ill? Shall I call my maid?

MRS. S. What I have to say must be heard by none but you.

MRS. M. (*trying to laugh.*) Nay, aunt ; if you look so at me, I shall think I'm a little girl again, going to be sent to the dark closet for being naughty.

MRS. S. Emily, would to heaven your fault was one calling but for that childish correction : for though I punished, I might still esteem you.

MRS. M. What have I done that you dare speak so to me ?

MRS. S. What have you done ?—You dare ask what you have done ? Do you think I'm blind ? Do you think you can hoodwink me, as you have done your doting father, and your clod of a husband ? I blush for you !

MRS. M. I do not understand you ! (*rises.*)

MRS. S. Oh, you do not understand me ! I must speak more plainly still, must I ? A man has addressed you as no man dares address a married woman, till he has ceased to respect her. Captain Hawksley is your lover !

MRS. M. It is false !

MRS. S. Is it ? To-night it may be ; were I not here, would it be false to-morrow ? Is it false that this man has a key to the garden door ? Is it false that to-night—in a few minutes, perhaps—he may be at that window—in this room—at your feet ? Is that false ? Answer me ! (*MRS. MILDMAy hides her face in her hands, and is silent.*) You cannot ! (*puts her across to L. H.*) Go to your room : I will wait here.

MRS. M. You wait here !—what for ?

MRS. S. To receive this man.

MRS. M. No—no !

MRS. S. Go !

MRS. M. Oh, you will not—

MRS. S. No remonstrance—go, I say !

(*She seizes MRS. MILDMAy by the arm, and forces her off at door L. 3 E. She then returns, and goes rapidly to the conservatory.*

The door unbolted !—All was ready ! Hark ! was that anyone stirring over head ? Let me see all is quiet up stairs—and then for you..

[*Exit MRS. STERNHOLD cautiously, R. D. 1 x*

* Bag

Re-enter MILD MAY, with candle, L. D. 1 E.

MILD MAY. Wonderful fellows, these detectives ! Gimlet had got the news as soon as I did ; I came full tilt upon him driving here at a gallop—we nearly smashed each other. Let me see, I must tell Mrs. Sternhold at once, or she may be committing poor Potter still deeper with the fellow : she's an intelligent woman, and can keep a secret. (*goes to door R. 1 E., and taps.*) Mrs. Sternhold—don't be frightened—it's me—Mildmay—I've come back. Eh ! no answer. (*looks through key-hole.*) She's not in her room. There's a light, too ! Where can she be ? Keeping my wife company, perhaps. Well, I'll deposit my carpet bag in my dressing-room, and then pop in on Emmy—she seemed sorry I was going—she'll be glad I've come back—poor little thing ! I think sometimes she's beginning to care for me.—Heigho !

[*Exit with candle, door L. U. E.*

Re-enter MRS. STERNHOLD, R. D. 1 E.

MRS. S. All is quiet—my brother and the servants asleep. Hark !

(*She turns the lamp down, and seats herself R. H.*
[*Lights down.*

Enter HAWKSLEY through c. d. of conservatory, and from conservatory into room, coming down c. cautiously.

HAWKS. (*springing towards MRS. STERNHOLD.*) Emily ! MRS. S. (*starting up—turns up lamp.*) 'Tis not Emily !

[*Lights up.*

(*At this moment MILD MAY is seen coming from his room, candle in hand—he starts—blows out the candle, and stands listening, but so as not to be seen by the characters.*

HAWKS. (*after a pause, recovering himself.*) Good evening, Mrs. Sternhold ! Delighted to see you looking so brilliant—your head-ache is quite gone, I trust.

MRS. S. (*rises*) Villain! — Swindler! — Adventurer! — Impostor! — Beggar!

HAWKS. Your excitement makes you illogical. Allow me to observe that beggars don't ride, and that my cab is at the garden door.

MRS. S. Thanks to the poor dupes who pay for it, of whom I have been one too long.

HAWKS. You do us both injustice, my dear madam. You are too clever for a dupe — and I'm not clever enough —

MRS. S. For a rogue? Excuse me — you have just the requisite amount of brains, but there is one quality you are deficient in.

HAWKS. And what may that be, pray?

MRS. S. Prudence — or you would have foreseen the danger of making me your enemy.

HAWKS. Allow me to offer you a chair. (*placing chair by table R. C., she sits.*) I see our tête-a-tête promises to be as long as it is already interesting. (*takes chair, and sits L. C.*) And now, my dear lady, I'm all attention; if you will be kind enough to explain to me the cause of all this emotion, I may perhaps succeed in calming it.

MRS. S. You are here — and you dare ask the cause of my indignation.

HAWKS. I understand. My presence in Mrs. Mildmay's boudoir is an unpardonable crime — there might have been an excuse for me had it been yours.

MRS. S. (*hiding her face in her hands.*) If my weakness had exposed me to such an insult, a man of honour would have spared me it.

HAWKS. (*contemptuously.*) A man of honour! In a word, — what is the meaning of this scene? Why are you here? What do you want? Where is your niece?

MRS. S. Yonder, in her own room. You love her?

HAWKS. Suppose I admit it?

MRS. S. And you dare to tell me so?

(*Seizes a paper-knife, which lies on the table.*)

HAWKS. How lucky it's not a dagger!

MRS. S. (*in a passion of rage, breaks the paper-knife, and throws away the pieces.*) The dagger's a poor revenge. It kills too soon.

HAWKS. We have a variety of slow poisons.

MRS. S. Clever as you are, you cannot give a woman a lesson in revenge. Trust the hate I feel for you from this night. My weapon shall not be dagger or poison. You see those pieces? (*pointing to fragments of paper knife.*) Before a month is past, I shall have broken you, as I have broken that!

HAWKS. You positively alarm me! Is it possible I can be so brittle?

MRS. S. Laugh on till others laugh at *you*!

HAWKS. No—really—such a capital joke deserves to be laughed at.

MRS. S. Listen, Hawksley! Because I have been weak, you have thought me blind. I have been your benefactress—yes, wince! I say, your benefactress—but in your eyes I was but one dupe the more. You did not know that a woman could love a man without esteeming him. From the first day I have known you, I have seen through you—your commission—your services—the credit you boast—the luxury you parade. I knew it all a lie—a shallow, transparent lie! You are nothing—you have nothing—

HAWKS. By Jove, madam—(*starting up.*)

MRS. S. Sit still. I have not done yet. I say, I knew you, and yet was weak enough to love you. That love drew me on to serve your ends—blindly—devotedly—to give countenance to your deceptions—credit to your lies: this is what I have done for you, and thus it is I am rewarded. My blind love has made me thus guilty, and you—you, for whose sake I have done these things—upbraid me with my weakness! Heaven is just! but 'tis bitter! very bitter! (*she sobs bitterly.*)

HAWKS. Don't cry! You'll spoil your complexion!

MRS. S. (*rising.*) From this moment I devote myself to your destruction, with all the energy I have hitherto employed for your service. I know your heart is invulnerable. I will not strike at that.

HAWKS. At my fortune, I presume?

MRS. S. Your fortune! I have but to let in the light upon its shameful secrets, and it crumbles to the ground.

HAWKS. But you won't let in the light.

MRS. S. I have done so.

HAWKS. Really!

MRS. S. The money I had wrung from my brother for your speculation, and on which you rely to meet your engagements to-morrow, will not be paid.

HAWKS. Oh! at last! (*rises.*) I was waiting for you to get out of the quicksands of sentiment to the solid ground of business. Be good enough to listen to me—and, above all, follow my argument closely. I am here in two characters—as a gentleman, and as a man of business. As a gentleman, I confess, my conduct has been scandalous—I admit it. Call me what you like, I deserve the very worst your abundant vocabulary can supply. But, as a man of business—hands off! There, I decline your jurisdiction altogether. The speculator cannot in fairness be saddled with the lover's peccadilloes. Mr. Mildmay intends to invest largely, I hope, in Galvanics. You will be good enough not to prevent him from executing that laudable intention.

MRS. S. He will not come.

HAWKS. Oh, yes he will.

MRS. S. I will forbid him.

HAWKS. And I forbid you to say a word to him in the matter! And woe to you if you breathe one syllable of my concerns to him, or any other living soul! You talk of my imprudence! have you forgotten your own? You can ruin my fortune! True. But your own reputation—that reputation so infact—so awful—kept up at such a cost of hypocrisy and deceit. I am an adventurer! Granted. What are you!

MRS. S. A most unhappy woman! (*sits.*)

HAWKS. You will have a better title to *that* name when I have shewn you to the world in your true colours.

MRS. S. It is not in your power. Who will believe *you*?

HAWKS. Allow me to observe that I am the fortunate possessor of no less than thirteen of your letters.

MRS. S. (*rises.*) You have not burnt them, as you swore *you* had done, on your honour.

HAWKS. *My* honour! How could *you* trust *THAT* security? Oh, no! One doesn't burn such letters as *yours*.

MRS. S. Alas ! Even I did not know this man !

HAWKS. (*looking at his watch.*) Half-past twelve o'clock ! How time flies, to be sure ! I've to be up early at business ; and late hours will ruin your complexion. *Addio !* Remember my ultimatum ! Peace or war, as you will. I prefer peace infinitely ! I hate giving pain to a woman ! But if Mildmay doesn't show to-morrow—with the money —your interesting autographs will be added to the literature of the country. *En attendant*—allow me to wish you a very good night !

(*He goes up towards door of conservatory, c., then turns ;*

Mrs. STERNHOLD crosses towards L. D. 3 E; MILD MAY is seen to step forward, and clench his fist, but checks himself, and retires, L. D. U. E.

By the way, I dine here to-morrow. I hope our little scene of to-night will not prevent your receiving me with your usual amiability.

[*Exit HAWKSLEY, by c. d. of conservatory.*

MRS. S. Ruffian ! Coward ! Should he dare to expose those fatal letters, he will destroy me ! But I must be calm—this girl shall not see a trace of emotion.

(*goes to door L. 3 E., and opens it.*

Emily !

Enter MRS. MILD MAY, L. D. 3 E.

Emily, I— (*turns faint.*)

MRS. M. Is he gone ?

MRS. S. For this night you are safe. This man dare not—dare not !—Oh, what will he not dare ?

(*crossing towards R. D. 1 E., while speaking.*

MRS. M. Aunt, dear aunt ! Be composed ! Come with me ! Come to bed ! What can have passed between them ?

[*Exeunt MRS. MILD MAY, leading MRS. STERNHOLD R. D. 1 E.*

Enter MILD MAY, from room D. L. U. E.

MILD MAY. So ! I knew he was a rascal—but I'd no notion Mrs. Sternhold had been such a fool ! But when

your strong-minded woman *does* break loose, a Welsh river after a flood, is a joke to her! Poor Emily, too! She has had a narrow escape! Perhaps, after all, I have carried the *laissez aller* principle too far. It's a capital rule in political economy—but it don't do in married life, I see. That wants a *coup d'etat* now and then. So! My wife!

(*goes up stage towards conservatory.*)

Re-enter MRS. MILDMAY, R. D. 1 E.

MRS. M. She's calmer now. I must go to my room for ether.

(*Going towards her room, L. 3 E., sees MILDMAY, and, not recognising him at first, screams.*
Stand back, sir! How dare you?

MILDMAY. (*coming forward L. c.*) Don't be alarmed, my dear. It's only John.

MRS. M. My husband! Come back? Thank heaven! I'm safe now!

MILDMAY. I hope so. But what's the matter? Why are you up at this hour? How comes that garden door open?

MRS. M. I—I—don't know. Was it open?

MILDMAY. Yes—I found it so, just now, as I came back from the station.

MRS. M. Then you're not going to Manchester. Do not leave me! Stay—do stay!

MILDMAY. My journey's unnecessary, I find. But, about this open door? I must take a survey of the premises. Jessop was firing at the blackbirds to day. He left his gun in the root-house.

MRS. M. No—no! Oh, consider!—if you should meet him—

MILDMAY. Him!—who?

MRS. M. The—the—the robber—the man!

MILDMAY. Oh! then there is a man?

MRS. M. No—no! Didn't you say you thought there was?

MILDMAY. Not I! But, to satisfy you, I'll make the round of the garden.

MRS. M. No—no!

MILDWELL. Don't be alarmed, Emmy. I shall take the gun, and use it—if necessary. (*going up stage.*)

MRS. M. Oh, heaven! If they meet!

(*sinking into a chair, R. C., and clasping her hands.*)

TABLEAU—*as drop descends.*

ACT II.

SCENE.—*Breakfast room in Mr. Mildmay's house.*

Door R. 2 E. Breakfast table and two chairs, c. Small writing table R. H. Mrs. STERNHOLD R. of table, and Mr. POTTER at top of table, seated at breakfast.

POTTER. Why Jane, you positively have eaten no breakfast! And now I look at you, I declare you are as pale as a sheet of paper, and your eyes are red, and I'm sure you're feverish. You are not well, my dear Jane? You're far from well—in fact you're very ill—I'm sure you're very ill. Do let me give you a globule.

MRS. S. Nonsense, brother, I don't believe in globules. It's merely the consequence of our discussion yesterday. You know discussion always makes me ill.

POTTER. But my dear Jane, there's not the least occasion to be ill this morning. I've agreed to do as you wished. Hawksley shall have the money for those shares this very day. It's an excellent investment, as you proved last night.

MRS. S. And pray who ever said anything of the kind?

POTTER. Why, didn't you?

MS. S. Certainly not. You are always misunderstanding me.

POTTER. (*joyously.*) Oh, there's time enough yet, for the matter of that. If you don't think it a good investment, say so, and I'll write to Hawksley, and tell him I've changed my mind, by your advice.

MRS. S. Of course; lay the responsibility upon *me*.

POTTER. Well, you see, as far as I'm concerned, I'd rather not have anything to do with the affair ; there's mischief enough done as it is, particularly as Mildmay has taken it into his head to invest six or seven thousand in it himself.

MRS. S. Mildmay invest his money in Captain Hawkesley's company ?

POTTER. Certainly ; didn't he tell you ? He was to have seen the captain to-day about it, after his return from Manchester. As he didn't go to Manchester, I suppose he'll call on him when he goes into the city this morning : he's late—poor Emmy's very unwell.

MRS. S. Go at once, and beg Mildmay to come here before he goes.

POTTER. Yes, my dear. I'll thank you for another cup of tea ?

MRS. S. I said *at once*, brother.

POTTER. (*rising.*) Certainly, my dear Jane,—certainly ; I'm going. (*aside.*) That woman's the guardian angel of our family. [Exit R. D.

MRS. S. (*rises*) Not satisfied with my brother's fortune, he wishes to secure Mildmay's, too ! And that poor silly girl fancies this man loves her—loves her for her own sake. I thought so once—fool that I was ! But so long as my letters remain in his possession, I am at his mercy—I and mine. I must have those letters, be their price what it may. Oh, if I could but inspire Mildmay's sluggish nature with one spark of chivalry or sentiment ! He is so dull ! But he is, at least, braver and more manly than this coward. He must extort from his fears what I could never obtain from his generosity.

Enter MILDWY, R. D. 2 E.

Good morning ! How is Emily ?

MILDWY. (R.) Not well ; she has had a bad night ; my sudden departure annoyed her, and my sudden return startled her. I recommended her to breakfast in her own room. Mr. Potter told me you wanted to see me.

MRS. S. Yes ; I have a secret to confide to you—a most important secret ; one I should not dare to trust to anyone in whom I had not the most implicit confidence.

MILDWATER. I'm much obliged to you ; what is it ? And as I've not breakfasted, if you will give me a cup of tea while you tell me. (*sits L. of table.*)

MRS. S. (*crossing to R., and resuming her seat, pouring out tea, &c.*) Promise me first, not to mention the subject to any one—not even your wife.

MILDWATER. My wife ! Didn't you say it was a secret ? The cream, please.

MRS. S. If your mother were alive, and a man had insulted her, what would you do ?

MILDWATER. The right thing, of course. Might I trouble you for the sugar basin ?

MRS. S. You have lost your mother ; so has Mrs. Mildwater : but your marriage with her has given you a claim upon me, second only to that of a brother. From all I have seen of you, I feel I may expect of you a brother's devotion.

MILDWATER. Do you ? Butter, please.

MRS. S. Suppose, then, a man had insulted *me* in the most flagrant way. I am a woman—a widow ; I have no son ; my brother is an old man. Suppose I said to you, "you alone can defend my cause ; to you alone I can look for aid—for protection : aid me—protect me !" What would you answer ?

MILDWATER. Eh !—Well—I really don't know. What should you recommend me to answer ?

MRS. S. Are you a man, and ask that ? You surely did not listen to the case I put.

MILDWATER. Why, you see we Lancashire folk are somewhat dull of comprehension. If you'd speak out, straight forward like, I might understand you better.

MRS. S. If a man gave you a blow, what would you do ?

MILDWATER. Hit him again.

MRS. S. Yes, if he were a Bruiser ; but if he were a gentleman, you would use the weapons of a gentleman in your defence. Your honour and that of your wife's relatives are one : you have been insulted through me. Now, do you understand ?

MILDWATER. I see : a lady has been insulted, and she wishes me to insist on gentlemanly satisfaction on her

account. Well, there's only one remark I wish to make on that point; yesterday, after dinner, as I was lying on the sofa, asleep, as you thought, you said to my wife, "Mr. Mildmay is dull, stupid, I admit it; but then he has none of those ridiculous pretensions that most men set up to a will of his own: you could do what you like with him, if you'd only take the trouble."

MRS. S. (*embarrassed.*) I don't remember saying anything of the kind.

MILDWATER. Don't you? I do. I have no doubt that you were quite right; only I don't see how a man without any will of his own is to set up a character for pluck and energy all of a sudden, and turn fire-eater, not on his own account, but on yours; there's my difficulty.

MRS. S. This is no answer, Mr. Mildmay.

MILDWATER. Isn't it? I think I can put it into unmistakeable English. I have been married for a year, and I've taken things as they came. I confess I have always had a sort of idea a man ought to be master in his own house; but I know that isn't your notion; you think a man ought to let his wife lead him by the nose; that a woman should control everything: in fact, you're the head of the family. I daren't ask a friend home to dinner without notice given, and leave obtained beforehand; the servants look to you for orders, and to me only for wages; you settle the patterns of the furniture, and the laying out of the garden: in short, you're *A 1*, and I'm nobody. I've no objection; only if I'm not to have any authority, I can't think of taking any responsibility: if I am a cipher, I claim the right to act as a cipher.

MRS. S. As I expected. (*aside.*) You are right; each to his place. I knew you had abnegated the duties of head of a family; I thought it just possible you might still retain the feelings of a man. (*rises.*) You have shown me my error—I am much obliged to you. Good morning, sir. [Exit MRS. STERNHOLD, *indignantly*, R. D. 2 E.]

MILDWATER. I hope she understood that, at all events.

Re-enter POTTER, R. D. 2 E.

POTTER. (*sits r. of table.*) Eh! Well, Mildmay, have you settled matters with my sister?

MILDWATER. Well, I think I have pretty well : it was about those shares of Hawksley's. (*breakfasting.*)

POTTER. I knew it was. Well, it appears she has changed her mind about 'em.

MILDWATER. Not that I know of. I'm off to Hawksley's directly after breakfast ; and—talking of that—have you got the shares he allotted to you last week ?

POTTER. Yes. (*taking out his pocket-book.*) Here they are.

MILDWATER. If you like to endorse them to me, I've no objection to take them at par, on account of so much of the money owing under my wife's investment.

POTTER. Take the shares at par ! (*rises and goes to writing-table to endorse shares.*) Delighted, my dear boy—de—lighted. But you're sure it's all right ? Is my sister aware of it ?

MILDWATER. Oh, Mrs. Sternhold and I understand each other. There's no time to be lost—I want to catch the first bus to the city.

POTTER. There you are—~~twenty~~ scrip certificates at par, that's one thousand pounds, and that makes seven thousand pounds I owe you now, instead of eight thousand pounds. (*gives shares.*) But, my dear boy, (*as MILDWATER crosses to R. D.*) I'd inquire about the speculation, if I were you, in the city, just by way of precaution. I would, indeed. You're not up to this sort of thing, you know.

MILDWATER. Oh, never mind me. I know I'm no conjuror—but, perhaps, after all, father-in-law, I'm not such a fool as I look. [Exit MILDWATER, R. D. 2 E.

POTTER. Poor lad ! Poor lad ! Now he thinks himself a devilish clever fellow ! If he had a little of my experience ! But there's no taking the self-conceit out of the young men now-a-days. [Exit POTTER, R. D. 2 E.

[SERVANTS clear stage.]

SCENE II.—*Captain Hawksley's apartments, gaily and luxuriously furnished; door, L. 2 E.; window, R., with chintz hangings; a profusion of prints, pictures, &c.; books gaily bound; a lounging chair, c.; fire-place, c.; an office table, covered with papers, prospectuses, plans, &c., R. C.; a cheque book, note case half full of notes, and packet of thirteen letters, in drawer on R. of table; chair R. of table; another table, L. H., with coloured plans of the "INEXPLOISIBLE GALVANIC BOATS;" chairs about stage.* HAWKSLEY is discovered, writing, in a fashionable morning wrapper and smoking cap, seated R. of table, R. H.

HAWKS. (*pausing from his writing to look at his watch.*) Eleven o'clock! and no signs of Mildmay! Surely that wildcat of a woman knows better than to carry out her threat of peaching. She ought to know I'm not a man to be trifled with. (*rises.*)

"Sweet is revenge—especially to women."

But reputation is still sweeter, and, thanks to her remarkably indiscreet pen, her's is in my hands—and she knows it. I'm a cool hand, I flatter myself, but, by Jove, she nearly threw me off my balance last night! That sudden turn up of the lamp was devilish well imagined. (*taking up plan.*) But this infernal Company. I never was so deep in a thing before without seeing my way out. After all, I should have done better to have stuck by Tattersall's and the Turf. The Ring are sharp fellows, but they're regular green 'uns compared with those Blades of the Stock Exchange. Those muffs at the Home Office crow about shutting up the West End Hells; but what's chicken-hazard to time bargains? A fellow who risks his hundred on the spinning of a roulette ball, is a gambler, and may be quodded by the first Beak that comes handy, but let him chance his hundred thousand on the up or down of the Three per Cents, every month of the twelve, and he may cultivate domestic felicity at his box at Brompton, in the respectable character of a man of business. Ha!

ha! ha! John Bull is certainly a fine, practical, consistent animal. (*a knock at door, L. H.*) Come in.

Enter DUNBILK, L. D. 2 E.

DUN. Ah, Hawksley, me boy, how are ye?

HAWKS. Right as a trivet, my prince of prospectus-mongers.

DUN. Ah, don't ye be puttin' the blarney on me, then. Look at that, (*giving newspaper.*) and see if that don't be taking the grin out of ye. Sure I've marked it wid a black edge, like a mournin' letter.

HAWKS. (*looking blank.*) Confound it! Galvanics at two-and-a-half discount. That's fishy!

DUN. Mighty piscatorial, me boy! and, betwixt you and me and the post, if you and me, and the direction generally, doesn't look mighty sharp, the two-and-a-half will be foive by to-morrow.

HAWKS. The devil! Why, they were at two premium only yesterday.

DUN. It's that blackguard Bolter; he's blowed the gaff. I tould the Direction they couldn't afford to quarrel wid the Secretary.

HAWKS. But how could we keep a fellow who had been robbing us to the tune of a hundred a month?

DUN. And what o' that? Sure wasn't he the manes of getting us tin times that out o' the public? The craythur was rared for the church: why wouldn't he be taking his tithe?

HAWKS. Well, there's only one thing for it—we must rig the market. Go in, and buy up every share that's offered.

DUN. Divilish asy to say "buy," but where's the tin to come from? I called in at Flimsy's, as I came along, and they looked so black at me, in the parlour, that I felt it a superfluous act of politeness to inquire after the state of our balance.

HAWKS. I've a thousand in this note case; and, besides, expect a few more thousands to-day.

DUN. The devil you do! Hooray! Corn in Agypt! It's yourself that's the boy can do it. I'll go bail you've

been dhrrawing that Brompton milch cow of yours again. Sure there's a dale of bleedin' in that ould Potter—and he'smighty polite, too. Sure he asked me to dine with him to-day.

HAWKS. I shall meet you there. But I've a better fish on my hook than old Potter—his son-in-law.

DUN. What, young Mildmay? I know the individual, and respect him. Mind what ye're about, me boy. He's from Lancashire—and thim north-country boys is as cute as Dublin car dhrivers.

HAWKS. Then this fellow's a cock-tail—for a greater flat was never potted.

DUN. Anyhow he'd find his match in you, if he was as sharp as Corney Rooney's pig, that always bolted a week afore quarter day, for fear he'd be made bacon of, to pay the rint. The top of the mornin' to ye, my boy. I'll be off to the city, and give our Boord the office. By the powers, but they ought to vote you a piece of plate.

HAWKS. Well, a handsome salver wouldn't look amiss on my sideboard.

DUN. Devil the salver—sure I'd suggest a stew pan.

HAWKS. A stew pan!

DUN. It's nate and appropriate. Brass outside, and tin at the bottom. [Exit DUNBILK, L. D. 2 E.

HAWKS. Curse his bogtrotting impudence! But that's the worst of letting one's self down to this city work. At the Corner, one was safe to be in a gentlemanly set, but East of Temple Bar, they're such d——d low fellows.

Enter a SERVANT, L.D. 2 E.

SERVANT. Mr. Mildmay.

HAWKS. Bravissimo! Here, bring this table down from the fire.

(*The SERVANT moves writing table, R. C., down level with first grooves, and places easy chair beside it, in c.*

Now show him in. (*sits R. of table.*)

(*Exit SERVANT, who re-enters immediately, showing in MILDAY. Exit SERVANT. HAWKSLEY pretends to be absorbed in his writing, and leaves MILDAY, upon his entrance, standing.*

HAWKS. (*looking up.*) A thousand pardons, my dear fellow! One gets so absorbed in these cursed figures. Take a chair. You'll allow me to finish what I was about.

MILDWATER. Don't mind me. I'm in no hurry.

HAWKS. (*after a minute of pretended work.*) By the way if you'll look on that table, you'll find a plan of our Inexplicable Galvanic Boat, somewhere. Just glance your eye over it, while I knock off this calculation—it will give you an idea of the machinery.

(MILDWATER approaches table, L. H., and takes up a plan, and, while pretending to look at it, surveys the room, &c.)

HAWKS. (*putting away his papers, and rising.*) And now, my dear Mildwater, I'm at your service. But, before we come to business, how are all at Brompton? The ladies all well?

MILDWATER. Mrs. Sternhold's a little out of sorts this morning.

HAWKS. Ah! Had a bad night?

MILDWATER. I should think so.

HAWKS. (*at table*) Well, I had a note from Potter. He tells me you had some thoughts of taking shares in our Galvanies. Ever done much in that sort of thing?

MILDWATER. No, not yet.

HAWKS. I fancied not, by the style in which you seem to have talked of getting shares, as if you thought they could be had for asking. You see there's been such a run on 'em, that we've had twice as many applied for as could be allotted. But there may be a few in the market still. Another week, and you'd not have had a chance. Perhaps it would be as well, though, before you connect yourself with it, that I should give you, briefly, an idea of our scheme, our means of carrying it out, and its probable results. (*crosses to R. C.*)

MILDWATER. If you would be so kind.

HAWKS. Fetch yourself a chair, then. (*they sit.*) Steam, it has been often remarked, is yet in its infancy—galvanism, if I may be allowed the comparison, is unborn. Our Company proposes to play midwife to this mysterious power, which, like Hercules, is destined to strangle steam in the

cradle. But, to do this effectually, is the work of no mere every-day speculator. We require a plan of operations calculated on a solid and comprehensive basis. You follow me.

MILDWY. A solid and comprehensive basis? I suppose that means a good lot of money.

HAWKS. Precisely. Money is the sinews of industry, as of war. Now, to anticipate events a little, let us throw ourselves into the future, and imagine our Company at work. We have created between the Ports of the West of Ireland and the United States, Mexico, the West India Islands, and Brazil, a line of Galvanic Boats—rapid, economical, safe, and regular. For rapidity, we can give four knots an hour to the fastest steamer yet built. As for safety, our Galvanic engines can't blow up.

MILDWY. But suppose the Company should? Companies do blow up sometimes, don't they?

HAWKS. Bubbles do, but not such Companies as this. But, to resume: economy we ensure, by getting rid of coal altogether.

MILDWY. Get rid of coal! Do you really? And pray what do you use instead?

HAWKS. Our new motive principle. That is *our secret* at present. But you will at once perceive, as an intelligent man of business, the incalculable consequences that must follow from the employment of a new motive principle, which combines the essential qualities of a motive principle—the maximum of speed, and the minimum of cost. (MILDWY bows.) You see, there are three things to be considered—the article, the duty, and the cost of carriage. The two former being fixed, let us represent them by A. and B. You understand algebra?

MILDWY. I used to know a little of it at school.

HAWKS. Then let X and $\frac{X}{2}$ denote the respective cost of the two modes of carriage—while the two rates of profit are represented by Y and Y^1 .

MILDWY. Which, in algebra, always denote an unknown quantity.

HAWKS. Precisely. Well, A. and B. remaining constant, let $Y = A$ plus $\frac{B}{X}$ be the formula for profit in the case of steam, then $Y^1 = A$ plus $\frac{B}{X}$, divided by 2, will be the formula for profit in the case of galvanic transport—or reducing the equations $Y^1 = 2 Y$, or, in plain English, the profit on galvanic transport equal to twice the profit on steam carriage. I hope that's clear!

MILDWY. Perfectly—only, as you began by assuming the cost of the first at only half that of the second, I don't see what need there was of any algebra to prove the profit double.

HAWKS. Ah!—Why, you see—some people apprehend a thing more clearly in symbols. However, to return to our plan of operations. You observe we start from a Port in the West of Ireland; by this means we gain six days on Liverpool, Bristol, and the Western Ports of England. At one blow, we destroy Liverpool.

MILDWY. The devil you do! I've property in Liverpool.

HAWKS. Next, we destroy Bristol.

MILDWY. Destroy Bristol, too!

HAWKS. That is, when I say destroy, we reduce her to a second-rate Port. She will still have the coasting and fruit trade, and may do a little in turtle. We destroy Hull—

MILDWY. But stop—stop—stop. You're going to destroy everything.

HAWKS. My dear fellow, it's the law of the universe. If, by our line, we can introduce West Indian sugar into the market, at two-thirds the price of East Indian, are we to hesitate because Ceylon may be ruined?

MILDWY. Of course not. I suppose that would be what the political economists call sentimentalism.

HAWKS. Precisely. If Ceylon is ruined on these terms, so much the better for the world in general.

MILDWY. And so much the worse for Ceylon in particular.

HAWKS. Just so. I see you follow me exactly.

MILDmay. Only, I was thinking—

HAWKS. Pray speak out. The suggestions of a new, fresh mind are invaluable. You were thinking—

MILDmay. That, as the general interest is made up of particular interests, if you destroy the particular interests, perhaps the general interest may not be so much benefitted, after all.

HAWKS. Ah, there you get into an abstruse field of speculation.

MILDmay. Do I? It seems clear enough to me.

(both rise.)

HAWKS. That's because you take a shallow view of the subject.

MILDmay. One I can see to the bottom of, in fact!

HAWKS. Precisely. A man of your calibre should always distrust what he can see to the bottom of.

MILDmay. I generally do. Well, after your very lucid demonstration, I see your company cannot fail of success. The more shares a man has, the more lucky he should think himself. (*goes up to table, L., and puts down his hat.*)

HAWKS. (*aside.*) Hook'd, play'd, and landed! (*pretending to look on table for note.*) I've mislaid Potter's note—but he mentioned your wanting something like two hundred shares, wasn't it?

MILDmay. I beg your pardon—not exactly—I think—

HAWKS. Why, wasn't that the figure you put it at yourself, last night?

MILDmay. Last night—yes.

HAWKS. You havn't changed your mind?

MILDmay. No.

HAWKS. Then let us understand each other. Do you want more than two hundred, or fewer?

MILDmay. Neither more—nor fewer.

HAWKS. What do you mean?

MILDmay. I mean, I don't want any at all.

HAWKS. (*starting with surprise.*) The dev— (*recovering himself.*) Oh! I suppose you've slept on it.

MILDmay. Exactly! I've slept on it.

HAWKS. Perhaps Mrs. Sternhold's advice may have had something to do with your sudden change of intentions.

MILDWATER. Mrs. Sternhold knows nothing about my sudden change of intentions.

HAWKS. I must satisfy myself on that point.

(comes in front of table.)

MILDWATER. Do, by all means, if it interests you.

HAWKS. (sitting on corner of table.) Well, as you don't know your own mind for four-and-twenty hours together, there's nothing more to be said. But as you don't want these shares, may I ask what has procured me the pleasure of seeing you this morning?

MILDWATER. Certainly. I had two objects in coming. In the first place, about two months ago, my father-in-law, Mr. Potter, took twenty shares in your Company. Those shares have come into my hands this morning by Mr. Potter's endorsement. Now, as I don't care about 'em myself, and as there seems such a rush for 'em in the market, I suppose you'll have no objection to take them off my hands at par.

HAWKS. Eh? Take them off your hands at par? Ha! ha! ha! No! By Jove, that's rather too good! My dear Mr. Mildmay, I know you're the most amiable of men—a consummate cultivator of that delicate vegetable, celery—a distinguished house painter and decorator—but I had no idea how great you were at a practical joke.

MILDWATER. Very well. We'll drop the shares for the present, and come to motive number two.

HAWKS. Pray do—and if it's better fun than motive number one, I shall have to thank you for two of the heartiest laughs I've enjoyed for many a day.

MILDWATER. We shall see. You have in your possession thirteen letters, addressed to you by Mrs. Sternhold. The second motive for my visit was to ask you to give up those letters.

HAWKS. (aside.) So! the murder's out! She prefers war! She shall have it! (aloud.) Mr. John Mildmay, your first demand was a good joke—I laughed at it accordingly; but your second you may find no joke, and I would recommend you to be careful how you persist in executing this commission of Mrs. Sternhold's.

MILDWATER. I beg your pardon. I have no commission from Mrs. Sternhold.

HAWKS. It was not she who told you of those letters?

MILDmay. Certainly not.

HAWKS. Who did?

MILDmay. You must excuse my answering that question.

HAWKS. Then you are acting now on your own responsibility?

MILDmay. Entirely.

HAWKS. Very well—then this is my answer. Though you have married Mrs. Sternhold's niece, I do not admit your right to interfere, without authority from Mrs. Sternhold herself, in an affair in which she alone is interested. I refuse to give up her letters. As to your first request, my business is to sell shares, not to buy them.

MILDmay. I was prepared for both refusals; so I have taken my measures for compelling you to grant both demands.

HAWKS. The devil you have! Do let me hear what they are? I am all impatience to know how you propose to make Harry Hawksley say *yes*, when he has began by saying *no*. You've no objection to smoke?

MILDmay. None in the world.

(HAWKSLEY seats himself comfortably in easy chair, putting his legs on another chair, and lights a cigar, R. C.)

HAWKS. Now, my very dear sir, fire away!

MILDmay. (sits L. C.; then in a very calm voice, after watching him.) When you explained the theory of your speculation, just now, you thought you were speaking to a greenhorn in such matters. You were under a mistake. Some four years ago, I held a partnership in a house in the city, which did a good deal in discounting shares—the house of Dalrymple, Brothers, of Broad Street. You may have heard of it. (HAWKSLEY starts.) One day—it was the 30th of April, 1850—a bill was presented for payment at our counting-house, purporting to be drawn on us by our correspondents, Touchet and Wright, of Buenos Ayres. (HAWKSLEY appears uneasy.) Though we had no advices of it, it was paid at once, for it seemed all right and regular; but it turned out to be a forgery. Our correspondent's suspicions fell at once upon a clerk who had just been dismissed from their employment for

some errors in his accounts. His name *then* was Burgess—dear me, you've let your cigar out. (HAWKSLEY *puffs at his cigar with an effort*.) The body of the bill was apparently in the same handwriting as the signature of the firm; but a careful examination of it established its identity with that of the discharged clerk; and in a blotting-book left accidentally behind him, were found various tracings of the signature of the firm. The detectives were at once put on his track, but he had disappeared; no trace of him could ever be discovered. Well, this money was repaid, and the affair forgotten. It so happened, that when the bill was presented for payment, only one person was in the counting-house—the clerk who paid the money, and who is since dead.—If you'll allow me, I'll join you—(*taking out cigar case*.) But in the private room of the firm, which was separated from the counting-house by a glazed door, was the junior partner—may I trouble you for a light?—(*lights his cigar by HAWKSLEY's*) who, through the door, saw the bill presented, and observed the face of the person who presented it. I was that junior partner: the person who presented the bill—Burgess, as he was then called—the forger—was *you!*

HAWKS. (*falls back in his chair, then with an effort*.) It is an infamous calumny!—An abominable lie! Your life shall answer for this insult!

MILDWY. I don't think that quite. But allow me to conclude. How you have passed your time since that 30th of April, 1850, I have not the advantage of knowing; but I know that soon after my marriage, and retirement from business, I met you as a visitor at my father-in-law's house. I've a wonderful memory for faces—I remembered yours at once.

HAWKS. It's a lie, I tell you! (*rises*.)

MILDWY. No, it isn't. I resolved not to speak till I could back my words by proofs. I applied to my late partners for the forged bill. One of them was dead, the other absent in South America; so that for ten months I found myself obliged to receive, as a guest at my own table, as the intimate and trusted friend of my wife's family, a person I knew to be a swindler and a forger!

HAWKS. By heavens!—
(Aiming a blow at MILDWAY, which he stops, and forces HAWKSLEY down into easy chair.)

MILDWAY. Take care! If we come to that game, remember it's town versus country; a hale Lancashire lad against a battered London roué; fresh air and exercise to smoke and speculation. You had better be quiet—a minute more, and I have done. The letter I had been so long waiting for, containing the forged bill, arrived yesterday from Manchester. You were kind enough to bring it out to Brompton yourself. That bill is in my pocket; if I do not deliver it into your hands before I leave the room, it goes at once into those of the nearest police magistrate.

HAWKS. *(after a pause, gloomily.)* What are your terms?

MILDWAY. The price of those shares at par, and Mrs. Sternhold's thirteen letters.

HAWKS. *(rises, goes round table, and takes notes out of drawer.)* Here's the money.

MILDWAY. *(at upper end of table R.)* You'll excuse my counting. It's a mercantile habit I learnt in the house of Dalrymple, Brothers. *(counts notes.)* Quite correct. Here are the scrip certificates. *(giving him shares.)* And now, if you please, the letters?

HAWKS. *(taking bundle of letters from drawer, and throwing them down on table.)* There!

MILDWAY. You'll excuse my counting them too. *(counts letters.)* Thirteen, exactly! And now, might I trespass on you to put them into an envelope, and seal them with your own seal?

HAWKS. Are they not safe enough as it is?

MILDWAY. Now oblige me.

(HAWKSLEY puts letters into an envelope, and is about to light taper.)

Oh, allow me—your hand shakes.

(Takes matches from him, and lights taper.) I wish Mrs. Sternhold to be certain that these letters have passed through no other hands than yours.

(HAWKSLEY seals the packet, and hands it to MILDWAY.) And there is the forged bill! *(giving bill to HAWKSEY.)*

HAWKS. (*examines the bill, then burns it by taper, and throws it to the ground, stamping on it. Aside.*) Gone! He knows nothing of the other.

MILDWELL. (*taking his hat from table L.*) And now, Captain Burgess—I mean Hawksley—I have the honour to wish you a very good morning.

HAWKS. (*crossing to him.*) Stop! A word before you go. Since we had first the pleasure of meeting, I've been a soldier, and have served in countries where blood wipes out disgrace. What are your weapons?

MILDWELL. I thought it might come to that; but you needn't trouble yourself to call me out, because I shan't come.

HAWKS. And do you flatter yourself I can't force you? I know duelling is out of fashion in this infernal cold-blooded country; but, even here, there are insults a man can't put up with, and hold his head up before the world — take care I don't put such an insult upon you. (*drawing near, and lifting up his hand.*)

MILDWELL. Don't try that on again: I may be less patient the second time. I might send you into the street without the trouble of going down stairs; there's two stories' fall, not to speak of the area spikes: you might hurt yourself.

HAWKS. Very well. We are by ourselves — there would be no use in insulting you here: but take care; the first time we meet in company, I will lash you across the face with my horsewhip. We shall see then if you will refuse me satisfaction.

MILDWELL. We shall. If you were only a duellist, I doubt if I should think myself bound to risk my life against yours. But I presume even the laws which you recognise absolve me from the obligation of going out with a swindler and a forger.

HAWKS. (*grinding his teeth.*) Do you wish to provoke me to murder you?

MILDWELL. Oh, I'm not the least afraid of that. For a man who can snuff a candle at twenty paces, to call out another who never fired a pistol in his life, is no great piece of heroism; but to commit a murder requires some pluck. You've defied transportation, but I

don't think you're the man to risk the gallows. Good morning. *(he turns to go L. D. 2 E.)*

(HAWKSLEY seems to meditate a rush, but checks himself, and stands biting his lip, and trembling all over.)

TABLEAU and end of *Act the Second.*

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Scene and Furniture same as Act I. Keys in doors, R. and L. 1 E. MRS. STERNHOLD seated in easy chair by fire R. H.; MRS. MILDMAJ sitting on sofa, writing at table L.; POTTER standing L. C., looking over her.*

POTTER. (L. c.) If you don't make haste, Emmy, we shan't be able to get the letters delivered, putting off our dinner to-day, in consequence of the sudden indisposition of Mrs. Sternhold.

MRS. M. This is the last, papa, It's just five—Jessop will have time enough to deliver them all before six.

POTTER. (*crossing to MRS. STERNHOLD.*) How do you feel now, my dear Jane? (*MRS. STERNHOLD turns from him impatiently.*) I'm really very sorry that I endorsed those shares to Mildmay, as it annoys you, but he said he had settled it with you.

MRS. S. Dear, dear brother—will you spare me any further allusion to the subject. My head aches dreadfully.

POTTER. Poor dear! Pull the curtains to, Emmy.

MRS. S. No, no—leave them, pray! And leave me, do!

POTTER. I can't think what Mildmay can have meant, by telling me he'd settled it all with you. Eh! here he comes, to give us an explanation.

Enter MILD MAY, L. D. 1 E.

Oh! here you are! Well, you're a cool hand.

MILD MAY. Eh?

POTTER. Didn't you tell me, before going into town this morning, when you asked me to endorse those shares to you, that you had settled it all with Mrs. Sternhold? And now, it seems, she knew nothing about it. My dear Jane, I wish him to explain himself before you. Mildmay, I insist upon a categorical answer. Did you, or did you not, tell me it was all settled between you and Mrs. Sternhold?

MILD MAY. (L. C.) I told you so.

MRS. S. (R.) Mr. Mildmay, do you mean to say I expressed any wish of the kind?

(rises, and comes down R. C.)

MILD MAY. You never said a word to me on the subject.

POTTER. (R. aside.) What does he mean by contradicting himself in this extraordinary way? He must have been lunching with Hawksley. He's had too much wine!

MRS. S. (R. C.) Mr. Mildmay, I insist on your explaining the meaning of your conduct!

MILD MAY. With pleasure! I couldn't dispose of the shares till they came into my hands, and it occurred to me that the best way of getting them into my hands from Mr. Potter's, was to use your name.

POTTER. (R.) But do you mean to say you have disposed of the shares I endorsed to you?

MILD MAY. I certainly have taken that liberty.

POTTER. (aside.) Oh! he must have been lunching! There's a coolness about him that's perfectly unnatural!

MRS. S. I hate mystification! Will you oblige me, Mr. Mildmay, by stating, simply and distinctly, what you really have done with those shares?

MILD MAY. Certainly. I was much struck, last night, with the justice of Mr. Potter's observations on the danger

of such speculations as Captain Hawksley's—so, instead of taking any new shares, I've let the captain have the old one's back again.

MRS. S. And do you mean to say he has taken them?

MILD MAY. Certainly—at par. Here's the money.

POTTER. (*crosses to c.*) Do you mean to say he made no difficulty about it?

MILD MAY. Yes—he did a little—but we got over that. There is the thousand pounds. (*gives notes to POTTER.*

POTTER. My dear John, I've done you injustice. Would you believe it? I thought you were tipsy—that Hawksley had been making you drink, in order to humbug you into buying—and now, it seems, you've humbugged *him* into buying. Who'd have thought you had had it in you? Would you have thought he had it in him, Jane?

MRS. S. (*crossing to MRS. MILD MAY.*) Have you finished those letters, Emily?

MRS. M. I've only to direct them, aunt.

MRS. S. I'll direct them if you'll tell Jessop to get ready to take them at once.

(MRS. MILD MAY *rises and Exits l. d. 1 E.*

POTTER. And I'll just lock up these notes in my escritoire! [Exit POTTER, l. d. 1 E.]

(MRS. STERNHOLD *sits on sofa, and addresses a letter or two.*

MILD MAY. (c.) Why, you're sending out a circular?

MRS. S. It is to put off the people we had invited to dine to-day. I'm too ill to receive them. Did I understand you to say you had seen Captain Hawksley this morning?

MILD MAY. Yes. I left him not long ago.

MRS. S. And when you offered him the shares, he took them without making any objections?

MILD MAY. I over-ruled his objections.

MRS. S. Can you inform me by what means?

MILD MAY. Oh! what matter about the means, when the end's attained?

MRS. S. Did nothing pass between you, on any other subject than these shares?

MILD MAY. Oh—yes—we did touch upon other matters.

MRS. S. (*uneasily.*) But nothing of any particular interest—nothing in which any of us were concerned?

(MILDMAY takes out the packet of letters, and puts it on the table before her. MRS. STERNHOLD snatches up the packet, and recognises Hawksley's seal.

MRS. S. His seal! (she tears open the packet and recognises her letters. Rises, and comes to L. C.) You have saved my good name! I owe you more than I can ever repay—more than life itself!

MILDMAY. (*quietly.*) Hadn't you better lock up those letters, before anybody sees them?

MRS. S. Stay!

(breaks the seal, and is about to count them.

MILDMAY. You may save yourself the trouble—they're all there.

MRS. S. All?

MILDMAY. Thirteen.

MRS. S. Then you have counted them?

MILDMAY. Yes—but I've no notion what they're about. He sealed them up, as you see.

MRS. S. John Mildmay, you have acted like a gentleman. Forgive me for my conduct to you—I cannot forgive myself. To think that I should have doubted you, at the very moment you were about to do me a service which a life of gratitude cannot pay for.

MILDMAY. I shall be satisfied with a good deal less than that. I see you're better already. Oblige me by not putting off your dinner to-day.

(MRS. STERNHOLD goes to table, L., and begins to tear up the letters written by MRS. MILDMAY, and throws scraps into a waste paper basket.

Re-enter POTTER, L. D. 1 E.

POTTER. Jessop's ready to start. Why, if she isn't tearing up the letters! My dear Jane, what are you about? I'm sure Emmy had written them very neatly.

MRS. S. (c.) I've changed my mind, brother. The dinner is not to be put off.

POTTER. (L.) Well, but my dear Jane—consider your head-ache—and allow me to observe—

MRS. S. My dear brother, allow me to observe that I'm

the best judge of my own state of health—and go and tell Jessop he will not be wanted to carry the letters.

POTTER. (*going L.*) Very well, my dear! (*aside.*) Now that's sheer strength of mind! What a woman she is! 'Gad, she rises from her prostration like a—what's its name—the bird over the fire offices—a phoenix.

[*Exit POTTER L. D. 1 E.*

MRS. S. (*crosses to R. c., and sits.*) And now that we are alone, tell me what has passed between you and this man? By what magic have you tamed his insolent and pitiless nature?

MILDWELL. (*L. C.*) Why dwell on details which could only give you pain? From to-day, let all that has passed, relative to this affair, be forgotten between us. As you said this morning, I have but paid a debt of duty to our relationship. You have got rid of a disreputable acquaintance; take my advice, and don't renew it. (*sits.*)

MRS. S. Renew it! Never! He was included in our dinner party to-day—but after what must have passed between you, I suppose there's no danger of our seeing him.

MILDWELL. I've no doubt he'll come.

MRS. S. He dare not.

MILDWELL. Oh yes, he dare! Assurance is his strong point. But don't be afraid—I shall be here. Receive him as usual, and leave the rest to me.

MRS. S. (*with surprise.*) John Mildmay! there's something in your manner to-day I have never seen before—a coolness, a self-possession, an energy I never should have expected from—from—

MILDWELL. From such a spoon—that's what you mean, isn't it?

MRS. S. No—that's not the word.

MILDWELL. It's about the idea, though. But you're wrong. I'm the same man to-day as I was yesterday.

MRS. S. John Mildmay, you're a perfect puzzle.

MILDWELL. Have you any curiosity about the key?

MRS. S. Curiosity! I am a woman.

MILDWELL. I'm a man—and not an automaton, as you've always considered me—that's all! Listen to me. We must have an explanation—and this is the time for it.

I'm neither a hero nor a conjuror, but I'm a straightforward man, and I'm not deficient in common sense. When I married your niece, I looked forward to a quiet life, with a woman I loved in my own undemonstrative way, and who, I thought, would have loved me—and so she would have done, but for you.

MRS. S. But for me!

MILDWELL. Yes! She has been brought up to think you infallible. Had you treated me with respect and consideration, she would have done so too. You thought proper to ridicule and despise me, and she followed your lead. I saw this, even during our honeymoon. For ten months I've tried what patience, indulgence, and submission would do—that plan has been a failure. From this hour, I change my tactics. You are my wife's nearest female relative, and you shall never find me wanting in duty or respect, but, from this day forth, remember, there's only one master in this house, and his name is John Mildmay. (*rises.*) Now, go and dress for dinner. (*she attempts to speak.*) Go and dress for dinner.

(*Politely handing MRS. STERNHOLD towards R. D. 1 E.*

[*Exit MRS. STERNHOLD, R. D.*

And now for Emily. Poor girl! Last night's lesson was a hard one, but she brought it on herself. It will do no harm.

Enter MRS. MILDWELL, L. D; 1 E.

Sit down Emily. (MRS. MILDWELL sits L. C.) How well you look.

MRS. M. A compliment from you! I thought you had forgotten how to pay one.

MILDWELL. Did you, Emily? You remember what day this is?

MRS. M. Yes. (*with a sigh.*) The anniversary of our marriage.

MILDWELL. Does it come round as such a day should, Emily? Do you remember the vows we both took this day twelvemonth?—"To love, to honour, and obey."

MRS. M. (*surprised.*) What do you mean, John?

MILDWELL. They did well, the compilers of that solemn service, to put *love* first—for it carries with it both the others. Have you kept that vow, Emily?

MRS. M. (*agitated.*) I do not understand you!

MILDWY. Emily, I returned to this house, last night, half-an-hour before you saw me. I overheard all that passed between your aunt and Captain Hawksley. I knew the motive of his intrusion into this house at that hour.

MRS. M. (*starting up.*) Spare me! Forgive me! I was foolish! I listened to him—but I never thought he could have dared—Indeed, John, I never did. And I wished to tell you all before you went—to implore you to stay and watch over me—to guard me from the consequences of—my folly!

(*sinking her head on his shoulder.*)

MILDWY. (*gravely.*) Compose yourself, Emily! I have too much fairness to confound folly with guilt. Why, my poor child, I knew that fellow's game. I saw how his romantic airs, his honeyed words, and showy graces had fascinated you—how, in comparison with him, you thought me cold, awkward, uninteresting, unimpassioned. You are not the first of your sex, Emily, who has prefered the shadow to the substance. Thank heaven you have not been awakened from your dream by the suffering that follows upon sin!) Don't speak, my love, but listen. Your father's doting fondness, and your aunt's mischievous example have made you what you are. Trust to me, henceforth, to make you what a wife should be. I should prefer to win you by a lover's tenderness, but, if I cannot do that, I know how to make a husband's rights respected.

MRS. M. Oh, thank you, dearest, thank you—tell me of my faults—I will try to correct them. I will honour and obey you, as a wife should.

MILDWY. I've been to blame, too. I have been rough, and cold, and careless—

MRS. M. No—no; you are the kindest and most generous of men. But my father—my aunt—they have been as much mistaken in you as I was. Speak to her, as you have spoken to me.

MILDWY. (*with a smile.*) I don't love her as I love you. But, make yourself easy—I have spoken to her, and in a way I don't think she will soon forget. And now,

go, darling, and dry your eyes—and come down to our guests, smiling as a wife should smile when she meets her husband's loving looks. (*kisses her.*)

MRS. M. Oh, bless you—bless you for such words! How have I misjudged you!

MILDWELL. (*suppressing his emotion.*) Go—go—dear. Remember, I've my eyes to dry, too.

[*Exit Mrs. Mildew, l. d. 3 e.*
Thank heaven, that's over! I've played a desperate game, but I've won it, and the stake was worthy of the risk.

[*Exit, door l. u. e.*

Enter POTTER, dressed for dinner, l. d. 1 e.

POTTER. Six o'clock, and Mildew not dressed yet. Egad! (*rubbing his hands.*) He'll be unpunctual for once. Well, I'm glad Jane's better, for we shall be a pleasant party, I flatter myself. There's Dunbilk, an uncommonly pleasant fellow, and— (*bell heard.*) Oh! I dare say that's Joe Langford. Joe's always sharp—military time, as he calls it—and a military appetite.

Enter JESSOP, announcing, l. d. 1 e.

JESSOP. Mr. Langford!

Enter LANGFORD, l. d. 1 e., crosses to R. [Exit JESSOP.

POTTER. (R. c.) Ah, Langford, my dear fellow, delighted to see you. Mrs. Sternhold will be down directly. Well, (*rubbing his hands.*) any news to-day?

LANG. (R. by fire-place.) Nothing particular. Uncommonly seasonable weather.

POTTER. Uncommonly seasonable weather—uncommonly seasonable—uncommonly— (*bell heard.*) I shouldn't wonder if that's Markham.

Enter JESSOP, announcing, l. d. 1 e.

JESSOP. Mr. Markham.

*Enter MARKHAM, l. d. 1 e., crosses to fire-place, R.
[Exit JESSOP, l.*

POTTER. Ah! it is Markham! How are you all at home?—that's right! You know Langford, I think. (*LANGFORD and MARKHAM bow.*) Well, anything new?

MARKHAM. No — nothing stirring but stagnation! Infernally disagreeable weather—

POTTER. Infernally disagreeable—infernally—very disagreeable weather! (*aside.*) I wish Jane would come! She has such a flow of conversation.

Enter MRS. STERNHOLD, R. D. 1 E., and MRS. MILDWELL,
L. D. 3 E.

Ah! here she is! Mr. Langford—my dear—Mr. Markham.

(*The gentlemen bow to the ladies, and enter into conversation, near fire-place, R. H.*)

Enter JESSOP announcing.

JESSOP. Mr. Dunbilk.

Enter DUNBILK, L. D. 1 E. Exit JESSOP, L. D. 1 E.

DUN. (L. C.) Mrs. Sternhold! Mrs. Mildmay! How are you, Potter? I was afraid I'd be afther me time—waiting for Hawksley. He promised to drive me here in his cab, and I waited till I was too late, and powdhered down in a Hansom, ten mile an hour. You expect Hawksley, don't you?

POTTER. (C.) Eh? Oh, yes, we rely on the captain. My women-folk, here, would never forgive me if we gave a dinner without asking the captain. I assure you, they pull caps for him—aunt and niece. Don't you, Emmy? I think I'm right in saying the captain's a bit of a favourite, eh, Jane?

MRS. S. (*evading the question.*) We certainly did expect Captain Hawksley, but he's not always to be relied on!

DUN. Ye may say that, ma'am—run afther as he is by the aristocracy, (*aside.*) not to speake of the sheriff's officers.

MILDWELL. (R. C.) I beg your pardon—I fear I have kept you waiting.

POTTER. (l. c.) Oh, Captain Hawksley hasn't come yet.

DUN. Sure I wouldn't wait for him, if I was you. He'd be sorry, if he does come, to think he spoiled the fish.

MILDWELL. No—we'll give him a quarter of an hour.

MRS. M. (*aside to Mrs. STERNHOLD, down R. H.*) Surely he will not dare to show himself here, after last night!

MRS. S. (*aside to Mrs. MILDWELL, down R. H.*) You have seen what he dares do, already!

POTTER. I hope he won't disappoint us. I never felt so anxious to see him.

MRS. S. (*aside.*) I am sick with apprehension.

MRS. M. (*aside.*) Oh, what will happen, if he and John meet!

Enter JESSOP, L. D. 1 E., with a card on salver.

JESSOP. (*crosses to MILDWELL.*) A gentleman wishes to see you, sir.

MILDWELL. (*coming down R. C.*) A friend of mine come to town unexpectedly. May I ask him to join us?

MRS. S. (R.) In your own house! My dear John, you surely need not ask that question.

POTTER. (l. c.) Jane!

MRS. M. (R.) Show him in, directly.

[*Exit JESSOP, L. D. 1 E.*
I'm sure we must all be glad to see any friend of yours,
my love.

POTTER. Emily! (*aside.*) What's come to the women? (*goes up.*)

Enter JESSOP, showing in GIMLET, L. D. 1 E. Exit JESSOP.

MILDWELL. (*crossing to l. c.*) This is my friend—

GIMLET. Maxwell—

MILDWELL. Mr. Maxwell, from the North.

GIMLET. (L.) Ladies, delighted to make your acquaintance—gents all.

MILDWELL. (*aside to him.*) Silence! wait till I tell you.

GIMLET. All right! (*MILDWELL and GIMLET go up c.*)

Enter JESSOP L. D. 1 E. announcing.

JESSOP. Captain Hawksley!

Exit, JESSOP.

*Enter CAPTAIN HAWKSLEY, (fashionably dressed.)
L. D. 1 E.*

HAWKS. (*crossing to c.*) Ah! Mrs. Sternhold, I hope you are better. No trace of yesterday's headache? Mrs. Mildmay, I hope you caught no cold sitting up last night over your novel. Ah, you really should be more careful of yourself. My dear Potter, thank you particularly for letting me have those shares this morning. How do, Dunbilk? How do, Markham? Good day, Mr. Langford. (*turning to MILD MAY who is up c.*) Mr. John Mildmay! (*a dead silence.*) A word with you, sir. (*MRS. STERNHOLD crosses to L. C. MILD MAY comes down R.C.*) I told you what you must expect if ever we met in company. As you seem to have forgotten it, I must remind you.

(*He raises his arm to strike MILD MAY with horsewhip, which he draws from his pocket. MRS. STERNHOLD stays his arm.*)

MILD MAY. Stop! My dear Mrs. Sternhold, don't be alarmed—this is no scene for ladies. Oblige me by walking into the next room for a few minutes.

(*The GENTLEMEN all gather round HAWKSLEY c.*)

MRS. S. For Mercy's sake— }
MRS. M. John! Husband! } (*Together.*)

MILD MAY. I must insist on your going.

(*MILD MAY puts them off R. D. 1 E. and locks door, then crosses to and locks L. D. 1 E.*)

POTTER. (L.C.) Captain Hawksley, what is the meaning of this behaviour?

HAWKS. (c.) It means that your son-in-law, after grossly insulting me this morning, refused me the satisfaction of a gentleman. I told him I would force it from him by the public outrage I have just inflicted. Dunbilk, you'll act as my friend!

DUN. Delighted me boy !

POTTER. If this goes on I'll send for
the police !

MARK. Gentlemen—

LANG. Really, Captain Hawksley—

MILDWY. (*authoritatively l.*) Not a word more—this is
my affair ! Mr. Potter, you have pistols in the house !

} Together.

(crosses to R.)

POTTER. (*l.*) Yes, but I won't allow anybody to use
them—they're out of condition — they're dangerous—
they'll burst.

MILDWY. (*R.*) No matter, I have taken the liberty to
bring them down. Here they are. (*opens box.*) I'm no
fire-eater, but I won't baulk Captain Hawksley of the
satisfaction he desires ; Markham, you will act for me.
Mr. Dunbilk, you represent my antagonist, I think ?

POTTER. Here ! police ! Jessop ! (all murmur.)

MILDWY. Be quiet, I insist—all of you. My mind is
made up. Nothing can change it.

HAWKS. (*aside.*) He has more pluck than I gave him
credit for. I will kill him though.

MILDWY. Gentlemen, I hold you all to witness what
passed. I am the insulted. I have the choice of time,
place and weapons. I make that choice. Here—now—
these pistols.

HAWKS. (*c.*) I'm ready—load away, gentlemen.

(DUNBILK begins to load pistol R.)

MILDWY. (*crossing to r. c.*) You have often boasted
you can hit the pip of an ace at twenty paces. I never
fired a pistol at anything more formidable than a sparrow.—
I am willing to risk my life against yours on equal
terms ; but if we stand up opposite to each other at twelve
paces, each with a loaded pistol—skill against no skill—
what becomes of the equality of risk ? (*crosses back to R. H.*)
Your friend has loaded one of these pistols—let us leave
the other unloaded—put both under the cloth—each draw
one, and fire together across the table : now, close your
eyes, and choose—you hesitate !

HAWKS. Such a way of fighting was never known but
in a novel. I decline this unheard-of mode of pro-
ceeding.

MILDWAY. I expected as much. I only wished to show these gentlemen that under cover of the forms of a duel, you contemplated assassination. (*goes to door R. H., and unlocks it.*) The storm is passed, ladies.

Re-enter MRS. STERNHOLD and MRS. MILDWAY, R. D. 1 E.

HAWKS. (L. C. to MILDWAY.) This bravado shall not serve your turn, sir; we have not done with each other yet.

MILDWAY. (R. C.) You are right, — we have not. Captain Hawksley has insulted me—I have challenged him—he has refused: had he challenged me, I might have refused; for no man, even by the code of society, is bound to go out with a felon.

ALL. A felon!

POTTER. A felon in this house! Where? Police! Police!

GIMLET. (*coming down L. C.*) Here you are, guv'nor! (*handcuffs HAWKSLEY.*) Sorry for it Mr. Boscowen; but I've been wanting you this long time.

POTTER. (L.) Boscowen! This is Captain Hawksley!

(*goes up L.*

GIMLET. Alias Burgess—alias Boscowen. It's on a charge of forgery, committed four years ago—evidence only completed last week. It's a lifer, as sure as my name's Gimlet.

HAWKS. (*aside to GIMLET.*) You're done, my boy! The bill's destroyed!

GIMLET. A bill; but not the bill. This is the other.

HAWKS. Done!—done by that wolf in sheep's clothing!

(*Stands for a moment overpowered, then rouses himself.*
Some ridiculous blunder—It will be set right this evening.

GIMLET. That's right, keep your pecker up.

(*MILDWAY gives key of door L. H. to GIMLET—he opens it.*

HAWKS. Mrs. Sternhold, I am sorry I shall not have the pleasure of dining with you: Mrs. Mildmay, no chance of another tête-à-tête, I fear: Potter, my boy, you were just in time with those shares; give my compliments to the Board, Dunbilk: Mildmay—(*grinding his teeth*) if ever I come back, I shall make a point of repaying all I owe you; and, till then, I shall let the debt accumulate at compound interest.

[*Exeunt CAPTAIN HAWKSLEY and GIMLET, L. D. 1 R.*

POTTER. (R. C.) I'm bewildered! What does this mean?

MILDWY. (L. C.) It means, my dear Mr. Potter, that straightforward honesty is generally a match for plausible roguery in the long run.

POTTER. (R. C.) Jane, can you explain this? You're the only person that ever can explain things in this house.

MRS. S. (R.) You are wrong, brother—wrong, as we have all been. Henceforth, for explanation, for advice, for guidance, look there. (*pointing to MILDWY.*)

POTTER. Why that's poor John Mildmay.

MRS. S. Your daughter's husband. (*putting Mrs. MILDWY across to MILDWY.*) The master of this house!

POTTER. (R. C.) John Mildmay the master of this house? Emily, my dear, has your aunt been—I mean has your aunt lost her wits?

MRS. M. (C.) No, she has found them, papa, as I have done, thanks to dear John. Ask his pardon, papa, as we have, for the cruel injustice we have done him.

(*gets up a little.*)

POTTER. Oh, certainly, if you desire it. John Mildmay, I ask your pardon—Jane and Emily say I ought; though what I've done, or what there is to ask pardon for—

MILDWY. Perhaps you'll learn in time. But we're forgetting dinner—Langford, will you take my wife?

(*he does so.*)

Markham, you'll take Mrs. Sternhold.

POTTER. My dear boy, you astonish me! But, however, there's an old proverb that says,—

“All is not gold that glitters.”

MILDWY. Yes; and there is another old proverb, and one much more to the purpose, that says,—

“STILL WATERS RUN DEEP.”

Disposition of Characters at End.

DUNBILK.

POTTER. MILDWY.

MRS. STERNHOLD.

MRS. MILDWY.

MARKHAM.

LANGFORD.

E.

L.