

“THE BOTTLE”

A Drama,

IN TWO ACTS,

FOUNDED UPON THE GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS

OF

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK, Esq.

BY

T. P. TAYLOR,

AUTHOR OF

*Wildfire Dick, The Seasons, The Waits, The Destruction of the
Bastile, &c. &c.*

THOMAS HAILES LACY,

WELLINGTON STREET, STRAND,

LONDON.

909527

First Performed at the City of London Theatre,
on Friday, October 1st, 1847.

The Scenery, entirely new, by Mr. ROBERTS, of the T. R. Covent Garden, Mr. ROBERTS, Junr., Mr. MORELLI, and Assistants. The Music, by Mr. MINGAYE. The Machinery by Mr. CAWDERY, and Assistants. The Properties and Appointments by Mr. PURVIS, and Assistants. The Dresses by Mr. CANTOR, Mr. LEWIS, and Assistants. The Drama and Tableaux under the personal superintendence of Mr. R. HONNER.



Programme of Scenery, Characters, &c.

ACT I.

RICHARD THORNLEY (<i>a Mechanic, an irresolute Character</i>)	MR. LYON.
NED (<i>his Son, a boy of 5 years old—a Character not formed</i>)	MASTER PEARCE.
GEORGE GRAY (<i>Associate of Thornley—an Improving Character</i>)	MR. H. T. CRAVEN.
SAM CODDLES (<i>Pot-boy at the "High-Mettled Racer"—a Speculative Character</i>)	MR. J. HERBERT.
DOGSNOSE (<i>a Determined and Sporting Character</i>)	MR. E. B. GASTON.
SERJEANT CRANK (<i>in the Recruiting Service—a Real Character to be seen any day between London Bridge, and Stone's End, Borough</i>)	MR. SMITH.
BINKS, No. 242 (<i>an Official Character</i>)	MR. PEARCE.
SPIKE (<i>a Sworn Broker and Appraiser—a Character too generally known</i>)	MR. ESSER JONES.
MR. MOREWORTH (<i>a Master Engineer—a Worthy Character</i>)	MR. MORELLI.
THE HON. GRANGE HOUNSLOW, (<i>a Roue, and an every day Character</i>)	MR. E. F. MARSHALL.
RUTH THORNLEY (<i>Wife of Richard—an Exemplary Character, the Real Friend and Monitress</i>)	MRS. R. HONNER.
ESTHER CLARE (<i>her Friend—an Industrious Character</i>)	MRS. E. F. SAVILLE.

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EMMA THORNLEY (*Daughter of Richard*) MISS BIRD.
KITTY CRUMP (*a Shoe Binder—rather an Envious Character*) MRS. R. BARNETT.

An Apartment in the House of Thornley.

TABLEAU THE FIRST.

THE HAPPY HOME.—The BOTTLE is brought out for the first time—The Husband induces his Wife to take a Drop.

Finsbury Square—Parlour of the “High-Mettled Racer.”

A Street in the Neighbourhood of Finsbury.

TABLEAU THE SECOND.

He is discharged from his Employment for Drunkenness—They Pawn their Clothes to supply the Bottle.

A VIEW NEAR THE BANK.

TABLEAU THE THIRD.

An Execution sweeps off the greater part of their Furniture, and he seeks for Comfort in the Bottle.

A Lapse of Three Years is supposed to take place between the First and Second Acts.

ACT II.

RICHARD THORNLEY (*a Depraved Character*) MR. LYON.
NED (*his Son—a New Character*) MASTER DOLPHIN.
GEORGE GRAY (*in the East India Service—a Martial Character*) MR. H. T. CRAVEN.
DOGSNOSE (*a Determined Character of the Worst Order*) MR. E. B. GASTON.
SAM CODDLES (*an Amateur Pastry-Cook, and Vendor of Pies—an Improving Character*) MR. J. HERBERT.
BINKS (*a Rising Character*) MR. PEARCE.
SPIKE (*an Auctioneer, Broker, and Appraiser—an Unrelenting Character*) .. MR. ERSER JONES.

RUTH THORNLEY (<i>a Neglected Character</i>)	MRS. R. HONNER.
ESTHER CLARE (<i>an Amiable Character</i>)	MRS. E. F. SAVILLE.
EMMA THORNLEY (<i>Daughter of Richard —a Rising Character</i>)	MISS WENTWORTH.
KITTY CRUMP (<i>an Altered Character</i>)	MRS. R. BARNETT.
MRS. WOLF (<i>a Lodging-House Keeper—an Avaricious Character</i>)	MRS. GRIFFITH.
MRS. GRUMP (<i>a Feeling Character</i>)	MISS DAVIS.

Exterior of a Public House in the vicinity of Moorfields.

TABLEAU THE FOURTH.

Unable to obtain Employment, they are driven by Poverty into the Streets to beg, and by this means he still supplies the Bottle.

Chick Lane—Apartment of Esther the Needlewoman.

TABLEAU THE FIFTH.

ABODE OF MISERY.—Cold, Misery, and Want, have destroyed their youngest Child—but he still consoles himself with the Bottle.

Moorfields.

Thornley's Room.

TABLEAU THE SIXTH.

Fearful Quarrels and Brutal Violence, are the natural consequences of the frequent use of the Bottle.

A Garret in the Residence of Thornley.

TABLEAU THE SEVENTH.

The Husband, in a furious state of Drunkenness, kills his Wife with the Instrument of all their Mischief.

Room in the House of Mrs. Grump.—An Apartment in Bethlehem.

THE BOTTLE HAS DONE ITS WORK!

It has destroyed the Infant and the Mother—it has brought the Son and the Daughter to Vice and the Streets, and left the Father a hopeless Maniac.

For COSTUMES—See SERIES OF PLATES.

THE BOTTLE.



ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A neatly-furnished Room in Thornley's House.*

TABLEAU THE FIRST.—“THE HAPPY HOME; THE BOTTLE IS BROUGHT OUT FOR THE FIRST TIME.”—See plate 1.

RUTH, THORNLEY, EMMA, and NED *discovered*.

THORN. Come, wife, one glass—only one, now; just take a glass.

RUTH. You know my aversion, Richard, to drink of any kind; it is the forerunner of all evil. The very sight of it inspires me with dread; I am very sorry you have brought it here.

THORN. Now, you're getting low-spirited; I couldn't have done a better thing. What so good for cheering low spirits as a glass of this? When one's vexed, now, or put out, this brightens one up, and makes all right again. Recollect, this day ten years we were married; and I ask you to oblige me, and you won't. It makes one think you're not so happy as you professed to be.

RUTH. Happy, Richard! let the stranger enter, and judge, from the comfort around, whether I could be otherwise than happy; let him look at the smiling faces that grace our humble board, and say whether it speaks not of contentment! No, Richard, I have been very happy; and to oblige you, though unwillingly, I will taste with you, and pray that it may continue, that no dark cloud may shadow our humble yet happy fireside!

THORN. (*hands the glass; she tastes, and puts it down*) That's well; but the thoughts of a dark cloud shadowing our fireside—what put that in your head?

RUTH. I only hoped, Richard, it might not. (*turns away*)

THORN. Why, how now? there's a tear glistening in your eye. I say, children, you hav'n't been vexing her, eh?

RUTH. Oh, no; they are ever good and dutiful.

THORN. There's something on your mind, and it's no use concealing it. Come I must and will know it.

RUTH. Then since you bid me speak, hear me, Richard, and without anger. It is *that* which causes me sorrow. (*points to bottle*) Its progress is slow, but sure; it is the pest of the humble home; it is the withering curse of the happy circle; the deadly poison that corrupts and withers, changing the good to bad; it fascinates but to

destroy; it charms in its progress, but its end is the grave. What reproach so bitter as the term of drunkard? Mark the result that waits upon its victims; they are spurned by their fellow-men as a pestilence; they dread the day, for they cannot brook the eye of scorn, and long for night, that they may shroud themselves in darkness, and deeply drink to banish recollection. I have seen all this—seen it in that family, once so happy, happy as ourselves, whom the demon Drink has claimed. This it is, Richard, that gives me sorrow. Oh! by the memory of our old loves, fly it, shun it, avoid it!

THORN. Why, Ruth, lass, you beat parson at church; you have made me feel so chilly, and I tremble like the leaves when the wind whistles through them; I must just take another glass, to warm me a bit.

RUTH. No, no, Richard; no more, if you love me; cast it from you as you would a loathsome thing, for there is poison in the touch. Do, Richard, do; or its fascinating influence will teach you to love it better far than Ruth. *She* will be forgotten, and *that* will be your only charm.

THORN. (*rises, and takes bottle*) D—n the bottle; I wish I had never seen it. You make me feel so uncomfortable, that sooner than have any more words about it, I'll throw bottle and all away!

RUTH. Do, Richard, do! and it will make me indeed happy to find that my words have awakened your better reason—that I have not spoken vainly. You hesitate—

THORN. Well, you see, Ruth, they do say it be sinful to waste anything; now, this cost a matter of one-and-tenpence, and—and 'tis very good spirit, and I don't think it be right to throw it away. Suppose, now, you felt sickish like, see how handy it would be to have a drop in the house, or in case a friend calls in.

RUTH. As you will, Richard; but for my sake—for the sake of those around you—do not forget yourself as a man; do not forget those who look up to you for support; nor, by the neglect which it teaches, desolate that hearth, once so joyous and happy. (*they embrace; he puts bottle on table, and sinks in chair*)

Enter GEORGE GRAY, d. in f.

GEORGE. Good evening, Mrs. Thornley. Ah! Richard, I'm glad to find you at home.

THORN. (*rises and goes to him*) Hush! not a word. (*aside*)

RUTH. Glad to find Richard at home? where else did you expect to find him? or where else, George, at the close of his day's toil, should a father be found, but in the bosom of his family?

GEORGE. True, but I thought— (*looks uneasily at RICHARD*)

THORN. George, won't you take a drop of anything? we've got it in the house. There, wife, now you see how handy it is. (*fills glass*)

GEORGE. No, no; I wouldn't touch a drop for the world.

THORN. Why, this is the anniversary of our wedding-day; you won't refuse to drink the missus's health, and prosperity to the young ones, eh?

GEORGE. I will wish them all the good they wish themselves, and long, long days of unmixed happiness; but I won't drink—I daren't; and I'm sure Mrs. Thornley will not think the less of me for refusing.

RUTH. No, George, I admire you the more.

THORN. Well, then, there'll be no harm in my drinking your health, and wishing us all prosperity. (*drinks*)

RUTH. Again, Richard!

THORN. Well, it was only one glass, and 'twere pity to waste it. Ecad! they may say what they like, but there be nought like a drop of good liquor, after all.

GEORGE. I want to speak with you, Richard; but—

THORN. I understand. Wife! hadn't thee better put the children to bed? it be getting late.

RUTH. I hope, George, you havn't come to take him away?

THORN. No; I ain't going out; George has just dropped in to have a chat, and mayhap he'll stop and spend the evening wi' us, and have a social glass. Come, children, give us a buss.

CHILD. Good night, father!

THORN. Good night! (*shakes hands, &c.*)

RUTH. (*aside*) I wonder what made him turn so pale when he saw George?

Exit, l., with the CHILDREN.

THORN. Now, George, what makes you look so solid, eh?

GEORGE. You havn't been to work to-day.

THORN. Hush! hush! don't let her know.

GEORGE. I can't blame you for concealing it from her, for I can well guess what her feelings would be; but this is not the first time, by many, that you have absented yourself. Your conduct has been noticed. I need scarcely ask the reason of this change—it is this (*the bottle*); and, from being one of the most sober and industrious men, you are becoming—

THORN. I know—a drunkard! But don't talk about that, don't; I've had enough of it all the evening: but I do like a glass, and that's the truth on't.

GEORGE. You must conquer the feeling, or it will conquer you.

THORN. D—n thy preaching! didn't I tell you I'd have no more on't?

GEORGE. I come to warn you as a friend, Richard, and you must hear me; or you may learn that from others which may prove less pleasing. I have that to say which I wouldn't for the world she should hear—you have to-day again been absent.

THORN. Well, they can stop the day's pay, and there's an end of it.

GEORGE. And how many days, and how often, have they done the same, and with no better effect! To conceal the deficiency from your wife, you have resorted to other means—betting with grooms, jockeys, and so on. Your intoxication has been observed; the blow is impending—avert it—there is yet time; and shun for ever the cause of all your miseries—the public-house.

THORN. Look you, George; I thank you for all you have said, and feel it here. I love my home, and heaven forbid that I should

destroy its happiness : I love it so well, that if I thought she knew all this, I think it would drive me mad, for I never could bear her just reproof. You speak of the public-house as the cause of misery to me and others ; well, let the employers settle with the humble artizan elsewhere, and not compel him to receive his hard earnings on the Saturday at the public-house, which holds out the temptation, and may end in his corruption.

GEORGE. Summon resolution to your aid ; all men have fortitude—exert it. I was gradually creeping into the same error, but the debasement and regret I felt enabled me to conquer the temptation : do you the same.

THORN. Well, I will—I will ; but things arn't come to the worst yet, eh ?

GEORGE. No ; but I heard our employer say that intoxication had spread to so great an extent in the factory, that he should put a stop to it, by discharging those who had given way to this fatal vice.

THORN. But there have been others who are worse than me. There's Dognose, now, and—

GEORGE. 'Twas a warning intended for all—for the sober man to avoid the evil, for the drunkard to reflect. The man you have named is no friend to any one, and at bottom idle and reckless. But your wife returns—think upon what I have said ; for I mean it friendly, believe me.

THORN. I know—I know you do ; but I arn't too far gone yet, am I ? No, no ; and I won't be led away, nor go to the house again—I won't. But, George, not a word to *her* ; she mustn't know—promise that.

GEORGE. I wouldn't for the world cause her a single pang ; it is for this reason I have sought you, and with the best intentions. You may rely upon my keeping my word—you keep yours. Good bye ! and let to-morrow find you at your business.

THORN. And every other day, George, please heaven ! Good bye ! and thank you kindly.

Music.—He shakes hands with GEORGE, who exits d. in f.
 Phew ! how cold his words have made me. My blood seems chilled and frozen, and I ain't done anything particularly wrong neither—not more than other men—not so bad. Oh, yes ! Richard, you have ; you have deceived her, the wife of your bosom—she who has been all truth, love, and confidence ; for you have told her a lie, and now you wonder that you tremble. It is the guilt at your heart, Richard, upbraiding you for the wrong you have done, which makes you feel like a coward. My discharge threatened—and it may come, and with it poverty, ruin, and disgrace. Poverty to them ! Drink !—drink, to give me courage, or she will, read in my face the secret of my *heart*. One glass only, and the last. (*drinks*) So !—how it rouses and cheers one ; I feel a new man again. But I won't endure these troubles—no, no ! I remember, before I took to *this*, I felt quite different : it has changed me, somehow—made me feel fiercer and more irritable, like ; but I'll have no more of it—no, not a drop.

Enter RUTH, L.

RUTH. So, George has gone. Rather a hasty visit. Why, how pale you look! No ill news from the factory, I hope; nothing wrong?

THORN. Why, what should there be wrong? You have always unpleasant thoughts in your head! (*testily*)

RUTH. (*mildly*) Well, I only asked; and, from your manner, I fear there is.

THORN. I tell you, no! What has the factory to do with you? Hold your tongue, will you!

RUTH. Richard, we have been married for ten years, without a harsh word being spoken; I hear them now for the first time—nor will it be the last, if you listen not to me: do, do, for it is not the loving husband that is speaking to me now, but the evil spirit within him. (*weeps*)

THORN. There, don't weep, don't: we'll be comfortable as ever; for you know, wife, there is nothing to make us otherwise.

RUTH. Yes, Richard—this! (*points to bottle*)

THORN. Ah! but you know not what I ha' done since you have been away—I took another glass—

RUTH. Another!

THORN. Ah! but hear what for—I took another glass, and I said, You be very beautiful—there's no denying it be good, you know, and cheering, and so on: but it's my last glass, so good bye, for I'll never touch you again.

RUTH. Dear Richard! (*embraces*) and now all things around grow bright again; for I feel the spell of temptation is broken for ever!

Enter KITTY, D. in F.

KITTY. Ah! that's as it should be; I like to see everybody happy. I couldn't help giving you a look in, on my road home. How's all the children?

RUTH. Well, and at rest.

KITTY. Ah! it's a fine thing to go to bed early; I've got a lot of shoes to bind, that'll keep me up half the night. Ah! when we're children, we think it hard to go to bed soon; when we grow up, and want to go to bed, we can't. Mr. Thornley's not looking quite so well. I like to make everybody happy!

THORN. I'm well enough—nothing ails me.

KITTY. That's more than they can say at the baker's. Havn't you heard the news?

RUTH. No—what has happened?

KITTY. Well, I thought you'd like to hear—I like to make everybody happy. Ruff's, the baker's, next to the public-house, where they sell the divinest gl—glass of spirits. (*aside*) I see there's a bottle on the table; they might ask me.

RUTH. Well!

KITTY. Their youngest child's dead—measles, they say—teething, I think. By-the-bye, it was the smallest child; but, however, it's gone, poor dear! bad nursing, I'm told—mother drank. (*THORNLEY starts; RUTH looks at him*) They don't ask me. Ah! drinking's a bad thing! I like to make everybody happy.

RUTH. It is, indeed !

KITTY. There's one comfort, drinking don't trouble *me* much.

THORN. Hang her chatter. (*aside*)

KITTY. Of course, you've heard the news about the factory?

RUTH. The factory?

THORN. What? what?

KITTY. Oh ! Mr. Innocence ! Come, I like your pretending not to know ; why, there's a lot of men going to be discharged, for missing a day's work, through intoxication. I like to make everybody happy.

RUTH. That can't affect us ; my Richard never lost a day, and has ever been sober and industrious : he is not the inmate of a public-house.

KITTY. Oh ! then it wasn't you I saw standing at the bar of the "High-Mettled Racer," the other morning ? I like to make everybody happy.

RUTH. My Richard ! he would scorn to be seen there—you are mistaken.

THORN. Y—yes—of course. Won't you take a glass ?

KITTY. Well, I thought I should get some at last. (*aside*) Since you're so very pressing, I'll just take a wee, very wee drop. (*fills glass and drinks*) I do really think this came from my shop. It's very comforting. Talking of comfort, your fellow-workman George Gray is sticking up to Esther Clare, the young milliner. She works in the next room to us ladies. I suppose we shall hear of a marriage coming off soon ; but, as I told her, she is very foolish. Families will come, you know, Mrs. Thornley—short wages—children and bread and butter, all day long. I like to make everybody happy.

Enter DOGNOSE, D. in F.

DOG. Good evening, all !

RUTH. Why do I dread the presence of that man ?

DOG. I'm glad to find you here. I've been waiting for you. You know that job's to come off to-night.

RUTH. Business to-night ! It can't be connected with the factory. You're not going out, Richard ?

THORN. No, no ; I have no wish.

DOG. (*aside*) But I have, and it's necessary—you've got a chance in the stakes. Come down, and know the worst. We shall meet some prime fellows there. Come !

THORN. No, no, let me stay here ; I have promised. You can return, and let me know.

DOG. I can't and won't go without you ; recollect that—

THORN. Hush ! hush ! my wife observes. (*aside*)

DOG. As you are so frightened of her, take care I don't frighten her more. (*aside*)

KITTY. Well, I must say it's not over polite to be whispering in presence of ladies ; however, I won't be a tax upon anybody. Talking of taxes, the broker's man says this neighbourhood's terribly behind, both in rent and taxes ; and that as to-morrow's

quarter-day, some of 'em had better look out. He says they've had warning by letter. I like to make every body happy.

RUTH. That reminds me!—the letter of yesterday—why did Richard conceal it from me?

DOG. You hear and know. I don't suppose, after that, you'll lose the chance of making some money. That sum would make you square. Think! for the time flies.

KITTY. Well, it don't appear that I'm an object of interest here, so I may as well take my departure. Certain persons might offer if they liked, to see certain persons home; but there's no gallantry in these parts. Good night, Mr. Thornley—good night; glad to see you all so well. Good night, Mr. —

DOG. Oh, good night!

KITTY. Ah! I shall live to see that man discharged, Mrs. T. Between ourselves, I've heard that man drinks awful. I like to make everybody happy. (*goes to D.*) Mercy on me! there's a little girl leaning out of window; she'll fall to a certainty. (*calls*) Mr. — your child's falling out of window. I like to make everybody happy.

Exit, D. in F.

DOG. Are you resolved?

THORN. Yes, it must be. (*takes up hat*) Wife, I must go out.

RUTH. At this hour, Richard?

DOG. Why, it's an unexpected matter up at the factory; it will put money in his pocket.

RUTH. Richard, tell me, is it indeed to the factory you're going?

THORN. Yes. Why should you doubt?

RUTH. Enough—I will take your word, for you never yet deceived me.

DOG. Pity you didn't ask that party to stay with your good lady; but however, we sha'n't be long.

RUTH. When may I expect you to return?

DOG. Oh, in an hour. The sooner we go, the sooner we shall be back. Come! don't look so glum; I know it's unpleasant to leave one's home, and the faces that make it so bright and cheering; but business, you know, Mrs. Thornley, must be looked to. Here, take a glass to keep out the cold.

RUTH. Oh, no! Richard doesn't drink.

DOG. Oh, oh! Well, I do. Here's to you, Mrs. Thornley—better times, and soon. (*drinks*)

THORN. Well, I must drink that.

RUTH. Husband!

THORN. One glass—only one. (*drinks*) Now I'm ripe for business.

RUTH. In an hour—remember!

THORN. In one hour.

Exit, D. in F.

RUTH. My mind misgives me—but, no! he would not tell me a falsehood. That letter—let me look for that. (*searches drawer*) 'Tis here! Great Heaven! as I expected, from the landlord—"Half-year's rent, due to-morrow; and, if not paid—" (*drops letter*) Half-year's rent due! It was ever paid punctually as the

quarter came. Merciful powers! what horrid thoughts are these that fill my mind? I feared the worst, and it has come. Hope, all flies, for he has deceived me. Oh! brain, brain!

Enter KITTY, d. in r.

KITTY. Excuse me, Mrs. Thornley; but your husband—

RUTH. Well!

KITTY. I thought you'd like to know where to find him.

RUTH. And that is—

KITTY. At the public-house. I like to make everybody happy.

RUTH. Oh! the deception thickens. Love has fled for ever—confidence broken, for he has told me a lie. What trust can I have in future promises?—what faith can I place in his love? None, none; for he has told me a lie!

KITTY. Dear me, what could have been the cause?

RUTH. This (*shews bottle*) fiend! Thou hast destroyed us; the tempter has come, and ruin stands upon the threshold. (*sinks down, Kitty leans over her; closed in*)

SCENE II.—*Finsbury Square—Evening.*

Enter CODDLES with tray of beer, r. 1 E.

CODDLES. What a thing is life! Beer, oh! What's the use of talking about being contented with your situation, if your situation ain't worth nothing. I never was cut out for this line o' life; I'm too haspirling—the field and the fancy's my idea. I don't mean the field of Waterloo, or any of them millingtary romantic places, but the turf and the glorious horse-racing—that's my idea; and when I alludes to a ring, I don't mean that little gold hoop that takes man into execution for life, but the noble art of self-defence. Matrimony's all very well, but it's nothing without the mopusses! I want a heiress—and why not? Sometimes heiresses go off with tall footmen, and why not with a middle-sized pot-boy. But such is life! Pot-boys don't go off so well as they did; the servant-girls looks arter the police now—them areas is the ruin of the force, and the cold meat's their destruction. Well, I've taken the favourite against the field, and if the favourite don't turn up trumps, I shall be very much against the field, indeed! Beer, oh!

Enter BINKS, L.

Well, 242, how do you bring it in?

BINKS. What's that to you?

CODDLES. I'll tell you what it is to me—there's a certain young girl as crosses this square, morning and evening; now I've got a certain eye in that quarter, and as I leave you all the run of the servant gals, which has been the potboy's right from time immemorial, I hopes you won't act ungrateful.

BINKS. What do you mean?

CODDLES. Why, if I catches your eye any more in that direction,

the eye of the active and gallant officer, 242, is likely to be put to a little inconvenience. (*squares*)

BINKS. Don't you threaten, my lad, or else I may put you to a little inconvenience. Go on with your beer.

CODDLES. And go on with your beat. I won't bring you out your half-pint when the house is closed, so you can save yourself the trouble of knocking.

BINKS. I've got an eye upon your house; I advise you to look out for licensing day. Mind you're not found out.

CODDLES. And I advise the proprietors of areas to look out for their cooks, and lock their coal-cellars. I take a chalk there, I believe. Go on again.

BINKS. Never mind—we shall see who's right. (*a scream heard, R.*)

CODDLES. There, you're wanted.

BINKS. It ain't on my beat.

Exit, L. 1 E.

CODDLES. The odds 'll be in my favour yet, old feller! I don't much like that eye of his being on our house, for there's a till there that I've looked upon as a sort of loan society; and unless this favourite business turns up trumps, I'm afraid I shant be able to return any instalments. But such is life. Beer, oh! I must hope for the best; and as a man that ain't married is a sort of Robinson Crusoe on a desolate island, if a heiress don't turn up, I must be contented with Kitty Crump. That's what I call combining arithmetic with worldly policy. Beer, oh!

Exit, L.

Enter ESTHER, R.

ESTHER. I have at length eluded him. I was compelled to seek refuge in a shop, to avoid him. Why am persecuted thus? for the last week he has followed me. I feared to mention it to George. Heavens! here again!

Going; stopped by HOUNSLAW, who enters, R.

HOUNSLAW. So, I have you again, my sweet girl. Why do you avoid me thus?

ESTHER. Your attentions, sir, are unpleasant. My conduct to you must have sufficiently expressed my dislike. I beseech you, leave me.

HOUNSLAW. My dear, I am a gentleman, and therefore—

ESTHER. Your actions are not those of one, or you would allow me to pursue my way unmolested.

HOUNSLAW. Am I so terrible in appearance, that it causes you to have thus? Let me explain my intentions: you have fascinated me—I love you—I am rich, you (excuse me) are poor.

ESTHER. And for that reason you insult me. You call yourself a gentleman—are your actions like one? Let me pass.

HOUNSLAW. Not yet. Scold as you will, I have (whatever my qualifications may be) sufficient discernment to admire a pretty face, when I see it. As I said before, I am rich—can offer you a carriage, jewels, and—

ESTHER. The name of wife? No, you would make me one of those who, too late repenting, untimely die neglected and forgotten. Go from me, sir; humble and hard as my lot is, I prefer it to all the allurements of the gauds you offer—which dazzle but to betray. (*crosses, R.*)

HOUNS. No, no, we don't part so. I don't think you can refuse me a kiss, at any rate, conscientiously.

ESTHER. I will again cry for help to those who will resent it.

HOUNS. Do so; but it is fortunate that there is no one by to resent it.

Endeavours to kiss her. **GEORGE enters, R., turns her suddenly from him, and stands in centre.**

GEORGE. You are mistaken; there is one who will not only do that, but, if necessary, punish.

ESTHER. George!

GEORGE. Don't be alarmed; I shall not suffer my anger to get the better of my reason. Harkye, sir! this young girl is betrothed to me, and though humble in circumstances, has no right to submit to insult; but rather, as a woman, should be protected, even by those who are supposed to set the example to the humble classes as a pattern of conduct, and invariably forget to do it. You rail at our behaviour, but do you ever look upon your own? Oh, no; all that you and such as you do is just and proper; but what the hard-working artisan does, is very bad indeed.

HOUNS. I'm decidedly getting the worst of this. Have you done?

GEORGE. I have—and shall merely content myself by adding, that having now found that she has a protector, you will probably be more guarded in your conduct, not only to her, but to others, lest you receive that punishment which you have deserved, but fortunately escaped.

Exit with ESTHER, L. 1 E.

HOUNS. I've decidedly got the worst of this. I must find out who my young spark is. I will be even with him yet. I have persevered strongly for a whole week, and to no purpose, it appears. Well, the wine I drank at the tavern may have fired my blood, and carried me too far; I must now strive to obliterate the sting of my defeat.

Exit, L. 1 E.

SCENE III.—Parlour at the "High-Mettled Racer." DOGNOSÉ,
RICHARD, TYKE, and MEADOWS, *at cards; others looking on.*

DOG. That's mine!

THORN. Ill luck! nothing but ill luck!

DOG. Come, another game! Recollect to-morrow.

THORN. Right. (*clock strikes twelve*) Do you hear that?

DOG. Well, twelve o'clock; what of it?

THORN. What of it? A world to me! We have been here four hours.

DOG. Well!

THORN. I promised to return in an hour.

DOG. What of that?

THORN. I'll tell you what of that. I have done to-night what I never did in my life before—stayed away from my home; I have kept *her* waiting, and watching; listening to every foot-fall, and I can see her disappointment as plainly as if she now stood before me—I can see her watching the hands of the clock, and the minutes, to her drag along so slowly, they seem hours; she gazes upon the light before her—to her, it burns more dimly than ever she has noticed it before; perhaps, for a moment, she feels overcome by sleep, but she wakes up, and suddenly again looks upon the hour; she thinks of rest, but she feels that she cannot sleep—her thoughts are elsewhere—she's thinking of her husband, of the father of her children, and where is he? Oh! where! (*falls in chair*)

DOG. Just ring the bell, will you? Cards is very exciting, and losing puts the nerves out of order.

Enter CODDLES, L. 1 E.

CODDLES. Now then, if there's any further orders, you must give 'em now, or else have 'em at the bar.

DOG. Well, fill these measures again.

CODDLES. Yes, but who's to pay? You know he's parted with his last shilling. Master's lent him a pound—and—

DOG. What are you talking about? Do you think we can't pay?

CODDLES. I see, you are the winners. My eye, if the favourite against the field don't come off the winner, what'll become of me?

THORN. Who's that spoke about the last shilling?

CODDLES. Why, *I* did, merely because there happened to be a recruiting serjeant at the bar, ready for any active young men—nice interesting young men, they look like too—coloured, and very nice work they seem to execute among Turks and other foreigners, if you may believe the engravings. But I'm not to be taken in by your penny plain and twopence coloured; but sitch is life!

Exit, L. 1 E.

DOG. Come, I say, rouse up; another game; think of to-morrow.

THORN. I do, I do; but I think more of her, and of the lie I told.

DOG. Bah! it's only once in the way; if there's a storm, it'll soon blow over. Play again, and see if luck will turn.

THORN. I have nothing left.

DOG. Yes, there's your watch; play, and go in for all you know.

THORN. I know too much.

Enter CODDLES with beer.

CODDLES. Now, the beer? (*Dognose about to take it*) But first the money.

DOG. You needn't be so fast—there's my last. (*gives it*)

CODDLES. What a chance for the serjeant!

DOG. Have a drink? (*hands RICHARD the pot*) Come, see 'em again; 'tis our last hope, gents; we—we're cleaned out, but will play for this. (*shews watch*)

TYKE. }
 MEAD. } As you like! (DOGNOSE forces RICHARD in chair, they play)
 CODDLES. Well, as I'm a bit of a sporting character, I must go in here. I'll take the odds against you.

TYKE. Done!

CODDLES. Half-a-crown to a shilling, and stakes down—very near the last with me; I shall have to go to that till again. (they play) Ullo! here's the serjeant turning out of the bar-parlour. Oh! cri', and here's George, the sentimental gent who never calls for anything but half a pint of porter, and never by no means offers to treat you. There's the swell, too—and ain't he been going it with the port wine, neither!

Enter GEORGE GRAY, followed by HOUNSLAW and SERJEANT CRANK.

HOUNS. That's my man. (*points to GEORGE*)

CRANK. I understand—good figure, and just about the standard measure. Brandy-and-water here, very strong!

CODDLES. Very strong! Oh yes! we always makes it precious strong after twelve; but I suppose as it's for him, it must be pretty decent; strong, I think you said?

Exit, l. 1 E.

GEORGE. (*who has been looking at RICHARD*) Richard, I have been watching you for the last few minutes, and with surprise; you have no business here at this hour; let me entreat you to go home.

DOG. Let him alone; he must finish the game.

GEORGE. Again, I say, he has no right to be here.

DOG. Neither have you.

GEORGE. Nor should I have been, had I not learnt where he was; it was the wish to serve him, as well as those about him, which induced me to come here.

DOG. You're very virtuous, I dare say. He's quite satisfied with the company he's in, ain't you, Richard?

THORN. Of course I am; he wouldn't drink with me this evening, and you can't call that man your friend who won't drink with you.

DOG. Oh! no, of course not. This hand will decide it.

Enter CODDLES with brandy-and-water, l.

CODDLES. The brandy-and-water.

GEORGE. Lost, unhappy man!

HOUNS. I beg your pardon; we had some words together this night. I had been drinking rather freely, and when the wine's in—you know the rest. I admire your conduct, on behalf of your friend. I say, sup with us, merely to drown all animosity.

CRANK. A fine fellow like you ought to be in the army; active young men, now, are sure to make considerable fortunes. I should say, for you, a serjeant in two months, a lieutenant in four, captain in twelve.

CODDLES. Or a dead man in one. Such is life.

CRANK. Come, drink; you'll not refuse an old soldier—one who has had the honour of being on the field of Waterloo, and of serving her Majesty upon many other memorable occasions?

GEORGE. Well, I bear no malice; I will not refuse to drink.

CRANK. Stop! a loyal toast: "Confusion to our enemies, and may the hour never arrive when they can rise up against us!"

(GEORGE *drinks*)

CODDLES. And here's "Success to all pot-boys;" and if the hour grows much later, he'll not be able to rise at all.

THORN. Lost! (*throws down cards*) All gone! I am a beggar! Fool! Villain!

GEORGE. All reasoning now with the past is useless; let me entreat you to go home.

THORN. Home! the drunkard has no home. I—I havn't now a shilling in the world, nor a friend to give me one; you can't (*to DOGNOSE*), you won't (*to GEORGE*); and those who gathered round me in my prosperity won't know me now.

GEORGE. Had I the means, I would convince you to the contrary; but to-morrow—

HOUNS. Now's your time—fortunate chane. (*to CRANK*)

CRANK. (*advances*) What! it never shall be said that a man in my company wanted a shilling; take it, in the Queen's name. (*presses it into his hand*) I love the youth of Great Britain too well to insult them, heaven bless them!

GEORGE. (*offering it to THORNLEY*) Take it, Richard.

THORN. No, I won't; let me go. I have lost all; show me the way to that place which was once a home of joy, which now I have made wretched; let me go, or I shall do somebody a mischief, for my heart's on fire, and my brain—Let me go!

Staggers off, L. 1 E.

GEORGE. I will go with you. He is incapable of assisting himself.

CRANK. Stop! Where shall I find you in the morning?

GEORGE. Why?

CRANK. Because you are the Queen's man—you are enlisted.

GEORGE. I?

CRANK. Didn't you take the money? Your mistress now is Glory.

HOUNS. I saw him give the money, which you accepted.

GEORGE. Villain! this is your work; detain me at your peril. (*rushes at HOUNSLOW—CRANK seizes him—business and closed in*)

SCENE IV.—*Street.*

Enter SPIKE, L. 1 E.

SPIKE. Up and stirring with the lark; this is as it should be. Here! Tom Ex.

Enter TOM, L. 1 E.

Now, Tom, you keep your eye continually upon No. 9, and go in with the milk—that is to say, when they open the door, which they're safe to do, to take in the milk, you immediately introduce yourself—you understand.

TOM. Yes, sir.

SPIKE. You ought to have been in 13, long ago.

TOM. Yes, sir, but No. 13's artful ; they look out o' the winder, and won't open the door.

SPIKE. Did you try a postman's knock at a late hour ?

TOM. Yes, and was hanse'd through the keyhole.

SPIKE. Well, what came of the keyhole ?

TOM. Why, they said if I had a letter, I must put it under the door.

SPIKE. It's the most artful village I ever had dealings with ; they get into debt, and defy the law. Why, there's one man had the impudence to tell me he had received summonses enough to paper a room, and intended to do it. You must get up an accident at 13, watch the husband out, then tell them he's run over, or fell from a ladder. We must get possession.

TOM. Then I'll try No. 9 first.

SPIKE. We shall astonish the neighbourhood to-day—four possessions and one seizure. How about No. 8, next street ?

TOM. No. 8 died last night.

SPIKE. Well, he might have settled his accounts first, and expired with honesty and propriety. What did he die of ?

TOM. Why, his wife said the thought of an execution upon his goods broke his heart.

SPIKE. Pooh ! an execution is just the sort of thing to make a man lively, and exert himself. And, la ! how they do cry. I shouldn't be surprised to hear, some day, of a large family getting up such an extensive flood of tears as to drown the broker. The fact is, poor people are a d—d nuisance. Let me see—8, 13, 14—four possessions—one seizure. How about 6, next street ?

TOM. No. 6, in the next street, disappeared in the middle of the night.

SPIKE. And cheated us of the levy ? Very well ! mind, when we make the next levy, we'll make up for the losses. There goes the milk. (*looks off, R.*) Now, away with you ; secure No. 9, and I shall be happy.

I'll astonish the neighbourhood to-day. Let me see. (*looks at memorandum book*)

Enter DOGNOSE, L.

DOG. Broad daylight, eh ? A nice night's work we've made of it. I've come off pretty tidy, but I've had hard work for it. Well, a silver watch is worth having.

SPIKE. Hollo ! No. 14, is that you ?

DOG. What of that ?

SPIKE. Death 'll be busy among your ranks ; the sworn broker's amongst you. Why don't you act like a gentleman, and let me put the man in ? see how he's been waiting about in the cold ; you should have compassion. But I don't think, after all, 14, that you're such a bad man as you've been represented. Can't we come to some little arrangement about that silver watch ? The brokers are open to all, influenced by none.

DOG. May be.

SPIKE. Now, let me have it ; let it go off the rent, and appear in

the eyes of your neighbours with all that magnanimity which paying your way inspires. Give me the watch, and keep open your street-door like a free man; turn virtuous, and die a respected father.

DOG. I can't, because I don't happen to be one.

SPIKE. But you have the watch.

DOG. And intend to keep it,

SPIKE. You'll come to be hanged; a man that don't pay his rent can never expect to prosper. No. 14, just wait till I get in possession; I don't wish to make myself unpleasant.

DOG. But when you meet with anything unpleasant, do as *I* do.

SPIKE. What's that?

DOG. Avoid it.

SPIKE. He'll decidedly come to be hanged. Only let me get my executions settled, and then I can go home to breakfast comfortably.

Exit, L. 1 E.

Exit, R.

SCENE V.—*The same as Scene I.*

TABLEAU THE SECOND.—“HE IS DISCHARGED FOR DRUNKENNESS.” *See plate 2.*

RUTH, CHILD with bottle, RICHARD in chair.

RUTH. Ellen (*giving frock*), this dress you will take to—(Oh! that it should come to this!)—to that shop; they will lend you money upon it. There's not a shilling in the house, and you, my poor children, must not go without your breakfast.

ELLEN. And the bottle, mother, which father bade me take—

THORN. Must be filled! it must; if you raise money for one thing, you can for the other.

RUTH. Go, child, go; it's useless to reprove or argue, now—go, child; and you take your sister into the other room.

Exit ELLEN, D. in f. Boy takes SISTER off, L.—RUTH falls in chair, and sobs.

THORN. Ruth, is that you again? what are you crying for?

RUTH. Richard, how are we to live?

THORN. Live! why the same as we always did.

RUTH. I cannot reason with you, for reason has fled its seat, and nothing but corrupt and hideous matters now find place in your bewildered brain.

THORN. What is the time?

RUTH. The hour is considerably past. (*bitterly*)

THORN. Well, at any rate I have returned—

RUTH. To find your situation lost, your wife and family penniless.

THORN. 'Tis false!

RUTH. It is too true; all who were not there when the bell rang were discharged; one or two passed by this door, and mentioned your name, derisively, as one who would suffer with them. And, oh! how, all the live-long night, have I alternately prayed and watched your coming, and as it faded away, and the first blush of morning beamed through the shutters, its faint and sickly light

made me sadder still; yet I watched on, until it became broad day. What then met my gaze? not the husband of former days, but one so degraded, that I almost blush to look upon him.

THORN. Well, well, let it pass; there's annoyance enough. Where's the bottle? that's pleasant, and, in trouble, one's only friend. (*sinks to sleep*)

RUTH. Alas! alas! where shall we find friends now? (*sobs*)

Enter ESTHER, d. in f.

ESTHER. Ruth, dearest Ruth, I know scarcely how to address you, but—

RUTH. Hush, speak lower; he is asleep, and sleep may prove beneficial.

ESTHER. I wanted to speak to him, for George, who was last night in his company, has not yet returned; they were seen together at the public-house.

RUTH. Another!

ESTHER. How wild you gaze, Ruth? what has happened?—no quarrel, I hope? No, that couldn't be, for he was ever a good man, and a kind father.

RUTH. Esther, the drunkard can never be either. You are yet young; if George was there last night, shun him now, as you would a pestilence. When once the fatal love of drink seizes upon the mind, all that is good and pure fades beneath the one absorbing passion, as the chill and sudden frost will blight the early flower; avoid him, or your home will be made desolate as mine.

ESTHER. Your home?

RUTH. Yes, look there. (*points to RICHARD*) Bad advisers have helped this, but who will aid us now with friendly counsel? Again, I warn you of George Gray.

THORN. (*rising*) Who wants to know about George Gray? I can tell you; he—he has enlisted.

ESTHER. Enlisted!—impossible!

THORN. Oh, no, it's true enough, and serjeant wouldn't let him go, neither. Come wife, come; I'm getting all right again—let's have no more quarrelling; I'll go and make it all right at the factory, and then we'll be as happy as ever.

RUTH. No, Richard, our future happiness depends upon your renouncing—

Enter ELLEN, with bottle d. in f.

THORN. The bottle! well, I'll only take a glass now and then; but I want one now, to cheer me up.

Enter TOM d. in f., with warrant.

What may you want, pray?

TOM. This paper will explain.

RUTH. (*snatches it*) What is this?

TOM. An execution for rent.

THORN. Who has done this?

RUTH. This—the bottle!

(TABLEAU—*see plate 2*)

SCENE VI.—*A Front Street.**Enter KITTY and CODDLES, R.*

KITTY. Here's nice goings on; one would fancy we were living near the Old Bailey, the executions are so busy. Well, certainly I am surprised at the Thornleys'; upright, straightforward people as they seemed to be; but there's no telling anybody now-a-day's, is there, Coddles? You don't seem to be particularly lively—I like to make people happy.

CODDLES. No—such is life! Kitty, there has been a sort of an affection sprung up between us. Have you invested money anywhere?

KITTY. Well, I think that's a question which ought to come from me. What's he aiming at? I like to make everybody happy. I haven't.

CODDLES. Thankye, you've quietly murdered me.

KITTY. What, after I've expressed an affection for you, do you dare tell me that I have quietly murdered you?

CODDLES. That's all right enough; we've all affections—some one way, some another; before I saw you, I had placed my affections upon a *till*.

KITTY. And who was she?

CODDLES. It ain't a she at all—it's a sort of what-to-avoid kind 'o thing, but I couldn't; whenever I've had a go at the *field*, I've always *tilled* it, and it's likely to prove very *harrowing* to my feelings.

KITTY. What do you mean?

CODDLES. Embrace me!

KITTY. Do what?

CODDLES. Embrace me, being positively the last appearance of Mr. Coddles in that character.

KITTY. I can't understand you.

CODDLES. Well, say nothing to Binks; stick to your shoe-binding, and prosper. Finsbury, you've lost your pot-boy.

KITTY. But where are you going?

CODDLES. I don't know. I always did the friendly thing with the half-quarterns; and when you're indulging in that liquid, perhaps you'll think of Coddles. Binks the officer is handy.

KITTY. Ah! you're a weak-minded man.

CODDLES. Well, I may be *weak*, and for that reason I leave you to the *force*. *Exit, L. 1 E.*

KITTY. Well, anything in the shape of a man is better than none at all; but for the present, Kitty, your visions of matrimony are all knocked on the head. Never mind, if I can't be happy myself, I'll go and enjoy myself with the miseries of others. I have not lost much in Mr. Coddles, for he had nothing—take nothing from nothing, and nothing remains. Binks has a pound a week, and that's consoling.

Exit, R. 1 E.

SCENE VII.—*Same as Scene I.*

TABLEAU THE THIRD.—“AN EXECUTION SWEEPS OFF THE GREATER PART OF THEIR FURNITURE.”—See plate 3.

SPIKE, TOM, MAN, THORNLEY, *sipping from glass*; RUTH, CHILDREN.

RUTH. Take this away, girl; already it's intoxicating influence stupifies; another glass will sink the man to a level with the brute. (*gives bottle to ELLEN, who takes it back*)

SPIKE. (*reading*) Let's see! chest of drawers, eight-day clock, table, mattress, bed, bedstead, small ditto—

RUTH. You will, perhaps, for the poor children's sake, leave me the little bedstead, will you not?

SPIKE. Nonsense! there's nothing obliging in law; this is the way mothers spoil their children—too much indulgence; let 'em sleep on the floor—make 'em hardy. (*reads*) Large family bible, tea caddy—no real plate, I think—no, only delph—hearth rug, and picture of the village church. Umph! not a Claude or a Reubens—no rising artist—juvenile effort—sell for a shilling.

RUTH. I must beg of you not to take that; it is the picture of the village church where I worshipped as a girl, that saw me wedded in my womanhood; there are a thousand dear recollections connected with it, humble though they be. There was a meadow close by, over whose green turf I have often wandered, and spent many happy hours, when a laughing, merry child; and dearer far it is to me, for beneath a rude mound in that sad resting-place, poor father and mother lie. You won't refuse me the picture?

SPIKE. Well, it ain't worth much, certainly; but you women are such rum'uns, you are. You wouldn't believe it, but one woman begged and prayed for a set of fire-irons, and because I wouldn't let her have 'em, positively fainted. Such funny fancies! One—let's see—I think we've got all—yes—nice healthy seizure this, no rows—not too many tears. This is what I like—it makes things go off so pleassnt. Is the cart ready?

TOM. All right, sir.

SPIKE. Now, we'll go to No. 13.

THORN. Stop! you don't go yet; I heard my wife ask for a small trifle, which you didn't choose to give her; now, I've a fancy for that myself, and I'll see thee d—d before you lay a finger on it. (*snatches picture from SPIKE*)

SPIKE. (*retreating*) Ullo! here, I say, young feller, let's have peace and quietness—no d—d nonsense. Come, let's have it back.

THORN. Touch it, and I'll brain you.

Raises picture to strike him, when MR. MOREWORTH enters D. in F.

Mr. Moreworth! (*drops picture, and stands abashed*)

MORE. Yes, unhappy man; I can feel no pity for you. Tomorrow, you would be without a meal. A family should not be made to suffer for the bad conduct of one undeserving the name of father. Take this. (*gives purse to RUTH, who kisses his hand; RICHARD sinks into a chair*)

PICTURE AND END OF ACT 1.

ACT II.

A LAPSE OF THREE YEARS TAKES PLACE.

SCENE I.—*A Street. Public-house, L. adjoining a churchyard.*

TABLEAU THE FOURTH.—“HE STILL SUPPLIES THE BOTTLE.”

See plate 4.

RUTH. And is it thus you employ the means of benevolence? Richard, reflect.

THORN. Reflect! I can't—I daren't; there is no comfort left me now in my sorrow, but this. (*putting bottle in pocket*)

RUTH. Oh! heaven, that ever my children should come to this; I thought to have seen them clinging around our hearth, when age had peacefully stolen upon us, and that they, thriving in the world, would serve to brighten it; but all now has faded—the prospect once so joyous has grown dim and dark, and we may read our fate in the once green leaves that now fall seared and yellow from the tree.

THORN. Ah! you always look on the wrong side of things—always did. I offer you that which would cheer you—it always drives away the blues—but I can't persuade you. Oh! no. you might be happy, but you won't.

RUTH. Happy! look there. (*points to CHILDREN*) Go back to the days when industry brought content, and every face in our humble dwelling wore a smile, for love and esteem were deeply implanted in the hearts of its inmates; and so years rolled on, and then came, like the mildew on the corn, the fatal drink. Slowly but surely was its progress: The man from whose lips a cross word had never fallen, grew angry and excited—the children, whose caresses ever met with smiles, received harsh treatment, and at length blows, and the broken-hearted wife neglect. So, steeped in poverty, the home became a wreck, and the streets at length their refuge. Happy! look at the boy who clung to your knee, the girl who fondled you, the mother who reared them—and read an answer in their rags.

THORN. (*soothingly*) Now, what have I done?

RUTH. (*pointing*) Look.

THORN. I can't stand this, and I won't; if we are in trouble, things may mend, and you should strive to think so. Instead of trying to console one, you try by every means to add to our miseries; but I have a friend here, who defies all the ill-usage in the world, that's one comfort.

RUTH. For a time, Richard, it may; but the day will come when the charm will be destroyed. Its career is marked by sickness and death—early death. The fevered lip and the pallid cheek already proclaim its influence; and, oh! when the fatal hour arrives, what will become of me, and these poor wretched children? If your heart be not deadened to remorse, think, oh! think of them—helpless, friendless, alone!

THORN. Well, I have thought. The girl, she's comely, and can go into service; and as for the boy, why my old pal, Dognose, he's bringing him up to a profitable business.

RUTH. Service for her?—she is too young for servitude, Richard; but for the boy, I must learn the nature of the employment he has to offer: coming from such hands as his, it can be of little good, and I will not have him made the companion of a dishonest man.

THORN. Go on—crush every effort I make to better our condition, do. What is it to you, so that he earns money?

RUTH. Nothing, so that it be earned honestly.

THORN. And why should you doubt?

RUTH. Have I not cause to doubt the actions of a man who first led you by his pernicious counsels to this fell misery. Look at his companions! who are they?—men shunned and avoided. Richard, as yet we are unstained by guilt; add but that, and our ruin is complete.

THORN. You talk of others; what are we? Can we mix with the fine-dressed, or your honest people? You rail at this life, and check every effort to improve it; but my mind's made up, and nothing you can say will alter it

ELLEN. } Father! mother! we are hungry.
JOE. }

RUTH. Yes, yes, you have some money.

THORN. No, I have none; 'tis spent—gone—

RUTH. Great heaven! and that which the hand of charity bestowed, has gone to the accursed monster Drink! Oh! but for my children, would I were laid in the cold, still grave. (*weeps*)

THORN. Harkye—if they want food, let them beg for it.

RUTH. Richard, with that word you have withered every hope—all, all is fled, and your only love is there. Oh, heaven! what will become of us? (*leans against house for support*)

Enter SPIKE, R. 1 E.

ELLEN and JOE. Charity, charity! we are hungry.

THORN. Yes—for one who has seen better days.

SPIKE. Charity, pooh! Go and apply at the workhouse—and break stones—and think how comfortable you'll feel when you reflect how many rich and great people—ay! even nobility—are constantly passing over the efforts of your industry.

THORN. That voice! oh, it's you, is it? I thought that we had met before. I know you.

SPIKE. Know me! I've no acquaintance in your style, I assure you; and don't know me too much, or else perhaps you will have to know a policeman!

THORN. Of course; to gaol with the beggar; spurn him, crush him, avoid him as you would a reptile—anything to get rid of him. Some years since you wouldn't have so spoken—you wouldn't have dared.

SPIKE. You must have been a very different kind of man, then.

THORN. I was, indeed; but don't rake up the past—it lays too

heavy on the brain—don't, it might madden. Well, one false step brought misery to me and mine; that misery you completed, for you swept away all, and left me bare walls. That was the deepest blow, and I never got over it. I thought and thought, and grew sick at heart, and fancy was busy with me, and I drank to drown care, and the spirit of industry fled from me. Well, I am Richard Thornley.

SPIKE. Bless me! dear, dear! the fine moral man of former days, and the virtuous father become—

THORN. What you see—now not ashamed to ask charity of the passer-by. Come, you knew me once; help me for the memory of old days.

RUTH. If not—for—for my children's sake!

SPIKE. I don't know how it is, but poor people will have children; that, to me, is one of the mysteries of London. But, I say, these sports and pastimes of the people of England, this begging business, is dangerous. The police have strict injunctions, and the Mendicity are all alive, oh!

RUTH. Oh, think if a like calamity crept into your happy home, and made it desolate—what would be your feelings? Think of this helpless little one, whose wasted arms enfold me—starving and cold—think, and pity.

SPIKE. I do believe that women were expressly invented for the annoyance of men of business, and brokers in particular; as for children, they're the scarlet-runners of human life, and they spring up as fast. You don't contract any rent now, I hope? (THORNLEY sighs) No, of course not. Prudent, too—nothing like honesty—die rather than deceive a landlord, or annoy a broker; the streets and magnanimity—hospitality and the workhouse. (*feeling in his pockets*) There! I've dodged up a little fourpenny for you! Take it, expend it prudently, and while you have it you'll never want money.

Exit SPIKE, L.

THORN. Little enough, but it will answer the purpose. (*going*)

RUTH. Whither are you going?

THORN. To drown care—to kill that which I feel gnawing at my heart—to drive that from me which fires my brain, and makes it beat so madly. I go to fill the bottle.

RUTH. The children, Richard, the children.

THORN. I care not—the bottle must be filled.

(*music—throws her from him, and rushes into the public-house*)

RUTH. Heaven, help me! Heaven, help me! (*leans for support against doorway*)

Enter KITTY, R. 1 E.

JOE and ELLEN. Mother! mother! (*crowding round her*)

KITTY. Ruth, Ruth; come, what ails you? Rouse up, as a good woman; I've such good news for you!

RUTH. I am afraid all good news for me will come too late. I have borne much, but 'tis over now, and I feel my heart is broken.

KITTY. Oh, nonsense! I've heard of a party in the next street who wants assistance, and can give you some needlework; look,

here's the address. (*gives card*) Now, go to her to-day; you don't know what it may lead to.

RUTH. You are very kind, but I have scarcely any spirits to undertake it; I feel now so forlorn and dejected, that every effort to restore me to myself seems vain.

KITTY. Yes, but you must rally, for your children's sake.

RUTH. For them—oh! yes you are right, for their sakes I will, I must. Deadened as every feeling is now within me, I must not forget that I am a mother, and that it is a sacred duty to protect them to the last.

KITTY. And your husband, he—

RUTH. (*sighs and points*) There!

KITTY. The wretch! oh! these husbands! Well, if I had a man, I should like to have a gingerbread one, 'cause I could first play with, and then eat him afterwards. Oh! if, foolishly entertaining the thoughts of "persons about to marry," the pound a-week was to serve me so—oh! his face and eyes! I like to make everybody happy. But come, come, no more tears; do as I wish, and all may go well. You may again have the little joint on Sundays, and the comfortable family pudding.

RUTH. Well, well, I'll try; it is for this poor thing, and these helpless ones, that I shall pray to heaven to support me in my task. No drudgery, however menial, I would not cheerfully undertake for them, and them alone, for it would soothe my last bitter moments, to know and feel that I had done my duty to them as a mother.

KITTY. The recommending of this needlework has given me such a stitch, that—Oh! I like to make everybody happy. (*cries*)

RUTH. Don't give way to regret on my account; your words have inspired me with hope, and I feel better now, and stronger than I have done many a day.

KITTY. That's well; I do like to make everybody happy: and let us hope, too, that your husband may reform.

RUTH. Girl, a confirmed drunkard never reforms.

KITTY. Ah! well, well, perhaps it would be better to leave him where he is. Come, leave this place. 'Tis a very cold and biting day; you all seem chilly, and I'll take you to a place where they sell the most delightful—(*RUTH shudders*) Well, well, I forgot; however, I'll walk with you; there's no pride in me: I like to make everybody happy. Come along. (*going*)

Enter DOGNOSE, very shabby, r. 1 e.

DOG. So, the very party I've been in search of! I thought I should light upon you somewhere. Ned, I want you.

RUTH. Want the boy? (*clinging to him*)

DOG. Yes, I've got a move a-foot, that'll change all our fortunes; we'll soon set aside those rags. This it is to have a brain.

RUTH. But how? how?

DOG. You'll excuse me, but I know women too well to trust 'em;

this is a little private affair, that can't interest any but those concerned. It's a rare good thing, so let that satisfy you.

RUTH. It does not; and if it be so good, and you really mean to serve us, why conceal its nature?

DOG. That's our affair altogether. Where's Dick?

RUTH. Again I ask, what want you with the boy?

DOG. And again I say, I can't tell. Where's thee father, boy?

JOE. There. (*points to public-house*)

DOG. Of course—I need not ask. Here, Dick, Dick!

Exit into house.

KITTY. Come, it's no use stopping here; let them go and sot together; you look after yourself—you'll get no good out of them.

RUTH. No, but I must know about him. What can he want? he is a bad man, and has ever held my husband in his toils, and I cannot go until I have learned.

Re-enter DOGNOSE, followed by THORNLEY, greatly intoxicated, L. U. E.

DOG. You see, I point out a clear way of making money, and who can object to it? You don't—no; for you see yourself once again settled, and the little bits of sticks about you, and then once more you can hold the world but as the world, and so defy it.

THORN. Of course, of course; do as you like. I know you wish to serve us all.

DOG. There, it's all settled. Don't be under any alarm; I'm going to take him in hand a little while; I've got a sort of errand-boy's place for him, where he'll soon be well fed and clothed.

RUTH. Where is this place? I claim a mother's right to know, and I must and will, before I part with him. (*holds him*)

DOG. Will you be fed, or will you linger up and down the streets cold and starving?

JOE. No, I've had enough of that—I'll go with you. (*runs from RUTH to DOGNOSE*)

DOG. Come, boy—a fortune, and speedy.

RUTH. You shall not take him from me—you shall not—I'll die first.

THORN. Die, then.

Music—Throws her off, she screams and falls. RICHARD staggers against the shop. DOGNOSE, with a laugh, darts off with the Boy.

SCENE II.—A Street.

Enter CODDLES, with a penny-pie stall, L. 1 E.

CODDLES. Here ye are—penny pies, all hot! veal, kidney, or fruit, fine juicy confectionery, all hot! No bidders! such is life. Talk of the romances of real life, here you have it in Coddles; Coddles, who has gone through a great deal, and is likely to go through a great deal more. Everything's going to the dogs, and they do say that a good many of them animals comes to me, but that's impudence; the real somnambulists, the cats, is set down as going the

same journey likewise, which is neither moral nor proper. I think I shall retire from the meat line, and stick to the fruit: then they cannot make any remark—but I shouldn't care so much, if I could only sell them. It's innovation that's ruined this business—the free trade, the unlimited baked potatoe, and everlasting ham sandwich! And what's been the ruin of me? Coddles, reflect:—betting, I believe, morally—*till*, I consider, properly; beer, I think, generally. As the beer has been to the betting, so as the till been to the pot-boy's destruction. Well, the betting business is as strong as ever, and that induced me to take to the pie line. I do a little on the quiet with the boys, in the juicy meat and fancy confectionery. Well, when things come to the worst, they say, they generally mend; as for mending, I'm mended all over. (*shows dress torn*) Ah! well, such is life. Now to look how my book stands. (*takes one out*) 'Ta'n't exactly a betting-book, but a sort of inweigler of the youthful branches. I do a little in the credit line. They say trust not in woman; that's true, if there's a policeman in the case, or anything milingtary; but I say, trust not in boys, for I think they take a delight in doing the pieman. (*looking over book*)

Enter GEORGE GRAY, dressed as a corporal, r. 1 e.

GEORGE. How familiar all around is to me, and how many happy thoughts have been awakened as I passed by each well-known spot? But as yet I have seen no well-loved faces, met no old friends—for strangers dwell where I was ever a welcome guest. I thought, too, the old factory looked more black and grim than ever, and I saw none of my old industrious associates. To be sure, I have been some years away; many may have passed to their last home. Then I thought of her—what can have become of her? I have gone through a great deal, and what may not she have suffered! I must obtain some information, for I cannot bear this suspense. Perhaps this man—Ullo! pieman.

CODDLES. That's me. All hot, all hot—veal or kidney—juicy meat and fancy confectionery. All hot, all hot!

GEORGE. Do you live about here?

CODDLES. Why, I can't say I *live*, but I go about here.

GEORGE. I want to ask you one or two questions, which you probably can answer. How goes on the factory?

CODDLES. Why, it don't go on at all; it's gone off—not like my pies, they always remain on hand. Take a kidney—

GEORGE. What do you mean?

CODDLES. Why, the old man's done—what I intend to do directly—retired from business.

GEORGE. And the factory men?

CODDLES. Oh, they're all scattered here and there; some are getting up in the world, and some poor fellows are down. (*points*)

GEORGE. You remember, then, Thornley and Johnson?

CODDLES. Thornley! Oh, don't I?—don't everybody! If the pieman were as well known and remembered as he, what a flourishing trade he would drive. They call him the publicans' friend,

and he supports them so much, that he now needs support himself.

GEORGE. I feared this. Beggary, eh?

CODDLES. Beggary—rags. Ah! out of the whole lot at that factory, there were very few who turned out good for much. There was one exception—George Gray.

GEORGE. Ah! You knew him?

CODDLES. Knew him? I believe you; I was potboy and waiter at the "High-mettled Racer," the very night he was hoccusSED.

GEORGE. What?

CODDLES. Yes, hoccusSED; and through a little bit of spite, and for a little bit of money, they managed to get him enlisted.

GEORGE. You are a villain! (*seizes him*)

CODDLES. No, I'm a pieman. Hallo! what's this for?

GEORGE. I'll tell you: I am that George Gray, who has been banished, by foul means, for many a long year, from my home—from those I loved. You assisted in this foul act: dare you—can you look me in the face?

CODDLES. Yes, because I had no hand in it; it was a mix-up between that swell and the serjeant, one of the proprietors of those highly-coloured engravings where a gentleman on horseback, quite pleasant and smiling, is killing every one about him, like one o'clock. It was their doing, not mine.

GEORGE. If I could believe you—

CODDLES. That's what I want—not only you, but everybody; they won't believe in my pies. You can do me a service—try one, and if you meet anybody, recommend—"one trial is all we ask."

GEORGE. Well, be it as it may, let it pass: I am anxious only about the present. Tell me, there was a girl—one Esther Clare—I would know something of her.

CODDLES. Try a mutton. (*offers pie; GEORGE turns from him*) No! Well, as for her, she cried a good deal when you went away; I think there was a little simmering of love, like my pies in the oven, when the heat moves the upper-crust, eh?

GEORGE. Go on, go on.

CODDLES. Well, since then—

GEORGE. Yes—(*eagerly*) since then—

CODDLES. She has struggled on, and held life and soul together, by working hard and fast at the needle. It's a very small instrument, that, but it's astonishing how fine and gay it makes folks. I have often thought whether any of these grand people have an idea how many long, long hours are consumed, and how many sleepless nights have been passed and spent, about the finery they wear. Oh, no! they've got it, and they never bestow a thought upon the maker. I am out very late, and when I have returned from my last round, I've seen the light in her window, and her shadow there, working away, night after night, and at an hour when everybody who had a bed had gone to it; and then I have said (that is, if I had sold all the pies): "Heaven bless you!—industry must thrive." But if I hadn't sold all the pies—

GEORGE. Well, if you hadn't—yes, yes—

CODDLES. Why, then, I used to say, "It's d—d hard; here am I, there is she; her fingers work, so do my legs;" and then I have

thought, what a pity candles wasn't sentimental, or else they'd say something.

GEORGE. You—you can direct me—

CODDLES. Direct you—I'll shew yon—

GEORGE. Do, do; go and get yourself something to drink, and then— (*offers money*)

CODDLES. Queen's man, eh? Oh! you don't do the pieman that way.

GEORGE. I don't want to enlist you.

CODDLES. Oh, then, give me the money, if you like, but not for drink. I've been in the business once, and I'm afraid. Many and many a good fellow I've seen drop off, through that same drink. First they'd come only once a-day, then two or three times, at last whole days; and then came the crying wives, the ragged children, and the man who used to go neat and tidy got shabbier and shabbier; and although (turning a deaf ear to the prayers of wife and children) he has been turned into the streets, the next morning he has turned in again with the opening of the doors: all at once he has been missed—gone to some other house, perhaps? he has, his last—found dead in the streets. I have seen many an honest, industrious chap, clever at his business, led away like this. Drink's the beginning, and the undertaker is the finish; so I reflected, and said, if I must spend money, I'll do it another way. I daren't enter a public-house; the sight of a till would—La! bless me, I—well, I'll show you the way. Money, if you like, but no drink.

GEORGE. Here, (*gives money*) now, quick, for I'm all anxiety.

CODDLES. (*taking it*) A whole half-crown! Pies, perhaps, won't be out to-morrow; Pies will probably see what's to be done in the betting way, and a shilling sweep is likely to come off, and a six-penny Gravesend, probable.

GEORGE. This way, did you say?

CODDLES. First to your left. How a man feels when he has money in his pocket! You won't try a mutton, will you? because to-morrow the juicy confectionery establishment will be closed. Last serenade;—Pies all hot!—this way.

Exit GEORGE, followed by CODDLES, L. 1 E.

SCENE III.—*A neat but plain Apartment. The Picture of the Village Churchyard, as in Act I. Scene I., hanging up.*

ESTHER discovered sewing.

ESTHER. This is weary work, hardly earned, badly paid, and wearily goes the time, when there are none by to solace, to console. Poor George! I often think of him, and wonder if he ever bestows a thought upon her he once professed to love. Well, if he has forgotten me, I hope he may be happy. If he selects another, he will never get one to love him more fondly or truly than I did—never. (*pausing in her work*) But I must hasten on with my work. Weeks and weeks I have scarcely had any, and now it comes all at once—more than I can get through, and am now compelled to send for assistance. Work, work, work, and yet of no avail; it will not clear away the poverty by which I am surrounded. The

dreadful threat of the few things I have got together being taken from me, the fear of being thrust forth homeless, checks every zealous intention, defies all industrious efforts. Well, well, I must try—still struggle on, still struggle on. (*she continues her work—a low gentle tap at the door*) The landlady, perhaps? I must go and quiet her.

Exit, R.

D. in F. opens. Enter RUTH timidly.

RUTH. I beg pardon, but I believe—no one here? This is the direction—yes. (*looking at card*) I hope they will not be long, for I left my poor child, sickly and ill. I fear—great powers! (*looking round the room*) what is here? (*sees picture*) That picture! Years have passed away since I gazed upon it, and the old, old scenes of joy and happiness come back to me. Again I am wandering over the green turf—again I meet the companions of early days—again I see the old village church—the days that are past spring up again in all their brightness: but I do not meet *him* who led me there! no—no—no! Why does it hang there, as if to remind me of the past—to tell me what I might have been? Why, why—(*staggers to chair and weeps*)

Re-enter ESTHER, R.

ESTHER. For the present I have quieted her. (*RUTH sobs*) What's this? A female here, and ill! (*hastens to her*)

RUTH. I beg pardon, but I came to seek for work. I— (*endeavouring to rise, falls back into chair*) Oh!

ESTHER. You are very ill. (*assisting her*) That face! surely I know it; let me look once again. It cannot be! and yet the likeness—Ruth!

RUTH. (*starts up*) Who is it mentioned that name? It seems to conjure up all the bright and happy hours that are past, that never, never will return. (*wildly*) But I beg your pardon—I—I came to ask for work

ESTHER. Ruth!

RUTH. Again! I have heard that voice before; I was sure of it. I know it now; let me look upon you—say, have we not met before?

ESTHER. Yes, in far happier days. I knew you when your home was joyful. Many years have passed since we have met, but I little thought, when I asked for assistance, that I should meet with you. Ah! Ruth, you are much changed.

RUTH. I know—I know all that you would say; I had a home once. You know what that home was. For myself I care nothing, but I have children; and when I saw that picture, my heart warmed again, and seemed to whisper—hope. You spoke of happier days—they are past.

ESTHER. Dear, dear Ruth, do not speak thus; you know not how glad I am to find that we meet once again. I never dreamt of seeing you again.

RUTH. Nor I, girl; I never dreamt that the storm of adversity would fall so dark and heavily upon me; but it has come, it has. But that picture?

ESTHER. I bought it at a sale. I knew that it had once been

yours, and the recollection of the hours, the bright ones we have passed together, induced me to become its purchaser ; I bought it for your sake. Oh ! Ruth, you know not how it glads me to be enabled to render you assistance. Here is some work I can offer you. Heavens ! how pale you look.

RUTH. Yes, I am ill, very ill, and the support which I require will not be needed long ; and then poor, poor children, what will become of you ?

ESTHER. Think for the best—take it.

RUTH. Bless you ! bless you ! (*takes it up*)

Enter SPIKE, D. in r.

SPIKE. Stop, stop ; I beg your pardon, but this moving things off the premises ain't exactly what the law likes.

ESTHER. What mean you ?

SPIKE. Why, there's a little trifle of rent in arrear, and every article becomes of value on such occasions, and if we do a little bit of seizure, it seems we shan't have much to carry.

Enter MRS. WOLFE, R.

MRS. W. Now, Mr. Spike, how do you find things ?

SPIKE. Good morning, ma'am ; things ain't quite so friendly as I could wish. When one sees little articles upon the go, I always think it's time for the broker to— Umph !—you understand.

ESTHER. If you allude to the trifle which I am indebted to you, I am in possession of plenty of work, and in the course of a week—

MRS. W. Course of a fiddlestick ! Money, marm, money ; that's what I want—that's what I will have.

SPIKE. Shall I put the man in ?

MRS. W. Yes ; and you put those things down. (*crosses L. to ESTHER*) Nice acquaintances you bring to genteel lodging-houses ; but you don't take that parcel with you, for all that.

ESTHER. Speak as you will, she shall have it ; she has endured bitter misery, almost starvation ; she is an old, an early, but a valued friend, and she shall not suffer longer, if I can prevent it.

MRS. W. I can stand a good deal, but I can't stand this—insulted under my own roof—I've come to something, however ! this is the beginning and the end—can you pay ?

ESTHER. I have already told you. Do as you please, harsh and cruel as are your proceedings will be, I fear not but that the same Providence who has so long watched over me will not desert me now.

RUTH. And all this is through me. Misery, misery, wherever I go ; it has fallen heavily upon me. Why, oh ! why should I be doomed to bring it to others ?

MRS. W. I don't want no tears, because that performance won't bring the money.

SPIKE. Of course not ; they always have the waterworks ready in these cases. I'll just step across the street, and put a man in.

Enter KITTY, D. in r.

KITTY. Oh, Ruth ! Ruth ! I'm so glad I have found you.

RUTH. You are agitated—pale; speak, speak!

KITTY. You're wanted at home immediately; I cannot, I dare not tell you what for. I have been searching for you for two hours; but, go, go—lose not a moment, or you may be too late.

RUTH. Too late! those words imply—It is death.

KITTY. No, no; let's hope for the best—go, go.

RUTH. I see, I know; it is death. Oh! would to heaven it had come here!

Rushes out, D. in F.

KITTY. And, now, pray what brings you here?

SPIKE. What, me? Oh, as for me, I'm going to put a man in.

Enter GEORGE GRAY, D. in F.

GEORGE. No, you are not; it is more likely that I'm going to put one out. What is your demand?

MRS. W. Three pounds ten—a quarter's rent; and considering the accomodations, very cheap, too.

GEORGE. I will pay it.

ALL. You?

SPIKE. I wish I had put the man in.

ESTHER. This kindness from a stranger!

GEORGE. Stranger no longer. Have a few years so changed me, that you do not recognise me. Esther, have you forgotten me?

ESTHER. Can it be? What! George Gray?

GEORGE. The same George Gray, that ever said he loved you truly, and has now returned to prove it. (*embrace*)

KITTY. Hurrah! And now, Mr. Spike, you may as well take yourself off the premises; instead of a man coming in, there's one to go out.

MRS. W. Lor' bless me! Well, I do like to see people affectionate. Poor thing! well, I always pitied her.

GEORGE. She, thank heaven, will not longer have need of pity; she has one who will protect her for the future, and shield her from all harm. Go, and learn this lesson—Do as you would be done by! go, and repent.

He leads off ESTHER; KITTY follows, L., grinning.

SPIKE. I say, Mrs. Wolfe, I shall look to you for my fees, because, thinking to get a broker out without his fees, is all d—d nonsense.

Exit D. in F. MRS. WOLFE, R.

SCENE IV.—*A wretched Room.*

TABLEAU THE FIFTH.—“THE DEAD CHILD.”

See plate 5.

THORN. Why do you take the glass from me?

RUTH. Look around. (*points to coffin*) There is my answer.

THORN. I know; but this is a time that one requires something. Taste a drop, Ruth.

RUTH. Why offer me that which has been our bane and curse? It has done its work well; it has brought death at last. Would it had come to me!

THORN. I must kave some—I will; my dark thoughts are upon me again. If it was not for this, I'm sure I should go mad. I must, I will have it! (*drunks—a knocking*) Who's there?

Enter DOGNODE, d. in f.

Dog. It's only me. I'm sorry to see this trouble, but what must be, must. Better times will come.

Ruth. To us—never!

Dog. Oh, yes, they will. Look here. (*shows money*)

Thorn. Ah! where got you that?

Dog. Oh, never mind where it came from; the sight of it does one's heart good, don't it. I say, haven't I kept my word?

Thorn. You have, you have.

Dog. And the beauty of it is, there's plenty more of it from the same shop. I don't think your good lady will look quite so harshly upon me as she did, eh?

Thorn. No, no; and to come at such a time too, when we are penniless! Look up, Ruth. Children—youself—all without food. He—he has brought assistance. Let the boy go and get something. You won't object to this being filled, just as if it were to drink success to better times? (*draws out the bottle*)

Ruth. (*rising*) No, he shall not go; nor with my sanction shall this accursed poison ever enter here more. It has crushed and blighted every hope on earth, and now it bears grim death in its progress. The children need food; I will go for their sakes, but I will not move one step for that. (*points to bottle*)

Dog. Well, well, just as you like; of the two, I'd rather that you would go. Here's a five-shilling-piece; now, get what you like. (*gives it*)

Ruth. Promise me one thing, that on my return I shall find you both here.

Dog. Oh! I'm not going to take him away.

Ruth. There is another promise I would exact; but no, alas! it is too late. *Exit with GIRL, d. in f.*

Dog. That's well done, if she can only manage to change it; I think she will, for it is a prime counterfeit. I say, Joe, lad, how, do you like the new game, and the new friends I have introduced you to, eh?

Joe. Oh, well! very well!

Dog. To be sure, and I've taken a fancy to you; I've brought you a new jacket, new trousers, and a pair of boots. Take this, and try your luck with it. (*JOE crosses, R.*)

Thorn. Stop, stop! I've been thinking, and I don't exactly like—

Dog. Nonsense, there are no other means; besides, the bottle must be filled.

Thorn. Right, right! and, over a glass, we'll talk about it.

Exit JOE, R.

Dog. You see, out of evil comes good; you never thought my brain would turn to such advantage, eh?

Thorn. No, no; but it would have been better if you had never thought of this.

Dog. Bah! there's nothing to fear; and it's better to risk everything than starve.

Thorn. I don't know that; I've got some strange fancies about me, and it seems as if I heard a warning voice.

Dog. Pooh! where should a warning voice come from, I should like to know.

THORN. From there. (*points to coffin*) Something seems to say, Repent, ere it be too late! That word rings in my ears, and seems to grow louder and louder every minute—now! now! Oh! there is something in this.

Dog. The something in this is, that you want the drink. The boy is slow; a few minutes, and—(*a hum of Voices is heard*) What's that? eh! D—n it, the boy is pursued! It's all up, then, if he makes for here. No, he avoids it. Good lad! The mob follow—the police, too; will they take him? A woman hastens to his rescue, it is—

(*a cry of "Stop thief!" is heard*)

THORN. What cry is that?

Dog. Nothing, nothing; sit still.

THORN. If it be nothing, why do you turn so pale?

Dog. Another moment, and they will have him.

THORN. Him! who? Stand from the door. What's this? The boy is running.

(*a cry of "Stop thief!"*)

Ha! I see it all! Wretch, you have destroyed him!

Dog. You mustn't interfere, or you will ruin all.

THORN. I will not see him dragged to gaol as a thief, if I can prevent it; lost, degraded as I am, I have still some portion of the father left within me. Stand from the door!

Dog. You shan't pass. (*throws him from him*)

THORN. Oh! for the strength of former days. I am enfeebled, helpless. The warning voice has not spoken in vain; but, oh! may my bitter curse——

Dog. It is too late; if you must curse, let it be upon the cause of all your miseries—the bottle.

RICHARD sinks into chair. Closed in.

SCENE V.—A front Street.

Enter CODDLES and KITTY, R. 1 E.

CODDLES Oh! don't talk to me; go to your policeman. He'll be on his beat presently. It's no use sininating with me. There's Gravesend and shrimps in the distance, for me—oysters, perhaps—a policeman for you.

KITTY. Don't you talk too fast, or else I shall really be compelled to comply with the anxious urgings of that active officer; but you have been the means of bringing two loving hearts together, and you don't go to the public-house so much, and I like you for that; and I am glad to see that you have taken to a new line of business.

CODDLES. Yes, but you have never bought any of the pies, and I do not like you for that.

KITTY. Then, you know, I always had a partiality for you.

CODDLES. Yes, and you show it by smiling at me, and walking arm-in-arm with the policeman.

KITTY. Well, that was only done because I like to make everybody happy. An old aunt of mine died lately.

CODDLES. Not the old lady with the private property?

KITTY. The very same; and I've been thinking, Sam, that a single life is very lonely.

CODDLES. Yes, and cold of nights.

KITTY. Marriage with loving hearts is pretty—a nice little business, now.

CODDLES. Yes, pastry, for instance—juicy confectionery.

KITTY. I can fancy myself behind the counter.

CODDLES. And my hand in the till. D—n those counters!

KITTY. A thriving business.

CODDLES. Yes, and thriving children; but since you've started the race, I want to know who is come in the winner?

KITTY. Why, upon the promise of amendment, you.

CODDLES. Me! the sole proprietor of the little property, the penny pieman is lost to the inhabitants for ever. Boys, your half-penny friend is gone, never to return.

KITTY. Come, we'll talk it over as we go along.

CODDLES. You may, under existing circumstances, take my arm. (*going, r.*) Stop a bit; if it's all the same to you, we'll go down the next street.

KITTY. Why?

CODDLES. Because I notice a little bit of blue with white buttons crossing the square.

KITTY. Again jealous of the policeman?

CODDLES. No; but it's as well never to give a chance away.

Exit, l.

SCENE VI.—*The Room as before.*

TABLEAU THE SIXTH—“THE QUARREL.”

See plate 6.

JOE. You shan't hurt my mother.

THORN. What! would you rise up against me? Recollect, I am your father.

JOE. Ah, ah! a pretty father you've been. Look at me, and see what you've done for me.

MRS. GRUMP. Come, I say, good people, don't quarrel: waking one out of one's first sleep, it's shameful. You've had warning to go, and the sooner you do so the better.

Exit, d. in r.

THORN. This is all your doing—all. You've ever the bitter word upon your lip, ever taunting; I can't stand it, even from you, and I won't.

RUTH. To-night, you have struck me a blow; years back you would have abhorred yourself for such an act—an act you would not then have dared to contemplate, but the career of misery is closing—thank heaven it is.

THORN. Be silent—there is dreadful feeling upon me—I am not the man of years back, and, as you say, I am changed. Knowing it, beware of me.

RUTH. If it prove my last words, I must speak them: you have brought a deadly curse upon me and mine. But, oh! I pray, beseech you, ere it be too late, repent; for the day will come when

you need consolation—no friendly hand to grasp, and you will die regretting and alone.

THORN. I won't hear another word; be silent, or—

Enter DOGNOSE, hastily, d. in f.

DOG. It's all up—away! They have got scent of the boy—of her—and have traced them to this house.

THORN. What do you mean?

DOG. The bad money; you all will suffer—in plain words, she has betrayed us.

RUTH. How could I do otherwise? I wanted bread for them, when the fraud was detected. I was innocent; what could I do but tell the truth?

DOG. And by so doing you have convicted your boy; his future home will be a gaol.

RUTH. No, no—not him—they will listen—will pity. 'Tis you, and you only are guilty; and 'tis you that shall be given up to justice.

DOG. They are entering the house.

RUTH. You shall not go. If the innocent are to suffer, so shall you. Help! help! (*struggling*)

DOG. Take your hands off. Will you see this?

THORN. No—'tis not he has brought this ruin; your busy tongue has done all. Let him go.

NELL. Father! father!

(*as he is frantically dragging her from him, DOGNOSE rushes out, RICHARD seizes bottle from mantle-piece. Closed in.*)

SCENE VII.—Another Room in the Garret.

Enter DOGNOSE, l. 1 e.

DOG. Perhaps in some of these rooms I may conceal myself till all is over, for I'm well known in my trade, and I have quite enough upon me to convict me. These women, they spoil everything; however, let but this storm blow over, and I get clean away, I shall take the liberty of carrying on my performance in quite another part of the town. (*going*)

Enter CODDLES, r. He seizes him.

CODDLES. No, you don't; I happen to have overheard all that you have said. How about that bad shilling, eh? You had eleven-pence ha'penny and a juicy hot pie for a bad shilling!

DOG. Let me go, or I'll do you a mischief.

CODDLES. You can't do more than you have done; and as for hurting, cut away—I can stand it. Here, Mr. Binks!

Enter BINKS, r.

For the first time you are really wanted. There's the lot, and a very bad lot it is, too.

DOG. It's all up; but I ain't done nothing. Come, Coddles, confess this is all a lark.

CODDLES. Oh, is it? I hope you may find it so. You can try and persuade them to it at the Old Bailey; eh, Mr. Binks?

BINKS. Two bad pieces of money were passed to-night; they have been traced to him.

CODDLES. Ah! then your two bad pieces have made a hit. He may be the author of a hundred pieces.

BINKS. Come, this way. (*dragging him off*)
(*a violent scream is heard, and a cry of "Murder"*)

DOG. What's that?

BOTH. A cry of murder!

DOG. By George, he has killed her!

BINKS. Take care of him. *Runs off, L.*

CODDLES. You tremble, and look pale. So you know all about this, too. I don't envy you your feelings. Come along. Queer originally, I believe; bad generally, admitted; transportation, certainly, without a doubt. Come along. Ah! would you! I can do it for you.

Drags him off, struggling, R.

SCENE VIII.—*The Room, as before.*

TABLEAU THE SEVENTH—"THE BOTTLE HAS DONE ITS WORK."

RICHARD is seized.

See plate 7.

THORN. Ruth! Ruth! What, don't you answer?

BINKS. She will never speak again.

THORN. Never! What's here, then? Why these people? I've done nothing. What does it all mean?

BINKS. Death—by this! (*pointing to bottle*)

THORN. (*involuntarily shrinks, passes his hand wildly across his forehead, and with a mad laugh*) Ha! ha! The bottle has done its work! (*falls*)

SCENE IX.—*A Room.*

Enter GEORGE and ESTHER, R. 1 E.

GEORGE. Don't droop, Esther! Tears are unavailing now, and what is past cannot be recalled.

ESTHER. I thought we should have rendered them so happy—talked of old times, of the days when their hearts were light, and the sun of prosperity shone around them. She was one of my earliest friends, too, and so anxious ever for our welfare; and this to occur after our long, long parting! Oh, George! the return which brought joy to my heart is now deeply shadowed, and I cannot check these tears; for 'tis very hard to lose an old, old friend. And how deep the regret, when by sudden and violent means. Oh, George! do not think me unkind; but indeed I can't help it.

GEORGE. A deep and moral lesson may be learned from this, and I thank heaven that I avoided the pernicious instrument which, years back, tempted me.

ESTHER. But the unhappy husband—is there no hope?

GEORGE. Alas! no. I tremble when I think of his state! His brain's turned—his senses fled—he is unconscious of everything around; his last refuge is the madhouse. Oh! Esther, this—this is too painful to dwell upon; let us leave this place.

ESTHER. Yet I would see her once again—for the last, last time;

only to press her hand—to drop a tear in memory of old, old times.

GEORGE. I guess your meaning; it is impossible now to comply with your wish. Come, Esther, you must strive to forget; you must.

ESTHER. Poor Ruth!

GEORGE sorrowfully leads her out, R.

SCENE X. AND LAST.

TABLEAU THE EIGHTH—"THE MADHOUSE."

THORNLEY *chained*. *The Boy and the Girl, and the Keeper looking through door.* See plate 8.

JOE. Don't you know me, father;

THORN. Know! what is there to know? Yes; it's warmer here, and better than the cold and muddy streets. I can't tell what has brought this change about, I can't; I've been puzzling my brain, but to no purpose. It don't beat now as it used to do. It's very strange why she don't come; I never knew her quit my side till now. Why don't she come?

JOE. She never will come again. Don't you know?—think!

THORN. I tell you that I don't know; and what have I got to think about? Who are you that ask it?

JOE. Your son.

THORN. What, my son! No, no; he is ragged, and in the streets. My son; he's not such a fine gentleman as you, and yet—say it again.

JOE. Your son.

THORN. There is a mist before me, and I cannot distinguish your face; but the voice is very like, very. But, if you are my son, you can tell me where your mother is. Ha! ha! you can tell me that.

JOE. She is dead!

THORN. Dead!—who killed her? It must have been very sudden. Ah! I know; it was a blow—a heavy one; and her last words are now ringing in my ears: "Live and repent!" Ha! ha! but no one knows who dealt that blow, eh?

JOE. The hand I now grasp.

THORN. Me! Why, she has spoken a thousand times with pride, that I never raised my hand against her; the whole world knew that. Ah! (with a sudden burst)—oh! yes—I did. It was this hand, and it grasped the instrument of destruction—mine. Oh! what a scream, and what a horrid cry rings through the streets in the dark night. It is murder! Ha, ha! and they say the husband has killed his wife; and so he did—so he did. Look at the red stains around; look! it flows like a river; it creeps up to my feet; take me from it, or I shall perish in that dark sea. Closer yet. And, oh! what a face is that glaring full upon me from the crimson pool! It is her's—Ruth's; I know it. She tells me I have murdered her, and a thousand voices echo it. And what is that by her side? It is the weapon of death; and a grinning fiend rises from the vapour, and mocks and points. It is the bottle! and the spirit of evil now madly laughs at its victim. Closer and closer yet. Oh! take me out—take me—(sinks exhausted)

JOE. Sister, go and take off your finery, I see the end of all this. I'll go back to my rags; honesty lasts, but these betray. Spurn all temptation, for here is a warning—a bitter lesson. I was half a thief, but this has changed me. Good-bye, father.

Enter GEORGE, followed by KEEPER.

KEEPER. You'll find him there. 'Tis nearly time for visitors to depart; take your farewell; for many days will elapse before you see him again. (*retires*)

GEORGE. Do you not remember me? (*advances to THORNLEY*)

THORN. I tell you, I know nothing; never had— Oh! ah! yes, I had a home, and there was a bright face there, ever beaming with smiles; children too, who loved. Where are they all? where is she? Gone! No more of the bitter scorn for her. I know where she is, that kind and loving mother; I'll tell you—there, there! Clouds open above me, and all is bright beyond. I see her sweet face looking faintly down upon me, but it is not the same smile of former days, for it is cold and angered; *but she is there!* Her spirit has fled to heaven; but the children, I left them last in rags—what, what will be their fate? No hope for them, none.

GEORGE. Yes, they shall be my care; I will find them a home—I will protect them.

THORN. You! Who are you that offers this?

GEORGE. A friend, who stretches forth a humble willing but a hand to snatch them from impending vice.

THORN. A friend—a friend to me! Why, who is this? The wretched have no friends—I found it so. Oh! I must know more of you—Oh! oh! I must!

KEEPER. His mad fit is coming on; you must part company now.

THORN. Part! who spoke of parting? No, no, don't part us; I must have company; I dare not be alone again; the red stream rises. What sudden burst of light was that? It was one momentary ray of reason—the truth. I killed her, and I am mad. The shroud of darkness is drawn aside. She is dead, and heeds not now my tears. Oh! friend—for I know you now—and you, my children, judge me not too sternly; I feel that I am fast dying; let me die here; but, oh! what hope is there for me? (*clinging to CHILDREN*)

GEORGE. Resignation. Pray for forgiveness there.

THORN. Your pitying face seems to say a contrite spirit may be remembered at the Throne of Mercy. Kneel, kneel with me, children; and may thy tears wash away a parent's sin!

GEORGE. (*affected*) Richard!

THORN. Hush! their lips are stirred in prayer—for me, for me! Fold your arms around me—closer yet. What mist is that which is falling? what bubbling is this next my heart? Pray on, pray on—the sound grows fainter—fainter—I die in prayer. (*falls back*)

Curtain.

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THE RAILWAY BELLE.

*First Performed at the Royal Adelphi Theatre, on Monday,
November 20th, 1854.*

CHARACTERS.

MR. CRABSHAW (*Station Master*) MR. GARDEN.
JOHN QUICK (*a Waiter*) MR. JAMES ROGERS.
MR. SAMUEL GREENHORNE MR. CHARLES SELBY.
MR. FALLOWS MR. R. ROMER.
LUNGS (*a Railway Porter*) MR. PAGE.
MRS. FALLOWS MRS. STOKER.
MARY FALLOWS MISS LELACHEUR.
JULIA SPRUCE (*the Railway Belle*) MISS WYNDHAM.

COSTUMES.

Crabshaw—Military coat, buttoned up, black trousers, cloth cap.

John Quick—First dress. Black coat and trousers, white waistcoat and cravat, pumps. Second dress. Extravagant plaid trousers, waistcoat, and dress coat.

Greenhorne—First dress. Grey suit. Second dress. Short tailed black coat, nankeen trousers.

Fallows—Brown great coat, grey trousers and gaiters.

Lungs—Railway porter's dress.

Mrs. Fallows—Silk dress, black cape.

Mary Fallows—Figured silk, light scarf, white bonnet.

Julia Spruce—Blue plaid delaine dress.

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