

VICTIMS

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY

IN

THREE ACTS.

BY

TOM TAYLOR, Esq.

AUTHOR OF

Still Waters Run Deep; A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing; A Blighted Being; A Trip to Kissengen; Diogenes and his Lantern; The Philosopher's Stone; The Vicar of Wakefield; To Parents and Guardians; Our Clerks; Little Red Riding Hood; Helping Hands; Prince Dorus, &c., &c., &c. And one of the Authors of—Masks and Faces; Plot and Passion; Slave Life; Two Loves and a Life; The King's Rival, &c., &c., &c.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,

89, STRAND,

(Opposite Southampton Street, Covent Garden Market.)

LONDON.

9092A

VICTIMS.

*First performed at the Theatre Royal Haymarket.
On Wednesday, 8th July, 1857.*

CHARACTERS.

Mr. Merryweather, a Stock Broker	MR. HOWE.
Mr. Rowley, an India Merchant	MR. ROGERS.
Mr. Herbert Fitzherbert, a Literary Gentleman ..	MR. W. FARREN.
Mr. Joshua Butterby, his Friend and humble <i>Admirer</i>	MR. BUCKSTONE.
Mr. Curdle, an Economist and Statist	MR. CULLENFORD.
Mr. Muddlemist, a Metaphysician	MR. L. WALTER.
Mr. Hornblower, Editor of the Weekly Beacon ..	MR. BRAID.
Carfuffle, Butler to Mr. Merryweather	MR. COE.
Skimmer, Footman to Mr. Merryweather	MR. CLARK.
Visitors to Mrs. Merryweather's Reception, Learned and Scientific Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Foreigners, &c.	
Mrs. Merryweather	MISS REYNOLDS.
Miss Crane, a strong-minded Woman	MRS. POYNTER.
Mrs. Fitzherbert	MISS M. OLIVER.
Satchell, Mrs. Merryweather's Maid	MISS LAVINE.
Mrs. Sharp, Landlady to Fitzherbert	MRS. GRIFFITHS.
Mary Bustle, Maid-of-all-work	MISS MEDEX.

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VICTIMS.



ACT I.

SCENE.—*Morning-room at the Acacias, Mr. Merryweather's Villa, in the Regent's Park. An elegantly furnished room, opening into a conservatory. Chairs, lounges, a table, R. C., a couch, R. A door R. C., communicating with Mrs. Merryweather's boudoir; a door communicating with the hall, 2 E. L.; a door communicating with Mr. Merryweather's dressing-room, 2 E. R. Bell, books, prints, &c., upon the table—statuettes, &c.*

SKIMMER discovered arranging the books, &c., on the table, brushing the dust from the statuettes and picture frames, with a feather brush, &c. He pauses from time to time in his work, to open and read in one of the books.

SKIM. Poetry! I adores poetry! especially melancholy poetry, like Mr. Fitzherbert's. Here's his works—(*takes up and opens books.*) What cutting titles—"Withered Leaves,"—and here's another, "Solitudes of the Soul,"—and his last, which missus has just been a cryin' into, "Ruins of the Heart." It's a great advantage to know the author of poems like these. He was here last night; he's here most nights, with the other liter'y gents as use the house, and don't they punish the wittles neither. I suppose it's misery gives him such an appetite. (*opens a volume.*) Beautiful!—here's language! (*reads.*)

" Around the board, all point at him,
 The lonely unenjoying man—
 They wonder why his eyes are dim,
 They wonder why his cheek is wan—"

Well, now, I thought he looked uncommonly jolly last night over his scolloped oysters. (*reads again.*)

" Alas, the banquet tempts not me,
 I find no pleasure in the bowl."

He mopped up his cold without, too, pretty tidy. Suppose I tried a verse myself. (*recites.*)

" I think, for all his gloomy language,
 Expressive of sich mental anguish,
 That Mr. F., enjoyed his sandwich."

But his verses is very heart-broken !

Enter CARFUFFLE, D. L. 2 E.

CAR. (L.) There you are, James Skimmer, at them books as usual, instead of attending to your work.

SKIM. (R.) Servants has minds, Mr. Carfuffle.

CAR. Not above their situations, James Skimmer. When I was in livery, I had a mind according. Now I'm out of livery, my mind is rose with my position ; and so may yours, James, when *you're* out of livery.

SKIM. Ah, if you knew how I looks forrad to that day, Mr. Carfuffle.

CAR. It's natural you should, James—it's an honourable ambition. But you'll never do it, James, if you keeps idling your time away with books. (*taking book from him.*) I'm afraid, James, you're growing liter'y.

SKIM. I'm doing my best, Mr. Carfuffle.

CAR. (sits, L.) Beware, James Skimmers ! I've knowed a great deal of liter'y people—I've lived in liter'y places myself, when I was in a humble position—and of all the uncomfortable, shabby, out-at-elbows families, I've ever seen or 'eard tell of, liter'y families is the most so.

SKIM. (R.) But ain't ours a liter'y family ?

CAR. On the female side, James ; but master's in the City, and that makes all the difference. It's like one of

these books, James; missus finds the print, but master the Rooshia binding and the gilt edges!]

SKIM. But the company we keeps is liter'y; you'll admit that, Mr. Carfuffle?

CAR. Yes, James; and it's the one thing makes me a *leetle* ashamed of the place. To be sure, liter'y people ain't all equally contemptible. There's Mr. Fitzherbert, now, he has something of the gentleman about him—

SKIM. And Mr. Butterby, too, is quite the gentleman; often gives me half crowns, and sends missus flowers, reg'lar. Here's his yesterday's bouquet. (*bringing down a small flower vase with violets.*) Liter'y people corresponds by bouquets. Do you know the language of flowers, Mr. Carfuffle?

CAR. No, James.

SKIM. I've read about it. Let's see—what's violets?

CAR. Two-pence a bunch, James.

SKIM. Ah, you've no poetry in you, Mr. Carfuffle.

CAR. I 'ope not, James.

SKIM. You're as bad as master. Don't you feel for missus, Mr. Carfuffle?

CAR. Why, James?

SKIM. A bein' of sentiment and poetry like her, tied to a plain man o' business like master.

CAR. Well, he *is* plain, James, but if you must have my opinion, I think master's the more to be pitied of the two.

SKIM. Lor' Mr. Carfuffle!

CAR. If I 'ad a wife, James, I know I should rather she loved, honoured, and obeyed *me* in the regular way, instead of giving herself airs with a lot of liter'y gents, and painters, and poets, and low people of that kind, who lives by their wits, and looking no more to me, except in regard to money, than if I was nobody in my own 'ouse.

MERRYWEATHER. (*without, R. D.*) James!

SKIM. But hush, here's master. *Exit SKIMMER, L. D. 2 E.*

Enter MERRYWEATHER from his dressing room, R. D. 2 E.

MERRY. Eleven o'clock and no breakfast—how's this?

CAR. Missis particularly ordered the breakfast was not to be laid sooner, as the noise disturbed her, now she sleeps in the blue room.

MERRY. Oh, very well; then I'll have breakfast in the study in future.

CAR. Missis particularly ordered it should be laid here, sir, in case she wished to speak to you afore you went to the city.

Exit, L. D. 2 E.

Enter SKIMMER with breakfast tray, L. D. 2 E.

MERRY. Be careful and make no noise, James.

SKIM. I 'ope, sir, you'll find me attentive to everythink that can spare missis any annoyance.

MERRY. That's right, James.

Enter SATCHELL, R. D. in F. down R.

How's your mistress this morning, Satchell?

SAT. (*pertly.*) She's suffering from one of her dreadful headaches, sir.

MERRY. Poor dear! I suppose I may go in, and say how sorry I am, Satchell.

SAT. Oh, dear no, sir, missis can't abear being disturbed so early.

MERRY. It was very inconsiderate in me not to think of that.

SAT. Very, sir, when poor missis is such an invalid.

MERRY. Yes, (*sighs.*) she used to enjoy such excellent health before I married her.

SAT. (*sighs.*) Ah, sir, ladies often changes sadly after marriage.

MERRY. So they do, Satchell. (*sighs.*) But pray ask your mistress if there's anything I can do for her before going to the city.

SAT. Very well, sir.

Exit R. D. F.

Exit SKIMMER, L. D. 2 E., after having laid the table.

MERRY. (*sighs.*) Ah! this is not the sort of breakfast I used to promise myself before I married Emily. I've made a terrible blunder, I'm afraid, and so has Emily, too. Who would have thought, though, from her letters, that things would have turned out in this way—unaffected, frank, and honest as they were? (*opens his desk, which stands on small writing table, L. H., and takes out letters.*) After all, I suppose mine were just as unlike my real self. I

should have done better with Lucy Aiken. (*takes out letters, tied round with lock of hair.*) Here's my proposal to her, with the lock of hair I purchased from her hair dresser! I was a poor clerk then, and little dreamt of succeeding to old Merryweather's name and business. I wonder what has become of Lucy? I don't think she'd have considered herself a victim if she had married me. (*sighs.*) Ah, well, it can't be helped now: I must make the best of it.

(*replaces letters and locks desk, leaving key in lock.* A tremendous double knock heard.

Who can that be?

Enter CARFUFFLE, D. L. C.

CAR. Mr. Rowley!

Exit CARFUFFLE, L.

Enter ROWLEY, L.

ROWLEY. Ah, Merryweather, my boy.

(*holding out his hand.*

MERRY. (*shaking hands with him.*) What, Jack Rowley! how are you?

ROWLEY. Said I'd drop in on you one of these mornings, and here I am, all the way from Primrose Hill, with a two-mile-of-a-frosty-morning appetite. (*rubs his hands.*)

MERRY. Delighted to see you—you'll stay breakfast?

ROWLEY. Of course I will—it's what I've come for. You know how I had set my heart on surprising you in the midst of your matrimonial comforts. Lucky dog! (*MERRYWEATHER sighs.*) Not like us poor bachelors, with the teapot for a *vis-a-vis*, but a pretty morning face in a pretty morning cap to sweeten your tea with her smiles, and butter your muffins with her own white hands.

MERRY. As you say, it's a great comfort—but pray be a leetle less boisterous—my wife sleeps in the next room.

ROWLEY. Sleeps! you don't mean to say she's in bed at this time in the morning?

MERRY. Why, the fact is, Emily is rather an invalid, and generally breakfast in her own room.

ROWLEY. The deuce! that's a disappointment. But never mind, we must do as well as we can, so order in the solids—chops, cold meat, eggs; you used to be famous

for your breakfasts, you know, in your days of single blessedness.

MERRY. Ah, yes! how jolly it was, Rowley!

ROWLEY. I believe you, old boy; but pray ring for the eatables, for I'm as hungry as an omnibus driver.

(MERRYWEATHER rings bell on table, R. C.)

MERRY. I'm not sure what there is, but of course there's something.

Enter SKIMMER, L. D. 2 E.

Oh, James, ask cook to send us up something hot—a grill, or anything in that way.

ROWLEY. And muffins, my boy, muffins, if you value my peace of mind. (JAMES is going, L. D.) And I don't see any cream!

MERRY. Muffins, James—and cream.

Exit SKIMMER, L. D. 2 E.

ROWLEY. Well, old fellow—hang it—you don't look as lively as you used to do.

MERRY. Lively! oh, I'm livelier than ever—much livelier. (*sighs.*) But my wife doesn't relish a riotous display of animal spirits—she's so intellectual.

ROWLEY. Humph!

Re-enter SKIMMER, L. D. 2 E.

SKIM. If you please, cook says there's no chops, and the cream was all used for missus's white soup, and there's no muffins, 'cause missus can't abear the boy's bell in the mornings, and there's no cold meat, 'cos Mr. Hornblower, and Mr. Fitzherbert, and Mr. Butterby cleared out the larder last night, after the concert. (ROWLEY whistles.)

MERRY. Friends of Emily's—very superior people.

ROWLEY. And devilish good appetites, apparently.

MERRY. Well, this is unlucky. (*with a forced gaiety.*) Ha, ha, ha! odd coincidence, isn't it? that you should have dropped in to-day of all days? How very good!

ROWLEY. Well, I don't see the joke.

MERRY. You must put up with rolls, and take your tea without cream. It's capital! you get the aroma so much purer. That will do, James.

SKIM. (*aside.*) 'Tother don't seem to appreciate the 'roma

Exit, L. D. 2 E.

ROWLEY. Well, if this is married happiness, it's as like bachelor misery as anything I ever saw in my life.

MERRY. It's provoking, I must say—extremely provoking. The fact is, you see, Emily is a creature of too much mind to attend to housekeeping; but in everything else she's a treasure.

ROWLEY. Humph!

MERRY. So considerate—so afraid of giving trouble.

Enter SATCHELL, R. D. F.

SAT. Please sir, missus says if you're going to the city you're to mind and not forget the music at Crash's.

MERRY. No, no! I'll remember.

SAT. And to match these wools at Crochet's, (*gives wools.*) and here's the books for Hookham's, (*gives books.*) and the bonnet boxes for Madame Clochette's, (*gives them.*) And missus says you're to be particular in not sitting on 'em.

MERRY. There—there, that will do, Satchell, I'll be careful.

Exit SATCHELL, L. D. 2 E.

She's so attached to me, you see—can't bear any other person to attend to her little commissions.

ROWLEY. So I see. Gad, they paint the Cupid of courtship with a quiver on his back, but the little god of matrimony should be represented with a porter's knot. Ha, ha, ha! (*pointing to MERRY, who is loaded with parcels.*)

MERRY. Oh, you may laugh.

ROWLEY. I know I may, I'm not married.

MERRY. Wedded life may have its burthens.

ROWLEY. Pretty heavy ones, evidently. (*pointing to parcels.*)

MERRY. But at least they are borne in company.

ROWLEY. Parcels Delivery Company, I should think.

MERRY. And then it's enjoyments!

ROWLEY. Tea without cream, and a breakfast table without muffins. No, no, I'm not to be humbugged! You've made a mistake—come confess—it will relieve you.

MERRY. No, no—I'm thankful for the change in my condition—(*puts parcels on sofa, r.*) though I will own to you, I do sometimes wish Emily had not such extremely delicate nerves, or that mine were a little more delicate, for then we should understand each other better.

ROWLEY. So you don't quite understand each other?

MERRY. How should we? She's all genius—I've not a spark of it.

ROWLEY. And most of your friends have just as little. How does she get on with them?

MERRY. Oh, you don't suppose she sees any of *my* friends—commonplace men of business? Oh, no, her friends are all what's called, "remarkable people"—poets, metaphysicians, artists—the house is overrun with men of genius. I do all I can to make her happy; but somehow, I don't think I've hit the right way, as yet.

ROWLEY. (*taking his hand.*) My poor, dear old fellow, I saw you were out of spirits—but I'd no idea it was as bad as this.

MERRY. You don't think me an unkind man, Rowley?

ROWLEY. Unkind! your heart's the softest place about you, except your head.

MERRY. I'm not the person to thwart and bully a woman, am I? In short, you wouldn't call me a brute, would you?

ROWLEY. You! a brute!

MERRY. Because I sometimes fancy I must be something of the kind. If you saw poor Emily's low spirits, the way she sighs, and casts her eyes up to the ceiling every now and then, when I'm with her, the style in which her friends speak of me—in fact, between ourselves, I'm afraid I'm breaking her heart without in the least intending it.

ROWLEY. My poor old boy—I've a shrewd suspicion she's breaking yours with her infernal airs and affectations.

MERRY. She! oh, no—it's my fault, I tell you. But what would you do in my place?

ROWLEY. Do? Why first and foremost, I'd be master in my own house.

MERRY. Oh, that I am—I flatter myself.

ROWLEY. Not a bit of it—or your wife wouldn't be in bed at this time of day—her d—d superior friends wouldn't be clearing out your larder—you would not be imagining yourself a brute, and your old city chums

wouldn't be received in this style, when they dropped in to breakfast.

MERRY. Oh, if I only knew the way to her heart, Rowley!

ROWLEY. What! she doesn't love you, then?

MERRY. She tries, I believe, but I'm not the sort of man to win the affections of a gifted creature like her. Oh, if I was only an editor like Hornblower, or a poet like that pale, sentimental, black-bearded Fitzherbert.

ROWLEY. Fitzherbert! what Herbert Fitzherbert—the fellow that writes in the periodicals?

MERRY. Yes! Do you know his writing?

ROWLEY. Sorry to say I do—across a three-and-six-penny stamp. (*showing two bills.*) Here's a brace of his dishonoured bills for eighty-six, six, eight, drawn by Joshua Butterby, and accepted, payable, but not paid by Herbert Fitz ditto.

MERRY. It's extraordinary how these men of genius are always in difficulties.

ROWLEY. He'll be in a worse difficulty soon—for I have ordered my solicitor to proceed to extremities.

MERRY. What, arrest him? No, no, Rowley—you mustn't do that, neither—suppose you endorsed the bills to me!

ROWLEY. Overdue as they are, and with notice of dishonour!

MERRY. I know it's unbusiness-like, but it's out of consideration for Emily—she has such a respect for him, such an admiration of his poetry—

ROWLEY. Humph! you'd better let me shut him up. Song birds pipe best in cages.

MERRY. No, no—Emily would break her heart about it, and I cannot bear to give her pain, more than I can help—that is; so give me the bills. (ROWLEY *gives them.*) We'll look in at Praed's on our way to the city. By-the-way, though, I forgot, you have had no breakfast.

ROWLEY. Nor you either; suppose you breakfast with me at the Union, *en passant*.

MERRY. A capital idea! In the style of old times, Jack; how I shall enjoy it!

Enter SKIMMER, L. D. 2 E.

ROWLEY. Of course we can't do things like you married men, but I promise you a regular sample of bachelor discomfort, with all the luxuries of the season, muffins inclusive! (*they are going, when ROWLEY, pointing to sofa, says.*) Don't forget your commissions.

MERRYWEATHER gets parcels, and they exeunt, L. D.

SKIM. (*taking away the breakfast things.*) That Rowley's a coarse man—the same vulgar stamp as master. Absorbed in what Mr. Fitzherbert calls the sordid pursuits o' gain, both of 'em. If it wasn't for the liter'y people missus brings about the 'ouse I'd give warning to-morrow. But the conversation in our soireés is really a privilege to a young man that aims at improvin' his mind as I do.

Exit with tray, L. D. 2 E.

Enter SATCHELL., L. D. 2 E, showing in MRS. FITZHERBERT, who is plainly dressed, with bonnet and veil.

SAT. You can sit down here, young woman, while I speak to missus about the work.

MRS. F. Thank you— *Exit SATCHELL, D. in F. R.* Another week's embroidery, and I shall have made up the two pounds for those bills; and then I shan't have to worry dear Herbert for the money. I hope I'm not doing wrong in trying to keep out of debt, and procure for him the little comforts he requires so much, though he does know nothing about it. Thanks to my maiden name, which I borrowed for the occasion, there's no chance of my being found out. I wish, though, those impudent, ill-bred men wouldn't follow one so in the street, and stare under one's bonnet. They see I'm poor, and unprotected—it seems so cowardly. There was one persecuted me all the way to this door—such a fool, too.

Re-enter SATCHELL, with a parcel, D. in F. R. C.

SAT. (R.) Here are half-a-dozen more caps, to be worked in the same pattern as the last, at three-and-sixpence a-piece, you know.

MRS. F. (C.) Thank you.

SAT. Mind, they must be ready against next Wednesday.

MRS. F. Next Wednesday! I shall have to sit up the greater part of every night to finish them.

SAT. That's no business of ours.

MRS. F. No; but please the last are not paid for, I think—(*timidly.*) and if—if Mrs. Merryweather could—

SAT. (*pertly.*) Oh you want the money—I'll tell missus; of course, it's always the way when one employs people out of charity.

Exit, R. D. F.

Enter SKIMMER, D. L. 2 E., shewing in BUTTERBY, who carries in his hand a bouquet wrapped in paper.

BUTTER. (*aside.*) There she is! (*to SKIMMER.*) Very well, I'll wait; he said he'd be here at twelve.

Exit SKIMMER, L. D. 2 E.

(*in a jaunty manner.*) Well, my dear, I said we should certainly be better acquainted, and here we are, you see, *tête à tête*. By Jove, now, don't "turn, oh turn, those eyes away"—I'm harmless, perfectly harmless. I only want another peep into those blue depths—"Lights that do mislead the morn."

MRS. F. Pray cease talking such nonsense, sir.

BUTTER. It's not nonsense—it's poetry—the language of passion! (MRS. FITZHERBERT *lowers her veil.*) Ha! now why put down your veil? It's no use—it only adds the charm of mystery to your other charms.

MRS. F. I'll call the servants, if you go on, sir.

BUTTER. Oh, pooh, stuff, you know you wont do anything of the kind—my importunities are flattering. By Jove, I'm struck with you, I am, by Jove! (*aside.*) Not a word. Hang me if I don't tempt her with Fitz's bouquet, which I was to leave for Mrs. Merryweather.

(*takes bouquet from paper.*)

MRS. F. Will that girl never come back?

BUTTER. Look, here are lovely flowers—let me present them to their sister—"Sweets to the sweet."

"I offer thee a rosy wreath,
Not so much honouring thee—"

MRS. F. As insulting me, sir!

(*crosses to L.—she puts away the flowers.*)

BUTTER. No, no, by Jove, don't be so cruelly cold—so impregnably adamantine.

Enter SATCHELL, D. R. F.

SAT. (*aside.*) Flirting with Mr. B.—I thought she was no better than she should be. Here's the money, young woman, and as we're not used to being dunneD, we will not trouble you with any more work after those caps are finished.

MRS. F. Oh, say I'm very sorry, please. I didn't mean—if not perfectly convenient—

SAT. Convenient!—well, to be sure, making a convenience of us! *Exit with a toss of her head,* D. R. F.

MRS. F. Ah, she wouldn't be so cruel; if she knew how I want the money for dear baby and for Herbert—

(*going, l.*

BUTTER. (*detaining her.*) Now don't go.

MRS. F. Once for all, sir, I beg you'll not insult me. I am not unprotected—and if I should be forced to appeal to my husband—

BUTTER. Husband!—pooh, an old dodge. Now, I say—

MRS. F. Oh, sir, why do you persecute me in this way?

She breaks away and exits, L. D. 2 E.

BUTTER. Gone!—she was a vision of delight!—I'll follow her. A delicious figure—slight, but undulating—quite Wordsworthian—

“A creature not too bright or good

For human creatures daily food,”

as Fitz would say. Yes, by Jove, a human creature must have his daily food; I'm not married yet, and Miss Crane is not here. But I must leave Fitz's bouquet—(*rings.*) or he'll never forgive me.

Enter SKIMMER, L. D. 2 E.

MIND MRS. MERRYWEATHER has this bouquet, Skimmer, and not a word who it comes from, you know.

SKIM. Certainly not, sir.

(*puts it in a vase, and exits,* L. D. 2 E.

BUTTER. (*looking out of the window, c.*) There she goes, out of the shrubbery. Now, Butterby, be yourself—be irresistible, Butterby, my boy! (*as he is rushing out, L. D. 2 E., he suddenly starts back.*) Miss Crane, by Jingo!

*Enter Miss MINERVA CRANE, shown in by SKIMMER,
L. D 2 E., who exits, L. D. 2 c.*

MISS C. Joshua!

BUTTER. Minerva!

MISS C. One moment, Joshua, and this feminine weakness will have been surmounted. A chair, Joshua!

BUTTER. Yes, Minerva, (*he places one—both sit.*)

MISS C. (r. c.) I expected to find my gifted friend Emily, and the sight of you, Joshua, affected me.

BUTTER. (l. c.) Exactly the effect which the sudden sight of you, Minerva, had on me.

MISS C. In the delicate relation in which we are placed—

BUTTER. Yes, going to be married next week—

MISS C. (*moving her chair away.*) You must feel the impropriety of our remaining together, Joshua.

BUTTER. Well, now, Minerva, considering we're to remain together for our natural lives, after next week, I should have thought it the most proper thing in the world.

MISS C. With ordinary women it might be, Joshua—but, you know, I am not an ordinary woman.

BUTTER. That you certainly are not, Minerva! Both mentally and physically you are a phenomenon.

MISS C. (*waving her hand.*) I am aware Joshua appreciates his Minerva—that he admires in her, not the external graces, but the mental gifts; the devotion with which she has embraced her great idea, the spirit in which she has entered on the noble cause of Female Emancipation! Is it not so, my Joshua?

BUTTER. (*aside.*) By Jove! how she talks. (*aloud.*) It is exactly so, my Minerva!

MISS C. Then, let us have no unworthy weakness, Joshua. If I marry, do you think it is for that vulgar happiness usually sought in such unions?

BUTTER. Eh? well, I certainly had that impression.

MISS C. Dismiss it! I take the chain of matrimony that I may be more free.

BUTTER. Oh! (*aside.*) A nice look out for me!

MISS C. More untrammeled in my missionary labours. In you I have found a mind that can rise to the height of

my idea. Your devotion to our mutual friend, the gifted Fitzherbert—your sympathy with this suffering angel, Mrs. Merryweather—first taught me that, under that exterior—

BUTTER. Minerva!

MISS C. However, at first sight, unprepossessing, and even vulgar—

BUTTER. Hang it! Minerva!

MISS C. Was enshrined a great soul—a heroic nature!

BUTTER. Yes, certainly, Minerva. Still my appearance—

MISS C. Might have repelled most of my sex. But, as I said before, I am not an ordinary woman.

BUTTER. No—but, you know, one doesn't like to be made out such an ordinary man, neither.

MISS C. (*with a smile of superiority.*) I had supposed you above such weaknesses, Joshua. Do not let me have reason to suspect that I have misconstrued you. (D. R. in F. opens—MISS CRANE waves her hand with dignity.) But enough—here comes our suffering friend—I would not she found us together. Retire, Joshua, to the garden.

BUTTER. (*aside.*) Confound it! Minerva is certainly a wonderful creature!—wonderful!—but she might have a little regard for one's feelings! I wonder how she'd like to be spoken to in this way herself. However, I shall be master next week, and, by Jove! I'll let Minerva see what's what then.

Exit, c.

Enter MRS. MERRYWEATHER, R. D. F., leaning on SATCHELL'S arm—SATCHELL wheels forward an easy chair.

MISS C. My dear Emily!

MRS. M. Good morning, dear! Thank you—that will do, Satchell. (*she sits—SATCHELL retires, R. D. F., after getting footstool, arranging smelling bottle, shawls, &c.*)

MISS C. And how is my poor sufferer, this morning?

MRS. M. No worse than usual, dear Miss Crane; and, alas! no better.

MISS C. You are looking more interesting than ever. What a lovely Cashmere!

MRS. M. Yes, Mr. Merryweather bought it me yesterday. Alas! (*sighs.*)

MISS C. Ah, I understand that sigh. The mention of *his* name.

MRS. M. He means kindly, dear Miss Crane. Do not be hard on him.

MISS C. Ah! I know the forgivingness of your angel nature.

MRS. M. Nay—suffering is the lot of all our sex. If it come to me in the form of union with a being who cannot sympathise with me—with whom I cannot sympathise—let me endure in silence. It is my duty!

MISS C. Ah, in the present unnatural state of society—it may be our duty to bow the knee, to stoop the neck, and even to bridle the tongue—but it shall not be so always; when I marry, dear Emily, I will shew a different example.

MRS. M. (*smiling.*) It is well Mr. Butterby is not within hearing.

MISS C. Oh, Joshua understands me. He feels as I do, that woman's mission is anything but *submission*. I've taught him the rudiments of the question, and after we are married, I'll complete the lesson.

MRS. M. Ah—why have I not your strength of mind and body, and then I could shatter the chain that now galls me. A pretty bracelet, dear, don't you think so?

(*shewing bracelet.*)

MISS C. Yes, sweet, indeed! Turquoise and silver goes so well with the sweet pallor of your complexion.

MRS. M. Flatterer!

MISS C. I know whose taste it is—I'm sure I do! Ah, don't blush—own it is the choice of our gifted friend, Fitzherbert.

MRS. M. No, indeed! It was Mr. Merryweather presented it to me.

MISS C. Indeed! I should not have expected anything so pretty from him.

MRS. M. I hope you do not think I would receive any present from Mr. Fitzherbert.

MISS C. Oh, we are able to defy the shallow rules of what triflers call society.

MRS. M. No, from him I accept only sympathy, and

flowers. This bouquet—it comes from him, I feel it does. Sweet flowers! The best exponents of feelings like his.

MISS C. Have you seen him this morning?

MRS. M. No! these flowers come like fairy gifts—without hands.

MISS C. How interesting he was last night after the concert; and Hornblower was great—great, indeed.

MRS. M. Yes, I am happy at least in my friends. But did you not think Herbert looked wan and unhappy?

MISS C. My dear, I never stoop to notice faces—I see minds, nothing but minds, and lighted by mind the most ordinary features become beautiful—even Joshua's.

MRS. M. I am sure Herbert has a secret sorrow: do you know anything of his private history?—where he lives?

MISS C. Nothing—his life is mystery.

MRS. M. What a charm that gives him; I wish I knew why he looks so pale, why he sighs so often, why he fixes his eyes so on me, when in spite of myself I reveal the sufferings under which I am sinking, why he never eats anything!

MISS C. Eats!—Genius is like the chameleon, it takes all colours, and it lives upon air. As to his history, dear, I've not a notion, but I'll ask Joshua. You know what friends they are. That after all is one of Joshua's fine traits—his enthusiastic appreciation of his friends.

MRS. M. Yes—as Mr. Merryweather coarsely says of him, “All his geese are swans.”

MISS C. An elevated nature would have said, “All his swans are eagles.” Suppose I questioned him a little about Fitzherbert, he's in the garden? (*going, returns.*) By-the-way, though, I had forgotten one thing—here's the address of that young pianist, which I promised you last night. I understand it is a charity to employ her, and I know your great luxury is doing good. (*gives card.*)

MRS. M. (*reads card.*) “Lucy Aiken, 3, Harriet Street, Belgrave Square.” Thank you—meanwhile, I will try and get a little rest—I feel languid.

MISS C. I've brought you my last volume. (*taking book from bag.*) “The wrongs of women.” In chapter three, I treat of ill-assorted marriages. I've had your sad case in my eye

all through. It will amuse you—it is thought to be harrowing ; I wrote it with a bleeding heart. *Exit c.*

MRS. M. Ill-assorted marriages ! Yes ! I should have been a poet's wife—to have shared in his aspirations, partaken his hopes, exulted in his fame ! Oh, Fitzherbert—Fitzherbert, why did we not meet 'ere I had become the wife of one who cannot understand me ? The very name, Merryweather, is redolent of vulgar happiness. How poorly his bracelet shows by the side of Herbert's flowers ! How can he love me ? He says he does, but there cannot be any real attachment between natures so uncongenial as ours ; besides, if he loved me, would he leave me thus, sad and suffering as I am ? He says it is for business ; how do I know—have I his confidence ? Does he ever tell me of his plans—of his friends—of his amusements ? I promised to tell Herbert how I was to-day—I will write to him. (*approaches writing table, L.*) My husband's desk—and the key in it ! Strange ! he generally keeps it so carefully locked. (*she takes hold of the key.*) How easily the key turns in the lock ! I declare it has opened. What's this ? (*examines contents of box.*) My letters—the utterance of my foolish, girlish heart, when I thought I loved him. And this ? a lock of hair, and not mine ; and this packet ? "My letters to dear Lucy Aiken." Lucy Aiken ! the name on that card ! No date to the letters. Oh, if he should be deceiving me, then, indeed, my cup of misery would be full to the brim. (*she sinks on the sofa and puts her handkerchief to her eyes.*) I knew I didn't love him, but I thought he loved me.

Enter SKIMMER L. D. 2 E.

SKIM. (*announcing.*) Mr. Fitzherbert.

Enter FITZHERBERT, L. D. 2 E., and exit SKIMMER, L. D. 2 E.

FITZ. (*aside.*) So ! my bouquet by her side ! My dear Mrs. Merryweather, you are ill—I disturb you.

MRS. M. (*R. C.*,) No no—stay, Her—Mr. Fitzherbert—you are always welcome, you know.

FITZ. (*C.*) Ever kind ! (*he sits.*) I could not rest until I had assured myself that you were not worse for the excitement of last night.

MRS. M. Oh, no—music never overpowers me.

FITZ. Ah! there is some music shakes me to the centre—when you were at the piano last night—

“ My spirit like a charmed bark did float
Upon the silver waves of that sweet singing ! ”

MRS. M. You never sing.

FITZ. Never! Poets are like swans—when we become vocal, 'tis in the hour of our closing agony.

MRS. M. But despair must not be kept locked in the heart, or it may shatter it.

FITZ. What matter, when the heart is already in ruins—besides, *we* have our pens.

MRS. M. Oh, if you knew the comfort your poems have been to me—their melancholy cadence falls like an echo of my own sighs. Griefs I have never confided to human ears are laid bare in your verses.

FITZ. How mysterious is the freemasonry of suffering!

MRS. M. Alas!

FITZ. What is life without sympathy? When the solitary heart yearns in vain for a heart to respond to its pulsations—when the lonely soul gropes blindly for its kindred soul and finds it not. This agony which I have clothed in words—this agony *you* feel—is it not so?

MRS. M. Why should I conceal it from you? But you, too, have felt it?

FITZ. Have I not? but I am a man, and can bear it. Besides, *we* may rebel—*you* can only suffer.

MRS. M. It is too—too true.

FITZ. (*passionately.*) And so, souls that were formed to understand and answer to each other, by the cruel chances of the world, must stand afar off, and measure the happiness that might have been, by the misery that is.

MRS. M. Oh, that it were in my power to console you—to probe your griefs with no ungentle hand.

FITZ. No, I must suffer alone. To reveal the dark chapters of my fate were but to deepen the gloom of yours. But you received my flowers?

MRS. M. Oh, yes!

FITZ. And you are not offended?

MRS. M. Offended! Oh, Mr. Fitzherbert, what offence can come of sympathy so conveyed?

FITZ. (*sighs.*) Alas!

MRS. M. You sigh!

FITZ. It is so habitual with me, I know not when or why I do it.

MRS. M. You have some hidden sorrow; I know you have something that is preying on your heart.

FITZ. Ah, if I durst—

MRS. M. Confide in me? You may—endurance has made me quick to feel, strong to comfort.

FITZ. No, no! why harass you with the tale of blighted hopes, baffled aspiration, misplaced affection—and all these aggravated by the ignoble chafe of pecuniary embarrassment?

MRS. M. That, at least, I can free you from. I am rich—let me have the pride of thinking some of the dross my husband prizes so highly has gone to alleviate a poet's pang. (*takes out note case.*)

FITZ. No, no, most noble of women, you distress me. It is true, that yielding to the urgent demands of a friend, I *had* accepted bills.

MRS. M. There is a hundred pounds here—oh, take it pray—pray take it—as a loan merely—I cannot bear to think of you, exposed to the hardships of a prison.

FITZ. Oh, woman! woman! How sublime are thou in thy inspirations of pity! (*falls on his knees.*) Let me thus, on my knees—(*seizing her hand.*)

MRS. M. No, pray—Mr. Fitzherbert—get up, sir—pray.

Enter MERRYWEATHER from the conservatory, c.—he pauses and starts.

MRS. M. (*catching sight of him.*) My husband!

FITZ. Yes, I think that is the way we had better manage it. (*MERRYWEATHER comes forward, R.*) Ah, Mr. Merryweather, we were rehearsing for our *tableau vivant* this evening—Paolo and Francesca, you know.

MERRY. Ah, just at the moment when they are discovered by the husband; your expressions are capital, both of them. But the rehearsal has fatigued you, my love—you are pale.

MRS. M. It has overpowered me a little.

MERRY. Mr. Fitzherbert throws so much earnestness into his acting.

FITZ. Yes, I give way to the illusion of the scene too much.

MERRY. A good deal, I think.

FITZ. I shall never forgive myself if I have tired Mrs. Merryweather—I must repair my indiscretion by adjourning the rehearsal; good morning.

MERRY. Pray don't let me interrupt you. I have merely entered for the books I want.

FITZ. No, no! (*aside.*) He doesn't suspect anything. (*aloud.*) I really must do penance; good morning. (*aside.*)

Just before I had accepted the loan, too. Provoking!

(*aloud.*) Good morning.

Exit L. D. 2 E.

MERRY. Can I not help you, Emily?

MRS. M. I will not trouble you. He *has* tired me sadly. I feel faint. Will you ring for Satchell? (MERRYWEATHER *rings.*) I will lie down a moment in my own room; a little rest will do me good.

Enter SATCHELL, R. D. F.

(*aside.*) Oh, he saw Herbert on his knees—I am sure he did. He does not love me or he would be much more agitated.

Exit R. D. F., leaning on SATCHELL.

MERRY. (*walks up and down two or three times.*) Can it be true? were they really only rehearsing—or are they imposing on my simplicity! Oh, Emily—Emily, I knew you did not love me—but to allow another—and when I would give my right hand to spare her a moment's pain! No, I deserve such a return so little, that I will not believe it. (*sits*) And yet this Fitzherbert is constantly here in my absence. He understands her—and then his infernal poetry. (*catches sight of bouquet.*) I wonder where those flowers came from? They were not here when I left the house this morning. (*rings.*) From him—I'll be sworn they are.

Enter SKIMMER, L. D. 2. E.

Who brought these flowers?

SKIM. The bouquet; sir?

MERRY. Yes, sir, answer me at once.

SKIM. Mr. Butterby, sir.

MERRY. You are sure of it?

SKIM. Yes, sir—he giv' them to my own 'ands, sir, and particly told me I wasn't to tell anybody who they came from.

MERRY. Oh! that will do, James—you may go.

Exit SKIMMER, L. D. 2 E.

Butterby! Ha, ha, ha! To think I should have tormented myself about a present of Butterby's. What an ass I am, to be sure. They *were* rehearsing—of course they were.

Enter MISS CRANE from garden, c.

Ah, Miss Crane!

MISS C. I expected to find Emily—

MERRY. She has gone to lie down a little; she is fatigued with her rehearsal!

MISS C. Rehearsal!

MERRY. Yes, one of to-night's *tableaux vivants*, with Mr. Fitzherbert; I found them at it. By-the-way, here's a bouquet which I think you have more claim to than Emily. (*presents it.*)

MISS C. Sir!

MERRY. Oh, it's not from me—it's from Mr. Butterby.

MISS C. From Mr. Butterby!

MERRY. James informs me he left it this morning. It does great credit to his taste.

MISS C. (*aside.*) What can he mean? Joshua send bouquets to Emily. (*takes it—finding note in the middle.*) What's this? Verses! (*reads.*) Oh! (*screams*)

MERRY. A note—in the bouquet! Miss Crane!

Enter BUTTERBY from the garden, c. down L.

BUTTER. Minerva's voice! what's the matter?

MISS C. Leave me! monster!

BUTTER. (*to MERRYWEATHER.*) You are to leave her! monster!

MISS C. No, *you*, sir! Leave me!

BUTTER. But Minerva—

MISS C. Then, sir, I will leave you! all is at an end between us. Make way, sir—you are beneath my resentment. I hate you! *Exit majestically, L. D. 2 E.*

BUTTER. Is Minerva mad? Do you know what has thus shaken her remarkably firm mind, Mr. Merryweather?

MERRY. Your bouquet, yonder—she's jealous of my wife. Ha, ha, ha!

BUTTER. Nonsense! it's not my bouquet, it's Fitz's—he asked me to leave it—

MERRY. His! Then that note—

BUTTER. What note?

MERRY. (*seizing the note, aside.*) In his hand! Oh, Emily—Emily! (*sinks into chair, R. of c. table.*)

BUTTER. (*aghast.*) Another case of spontaneous combustion. Oh, for goodness sake, what *is* the matter?

(*falls into chair, L. of c. table.*)

TABLEAU.—END OF ACT I.

A C T I I.

SCENE.—*The Sitting Room in Fitzherbert's Lodgings.*

The room is comfortably furnished. Books are strewn about; a writing table, with manuscripts, and other indications of literary labour, R.; a pianoforte, L.; some prints, in handsome frames, &c.; sofa, chairs, round table, and writing table. Window in flat, R. Door in flat, L., communicating with bedroom; doors R. 3 E. and L. 2 E., one leading to the stairs, the other to the back stairs. Fireplace, R.

MRS. FITZHERBERT *discovered.*

MRS. F. Four o'clock! Herbert will soon be home; let me see if all is ready for him. He shall find his dressing-gown nice and warm, (*hangs it before fire.*) and his slippers, (*puts them before fender.*) I must embroider a new pair soon—dear fellow—and his chair, with my own work. (*wheels a worked chair near the fire.*) There! all looks very cozy—and I've put fresh ink in the stand, and mended his pens. How proud I am to think that I can mend the

pens he writes his beautiful verses with. And now I must get on with these troublesome caps of Mrs. Merryweather's, while baby's asleep. (*she sits down to work.*) He grows more like dear Herbert every day. (*a knock at the door, r. 3 e.*) Come in!

Enter MRS. SHARP, r. d. 3 e.

Oh! Mrs. Sharp! Good afternoon!

MRS. S. (r.—*presenting a paper.*) If you please, mum, a man have left this bill, and will be obliged if it could be settled at once.

MRS. F. (r. c.) A bill! (*aside.*) How provoking! Tell him, if you please, that Mr. Fitzherbert is not at home, but that he shall have it when he comes in, directly.

MRS. S. He says he's been three times already, mum.

MRS. F. I'm very sorry, I'm sure. (*looks at bill.*) For flowers, one pound twelve shillings.

MRS. S. And I'd be much obliged, mum, if you could settle the rent. There's nearly a month owing, you know, and if I have to wait for my money, other parties has to wait for their's; and it was understood the apartments was took by the week.

MRS. F. Yes, I'm sure, Mrs. Sharp, if I had the money you should be paid directly, but—

MRS. S. Yes, mum, but good will won't pay butchers and bakers, you know—and when parties can find money for flowers, and pianos, and pictures, it's only nat'ral, you see—

MRS. F. Dear Mrs. Sharp, don't be angry; I'm so sorry—but, if you'd only wait a little—such a very little—(*coaxingly.*) you don't know how rich I shall be soon. Now, do.

MRS. S. Ah, well, you're an angel, that's what you are! But as for Mr. Fitz—

MRS. F. Now, Mrs. Sharp! (*stops her mouth, playfully.*) You really shan't say a word against my husband.

MRS. S. He ought to be ashamed of himself, lettin' you toil and moil—and so I'll tell him.

MRS. F. Oh, now, dear Mrs. Sharp, you promised to keep my secret.

SHARP. Yes, that I did, certainly, and to take in letters and messages for Miss Aiken.

MRS. F. It's my maiden name, Mrs. Sharp; you see, my husband would be angry if he knew I worked and gave music lessons. He's of a much higher family than I am, and it is natural he should be proud.

SHARP. It would be better if his pride set him earnin' money to pay his debts. But I don't want to hurt you, mem, I'm sure, and I'll say nothing more about it. But the rent I must have, and so you may tell Mr. Fitzherbert.

Exit. R. D. 3 E.

MRS. F. Oh, if dear Herbert would only be a little more careful. One pound twelve for flowers! and I'm sure we could get on very well without a piano—and all those prints, too. (*changing her tone.*) What a selfish, thoughtless thing I am! As if I could understand how necessary flowers and music and beautiful faces are to a poet like Herbert! When I think that he stooped to marry me, I ought to be too glad to aid him out of my little earnings. I hope Miss Crane has persuaded her rich friend to engage me to play at her *soirée*. That will be ten shillings towards the rent—and then, for my caps, let me see, I shall have—Hark!—dear Herbert's step! Bless him!—I must put away my work. He doesn't like it.

(*she jumps up, and puts away her work-basket in the drawer of the table, but leaves cap on table, and runs to the door, L. 2 E.*

Enter FITZHERBERT, L. 2 E.

(*she runs up to him, and throws her arms round his neck.* I'm so glad you've come back, dear—I've everything ready for you. See, here's your dressing-gown, and your slippers, and your own, own chair.

(*he puts on dressing-gown, and sits in chair, R., without speaking.*

And if you feel in the humour for writing, I've mended plenty of pens—and here's a new quire of paper—

FITZ. (R.—*shaking his head impatiently.*) For Heaven's sake do contrive to hold your tongue for an instant, Lucy; you distract me.

MRS. F. (R. C.) I beg your pardon, love—I'm very thoughtless.

FITZ. And here you've been at your old tricks, deranging all my papers. How often have I told you I would not have my papers disturbed?

MRS. F. I'm very sorry—I thought—

FITZ. Oh, no explanations, pray—I hate discussion. You've done exactly what you ought not to have done, and there's an end of it.

MRS. F. Yes, dear, I'll be a good girl in future.

(*her voice falters.*)

FITZ. There, now you're going to cry. What on earth have I said or done that you should whimper at?

MRS. F. Nothing, dear, I'm sure—

FITZ. When I come home, harassed by all sorts of difficulties and botherations, instead of the comfort of a quiet fire side, I'm to be treated to a scene! But you women have no consideration.

MRS. F. I beg your pardon, dearest—

FITZ. There again, Lucy—can't you let the matter drop? Any letters come since I've been out?

MRS. F. Only this, dear. (*holding bill.*)

FITZ. Well, why can't you give it me?

MRS. F. It's a bill, dear, from Covent Garden, for flowers.

FITZ. (*takes it, and crumples it up.*) Confound those Jews!—they're always in such an infernal hurry for their money. (*flings bill on one side.*) It would serve the old witch right if I never bought another bouquet at her rascally shop.

MRS. F. And Mrs. Sharp has been up again about the rent.

FITZ. Yes, that's right, let me hear of every infernal dun who has been clamouring and pressing, do! You've chosen your time well, just when judgment has very likely been entered up on those bills of Butterby's, and I may be arrested at any moment. (*rises, and crosses to L.*)

MRS. F. Arrested!

FITZ. Yes—arrested. You don't suppose because I'm a man of genius, and a poet—because I've hampered

myself with a wife and a child—that the law will forego its prey?

MRS. F. Oh, Herbert, dear Herbert! can nothing be done—Mr. Butterby?

FITZ. He hasn't a farthing to spare. After his marriage with Miss Crane he may be able to do something.

MRS. F. But the publishers—your friend, Mr. Hornblower?

FITZ. He! He'd see me rot in the Bench before he'd advance me a shilling. Besides, I'm twenty pounds in his debt for contributions already. (*walks about, from L. to R. and back.*) Good Heaven! how is a man to whip imagination into a gallop with all this weight of embarrassment on his back! A poet! a being who should be lodged in a palace, lulled by sweet sounds, intoxicated by delicious odours, inspired by beautiful forms, surrounded with all appliances of repose, and luxury—pent up here in a mean lodging—dunned for money—distracted by the cares of a family—how is it possible that I can reveal to the world the powers that lie dormant within me? But I forgot. How should *you* understand these sufferings?

MRS. F. I understand but little, dear! I am very simple, but I love you very much, and my only prayer is that I may be able to help and comfort my husband.

FITZ. Yes, you're a good girl, Lucy—but it has been your misfortune to marry a man whose mind dwells in a different region from yours, and you must take the consequences.

MRS. F. Oh, I would take them were they twenty times as hard to bear, if I could only comfort you a little.

FITZ. You do your best—I know you do—I appreciate your good intentions. (*crosses back to chair, R., and sits.*)

MRS. F. Thank you, dear Herbert, I am sure you do. (*she sits on a footstool at his L. side, and takes his hand.*) Believe me, dear, I am sensible of all you have done for me—how you have forgone all that your birth and genius could have commanded, to link yourself to a poor girl with no fortune, no talents—nothing, in short, but her strong love and honest heart to give in exchange for the name of your wife.

FITZ. I believe it, Lucy—I am sure you feel the sacrifice I have made for you.

MRS. F. Oh yes! and now, dear, they say a woman's tongue is persuasive, you know; suppose you were to let me see Mr. Hornblower, and try to induce him to advance you something? I'll tell him you're going to be so diligent, and so brilliant—but that he knows already.

FITZ. No, no—you remember our compact—that, for a time, at least, our marriage was to be kept a secret.

MRS. F. Yes, I submit to that—to anything you like to impose, but I thought that now, perhaps—

FITZ. No; we must keep the secret a little longer; you have no notion how the knowledge that I am married would diminish people's interest in me—the ladies especially—and interest is all I have to trust to, as yet.

MRS. F. I'm sure if they knew your talents somebody must give you something.

FITZ. (*rises and crosses to L., shrugging his shoulders.*) Yes, a collectorship of stamps like Wordsworth, or a gauger's place, like Burns. No, I may sink, but I will never stoop!

MRS. F. Anything is better than debt, dear.

FITZ. Pshaw! you can't understand the loathing of a poet's nature for the sordid trafficking of your men of business. But 'tis the fate of genius to be misunderstood, misplaced, misconstrued!

Enter MARY BUSTLE, D. R. 3 E.

MARY. Mr. Hornblower, sir.

FITZ. Very well—show him up. *Exit MARY, D. R. 2 E.*

MRS. F. Oh, do try if he won't advance you a little more.

FITZ. Well, well, I'll try. Go into the bedroom—Hornblower only knows me as a bachelor.

MRS. F. I'll be as quiet as a mouse, love.

(*kisses him, and exits into bed-room, D. L. F.*

FITZ. (L.) Poor thing!—can't understand me in the least—but she means well. Now for Rhadamanthus.

Enter HORNBLOWER, D. R. 3 E.

Ah, Hornblower, delighted to see you.

HORN. (R.) Pens—ink—paper—and your dressing-

gown ! That's as it should be—nothing like a soldier in his uniform, arms in hand. Well, the muse is propitious, I hope—we are brilliant, eh ? What is it—epic or lyric—Pope or Anacreon ? Are we going to convulse the public with our fun, to awe them with our agony, or to mystify them with our metaphysics ? “ Under which King, Bezonian, speak or die !”

FITZ. (*crossing to table, R., and producing MS.*) I have here a series of sketches from life—mixed humour and pathos, which I was working up.

HORN. The very thing, my boy ! A dash of Tennyson in a bumper of Hood—green tea laced with cognac—couldn't be better.

FITZ. Shall I read you a specimen ?

HORN. No, no ; confound it ! I'm an editor, not an auditor. It's the public's business to read.

FITZ. Highly finished—you know.

HORN. Ah, polish—polish ! that's the thing. Better one pearl well set than a ton of pearl oysters. How much ?

FITZ. They will make about a sheet.

HORN. Oh, we'd find room for them if they came to twice as much.

FITZ. I must have twenty guineas for them.

HORN. (*taking the MSS.*) Twenty guineas ! my dear boy—the age ought to be ashamed of itself that measures the value of such things by paltry dross. Oblige me by not mentioning price in connection with productions destined to live for ever.

FITZ. Meantime, their author must live, too.

HORN. Live ! of course he must. The days of Grub Street and Garretteers are over. Literature is honoured and remunerated as it deserves. Here are you, for instance, feted, lionized, and paid—splendidly paid ; you can't imagine the pleasure I feel in paying my contributors.

FITZ. I know you do—so, as here's pen and ink, you may as well draw the cheque at once.

HORN. The cheque ? You forget, my dear fellow, we are not square.

FITZ. Oh, I'll work the old debt off next month ; I want to start fair with this article.

HORN. Suppose we started fair with the next? This sheet will just balance our account. (*puts MS. in his pocket.*)

FITZ. But the fact is, my dear Hornblower, I want the money infernally.

HORN. Of course you do. But my dear boy, I make it a rule, never to trust a poet. Their will to work is excellent, but their inspiration is so uncertain; the only thing that always sets it agoing is—"work done, money down." Good morning! I've to see Muddlemist for half a sheet of Metaphysics, and Curdle for a slashing article on Agricultural Statistics. (*crosses towards D. R.*)

FITZ. But you've put my verses in your pocket.

HORN. As you did my twenty guineas, two months ago. Miserably below the value of your immortal work, I'm quite aware; but remember, my boy, "Paradise Lost" was sold for ten pounds. Be that your consolation. *Exit R. D. 3 E.*

FITZ. Confound the old humbug, he's done me; I knew he would. But how is the poet to struggle with the sordid capitalist? No, I must look on, and see that fellow building up a fortune out of my brains. It is infamous! The labour of a month gone, and not a farthing for it—it's down right robbery! But something must be done about these bills. Failing a loan from my sentimental admirer, Mrs. Merryweather, I must get Butterby to renew. His marriage will set him up—

Enter BUTTERBY, R. D. 3 E., with a parcel in brown paper under his arm.

Talk of the devil!

BUTTER. (R.) Well, he's not a pleasant topic; but if you have anything to say to him, I'm your man, for I'm going to him rapidly.

FITZ. (L.) What do you mean?

BUTTER. I'm ruined, that's all; done up, my boy. By Jove! I've lost eight hundred a year.

FITZ. You!

BUTTER. That is, I've lost the prospect of it—it comes to the same thing.

FITZ. What do you mean?

BUTTER. You know I was to marry Miss Crane, a woman with a masculine understanding, and twenty-seven

thousand in the three per cents. I had got the license, sir, bought the cake, ordered the breakfast, got home my wedding suit—blue and brass, canary waistcoat, and lavender kerseymeres ; tried 'em on last night ; a beautiful fit, only the trousers wanted taking in—I've got 'em in this parcel.

FITZ. Well !

BUTTER. And now all the fat's in the fire. I suppose I must eat the cake—I've countermanded the breakfast—and I'm going to try to persuade the tailor to take back the lavender kerseymeres at a reduction. Minerva has thrown me over.

FITZ. The deuce she has ! Why ?

BUTTER. It's all that infernal bouquet of yours. I was fool enough to offer it to a little milliner, and she must have been told of it by some of the servants.

FITZ. (*aside.*) My note ! (*aloud.*) But you gave the bouquet to Mrs. Merryweather ?

BUTTER. I left it for her—but of course I wasn't going to compromise you, my boy, by saying you sent it.

FITZ. No, no ; did quite right ; but this matter must be arranged.

BUTTER. How ? If you'd seen the look she gave me, and heard the style she pitched into me—I trembled—by Jove I did—before that masculine mind of hers. She was awful—a fury, by Jove—a perfect Lady Macbeth—Ristori's nothing to her.

FITZ. Oh ! all this must be explained : it is absolutely necessary, for my sake, as well as yours, that this marriage should take place. Those bills I accepted must be renewed.

BUTTER. Why, you don't mean to say you've not met them ?

FITZ. No ; I took care to keep out of their way.

BUTTER. Then the indorsee will be down on the drawer, and by Jove, the drawer's empty.

(*turns out his trousers pockets.*)

FITZ. And then they'll enter up judgment, and I shall be arrested.

BUTTER. You arrested ? Fooh ! by Jove, they'll never arrest *you*, Fitz ; they've too much respect for genius. I'll

tell you what—get somebody else to draw on you—I know lots of capitalists—enormous capitalists—they'll be delighted to discount your paper—delighted.

(puts parcel on table, R. C.)

FITZ. That I may find myself three months hence more embarrassed than I am now. No, you must renew, and when you've married Miss Crane you can pay without difficulty.

BUTTER. But how am I to make it up with Minerva?

FITZ. Oh, I'll father the bouquet, and you shall make her a handsome present—a dress, say, or something of that sort.

BUTTER. Soften a superior woman like that with a dress, pooh! you don't know Minerva, my dear Fitz, you don't, by Jove.

FITZ. If she were the Goddess of Wisdom in *propriâ personâ*, she couldn't resist the allurements of Swan and Edgar's. I know, 'em, Butterby—I tell you I'll make up this quarrel—the marriage shall come off, and you shall wear your lavender unmentionables, renew the bills, and be happy ever after, like the prince in the fairy tale.

BUTTER. By Jove, Fitz, you're a wonderful creature. The way you get a fellow into a scrape, and the way you get him out of one are equally masterly.

FITZ. Your happiness is at stake, my dear Butterby, and for a friend like you—

BUTTER. My dear Fitz, (*shaking his hands.*) By Jove, you're the guardian of my happiness, as I am the champion of your reputation. Let any man touch that, and he will have to settle with Josh Butterby, by Jove he will—and so you think I may have the lavenders taken in.

FITZ. Certainly—and we'll choose the dress at once.

BUTTER. I'll leave the continuations at my tailors' *en passant*.

FITZ. No, no—we should look like a shopman and an errand boy. We'll send it by the servant: put a paper in the parcel describing the alterations you want.

BUTTER. Exactly! (*crosses to table, R., and writes—reading.*) "They will fit very well, if taken in half an inch at the waist." (*opens parcel and puts in note.*) And that will allow a margin for emotion and the wedding

breakfast. There—and now, Fitz, do me one more favour.

FITZ. What is it?

BUTTER. Just knock us off a sonnet, or an epigram, or an acrostic, or anything, in fact, in verse, to send to Minerva with the dress—something touching and appropriate—a sort of—you know—with allusions—you understand—I have exactly the sort of thing in my head, only, by Jove, I can't express it.

FITZ. Oh, yes, we'll talk it over as we go along. (BUTTERBY *is going*, R. D., FITZHERBERT *stopping him*.) Not by the front door. There's a suspicious customer outside.

BUTTER. I see—a Mosaic Arab, hung in chains of his native metal.

FITZ. This way! (*pointing to door L. 2 E.*)

BUTTER. Back stairs, eh?—kitchen door, into the back street! I twig! By Jove, you're an extraordinary fellow, Fitz—ex-traordinary!

Exeunt, L. D. 2 E.

MRS. SHARP. (*outside, R. D. 3 E.*) First floor landing, sir—door facing you.

Enter MERRYWEATHER, R. D. 3 E.

MERRY. Eh! Nobody here? she said I should find Fitzherbert. He's in the next room perhaps—I'm not sorry to have a moment to settle my plan. So—here are his bills, and his verses from that d—d bouquet. I wish I could endorse the one with "No effects," as safely as I may the other. Here's incendiary stuff to write to another man's wife. (*reads.*)

"Dear drooping victim of a joyless fate—"
That's Emily.

"The tyrant's chain thy tender neck may bind—"
That's me! never used any chain worse than a twenty guinea necklace.

"But souls in destiny's despite will mate.
Mind unenthralled *will* seek it's kindred mind.
As captives that in neighbouring dungeons pine—"
The Acacias a dungeon!

"With secret tokens cheat their heavy hours,
So doth my captive spirit leap to thine,
Breathing its sympathy in these poor flowers."

Was ever such rhodomontade? and yet it's trash like this that has persuaded poor Emily she's a victim, and I'm a brute—they all agreed I was one, and I thought I must be one for a long time. But I'm not—Rowley says I'm not! No, I'm d—d if I am! And this comes from a coxcomb I could clap in the Bench to-morrow—not that I mean to do anything of the kind! No—I will teach him what "the tyrant" is. I'll burn his bills before his own eyes, return him his ridiculous lines, and beg him to oblige me by not giving me or my wife any more of his company. Luckily Emily has not seen his note—I hope it's the first—surely she would never forget herself so far—and yet that rehearsal—I don't know what to think. That's the worst of these fine sentiments; they're like the mirage eastern travellers write about; seen through their medium, sin looks heroic, and duty despicable. Fitzherbert doesn't make his appearance though. Egad! I'll enclose him his bills and note; I can write what I want to express better than I can say it.

(crosses to table, R., sits, and writes, with his back to the door, L. F.)

Enter MRS. FITZHERBERT, D. L. F.

MRS. F. All gone—(*runs up to MERRYWEATHER, R.*)
Herbert, dear—

MERRY. (R.—turns round.) Eh?—why—

MRS. F. (R. c.) I beg your pardon, I thought it was—

MERRY. Lucy Aiken!

MRS. F. Mr. Langford!

MERRY. Good gracious! Why, Lucy—(*takes both her hands and shakes them heartily.*) my dear little friend, Lucy—that is— What on earth are you doing here, in Mr. Fitzherbert's lodgings?

MRS. F. He is my husband, Mr. Langford.

MERRY. Your husband, Lucy! Fitzherbert your husband, and I never heard of it!

MRS. F. No; you see, it's a secret. You'll not betray us, I'm sure you won't, will you?

MERRY. Betray you!—a secret, Lucy? Remember, I was your father's friend—I knew you a very little girl, Lucy—I— You *are* married, Lucy?

MRS. F. Mr. Langford!

MERRY. Forgive me—no, I didn't mean that—of course you are.

MRS. F. We were married secretly. Herbert's family are proud, and— But you'll keep the secret, dear Mr. Langford?

MERRY. Yes. But to think of my— Good gracious! Why, do you know, Lucy, I was looking over my old letters to you this very morning, the letters you sent back, you know.

MRS. F. Oh, we must forget all that now, Mr. Langford. But you are well—you are happy?

MERRY. Yes, oh, yes—I'm married, too, Lucy.

MRS. F. Oh, I'm so glad of that, for then I'm sure you must be happy.

MERRY. You think it follows—(*with a half sigh.*)

MRS. F. Oh, yes; for you would never marry any one you did not love, and she must love you, you're so good and kind.

MERRY. But you did not love me, Lucy.

MRS. F. Oh, yes, I did, very much indeed—like an elder brother.

MERRY. Ah—exactly. But this—your husband!—Remember our old friendship, and let me question you, Lucy. Are you happy?

MRS. F. Oh, yes, very happy. You would not ask that if you knew Herbert.

MERRY. I—good gracious!—eh? Oh, I dare say I shouldn't. Well, you seem very comfortable here—pictures—a piano—

MRS. F. Yes, Herbert loves to surround himself with all that is beautiful.

MERRY. (*aside.*) Without paying for it.

MRS. F. But how did you find out I was living here?

MERRY. Why—eh? The fact is, you see—How? Why don't you know? Can't you guess?

MRS. F. Oh, to be sure; I forgot I had given my maiden name at this address.

MERRY. Of course. (*aside.*) Thank goodness she's explained it. (*aside.*) Yes, as you gave your maiden name, how was I to suppose you were married?

Enter MRS. SHARP, R. D. 3 E.

MRS. S. A lady, mem, in her carriage. Here's her card.

MRS. F. Beg her to walk up stairs.

Exit MRS. SHARP, R. D. 3 E.

(*reads.*) "Mrs. Merryweather." (*to him.*) You won't mind.

MERRY. (*aside.*) My wife? What should she come here for? To see Fitzherbert? (*aloud.*) Lucy, put me somewhere. This lady mustn't see me—I musn't see her, that is—

MRS. F. But—

MERRY. Never mind—I'll explain all after she's gone. Do hide me somewhere—anywhere—I insist upon it.

MRS. F. In this room, Mr. Langford, but—

MERRY. Not a word now. (*aside*) If she have come to see Fitzherbert! I'll watch. *Exit into bed-room, L. F.*

MRS. F. What can he mean by this strange confusion?

Enter MRS. MERRYWEATHER, R. D. 3 E.—MERRYWEATHER peeps from bedroom, R. D.

MRS. M. (R.) Miss Lucy Aiken, I believe. (MRS. F. bows.) My friend, Miss Crane, recommended you to me as a pianist: as I wanted one for this evening I have called to ascertain if you are disengaged.

MERRY. (*aside.*) I'm relieved!

MRS. F. (*aside.*) Herbert will be out. (*aloud.*) Yes, ma'am, I have no engagement for this evening.

MRS. M. Ah, that is lucky! Miss Crane is eloquent about your skill and obligingness.

MRS. F. Miss Crane is very kind, ma'am—I am always eager to do my best; I believe that is my chief title to her praise.

MRS. M. You are not quite a stranger to me. Mr. Merryweather has mentioned your name—I think he is an old acquaintance of yours.

MERRY. (*aside.*) How the deuce does she know that?

MRS. F. Mr. Merryweather! I think not, ma'am—I have no acquaintance of that name.

MRS. M. (*aside.*) She is deceiving me. (*aloud.*) Ah—it is singular—I am almost sure he spoke of you: you are certain you do not know him?

MRS. F. Quite, ma'am; my acquaintances are very few—I am not likely to forget any of them.

MRS. M. You are very young, Miss Aiken—and excuse me if I add, very handsome—to be compelled to resort to this mode of supporting yourself.

MRS. F. But I am poor—and the poor must face many things that to the rich seem very hard and very dangerous.

MRS. M. But music is not your only resource—you embroider, I see. (*takes up the cap* MRS. FITZHERBERT *has been working at.*) Surely I know this pattern!

MRS. F. Oh, yes, they are your own caps; Mrs. Satchell, your maid, has been kind enough to employ me.

MRS. M. You called at my house this morning?

MRS. F. Yes.

MRS. M. (*aside.*) A rendezvous with my husband! (*aloud.*) Did you see Mr. Merryweather?

MRS. F. No, ma'am.

MRS. M. But music and embroidery are not your only resources. I see manuscripts here. (*pointing to table, R.*) You are literary?

MRS. F. Oh, no, no, indeed—I sometimes copy manuscripts.

MRS. M. Ah! I often employ an amanuensis. Let me see your handwriting. (*turns to table, R., and sees note MERRYWEATHER had begun, aside.*) My husband's hand! (*aloud.*) Bold, but rather commercial than feminine. May I ask if this is your writing?

MERRY. My note, by Jove!

MRS. F. That, madam! oh, no—I really do not know whose writing that is.

MRS. M. It is strange; the ink is still wet.

MRS. F. The ink! (*embarrassed.*)

MRS. M. Yes, Miss Aiken, these letters have not been traced two minutes!

MRS. F. Indeed, madam, I—

MRS. M. And the hand that traced them is my husband's!

MRS. F. Your husband's!

MRS. M. You see before you, a fond—an injured wife!

MERRY. (*aside.*) Huzza! she's jealous!

MRS. M. The Mr. Merryweather, whose very name was strange to you, is my husband. The Mr. Merryweather, who wrote these letters, Miss Aiken—(*shews parcel.*) whom you receive at your lodgings, and whom you deny to his wife! speak the truth—he has just left you?

MERRY. (R.—*coming forward.*) No, my dear! he is still here, luckily.

MRS. M. (c.) My husband! Oh, this alone was wanting—

MERRY. To save you from committing an act of very grievous injustice, and to prevent my poor little friend, Lucy, from an unconscious falsehood.

MRS. F. (L.) Oh, Mr. Langford, do explain—pray—

MRS. M. Langford! a feigned name, too! Oh, this is too cruel.

MERRY. Ah—I forgot! you did not know that before marrying you, I *was* Mr. Langford—that by that name alone, Lucy knew me; I changed it under my uncle's will on succeeding to his fortune and his business.

MRS. M. But this lock of hair? (*holding it up.*)

MERRY. Was purchased from Lucy's hair-dresser, for one shilling and sixpence.

MRS. M. But these letters—(*showing packet.*)

MERRY. Were written four years ago—when I still had a right to correspond with an unmarried lady, and no wife to look into my writing desk.

MRS. M. But your presence here—explain that, sir, if you can!

MERRY. I came to see this young lady's husband.

MRS. M. Her husband! Then she is married?

MRS. F. Yes, madam! forgive this, the only deception I have practised—I used my maiden name to obtain work and lessons, that I might spare my husband's pride, while I did what I could to help him—we are very poor.

MERRY. There, Emily—you see what the girl is whom you have ventured to suspect. But I will tell you

more on our way home, for it must not be in Lucy's hearing. Lucy, you will come to us to-night, there's a dear girl.

MRS. F. Oh, Mr. Langford—

MERRY. Merryweather!

MRS. M. I beg your pardon! the old name will come to my tongue, for it is written deep in my heart. Oh, madam—if you knew how kind he was to me ever so long ago, and so refined in his kindness, too!

MRS. M. Refined! My husband?

MRS. F. Yes—no woman could have been more considerate. Oh, how happy you must be with such a husband!

MRS. M. (*aside.*) Kind! considerate! my husband refined! Can I have been mistaken in him?

MERRY. Never mind that, Lucy—you must come to us to-night. Mrs. Merryweather, you will receive her as one who is my friend—who is well worthy to be yours.

MRS. M. I ask your pardon for the suspicion that circumstances, but too naturally excited; here is my hand.

MERRY. Give her your hand, Lucy. (MRS. MERRYWEATHER and MRS. FITZHERBERT *shake hands.*) And take mine. (*he shakes her hand.*) *Au revoir*, Lucy! Come, Emily! (*gives his arm to his wife.*)

MRS. M. (*to MERRYWEATHER.*) Poor thing! To think of her slaving in this way. What a selfish wretch the husband must be to suffer it. I hate him!

MERRY. You can't think how entirely I agree with you, my dear.

MRS. M. What's his name?

MERRY. Pardon me—that is Lucy's secret. But you cannot have an idea how utterly contemptible the man is, till you have heard my story. I'll tell it you on our way home. And so you really were jealous?

MRS. M. No!

MERRY. Yes, you were!

Exeunt MR. and MRS. MERRYWEATHER, arm in arm,
R. D. 3 E.

MRS. F. But my secret! they will betray my secret—and then dear Herbert will be angry. My head is all in a whirl—I can't think. (*pressing her hand to her brow.*)

Mr. Langford—no, Merryweather—still the same kind heart as ever—now I am going to cry, like a fool—I won't cry—yes I will—it will do me good—I will go in and have a good cry, beside dear baby. *Exit to bedroom.*

Enter MRS. SHARP, R. D. 3 E., with a parcel in whitey brown paper, of the same size as the one containing the trowsers, which is in brown paper.

MRS. S. A parcel! the young man said that there was nothing to pay, or I'd not have took it in—and here's another. (*takes up parcel with trousers.*) I wonder what's in 'em—I declare I could almost suspect they're a makin' my apartment a receiving house for goods on false pretence—there's such a many swindlers about. (*feels parcels.*) drapery goods, both on 'em. Suppose they *is* false pretences. And suppose I was wanted to give evidence, and me knowing nothing about 'em. It's my dooty to examine the contents—they're only pinned. (*opens parcel, No. 2, whitey brown, and takes out satin dress.*) Ah! what a lovely satin—ten shillin' a yard, at least. Oh! it can't be honestly come by—and the other—(*opens the other packet—a rap is heard, L. D.*) Oh, it's Mr. Fitzherbert. Oh, Lord a' mercy—if he catches me. (*she hastily puts up parcels, changing the covers.*) I declare my heart was in my mouth.

Enter BUTTERBY and FITZHERBERT, L. D.

FITZ. Boy left a parcel, Mrs. Sharp?

MRS. S. Yes, sir—I was just bringing it up. (*aside.*) It *are* false pretences *Exit, R. D. 3 E.*

BUTTER. There it is, by Jove—a stupendous success, my boy—I feel it *is*—stu-pendous—Minerva's done—clear as a whistle—knocked over, by Jove.

FITZ. Yes—she's more than woman if she can resist satin.

BUTTER. And my verses—that is—my idea, and your words. Come, let's finish 'em, at once, while we're in the vein.

FITZ. And despatch parcel and verses together, to the house—I've only the last couplet to finish. (*sits at table, R.*

BUTTER. Eh? I've an idea—by Jove, I've such an idea! We're all to be at Mrs. Merryweather's this even-

ing—the whole set; we'll send it there, that Minerva may receive it, bang—before everybody. It will be a hit—a tremendous hit—a blaze of triumph, by Jove.

FITZ. Especially when accompanied by your verses—here they are. (*gives them.*)

BUTTER. (*reading to himself.*) Brilliant, by Jove—capital, by Heavens—Lempriere couldn't beat 'em—only—I say, my boy, you've called me Joshua.

FITZ. Well; it's your name, isn't it? and a highly respectable one—it exhales an odour of Quaker sobriety, perfectly refreshing.

BUTTER. Yes—it's respectable, as you say—but drab—decidedly drab—in fact infernally Ebenezerish. Suppose you called me—Chloe—no, that's a woman's name.

FITZ. Damon—ah—eh?

BUTTER. Yes—Damon—and you'll be Pythias. By Jove, that's the very name I had on the tip of my tongue.

FITZ. And now to dispatch our mercury with Damon's peace offering. (*rings bell on table.*)

BUTTER. (*reads last line.*) Delicious, by Jove—delicious.

Enter MARY, R. D. 3 E.

FITZ. Oh, Mary, carry these parcels directly—

BUTTER. The brown paper one to Mr. Lamkins, 11, Conduit Street, and the whitey brown to Mrs. Merryweather's, The Acacias, Regent's Park—you understand—stop, I'll put on the addresses, or she may make a mistake. (*writes addresses.*)

Exit MARY, with parcels, R. D. 3 E.

BUTTER. There, my boy, I think I've done the trick now. Egad a fellow doesn't know how much poetry there's in him till he tries.

FITZ. Nor how little.

Exit L. D.

BUTTER. (*repeating.*) "And when you wear it think of me." By Jove! It's stunning.

Exit L. D.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Entrance Hall at the Acacias. (1st Grooves.)*

SKIMMER discovered, l. 1 E., book in hand, receiving and announcing GUESTS as they enter l. 1 E., FEMALE SERVANT at D. in L. F., taking hats, cloaks, &c. CAR-FUFFLE at R. 1 E., announcing GUESTS as they exit, R. 1 E.

Enter elderly LADY and her DAUGHTER, l. 1 E.

SKIM. (*looking at book.*) Missis and Miss Rigaud.

(they cross R.

CAR. (*in a sonorous tone.*) Mrs. and Miss Wriggle!

ELDERLY LADY. (*with dignity.*) Rigaud, sir!

CAR. Mrs. and Mrs. Wriggle! oh! (they pass in R. 1 E.

Enter HORNBLOWER, l. 1 E., crosses to c.

SKIM. Mr. Hornblower! eh! (*looking off.*) I beg your pardon, the cabman is waiting, sir!

HORN. Confound the fellow! his fare is one and six, and I shall give no more. *Exit SKIMMER, l. 1 E.*

CAR. Mr. 'Orn—now, James!

Re-enter SKIMMER, l. 1 E.

SKIM. Sir!

HORN. (*who has just flung open his coat.*) Well?

SKIM. He won't take it, sir—and says, with his compliments, you ought to be a threepenny buster, 'cos you can't afford cabs, Mr. Hornblower!

HORN. Confound his impudence! Here's sixpence, (*gives it.*) and take his number. *Exit SKIMMER, l. 1 E.* I'll have an article on the extortion of these infernal villains in next week's number. (*crosses to R.*)

CAR. Mr. 'Ornblower! (*he passes in R. 1 E.*)

Re-enter SKIMMER, l. 1 E.

Enter a FOREIGNER, l. 1 E.

SKIM. Name, sir, please?

FOREIGNER. Der Kaiserlicher Königlicher ober Kapellmeister—und Kammerath—Düdelsackshonhäusen!

SKIM. Goodness gracious! I beg pardon, sir, I didn't quite catch it.

FOREIGNER. (*repeats name.*)

SKIM. No, I never can! Mosoo Diddle sacks and Shoosen. (**FOREIGNER crosses to c.**)

CAR. Mosoo little socks and shoes on!

FOREIGNER. Ach Gottè! nein—nein—"Der Kaiserlicher—Königlicher—"

CAR. (*majestically.*) Pass on, sir, you *are* announced!

FOREIGNER passes in r. 1 e.

Enter another FOREIGNER, l. 1 e.

FOREIGNER. Signor Scappavia di Mongibelli.

SKIM. Signor Skipper via de mangy belly.

(**FOREIGNER crosses to c.**)

CAR. Bother these foreigners! Signor Chippaway de Stranger bellows. **FOREIGNER passes in r. 1 e.**

Enter ROWLEY, l. 1 e., he is going in without being announced.

SKIM. Beg pardon, what name, sir?

ROWLEY. Rowley—John Rowley—

SKIM. (*looking at book.*) Beg pardon, sir—but you are not on missus's list.

ROWLEY. No, but I'm on master's.

SKIM. We're to go by missus's orders.

ROWLEY. You shall go by master's orders, if you attempt to stop me.

CAR. Now, James, what is it?

SKIM. A gent as arn't on my list, Mr. Carfuffle.

ROWLEY. Come, let me pass, will you—you flunkies?

CAR. Flunkies!

Enter MERRYWEATHER, r. 1 e.

MERRY. What's the matter? Ah, Rowley my boy! (**ROWLEY crosses to him.**) Delighted you're arrived at last—come in!

SKIM. I beg pardon, sir—the gentleman's name arn't down in my book.

MERRY. Confound your book, sir! I'm master here! come along, old fellow!

CAR. (*with dignity.*) I beg your parding, sir—I beg your parding—but this gent have called me a flunkey!

MERRY. And what the devil are you but a flunkey?

CAR. (*recoiling paralysed.*) Well!

ROWLEY. Ha, ha, ha! a good beginning, my boy! Keep it up, and you'll be a man again, and not a woman's plaything.

They pass in R. 1 E.

SKIM. (l. c.) Mr. Carfuffle, did you hear that?

CAR. (r. c.) Yes, James, with amazement; master's a gettin' his head out of the collar—

SKIM. "I'm master here!" Well, if ever I thought to hear master use language like that.

CAR. Mark my words, James—there's a convulsion a-hatching in this family.

SKIM. Well, I did think master held his head up uncommon, as he came in with missus this afternoon. Mr. Carfuffle, p'raps we 'ad better be a little more respectful to master.

CAR. P'raps—Door, James! (*they each retire to their places.*)

Enter BUTTERBY and FITZHERBERT, l. 1 E., and cross to c.

BUTTER. By Jove, Fitz, I'm quite agitated—Miss Crane come, James?

SKIM. No, sir, not yet.

BUTTER. Don't leave me, Fitz, till I get off my goloshes.

FITZ. Hang your goloshes! (*going R.*)

SKIM. (*announcing.*) Mr. Fitzherbert!

CAR. Mr. Fitzherbert! *He passes in R. 1 E.*

BUTTER. (*struggling with his golosh on one foot.*) Confound the things!

Enter MRS. FITZHERBERT in bonnet and shawl, l. 1 E.

SKIM. Now young woman, what do *you* want?

MRS. F. Take my card in, please, to Mrs. Merryweather.

Exit SKIMMER, R. 1 E.

BUTTER. (*at the voice, looks up, aside.*) The undulating little milliner, by Jove. Ah, my dear—delighted to see you! *De-lighted!*

MRS. F. Sir! (*aside.*) It's that silly man!

BUTTER. You gave me the slip this morning—but now you must tell me your romantic name, and your mysterious address—you must, by Jove!

MRS. F. Sir, if you say another word to me, I'll complain to Mrs. Merryweather; (*crosses R.*) as you are coward enough to insult me, I am sure you will fear to offend her!

Enter SKIMMER from R. 1 E.

SKIM. That way, miss, please. (*points R. and crosses to L. 1 E.*) MRS. FITZHERBERT passes in R. 1 E.

BUTTER. (L. C.) James, do you know that young person?

SKIM. No, sir—but here's the card she giv' me.

BUTTER. And which you'll instantly give me. (SKIMMER does so.) That's it—here's a shilling. (*gives him one.*)

SKIM. Thank you, sir. (*retires to his situation, L. 1 E.*)

BUTTER. (*reads.*) "Miss Lucy Aiken, 3, Harriet Street, Belgrave Square." Fitz's street, by Jove! Fitz's number, too! What a remarkable coincidence—re-markable! I must follow this up in the "veni-vidi-vici" style—by Jove!

Enter CURDLE with umbrella, L. 1 E.

SKIM. Mr. Curdle!

BUTTER. (*aside.*) The old multiplication table. (*aloud.*) Ah, Curdle, come to enliven us with a few figures, eh?

CURDLE. (*with a Scotch accent.*) Yes—I'm gay gleg at a quadrille, Mr. Butterby. Here, Jems, ye'll gie yon cabman saxpence. (*gives SKIMMER money, he exits L. 1 E.*) It's a comfort to hae got rid of the awfu' imposition o' yon twopence, Mr. Butterby.

BUTTER. Hideous, by Jove—hideous! I always gave them a shilling.

Re-enter SKIMMER, L. 1 E.

SKIM. Cabman looked very hard at it, sir, but he says he don't know what it is.

CURDLE. The ignorance o' the lower orders in this country is crass—perfectly crass. Ye'll tell him it's twa

coins of the realm called threepennies—first minted under Edward the Second, and revived under a late enlightened admeenestration.

SKIM. He says it's over a mile, sir.

CURDLE. Na, na ; it's a mile and twenty sax feet to the "Acacias," from the third hoose in Langham Place—I've measured it wi' my pedometer—ye ken, Mr. Butterby. Noo—I took him up at the fifth hoose, and the hooses havin' a frontage of thretty feet—twice thretty's saxty, and twenty sax from saxty leaves just thretty-four feet less than the legal distance o' ane mile, and so ye'll tell him, Jems.

Exit SKIMMER, L. 1 E.

Numerical exactitude's everything in this commercial country, Mr. Butterby.

BUTTER. My motto is—d——n the coppers.

CURDLE. Oh, you's misplaced profanity, mon—if ye begin wi' damning the coppers, ye'll never ha' a proper respec' for coin o' a higher metallic denomination. But wha's this? (*looking of L. 1 E.*) Eh? it's Miss Crane, and yon puir creature, Muddlemist.

Re-enter SKIMMER, L. 1 E.

BUTTER. Minerva, by Jove! Butterby, my boy—be firm.

Enter MISS CRANE and MUDDLEMIST, L. 1 E.

SKIM. Miss Crane—Mr. Muddlemist!

(BUTTERBY meets MISS CRANE'S eye—she draws up with a repellent dignity.)

MISS C. Good evening, Mr. Curdle—I am glad we are to have the advantage of *your* society this evening.

BUTTER. The advantage is on *our*—

MISS C. (*in an icy tone.*) Sir! Your arm, Mr. Muddlemist, to enter the reception room.

(MUDDLEMIST gives his arm, and they cross to R.

CAR. Miss Crane—Mr. Muddlemist!

(MISS CRANE turns and gives BUTTERBY a severe look, and passes in, R. 1 E. with MUDELEMIST.

BUTTER. Cut, by Jove—as clean as a turnip.

CURDLE. Odd, mon, yon was an awfu' look Miss Crane gave ye—I thocht ye were an accepted suitor.

BUTTER. I was this morning.

CURDLE. And ye've quarrelled! I'm glad to hear that, for ye're no' in a position to add an increment to the population without contravening a' the doctrines o' the great Malthus.

BUTTER. What the deuce has the great Malthus to do with my increasing the population, or you either?

CURDLE. You see, ye're just an unproductive labourer, Mr. Butterby, and you've no' that capital—either fixed or floatin'—that justifies you in takin' a wife, accordin' to the doctrines o' James M'Culloch.

BUTTER. Hang James M'Culloch! I shall take as many wives as I please, sir, without asking your leave, sir, or that of any other infernal, calculating, figure-grinding, blue-book-cramming political economist.

CURDLE. Weel, weel, Mr. Butterby, ye see demand produces supply—

BUTTER. Then just wait till I demand advice before you supply it, Mr. Curdle. There, I think I've sold *him* in the cheapest market. (*going, R. 1 E.*)

CAR. (*announcing.*) Mr. Butterby!

BUTTERBY *passes in, R. 1 E.*

CURDLE. So, he's aff wi' Miss Crane—I see na' reason why I should na' be on wi' her mysel': she's fond of feegures, and mine's no' that's bad! And I'm fond o' feegures, too, and *she's* got a pretty ane in the three per cents! Sae puttin' our twa feegures thegether, it may come to something. (*going, R. 1 E.*)

CAR. (*announcing.*) Mr. Curdle!

CURDLE *passes in R. 1 E.*

Mean party that, James!

SKIM. Sealy!

CAR. Very!

Exeunt CARFUFFLE, R. 1 E., SKIMMER, L. 1 E.

SCENE II.—*Drawing Room at the Acacias, brilliantly lighted and elegantly furnished—conservatory beyond, with fountain playing in c., arched entrances R. and L.*

COMPANY promenading in the background—others grouped about the stage.

ROWLEY and MERRYWEATHER come down c.

ROWLEY. (R.) And these are all remarkable people, eh?

MERRY. (R. C.) Yes, more or less! the rooms are a perfect encyclopaedia—a British Museum of celebrities.

ROWLEY. A good deal like the one in Great Russell Street—with abundance of idols, rich stores of learning that nobody wants, a good many lions stuffed at your expense, and venerable remains of antiquity that once were goddesses.

MERRY. You see that pale man with the bumpy forehead, and strawy hair? (*pointing off*, L.) That's Muddlemist, the great metaphysician—Hornblower declares he's demolished Kant.

ROWLEY. What the newspapers would call a most determined act of self-destruction.

MERRY. You know Hornblower, of course—the great Hornblower they call him here—I suppose from the wonderful way he blows his own trumpet, and the trumpets of all his clique, in the "*Weekly Torch*," to which he supplies the light, and does his best to snuff out every other luminary. (*they appear* L.) He's coming this way, talking to Muddlemist. (*gets R*)

Enter HORNBLOWER down L., talking to MUDDLEMIST.

HORN. Don't tell me, sir; it's a settled question. The Hegelian School has smashed the positive philosophy.

ROWLEY. (*to MERRYWEATHER*.) I should think Hornblower had picked up the pieces, and put them together for his own use.

MUDDLE. That is—taking as our stand-point the subjective, "me," and confining our survey to the notional cycle—the field of gnosis as opposed to the objective and phenomenal universe—it may be so; but you will pardon my remarking this is not a clear view of the subject.

Exeunt, L. U. E.

CURDLE and MISS CRANE *enter conservatory from L.*

ROWLEY. Well, I think it is not, exactly. But who are that couple talking so earnestly? (*pointing c.*)

MERRY. That's the great political economist, Curdle, with the strong-minded Miss Crane, whose mission it is to emancipate women at once from their prejudices and their petticoats.

ROWLEY. And invest them, I suppose, with our intellect

and inexpressibles. And that young fellow wrapped in solitude and self-importance on the sofa? (*pointing L.*)

MERRY. Confound him—that's Fitzherbert. To think he should have had the coolness to accept my wife's invitation.

ROWLEY. Pooh! he'll accept anything—bills especially.

MERRY. When he must have known he would have to meet me.

ROWLEY. He knew he'd have to meet his bills, too.

MERRY. However, I've prepared a lesson for him.

ROWLEY. I never saw a young gentleman who seemed to want one more.

Enter BUTTERBY, L. 3 E.

BUTTER. (L.) How do, Merryweather? (*gives him two fingers superciliously.*) Brilliant soirée: shews Mrs. Merryweather's usual taste. (*aside to him.*) I say, you must explain that bouquet business to Miss Crane—my future happiness is at stake. Look at that prig of a Scotch economist, whispering to her—clenching what he would call the intimate relation of interest and capital; you really must explain—

MERRY. (c.) I will if I can; but she's awfully irritated with you.

BUTTER. I give you my honour she has no cause. I may be volage, gallant—I may have had my successes with the sex—but on this occasion I am immaculate.

MERRY. But why not make your own peace with her?

BUTTER. By Jove! there's a dignity about that woman, sir, that quells my natural audacity—Jos. Butterby feels like a cypher in her presence, he does, by Jove! You've not heard of a parcel being left here for her, have you.

MERRY. No.

BUTTER. Well, if one should come, don't let 'em give it to her till I'm there—promise me; and I say, get Mrs. Merryweather to make my peace, will you?

MERRY. I get my wife to do anything! Hadn't you better apply to your friend, Fitzherbert?

BUTTER. A good idea! of course I had—Fitz will manage it at once. Confound that arithmetical Scotchman! he's dividing us by two.

Exit, L. 3 E.

ROWLEY. A vivacious style of man, that; is *he* a remarkable person, too?

MERRY. Only the appendage of one; he's a barnacle that attaches himself to the keel of a reputation, and flatters himself he's part of the ship. He's Fitzherbert's toady-royal. (*looking off R.*) But here comes my wife.

(*gets to R. corner with Rowley.*

Enter Mrs. MERRYWEATHER, R., followed by the Two FOREIGNERS and Two LADIES; Miss CRANE and CURDLE come from conservatory, BUTTERBY, FITZHERBERT, HORNBLOWER, and MUDDLEMIST, from L., other GUESTS follow, and all surround Mrs. MERRYWEATHER.

ROWLEY. How they all flock about her! And here are you, the master of the house, pushed into a corner with no more ceremony than an old piece of furniture.

MERRY. But like other old pieces of furniture, there may be more in me than anybody imagines. I shall have my revenge yet.

(*Mrs. MERRYWEATHER comes forward with FITZHERBERT, and the other CHARACTERS, BUTTERBY keeps rather back.*

MRS. M. Nay, nay, you really are too flattering; it is my duty, as it is my pleasure, to do the honours of my house to my friends, so far as my poor strength and spirits will allow me. (*GENTLEMEN place chairs and they all sit.*)

MUDDLE. What I especially admire in your soirées is the æsthetic element.

ROWLEY. (*going to him.*) May I ask what that is, sir? (all look surprised.)

MRS. M. I beg your pardon—Mr.—?

MERRY. Rowley—a friend of mine, my dear.

OMNES. Oh! (*they turn away.*)

MUDDLE. You asked for a definition of the term æsthetic, sir?

BUTTER. Confound him! now we're in for a screed of transcendentalism, as long and as slow as an excursion train.

MUDDLE. The word takes its rise in Germany, and has its roots in the Platonic nomenclature—in the objective hypothesis of the subjective ‘me.’—

HORN. (*interrupting.*) Now, there you come upon that

fatal dualism of Fichte's, Muddlemist; why can't you keep on the plain ground of common sense?

ROWLEY. Just what I was asking myself.

HORN. (*with self-importance.*) The thing lies in a nutshell. Æsthetic is that field of the intellectual in which the mind labouring to express the inward by the outward, symbolizes its spiritual conceptions in plastic form. I comprehend much in the term.

ROWLEY. Hang me if I comprehend anything.

HORN. Sir!

MISS C. Oh—it's a friend of Mr. Merryweather's
Fitz. Nay, Hornblower—(*rising.*)

BUTTER. Hush! now Fitz—(*to the COMPANY.*) Pray hush. You were remarking, Fitz—

FITZ. Why veil the glowing glory of the real in the floating cloud drapery of the metaphysical?

ROWLEY. I'm sure I don't know any reason.

FITZ. Why dim the divine eye of the painter as he fixes the rainbow on his canvas—why cramp the creative hand of the sculptor as it puts breath into the marble, by the fetters of a definition? The soul of the æsthetic is the beautiful—the soul of the beautiful is the true—the soul of the true is the ideal.

ROWLEY. Egad! they fit into one another like a nest of Chinese boxes.

OMNES. Beautiful!

BUTTER. Hush—pray—hush—he's not done yet.

FITZ. I have done. (*sits again.*)

MISS C. How imaginatively—how poetically—how lucidly explained!

BUTTER. Lucid! Yes, by Heavens, that's the precise word.

MISS C. Sir! (*she gives him a look—he draws back his chair affrighted.*)

CURDLE. Mr. Fitzherbert, ye've a great power o' exposition, sir; ye only need training in the exacter sciences to be ane o' the lights o' the age.

BUTTER. Pooh! Sir, he *is* one of the lights of the age. Its electric light, by Jove.

HORN. Yes — our friend Fitzherbert has won an immortality at a time of life when most men have barely achieved a competence.

MERRY. Which is not a bad foundation to stand upon,
Mr. Hornblower.

HORN. I was prepared for the remark from *you*, sir.

MUDDLE. We are aware Mr. Merryweather dwells
entirely in the region of the phenomenal—

ROWLEY. I beg your pardon, sir, he dwells in the
Regent's Park, and this is his house, though the fact
seems very generally overlooked.

HORN. Sir—

MRS. M. Pray, Mr. Hornblower—Mr. Rowley is a friend
of Mr. Merryweather's—as such he is privileged to ridi-
cule my tastes, and my friends.

MERRY. (*aside.*) Hang it! Rowley's going too fast.

MISS C. It is the fate of our sex.

MRS. M. Yes; men assume airs of superiority to *us*,
and yet what is the courage and power of man to the
heroism, the patient endurance, the active, self-denying,
unselfish devotion of women?

MISS C. What indeed? (*FITZHERBERT rises.*)

BUTTER. Hush! Fitz is going to say something. (*all
look at FITZHERBERT—a pause—he sits again.*) Oh, I beg
your pardon—I thought he was.

CURDLE. It's a fac' that comparing the relative number
of the sexes—

FITZ. For mercy's sake, Curdle, spare us those dreadful
figures. Pray continue, Mrs. Merryweather; you were
praising the devotedness of woman.

MRS. M. Oh! had you but seen the example of it which
I have seen to-day—

MISS C. Pray tell us.

MRS. M. Imagine, then, a woman, young, beautiful,
accomplished, married to a man too idle to turn his powers
to account—too haughty to allow his wife to put her
accomplishments to profit—but not too proud to incur
debts which he cannot pay.

FITZ. Oh, mean and ignoble!

MRS. M. Conceive this young wife toiling in secret to
procure for this husband means to indulge his costly tastes,
and luxurious appetites—employing her lonely nights—
for he is absent at his pleasures—to earn that paltry pit-
tance with which the selfish rich reward the vigils of the
poor—

FITZ. Oh, humanity—humanity!

ROWLEY. I should say—oh, *in*-humanity.

CURDLE. But ye see, the cost o' labour is no' that arbitrary—

BUTTER. Silence, Mr. Curdle! I insist upon it!

MRS. M. For such a husband, this angel wife sits at her needle till early morning—braves the inclemency of the weather in carrying home her work—the impertinence of her employer's menials—the insults of profligate men—men, gentlemen—

FITZ. Oh, there is no man so brutal.

BUTTER. Impossible!—such ruffians are fabulous!

MRS. M. And through all this, not one murmur, not one regret; but the tenderness of an angel, the heroism of a martyr, the self-denial of a saint.

FITZ. Oh, that such a being had fallen to my lot: but this paragon is a creature of your imagination, so fertile in images of purity and self-devotion.

MRS. M. No, I have described—a real woman.

MISS C. We are all such women—that is—we should be, under similar circumstances.

ROWLEY. (*aside.*) I shouldn't like to give *you* the chance.

MRS. M. Nay, nay, you shall all see this sweet creature, you shall all know her, in this house, this very night.

(*rises.*)

ALL. (*rising.*) To-night!

FITZ. We will bow the knee to her—we will place around her brow, pale with watching, the aureole of martyrdom. (*all but FITZHERBERT and BUTTERBY go up c.*)

MRS. M. I will prepare her for the ovation. *Exit R. U. E.*

Enter SKIMMER, L. E., approaches BUTTERBY and whispers in his ear—then exits L. U. E.

BUTTER. I say, Fitz, the parcel's come—now for it. And I say, my boy, only think, I've seen the little milliner—I've got her card.

FITZ. What the devil's that to me?

BUTTER. Why there's a coincidence—she lives in your street—the same number—here's her card. Oh, we're hand and glove together—I've done the business, my

boy!—by Jove! I have—floored her like a nine-pin. But here's the parcel—now for it!

(FITZHERBERT takes the card carelessly.

GUESTS.	GUESTS.	GUESTS.
ROWLEY. MERRY.	MUDD. CURD. MISS C.	HORN. FITZ. BUTTER.
R.	C.	L.

SKIMMER comes from L. U. E., with parcel—crosses and gives it to MISS CRANE.

SKIM. A parcel, ma'am, for Miss Crane, to be delivered immediately.

Exit L.

MISS C. For me—what can it be?

BUTTER. (*aside to FITZHERBERT.*) Back me up, my boy! I feel like a stoker going to sit down on a safety valve. Don't lose the card though.

(goes up towards MISS CRANE.

FITZ. Confound the card—(*looks at it.*) What's this? "Lucy Aiken!"—my wife's maiden name! Has he dared—(*stands perplexed.*)

BUTTER. (*to MISS CRANE, who is coming down, and trying to unfasten the parcel.*) One moment—hear me—before you open that parcel; Mr. Merryweather has explained to you the error of this morning—can you still bear malice?

MISS C. Suspicion once roused, sir, is not easy to appease. It is true Mr. Merryweather has convinced me there was a mistake.

BUTTER. Oh, blessed words! Then the work that his explanation has begun, let this, my peace offering finish—

MISS C. Your peace offering?

BUTTER. Yes, a humble tribute which devoted affection lays at the shrine of loveliness. Listen to my votive song—

(*all gather and listen, and BUTTERBY reads.*)

GUESTS.	GUESTS.	TWO LADIES.	GUESTS.	GUESTS.
MERRY.	ROWLEY.	CURDLE.	MISS C.	BUTTER.
R.	C.			L.

"To Minerva—with a dress."

"In sudden wrath Minerva frowned—"

Need I say who is Minerva?

"And Damon sank as 'neath a spell!—"

Who Damon is, is obvious.

“ That frown divine on all around
Sank, blighting, whereso’er it fell.

“ His angry goddess to appease,
Sad Damon sought with hope and fear ;
Some charms e’en goddesses can please—
May Damon hope he’s found one here ?

That is in this parcel.

“ Then take, great goddess, where you sit,—”

In point of fact, you ain’t sitting, but the posture is figurative—

“ The gift he proffers on his knee— *(kneels.)*
To female empire tribute fit,
And when you wear it, think of me !”

(he opens parcel, and takes out pair of trousers, then starts astounded and lets them fall at his feet.)

MISS C. Oh ! this is too much !

(screams, and faints in ladies’ arms—agitation—Rowley and MERRYWEATHER burst into laughter.)

BUTTER. Those d—d lavender kerseymeres, by Jingo !

CURDLE. She’s off ! she’s fainted ! she’s a murdered woman !

HORN. Carry her into the air ! This is a manly revenge, Mr. Butterby !

They all but FITZHERBERT and BUTTERBY, retire with MISS CRANE through conservatory, c., and off R.

BUTTER. But, Minerva ! Hornblower ! Mr. Merryweather ! Oh, by Jove ! here’s a victim to appearances ! Fitz, you’ll stand by me at this fearful crisis ?

FITZ. I have an account of my own to settle with you, sir.

BUTTER. You, Fitz ? By Jove ! here’s another crisis.

FITZ. From whom did you get that card ?

BUTTER. From the little milliner, I tell you, who must henceforth be my only consolation.

FITZ. No fooling, sir ! Do you mean to tell me you obtained this card from the lady whose name it bears ?

BUTTER. Certainly.

FITZ. By force, then ?

BUTTER. Force ! pooh ! nothing of the kind. *(aside.)* It was by a shilling. *(aloud.)* But I must explain to Minerva.

FITZ. Stay, sir! By Heaven! you shall stay.

(seizes him.)

BUTTER. Fitz! Fitz! *(struggling with him.)* My future happiness is at stake. That d—d long-headed Scotchman's having it all his own way with Minerva. I must explain, or perish in the attempt!

Breaks from him, and rushes off, R. C.

Enter MRS. MERRYWEATHER, R. U. E.

MRS. M. What! all gone but you? What has happened? You seem agitated.

FITZ. Nothing. Another mistake of that ass, Butterby's—a sudden illness of Miss Crane—I don't know. *(aside.)* Oh, he shall answer for this!

MRS. M. And no one here to welcome my paragon of wives?

HORNBLOWER, MUDDLEMIST, MERRYWEATHER, and ROWLEY, come down.

MRS. M. (c.) Will nobody tell me what is the matter?

MERRY. (R. C.) Nothing, my dear—a slight mistake, that's all. Ha, ha, ha! *(ROWLEY laughs.)*

MRS. M. And what on earth is that?

(pointing to trousers.)

ROWLEY. (R. C.) A present of Mr. Butterby's to Miss Crane.

(picks up trousers, and puts them on sofa, R.)

MERRY. For use after marriage.

MRS. M. I will not have my protégée's triumphal entry ruined in this way.

FITZ. (L.) How I long to see her! What is her name?

MRS. M. I only know her by her maiden name, her married one is a secret.

FITZ. A secret! I love mystery.

MRS. M. The husband, it seems, is ashamed of this charming creature, because her family is inferior to his own.

FITZ. *(winces.)* Indeed!

MRS. M. How you, the poet, who feel that true nobility is of the soul, must scorn such weakness.

FITZ. And yet the world—

MRS. M. Has a sad power over natures like this selfish man's. Luckily, we are above such folly.

FITZ. *(aside.)* Much you know about it.

MRS. M. But my paragon is waiting. Come, all of you, and, above all, Mr. Fitzherbert, who so well appreciates the excellences of woman, let me present to you one who concentrates all these excellences in her own sweet person.

Goes to R. U. E., and brings on MRS. FITZHERBERT, who enters timidly, with downcast eyes.

MERRY. Now for my revenge, Rowley!

(FITZHERBERT has turned up, and got over to R. C.

FITZ.	HORN.		
ROWLEY. MERRY.	MRS. F.	MRS. M.	MUDDLE.
R.	C.		L.

MRS. M. Let me introduce to my most valued friends one I am proud to add to their number. Mrs.—(aside.) Your married name, dear? You must tell me now, you know.

MRS. F. (aside.) I dare not!

MRS. M. (aside.) You must! I can't present you as a "Miss."

MRS. F. (in a half whisper.) Fitzherbert, ma'am.

MRS. M. (surprised.) Mrs. Fitzherbert!

FITZ. (who has turned at the name, down R. of MRS. FITZHERBERT.) Lucy! My wife!

MRS. M. His wife!

MERRY. I'm satisfied! (ROWLEY whistles.)

FITZ. Am I brought here to be mortified—mystified—made a fool of?

MERRY. (aside to him.) No, sir, only to be read a lesson to.

MRS. F. Indeed—indeed, dear, I kept our secret; did I not, Mr. Merryweather?

MERRY. You did, Lucy. It was I who surprised it by an accident, Mr. Fitzherbert. I and my wife called at your lodgings to return some papers which you left here this morning—no doubt, by mistake—here they are.

(gives him papers.

FITZ. (aside.) My bills—cancelled! The verses from the bouquet!

MERRY. Discovering the treasure this jealous poet kept hid from all of us, we determined, by this little trick, to teach him that a man's wife is not all his own property,

but a blessing that his friends have some claim to share.
(*aside to FITZHERBERT.*) I was not the first, you know, to put the doctrine in practice.

MRS. F. Herbert, dearest, you are not angry with your poor Lucy?

FITZ. No, Lucy, it is not anger that keeps me silent—it is shame—it is remorse.

MERRY. Remorse! Pooh! that's too strong a term. Of course, gentlemen, you don't suppose there was any truth in my wife's picture of the husband.

ROWLEY. No, that was our fun.

HORN. and MUDDLE. } Oh, of course—capital—ha, ha, ha!

(*they go up a little.*)

MRS. M. (*aside*) And this is the man for whom I had almost forgotten the duties of a wife! George! (MERRYWEATHER goes to her.) I have been weak, wicked, mad! How I have misjudged this man!—how I have misjudged you!

ROWLEY. But here comes our hero of the unmentionables!

Re-enter BUTTERBY with MISS CRANE on his arm, R. C., CURDLE following discomfitted. GUESTS all follow on.

BUTTER. Yes, here I am, by Jove! all is explained. It's a case of set down one and carry one—eh, Curdle?

CURDLE. I call it a case of subtraction.

MRS. M. My dear friends, I congratulate you. But here is a new member of our happy circle—Miss Crane, Mr. Butterby—Mrs. Fitzherbert.

(MR. and MRS. MERRYWEATHER and ROWLEY go up a little.)

BUTTER. (*aside.*) The undulating milliner, by Jove!

MRS. F. (*aside.*) The silly man!

MISS C. What means this agitation, Joshua? I thought that now, at least, our horizon was all serene.

BUTTER. Nothing, merely my felicity!—it's too colossal to carry steadily—by Jove, it is! (*aside to MRS. FITZHERBERT.*) Don't say anything, for mercy's sake, till I'm married. (*passes her over to MISS CRANE.*) Allow me to introduce you to Miss Crane. (*aside to FITZHERBERT.*) I stole that card—it was an act of felony of the most despicable description.

MISS C. Joshua!

BUTTER. Minerva!

(crosses to her, and all come to their places as before.)

MERRY. Well, Emily, you are pensive, my love.

MRS. M. Now, for the first time, I feel all the suffering my folly and selfishness have caused you.

MERRY. He talked so well, Emily.

MRS. M. And you knew all—his selfishness—his embarrassments—and never betrayed the one, or took advantage of the other! Oh, George, you are good and great, and I—I am unworthy of you!

(hides her tears upon his shoulder.)

MERRY. (aside to ROWLEY—looking over his shoulder.) Look at this, Jack, does this make up for the discomfort of this morning's breakfast?

ROWLEY. Egad! Merryweather, I'll go and get married immediately.

MERRY. Yes, this might tempt, in marriage bonds to mingle

The sternest bachelor who e'er lived single—

Such women are!

ROWLEY. Query!

MRS. M. Not all, I own.

BUTTER. Be my Minerva, for example shown,

Against her sex for strength of mind—

(aside.) and bone!

MRS. M. Of married life, our cases prove this much,

All are not victims who behave as such.

MRS. F. While many a victim wears the marriage chain,

Who never feels—

FITZ. Or never tells the pain.

MRS. M. But let your hands give us assurance certain,

All this night's "Victims" are *our* side the curtain!

GUESTS.

GUESTS.

GUESTS.

GUESTS.

MUDDLE.

FITZ.

MRS. F.

ROWLEY.

MERRY.

MRS. M.

BUTTER.

MISS C.

CURDLE.

HORN.

R.

c.

L.

CURTAIN.