

LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET.

A Drama,

IN TWO ACTS.

Adapted from Miss Braddon's popular Work of the same title.

BY

WILLIAM E. SUTER, Esq.,

AUTHOR OF

The Pirates of the Savannah, Idiot of the Mountain, Syren of Paris,
Angel of Midnight, Old House on the Bridge, Outlaw of the
Adriatic, Sarah's Young Man, A Quiet Family, John
Wopps, Rifle Volunteer, Brother Bill and Me,
&c., &c.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
89, STRAND, LONDON.

*First Performed at the Queen's Theatre under the management of Mr. C. J. Jones), on Saturday,
the 21st of February, 1863.*

A new Drama of extraordinary interest, founded on the celebrated Work of the same title.

LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET!

CHARACTERS.

SIR MICHAEL AUDLEY	Mr. DEVILLE.
ROBERT AUDLEY	(his Nephew)	Mr. CHARLES SENNETT.
GEORGE TALBOYS	Mr. THOMAS SENNETT.
LUKE MARKS	Mr. J. GREEN.
BIBBLES	Mr. W. H. WHITTON.
BUBBLES	(a Butler)	Mr. W. W. SEYMOUR.
LADY AUDLEY	(a Footman)	Miss MARION JACKSON.
ALICIA	Miss EMILY SLADE.
PHOEBE MARKS	(Sir Michael's Daughter)	Miss BLANCHE FORDE.
MARTIN	(Lady Audley's Waiting Maid)	Miss JENNY SLADE.
	(a Servant)	

Programme of Scenery and Incidents.

THE INTERIOR OF AUDLEY COURT.

Bubbles caught—what a butler is expected to be—Bubbles in the way—Phoebe and her lover—Luke's advice—
Bubbles's dignity hurt.

ROBERT AND GEORGE ARRIVE AT THE COURT.

The first blow—what a brave heart can do—Bubbles fishes for a compliment, but gets the reverse—a woman's smile.

THE RECOGNITION!

X 6360142

THE LIME TREE WALK. THE MEETING.

Husband and wife—an outraged husband's wrongs cry for vengeance.

HALL IN AUDLEY COURT.

Bubbles won't be discharged—Bubbles loses his courage.

LADY AUDLEY'S BOUTONNIER.

The bribe—Robert seeks Lady Audley—the warning—a duel to the death.

THE CASSOLETT MOUNT STANNOG.

"This building was built of nothing but the frailest and most flimsy material!"—Luke an unfortunate individual—
Bubbles down in the world.

Lady Audley comes to the Inn. THE FIRE! An Apartment.

Poor Bubbles—a great loss—Phœbe's discovery—a suspicion—a surprise—Robert Audley you have conquered.

A CIER MIE.

Poor Alicia—strange love making—Bubbles thinks of not the last blow struck—a surprise—"A hand stronger than
my own is beckoning me onward upon the dark road."

THE LASER CRIE!

"BURIED IN THE GRAVE WILL BE LADY AUDLEY'S SUGGERY."

LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET.

ACT I.

SCENE FIRST.—*Interior of Audley Court. (2nd Grooves.)*

Enter BIBBLES and BUBBLES, L.

BIBBLES. Bubbles, I caught you at it.

BUBBLES. I didn't go to do it, Mr. Bubbles.

BIBBLES. You did go to do it, Bubbles; you went into my private apartment and you—

BUBBLES. I went to put it to rights, Mr. Bubbles.

BUBBLES. And now I've got you to rights, Bubbles. I saw you take up a decanter, fill a glass, and drink it.

BUBBLES. Drink the glass, Mr. Bubbles?

BIBBLES. No evasion, Bubbles. I say, you—

BUBBLES. I was taken suddenly so very faint.

BIBBLES. You might have felt faint, but you smelt very strong of Sir Michael's choicest port.

BUBBLES. Oh! I wish I was a butler, that I might drink as much as you do.

BIBBLES. You a butler! never hope to arrive at that dignified station; a butler is expected to be a man of noble bearing and commanding figure—a butler is expected to be a man—that is, in short, such a man as I am!

BUBBLES. Then they must be very hard to get, for I never saw such a man as you are in all my life—

BIBBLES. (*conceitedly*) I am glad, Bubbles, you have sufficient discernment to do me justice.

BUBBLES. And I hope I never shall again! such a pompous, domineering—

BIBBLES. Bubbles!

BUBBLES. Conceited, inflated, stuck up—

BIBBLES. Bubbles!

BUBBLES. My indignation will have vent, I can't bottle it up any longer, I will speak.

BIBBLES. You do, and your speech is very thick; and it isn't your indignation that is speaking—it's Sir Michael's old port! Bubbles, you took more than one glass!

BUBBLES. One glass was all I took.

BIBBLES. You swear it?

BUBBLES. Yes, one glass of port—that's all—and four glasses of brandy!

BIBBLES. (*starting*) Horrible! the brandy that I keep for my own drinking! I might have forgiven you for drinking Sir Michael's port, but to presume to swallow my brandy—my own private bottle of—

BUBBLES. I didn't swallow the bottle—and, if anybody says I did, it's a lie!

BIBBLES. Hitherto unheard of ruffian, you are discharged!

BUBBLES. What does that matter to such a smart young man as I am! I shall make it my business to obtain a situation with a lovely young lady with large property, and she'll fall in love with me and marry me!

BIBBLES. If she did, she'd be sent to pass the honeymoon in a lunatic asylum! Bubbles, you are discharged—I give you warning.

BUBBLES. You are jealous of me with Phœbe Marks, that's it!

BIBBLES. Jealous of *you*! Do you imagine Phœbe would cast a look on an undersized footman when there is a full grown butler in the way?

BUBBLES. Yes, you *are* in the way!

BUBBLES. Phœbe Marks is Lady Audley's own maid, and a great favourite with her mistress, receiving, besides her liberal salary, handsome presents from her ladyship; in short, Phœbe is a charming creature!

BUBBLES. Well, and so am I; so it would be a capital match.

BUBBLES. Bubbles, you are a little man; and as I am tall and powerful, of course I can't be such a coward as to strike you—so, there! (*kicks him*)

BUBBLES. Oh! why, surely you didn't dare to—

BUBBLES. (*kicking him again*) Yes, I did!

BUBBLES. Oh! I'll take you before a magistrate.

BUBBLES. You've got no witnesses.

BUBBLES. Yes I have; I'll show my bruises.

BUBBLES. Get out! *Kicks him off, exit, L.*

Enter LUKE MARKS, R.

LUKE. They let me in directly I asked for Phœbe Marks, and said I were her cousin, it shows that she be somebody; but now I am here, how be I to find her in this great rambling house?

Enter PHŒBE MARKS, L.

PHŒBE. You need not search far, Luke, for here I am.

LUKE. Ah! you didn't come to look after me, so I thought I'd best see after you. I come across through the fields, and in at the gate agen the moat, and up to the back door of the house.

PHŒBE. I can see the well from my bed room window, and happening to be at that window I saw you approaching, and immediately hurried to meet you, for we were, you know, playmates in childhood, and now are sweethearts.

LUKE. Yes, and we are bound to marry one another, you know.

PHŒBE. (*rather sadly*) Yes—yes.

LUKE. You don't seem over pleased about it?

PHŒBE. (*quickly*) Oh, yes, indeed! But I—I was just wishing that I were a great lady like—

LUKE. Like your missus, eh? But 'taint every poor girl, merely because she happens to have been born pretty, that is lucky enough to find an old fool of a rich baronet to fall in love with and marry her.

PHŒBE. And Sir Michael perfectly doats on her; she has just as much money as she chooses to ask for.

LUKE. Ay, it's a fine thing, Phœbe, to have lots of money, and I hope you'll be warned by that, my lass, to save up your wages agen we get married.

PHŒBE. And what was Miss Graham, now Lady Audley, only three months ago, when she lived in Mr. Dawson's house? nothing but a governess, a servant like me, taking small wages, and working for them as hard, or harder than I did. You should have seen her shabby clothes, Luke, worn and patched, and turned and twisted, yet always looking nice upon her somehow, and now she is a great lady.

LUKE. Never you mind her, take care of yourself, Phœbe! that's all you've got to do. What should you say to a public house for you and me, by-and-bye my girl? There's a deal of money to be made out of a public house.

PHŒBE. Unless it happens to be a losing speculation. (*aside*) Oh, dear! and I've got to marry this man!

LUKE. And I should think you'd soon get tired of this mortal dull place—I've heard tell of a murder that was done here in old times.

PHŒBE. Oh, Luke! don't talk like that, or I shall fancy I see a ghost in every dark corner of the old house—(*bell rings*) hark! there is Lady Audley ringing for me—you must go now, Luke, but I shall see you again soon.

LUKE. Yes, yes, you go to her ladyship, stick close to her, and seem very fond of her; because the more you can get out of her, the better I shall like you, you know.

PHŒBE. (*aside*) Thinks only of what I may bring him, and I darent say I won't have him; oh, dear!

Exit, L.

LUKE. Phœbe's getting quite a fine lady here; but I'll soon cure her of that complaint arter she's my wife. Let's see, which way did I come in, (*looking about*) and which way am I to get out, I wonder.

Enter BIBBLES and BUBBLES, L.

BIBBLES. It's no use trotting at my heels, like a poodle; I tell you, it's no use, Bubbles, you are discharged.

BUBBLES. (L.) I won't go till you give me a character for honesty and sobriety.

BIBBLES. (C.) Why, you drunken robber!

LUKE. (R., *seeing them*) Oh! one of these men will tell me—I say, you fellows:

BIBBLES. Fellows! (*aside*) Never met with such indignity since I have been a butler! (*to BUBBLES*) 'Tis all through you I am so insulted, he judges me by the company I keep.

LUKE. One of you fellows, I say; which is the way out of this queer old house.

BIBBLES. How did you get in?

LUKE. What's that to you?

BIBBLES. Intolerable impertinence; but never mind now how you got in, you shall be turned out.

LUKE. (*advancing a step*) Are you the man that is going to—

BIBBLES. (*retreating*) Certainly not—I leave all disagreeable work to my subordinates. Bubbles! (*turning to BUBBLES, who is sitting in chair, L., asleep*) Why, curse the fellow, if he aint—— (*pulling him out of the chair*) Bubbles!

BUBBLES. What's the matter?

BIBBLES. Turn the vagabond out!

BUBBLES. Yes; (*seizing BIBBLES and shaking him*) Come along, get out!

BIBBLES. (C., *pushing him away, and pitching into him*) Wretch! shake a butler—hanging's too good for you, drunken brute!

BUBBLES. (L.) It's your fault; you shouldn't keep such strong brandy.

LUKE. (R.) I am the man you are to turn out.

BUBBLES. You— (*crosses to C.*) let's have a good look at you. (*looking him over*) Um! Mr. Bibbles, I beg most respectfully to decline. (*crosses to L.*)

LUKE. If all the servants are such animals as these, I shall never get out of the place.

Exit, R.

BIBBLES. (*shouting after LUKE*) I'm not a servant, and I'm not an animal—I'm a butler; villain! (*turning to BUBBLES*) you fell asleep while I was being insulted, and I'll stop it out of your wages!

BUBBLES. Oh, Mr. Bibbles! (*leaning heavily against him*)

BIBBLES. Oh, here's an outrage—a common servant leaning against a butler!

BIBBLES. I do feel so weak and ill, Mr. Bubbles!

BIBBLES. You're drunk, Bubbles.

BIBBLES. Do, please, carry me up stars and put me to bed.

BIBBLES. I'll put you in the horsepond! wretch, remove your ignoble carcass from my dignified shoulder, this moment, or—

BUBBLES. Oh, Phœbe, lovely Phœbe!

BIBBLES. Ah! (*starting violently from Bubbles, who falls to the ground*) Monster, remain there till I return—I'm going for the sharpest carving knife on the establishment! *Rushes off, R.*

BUBBLES. (*on ground*) Oh, law! he's going to murder me, and I'm in such a weak state; going to kill me, oh! I must crawl up to his room and have a drop more of his brandy, or I shall never be able to live through it.

(*crawls off on his hands and knees, L.*)

Enter ROBERT AUDLEY and GEORGE TALBOYS, R.

ROBERT. Well, George, here we are, arrived at last at my brave old uncle's mansion, and though I did not say in my letter to him that I should bring you with me, as, indeed, how could I? for I did not so unexpectedly run against you till the day after that letter was written, yet for all that, I say I can promise you a hearty welcome from Sir Michael Audley; and his young wife cannot, so soon, prove otherwise than amiable, for, as I have already told you, my uncle has lately married, for the second time, with a mere girl, as young almost, or quite, as his daughter by his first marriage; but (*looking at GEORGE*) all my chattering is thrown away upon you, there you stand as gloomy and as sad—

TALBOYS. (R. c.) Why would you force me to accompany you hither?

ROBERT. (L. c.) Because I saw you so wretched, I feared to leave you to your own company. George, George, we were fast friends in early youth! I lose sight of you for years, and suddenly we meet again—you appear to me the same as of old, except that foreign suns have rather bronzed your features—we enter an hotel together—you carelessly take up a newspaper, and the next instant—George, what there did you read, what could you read? nothing that could affect the fortune you have earned? (*GEORGE shakes his head sadly*) Well, whatever your grief, will you endure it alone? think you that my friendship is a mere word—that in name only has existence?

TALBOYS. I know you to possess as true a heart as ever throbbed within a human breast, and would not afflict you with the relation of a sorrow you can do nothing to alleviate.

ROBERT. Is then, true sympathy nothing?

TALBOYS. (*crosses to L.*) Well, since you will have it so, know that when you saw me sitting rigid as a statue, and as pale, before that newspaper, it was because therein I had seen recorded my darling wife's untimely death. (*crosses to R., and sits, placing his hands before his face and sobbing*)

ROBERT. Heavens! my poor friend, I—I did not mean that you—

TALBOYS. (*rising*) Mine was a romantic, a hasty marriage—ours was indeed love at first sight. We went to Italy. You know I was never a niggard with my money; I had but two thousand pounds bequeathed me by my father—well we lived in splendid style so long as it lasted; when but a couple of hundred or so were left, we returned to England, to the little watering place which had ever been my dear one's home; and soon we were almost penniless, but I had no fear of the future, believing that I had influence which would obtain for me a lucrative appointment.

ROBERT. And did it not?

TALBOYS. I could obtain nothing, and when tired out and down-hearted, I returned to my wife, and told her that I had failed in everything, she burst into a storm of sobs and lamentations, telling me that I ought not to have married her if I could give her nothing but poverty and misery, and that I had done her a cruel wrong in making her my wife.

ROBERT. (*surprised*) Did she tell you that?

TALBOYS. By heavens, Robert! her tears and reproaches drove me almost mad, and I rushed from the house, declaring that I would never enter it again.

ROBERT. Well?

TALBOYS. Well, I flew into the open country, and there dashed myself despairingly on the ground, after a while I grew calmer and could think, and suddenly I remembered that in India I had a relative, a wealthy merchant, and I resolved to go to him; I wrote a few brief lines to my wife which told her that I never had loved her better than now when I seemed to desert her; that I was going far from her to try my fortune, and that if I succeeded I should come back to bring her plenty and happiness, but that if I failed I should never look upon her face again. I did not leave her to hopeless poverty, for she had still her jewels, her trinkets, while I—but, no matter, no matter now—

ROBERT. And in India, you succeeded?

TALBOYS. Not till I had long despaired of success, for the relative to whom I went was a hard man, and made of me one of his clerks—with the poor wages of a clerk, that was all; but was'nt I toiling for my darling? Through all that dreary

time, her pretty white hand beckoned me onwards to a happy future. Why, I have seen her sitting by my side, as plainly as I had ever seen her in the one happy year of our wedded life; and so I toiled on steadily, and at last I conquered.

ROBERT. Brave fellow!

TALBOYS. With the little money which I had saved, I commenced to speculate on my own account, fortune attended my every venture, and at last I awoke one morning to find myself with twenty thousand pounds, and more—and a week after was on board a vessel to return to England, and as I madly believed, to the darling of my life.

ROBERT. But in all that time did you never write to your wife?

TALBOYS. Never, till a week before the vessel set sail; I waited for good fortune, and when that came, I wrote, telling her that I should be in England almost as soon as my letter, and giving her an address where to find me—and I returned, as I hoped and believed, to her love and to a life's happiness, and I find her dead. Helen, my Helen, my wife, my darling, my only love! dead! dead! (crosses, L.)

ROBERT. George, there may have been some other Helen Talboys?

TALBOYS. No, no, my wife is dead! I know it but too well, for two days' since I stood beside her grave, and upon her tombstone read my darling's name! (covering his face with his hands)

ROBERT. My poor fellow, what can I say to comfort you?

TALBOYS. Nothing, (crosses, R.) I must bear the heavy sorrow as best I may. (going, R.)

ROBERT. Whither are you going, George?

TALBOYS. Out into the air, here I am stifled! stifled!

ROBERT. You will presently return to the house?

TALBOYS. Yes, yes, have no fear for me; I shall not lay hands on my life, I would pray to heaven, not outrage it. Oh, Helen! Oh, my wife! dead! dead! (hurrying off, R.)

ROBERT. Poor George! how he grieves; and yet, judging her by his own report, she could not have been a very devoted wife, nor have loved him much, as it appears to me; but then, of course, I know nothing about it, for I am not a married man—but I suppose that some day I must come to it, though I shall endeavour to put off the evil time as long as possible.

Enter BIBBLES, R.

BIBBLES. Mr. Robert Audley, I have the honour to be your most obedient very humble servant—

ROBERT. Jonathan Bibbles, as usual, I know all about it.

BIBBLES. Heard of your arrival, and was delighted. We have always a hearty welcome for your uncle's nephew. (bowing)

ROBERT. (*also bowing*) And my uncle's nephew is very much obliged to you, and has the honour to be your most obedient, &c., &c.

BIBBLES. You are looking remarkably well, sir; do you think I am at all altered?

ROBERT. Not at all, Mr. Bibbles; you are as great a fool as ever!

BIBBLES. He, he, he—you are always so comical, sir. Weren't you surprised, Mr. Audley, when you heard of your uncle's marriage?

ROBERT. No, Bibbles, I always felt certain that my uncle would some day marry again, and why should he not?

BIBBLES. Ah! (*sighing heavily*) love is an attack to which we are all subject, whatever may be our age or condition, whether we are a baronet or a butler—ah! (*sighing again*)

ROBERT. (*laughing*) Why surely, Bibbles, you haven't got a touch of the complaint?

BIBBLES. A touch! Sir, I have got enough of it to knock me down!

ROBERT. (*laughing*) Well, you do appear rather upset.

BIBBLES. But my marriage, if ever it does take place, will not dispossess my nephew, who always looked forward to be my heir; because you see, Mr. Audley, I haven't got a nephew—my nearest relation in the world is my father's mother's sister's daughter's husband; and goodness knows what relationship that is, for I don't.

ROBERT. You rascal! how dare you?

BIBBLES. I am sure I humbly beg your pardon, sir. I didn't mean to—

ROBERT. Begone, unless you are anxious to be kicked!

BIBBLES. Well, sir, I'm not; I don't mind kicking others, but I don't like to be kicked myself; and you must excuse me, for I very often don't know what I am talking about since I have fallen in love with a charming creature, a great favourite with her mistress, receiving, besides her liberal salary, handsome presents from her ladyship.

ROBERT. If you are not gone—

BIBBLES. Mr. Robert Audley, I have the honour to be your most obedient, very humble—

ROBERT. (*raising his voice*) Rascal! *Exit Bibbles, bowing, R.* I suppose it is thus that all will judge me; but have I ever thought of, or cared about my uncle's fortune? Not I, indeed; I have enough of my own, even should I marry, and I suppose that some day I must marry my cousin Alicia. It might seem to others that the partiality of a young lady who is sole heiress to a very fine estate is rather well worth cultivating, but it doesn't so occur to me. Alicia is a very nice girl, a jolly bouncing girl, with no nonsense about her—a girl of a thousand;

but my enthusiasm will carry me no farther at present. Hem! here she is; (*to ALICIA as she enters, L.*) My dear Alicia.

ALICIA. (*giving him her hand*) Ah! cousin, you were longing, I suppose, to see the wax doll with flaxen ringlets that my father has married; and, of course, you will think her the most charming creature in the world—all the men do; I can't imagine why—I don't like her.

ROBERT. (*laughing*) I didn't suppose you would, and, no doubt, you and my lady, your young stepmother, go at it hammer and tongs. I hope you won't quarrel or say unpleasant things to each other at the dinner table—rows always upset a man's digestion.

ALICIA. I don't like her; shouldn't, I think, if she were not my stepmother? I don't like her eyes—something strange and sinister in their expression, I think!

ROBERT. Well, when I have seen her I will tell you.

ALICIA. And to think how my poor foolish father doats on her—a man at his time of life ought to know better.

ROBERT. (*laughing*) What! know better than be fond of his wife?

ALICIA. Don't be aggravating, Robert, come along.

ROBERT. Not yet; a friend came with me whom I must go and look for.

ALICIA. A friend!

ROBERT. Yes, a poor fellow who has lately lost his wife and—

ALICIA. Well, I will go with you in search of this interesting widower! (*looking at ROBERT coaxingly*) Robert!

ROBERT. Yes, Alicia!

ALICIA. Of course, now you have come to us at last, you intend to stay with us a good long time!

ROBERT. No, cousin, I must return to town to-morrow morning.

ALICIA. Oh! (*concealing her disappointment*) You are always very soon tired of Audley, Robert, but of course you have no friends here except your relations at the Court, while in London, no doubt, you have the most delightful society, and—

ROBERT. I get good tobacco; Audley is the dearest old place, but when a man has to smoke dried cabbage leaves, you know—

ALICIA. (*aside*) Oh! to have only one cousin in the world, and he to care no more about you than a dog!

ROBERT. What did you say, Alicia?

ALICIA. Nothing, you stupid log. (*petulantly seizing his arm*) Come along! (*drags him off, R.*)

Enter SIR MICHAEL and LADY AUDLEY, C.

SIR M. Ah, Lucy, I know that I am growing old, that my

beard is white—if for your sake, dearest, I could but take twenty years from my life!

LADY A. Why should you wish that, when I so love you as you are—you are so good, so noble and generous; there are women a hundred times my superiors in beauty and goodness who might love you dearly!

SIR M. You are the delight of my life—where'er you go you carry joy and brightness with you—all love, admire, and praise you.

LADY A. (*aside*) If they knew me rightly they would curse me.

SIR M. You are the best and sweetest creature that ever lived, and I the most blessed of men in having won you to be my wife. Till I saw you I had never loved. My marriage with Alicia's mother was but a dull, jog-trot bargain, made to keep an estate in the family that would have been just as well out of it.

LADY A. Could I forbear to love the man who sought me that he might raise me to an eminence beyond the hope of e'en my wildest dreams! Oh, I sometimes doubt if it be really true, that the poor humble governess, Lucy Graham, is now indeed the great Lady Audley!

SIR M. Would that I could have given you a kingdom with my love! (*draws her to him, and presses his lips to her forehead*)

LADY A. (*aside*) No more dependence, no more drudgery, no more humiliations—every trace of the old life melted away, every clue to identity buried and forgotten.

SIR M. (*who has been looking off, R.*) I thought my eyes were not deceiving me—it is my nephew.

Enter ROBERT with ALICIA, R.

ROBERT. Yes, dear uncle, it is really and positively your nephew.

SIR M. (C.) Welcome, boy, welcome! (*introducing him*) Lady Audley. (*ROBERT bows*)

LADY A. (L. C., *smiling*) I have heard much of you, Mr. Audley, both from my husband and Alicia, and am much delighted to make your acquaintance.

ROBERT. (R. C., *aside to ALICIA*) What a smile! no wonder my poor uncle was caught—she is perfectly fascinating—charming!

ALICIA. (R., *aside to ROBERT, spitefully*) I tell you she is a wax doll. But, of course, like all the men, you are smitten with her at first sight!

ROBERT. Nonsense, do you think I don't know better than fall in love with my aunt?

SIR M. What are you two chattering about there?

ROBERT. Why—why—oh, uncle, I hope you will pardon

me, but I have taken the liberty of bringing here with me a very dear friend.

LADY A. Any friend of yours, sir, would, I am sure, be welcome here.

SIR M. He knows that, the rogue; but who is he, Robert—do I know him?

ROBERT. No, uncle; and poor fellow, you will not find him very entertaining company I fear, for his wife is lately dead, and—

LADY A. (*slightly starting*) Ah!

ROBERT. He had but just returned from the Indies, when—
(LADY AUDLEY is violently agitated)

SIR M. The unhappy man shall receive from us every consideration. What is his name?

ROBERT. George Talboys. (LADY AUDLEY shudders and remains petrified) Hush, uncle, he is here!

Enter GEORGE TALBOYS, R.

My dear George, it was no false promise when I told you that here you would find a hearty welcome—my uncle, Sir William Audley. (*they bow to each other*) Uncle, with your leave—
(SIR MICHAEL draws back a step. ROBERT leads TALBOYS across towards LADY AUDLEY) Lady Audley, this is—
(passing him next to LADY AUDLEY)

TALBOYS. Great heavens! (*rooted to the spot and gazing wildly on LADY AUDLEY, ROBERT observes them both greatly amazed. SIR MICHAEL and ALICIA are conversing together, R.*)

LADY A. (L., suddenly rousing—aside to TALBOYS quickly) An hour hence—the lime-tree walk, near the old well.

TALBOYS. I am mad! oh, surely, I am mad! (*rushing off, R.*)

SIR M. (*suddenly turning*) Eh! What is this, whither is he scampering?

ROBERT. (C.) You must forgive him, uncle, he cannot yet endure the society of any one.

LADY A. (*crossing to SIR MICHAEL, laughing lightly—having quite subdued her emotion*) It would almost appear that it was I who drove him hence, and yet I have never been accounted altogether frightful.

ROBERT. (*aside*) There is something that I cannot understand, something that—

SIR M. Robert, give your arm to Lady Audley.

ROBERT. Oh, certainly—delighted. Lady Audley, if you will allow me?

LADY A. (*taking his arm*) You will not follow the example of your friend, and run away from me? (*laughing merrily as she goes off with ROBERT, L.*)

SIR M. (*offering his arm*) Come, Alicia, my dear!

ALICIA. (*aside, as she goes off with SIR MICHAEL, L.*) One's own cousin to fall in love with a wax doll—it's shameful!

SCENE SECOND.—*The Lime-tree Walk; well, c.; the old and decayed stone wall which surrounds it only seen here and there through the heavy brushwood which grows everywhere about it; half dark; Music.*

Enter GEORGE TALBOYS slowly, L. U. E., and advances; suddenly stops, listens for a moment, and then hurrying up is met by ROBERT AUDLEY, who enters, L. U. E.

TALBOYS. (*drawing back*) Ah! you!

ROBERT. You say that in a tone as if you had expected some one else, and that my presence is a disappointment to you.

TALBOYS. How came you to seek me here?

ROBERT. You fled from us so abruptly; and as her ladyship hurried to her room immediately afterwards, to dress for dinner, as she said, I availed myself of the opportunity to seek you everywhere about the grounds, and at last you see—

TALBOYS. (*glancing anxiously towards back*) Leave me instantly!

ROBERT. George, you are expecting some one; must I tell you?—

TALBOYS. Tell me nothing, but leave me—delay not a moment I entreat you, and swear to me that you will not linger near this spot—that you will neither watch nor listen!

ROBERT. George, do you then believe me capable of—

TALBOYS. I believe nothing, but if you would we should continue friends.

ROBERT. Enough! it is a strange request, but I pledge to you my honour that I will in this obey your wishes.

TALBOYS. (*crosses to L.*) Thank you, thank you, now go—at once.

ROBERT. You promise me that you will presently return to the mansion?

TALBOYS. Yes.

ROBERT. Adieu, then! (*aside—looking towards L. U. E.*) Heavens! Lady Audley! now my word is passed, but hereafter I will attempt to solve this mystery. *Exit, R. 1 E.*

Music.—TALBOYS turns, sees that ROBERT is gone, and walks over to R., looking after him—LADY AUDLEY enters, L. U. E., advances, L. C., and remains standing quietly till TALBOYS satisfied that ROBERT is gone, turns round, sees LADY AUDLEY, and starts)

TALBOYS. Ah! woman, devil, or whate'er you are—

LADY A. Hold! let us endeavour to commence calmly.

TALBOYS. Calmly! are you not my wife?

LADY A. I was! the wife whom you deserted—abandoned!

TALBOYS. No, 'tis false! you know it, I but fled from you in the hope I might return and make you wealthy.

LADY A. Listen to me. After your departure, I vainly sought employment—a wife whom her husband had deserted could not be innocent of all fault—and no one would receive me as the instructress of their children. I was penniless—helpless—hopeless; before me was starvation or a repulsive life of infamy! I shrunk from both and resolved to live anew, and for myself alone. I ceased to be Mrs. George Talboys, forgot even that I had ever been Helen Maldon, and became Miss Lucy Graham. For a miserable stipend I toiled as a governess, was seen, admired, and loved by Sir Michael Audley, he offered me his hand, weary of poverty and drudgery, fixed in the belief that you would never return to claim me, I became Sir Michael's wife.

TALBOYS. Oh! infamy!

LADY A. Scarcely was I married when your letter reached me, it told me you were about to quit India, named the time when I might expect once more to behold you. What did I then? not groan and tear my hair, no! I hastened to my birthplace, I knew that there, a young girl, a playmate of my childhood, was dying rapidly of consumption. She did die. Her mother for a heavy bribe, consented that the girl should be buried in my name. I then caused to be inserted in the papers the announcement of my own death, and if you have visited the grave, you have seen the words, "Helen Talboys," written on its tombstone.

TALBOYS. Oh! horrible! and this the woman I have so wildly loved, who wantonly, for her own wild, selfish ends, has driven me to despair.

LADY A. The past cannot be recalled; the wealth and splendour I have attained I will not lose. Go then, let us forget each other; you shall share always of the riches at my command—I will do anything sooner than abandon the wealth and the position I have won, and go back to my old life.

TALBOYS. You offer me wealth. I am worth twenty thousand pounds—'twas all for you—for you! and now—

LADY A. Is it, then, mere revenge you seek? to crush the woman whom you have loved—who has been your wife.

TALBOYS. While I live I will never forgive you for the lie that has broken my heart. You have plucked it from my breast, have trampled upon it, and now—I have no heart in which to feel one sentiment of mercy for you. I would have forgiven you any wrong but this one deliberate and passion-

less wrong that you have done me. No power on earth shall turn me from my purpose, which is, to take you to the man you have deceived, and make you tell your terribly wicked story.

During the last speech, LADY AUDLEY's hand has been working convulsively beneath the bosom of her dress, and at the end of the speech, she, unseen by TALBOYS, partly draws forth a poniard, thrusting it instantly back to its hiding place.

LADY A. (*advancing fiercely towards TALBOYS*) I defy you—I defy you! denounce me to Sir Michael, I will declare you to be a madman, or a liar, and I defy you to convince the man who loves me, blindly worships me, that you have any claim to me—farewell. (*is hurrying off L. U. E.—TALBOYS follows, seizes her by the wrist, and drags her back*)

TALBOYS. You go not yet.

LADY A. (*shaking him off*) You have bruised my wrist! again thrusting her hand beneath her dress)

TALBOYS. Your infamous cunning shall no longer avail you; by heaven! if there were but one witness of your identity, and that witness were removed from Audley Court by the width of the whole earth, I would bring him there to swear to your identity and to denounce you.

LADY A. Ah! (*with a wild exclamation she suddenly brings her hand holding the poniard from her dress; turns rapidly on TALBOYS and stabs him; he utters a cry, staggers back against the wall of the well; the wall gives way with a crash, and he disappears, falling down into the well; LADY AUDLEY throws her poniard amongst the brushwood and hurries off, L. U. E.—Music*)

SCENE THIRD—Hall in Audley Court. (1st grooves)

Enter BIBBLES and BUBBLES, L.

BIBBLES. Don't stagger after me, intoxicated wretch! you have your discharge—have received your wages—you are no longer servant here—go!

BUBBLES. Not without a written character for honesty and sobriety; besides, why should we separate? I forgive you all the injuries you have inflicted on me!

BIBBLES. Injuries!

BUBBLES. Those kicks, you know; you will not be doing your duty as a respectable butler if you discharge the most sober and industrious servant in the establishment.

BIBBLES. If you don't instantly get out—

BUBBLES. I won't go till you pay me my wages!

BIBBLES. Rascal ! I have paid you !

BUBBLES. Yes, but there was no witness, and I gave you no receipt, so I shall swear I have never received a farthing ; and you'll have to pay me again !

BIBBLES. Why, you—

BUBBLES. I'll teach you what it is to take the bread out of an honest man's mouth.

BIBBLES. I'm perfectly paralyzed !

BUBBLES. A steady and hard-working young man that is always on his legs—down early and up late !

BIBBLES. (R.) Wretch, wretched wretch, my wrath has an exterminating power. I could have forgiven you everything but presuming to love Phœbe Marks.

BUBBLES. (L.) I don't love her—I want to marry her—that's all ; and if I have cast my eye—

BIBBLES. Yes, I know you have a cast in your eye, but I won't allow you to squint at her—she shall be mine as soon as ever I can get her ; and, oh ! don't I wish I may get her.

BUBBLES. Will you be mine, Phœbe Marks ?

BIBBLES. Phœbe Marks, no ; (*threatening*) but you shall have some other marks if you don't mind.

BUBBLES. You presume upon your majestic figure, but though little, I am brave, (*squaring*) and if you will only tie your hands behind you, we'll contend in a deadly struggle, and the conqueror shall have Phœbe Marks.

Enter MARTIN, L.

MARTIN. Phœbe Marks, indeed, who is she I wonder, that you should quarrel about her ! (*crosses to C.*) I am really surprised at you, Mr. Bibbles !

BIBBLES. Phœbe Marks is a charming creature, a great favourite with her mistress, receiving besides her liberal salary, handsome presents from her ladyship.

MARTIN. Well, she is engaged to be married !

BIBBLES. Not yet, Martin, for I haven't yet found courage to propose to her.

BUBBLES. No, more have I.

BIBBLES. Silence, you Bubbles !

BIBBLES. I shall talk as long as I like, Bibbles !

BIBBLES. (*indignant*) Bibbles, plain Bibbles !

BUBBLES. Yes, you are very plain, Bibbles !

BIBBLES. Say Mister Bibbles.

BUBBLES. Not now I'm discharged !

BIBBLES. Ignorant brute !

MARTIN. I tell you, Phœbe Marks is engaged to be married to her cousin Luke.

BIBBLES. Look, look where?

MARTIN. It's as true as that my name is Martin.

BIBBLES. No, no, it won't do, Martin; I can't swallow that.

MARTIN. You will have to do it though.

BIBBLES. It can't be, she has often looked at me, and must have perceived what a superior man I am.

MARTIN. You are, Mr. Bibbles; the man she is about to marry, is a rough, dissipated savage.

BIBBLES. And she might have had me, a quiet, sober, young man.

BIBBLES. If I but knew him.

MARTIN. You do, he was here this morning, and told me that you two talked about turning him out, and that if you had attempted it, he would have killed you both.

BIBBLES. That ruffian! then I shall have nothing to do with him.

BIBBLES. Nor I neither.

MARTIN. You had better not, for I tell you he is a savage, and always carries a knife about with him, which he uses without any ceremony.

BIBBLES and BUBBLES. Oh! (*they stagger back*, BIBBLES to R., BUBBLES to L.)

MARTIN. (*aside*) To cut his bread and cheese. (*aloud*) If you are wise, Mr. Bibbles, you will think no more of Phoebe Marks.

Exit, L.

Enter LUKE MARKS, R., quietly, and advances thoughtfully behind them to C.

BIBBLES. (R.—*not seeing LUKE*) Lost to me for ever!

BIBBLES. (L.—*ditto*) Not a chance left!

BIBBLES. For a longer period than that—(*each time they speak they stagger a step back towards C.*) And he would actually kill such a fine man as I am.

BUBBLES. Cut off a steady, sober—

BIBBLES. Kill me in cold blood!

BUBBLES. When he's in a passion.

BIBBLES. Oh!

BUBBLES. Oh! (*both fall against LUKE*)

BIBBLES. Support me, Bubbles!

BUBBLES. Hold me up, Bibbles!

LUKE. (*gruffly*) Why, what the devil do you mean by—
(*both start suddenly upright, turn towards LUKE, discover their mistake, and scamper off frightened*, BIBBLES R., BUBBLES L.)
What is all this about? I thought I heard Phoebe's name as I came in—ha, ha, I shall have her now; and what's better, I shall have the public-house too—ha, ha, ha!

Exit, L. *Music.*

SCENE FOURTH.—*Lady Audley's Boudoir, elegantly furnished,*
door R. U. E.

LADY AUDLEY *discovered, seated on couch, down L. ; ALICIA on chair, R.*

LADY A. (L., shrugging her shoulders) It seems very hard that you cannot love me, Alicia, for I have never been used to make enemies; but since it seems that it must be so, I cannot help it. You won't try to injure me?

ALICIA. (rising) Injure you! How should I injure you?

LADY A. (rising) You'll not try to deprive me of your father's affection?

ALICIA. I may not be so amiable as you are, my lady, and I may not have the same sweet smiles and pretty words for every stranger I meet; but I am not capable of a contemptible meanness,—and even if I were, I think you are so secure of my father's love, that nothing but your own act will ever deprive you of it.

LADY A. (again shrugging her shoulders) What a severe creature you are, Alicia! I suppose you mean to infer by that, that I'm deceitful. Why, I can't help smiling at people, and speaking prettily to them. I know I'm no better than the rest of the world, but I can't help it if I'm pleasanter—it's constitutional.

(ALICIA is going, R.)

Enter PHÆBE MARKS, *door R.*

LADY A. Ah! Phœbe—oh, stay Alicia; has Mr. Robert Audley heard yet anything of the friend who so suddenly deserted him? I—(compressing her lips for a moment) I have forgotten the name of—

PHÆBE. Mr. George Talboys. (LADY AUDLEY suppresses a slight start) I do not know, my lady.

LADY A. (smiling) What a bother to make, because a man takes it into his head to run away from those with whom his own grief will not suffer him to be sociable.

ALICIA. (aside) She is right, I do hate her, a frivolous, heartless, giggling wax doll!

Exit, r. door.

LADY A. (sitting on couch, L.) I can tell by your looks Phœbe, that you have come again to plague me about your marriage with your cousin. You surely are not in love with the ugly awkward creature?

PHÆBE. I don't think I can love him. We have been together from children—my mother almost reared him—I was but fifteen when she died, and almost with her last breath she exacted from me a promise that I would marry Luke, and now I daren't refuse to be his wife. When a boy, he was always violent and revengeful. I saw him once take up a knife in a

quarrel with his mother. My lady, I dare not refuse, I must marry him.

LADY A. (*rising*) You silly girl, you think he'd murder you, do you? what nonsense! I shall be very sorry to lose you, but I have promised to stand your friend in all things. What does your cousin mean to do for a living when you are married?

PHŒBE. He would like to take a public house, my lady. If you would see him now—

LADY A. He is then at hand? oh, by all means let him enter, and he shall take a public house, and the sooner he drinks himself to death the better.

PHŒBE. (*going to door*) You may come in, Luke.

Enter LUKE, r. door, slowly and awkwardly, his hat in his hand, does not bow, but fixes himself, c., rubbing his head and staring at LADY AUDLEY.

LADY A. Young man, your marriage with Phoebe is agreed upon, and I shall give you fifty pounds. (*LUKE does not stir*) How, do you not thank me? or is it by rubbing that bullet head and staring, that you usually express your gratitude?

PHŒBE. (*close to LUKE, r. c.*) Tell my lady how thankful you are, Luke.

LUKE. (*c., savagely*) But I'm not so over and above thankful; fifty pounds ain't much to start a public. You'll make it a hundred, my lady?

LADY A. (*indignantly*) I shall do nothing of the kind, and I wonder at your impertinence in asking it.

LUKE. (*insolently*) Oh! yes you will though. (*LADY AUDLEY draws herself up haughtily—he goes closer to her—their eyes meet—he speaks in a low but very distinct tone*) The stone round the old well is all broken away, my lady—(*she slightly starts*) and I happened to come into the lime tree walk just in time to see how it was done. (*LADY AUDLEY shivers convulsively*). You'll make it a hundred, my lady?

LADY A. (*recovering herself*) Well, yes, and you shall never want a twenty pound note while I have the power to give it.

PHŒBE. Oh! thank you, my lady. (*LADY AUDLEY goes to and sits on couch*).

Enter ROBERT AUDLEY, r. door.

LUKE. (*as he goes off r. door with PHŒBE*) I knew she would make it a hundred—I knew she would. (*LADY AUDLEY, absorbed in thought, does not perceive ROBERT who walks slowly over, places himself beside her, and gazes earnestly on her for a moment or two before speaking*).

ROBERT. Lady Audley!

LADY A. Ah! (*starting to her feet*) You, why do you come

creeping into the room to frighten me out of my poor wits.
(peevishly) You ought to know how nervous I am.

ROBERT. Lady Audley, heaven knows I wish to be merciful, that I would willingly spare you, but justice must be done. Shall I tell you why you are nervous in this house, my lady?

LADY A. (*with a slight laugh*) If you can.

ROBERT. (R. C.) Because for you this house is haunted.

LADY A. (L. C.) Haunted!

ROBERT. Yes, haunted by the ghost of George Talboys.

LADY A. (*after a moment passed in endeavouring to suppress her agitation*) What do you mean? Why do you torment me about this George Talboys, who happens to take it into his head to keep out of your way for a while? What is George Talboys to me, that you should worry me about him?

ROBERT. He was a stranger to you, my lady, was he not?

LADY A. What could he be to me but a stranger? But if he be dead I'm sorry for him. If he lives I have no wish either to see him or to hear of him.

ROBERT. Lady Audley, that announcement in the newspapers of his wife's death, which struck my poor friend to the heart, was a cruel lie, a base and cowardly blow in the dark—it was the treacherous dagger-thrust of an infamous assassin.

LADY A. (*shrugging her shoulders*) Ridiculous.

ROBERT. George Talboys' wife is still alive.

LADY A. You are mad.

ROBERT. And you, my lady, you are she.

LADY A. By what right do you dare?

ROBERT. The evidence I have collected against you wants only one link to be strong enough for your condemnation, and that link shall be added. I will spare no trouble in completing the chain, unless—

LADY A. (*eagerly*) Unless what?

ROBERT. Unless the woman I wish to save from degradation and punishment accepts the mercy I offer her, and takes warning while there is time.

LADY A. She would be a very foolish woman if she suffered herself to be influenced by any such absurdity. If you choose to insist that I am Helen Talboys, you may—I shall not attempt to hinder you.

ROBERT. Then you will be able to bring some one forward who can identify you with the past?

LADY A. If I were placed in a criminal dock I could, no doubt, bring forward witnesses to refute your absurd accusation. But I am not in a criminal dock, Mr. Audley, and I do not choose to do anything but laugh at your ridiculous folly!

ROBERT. It is to be a duel to the death, then, my lady?
(speaking solemnly) You refuse to accept my warning—you

refuse to go hence and repent of your wickedness in some foreign place, far from the generous gentleman you have deceived and fooled by your false witcheries? You choose to remain here and defy me?

LADY A. I do! (*looking him full in the face*) It is no fault of mine if my husband's nephew goes mad, and chooses me for the victim of his monomania.

ROBERT. So be it, then, my lady. I last saw my friend George Talboys in the lime-tree walk, and left him as I saw you approaching to join him; he was seen by others to enter those gardens, but he was never seen to leave them—I do not believe that he ever did leave. I believe that he met with his death within the boundary of those grounds, and that his body lies hidden below some quiet water, or in some forgotten corner of that place. I will have such a search made as shall level this house to the earth, and root up every tree in those gardens, rather than I will fail in finding the grave of my murdered friend!

LADY A. Ah! (*uttering a cry and tossing up her arms wildly above her head*) You shall never live to do this, I will kill you first. Why have you tormented me so? Why could you not let me alone? What harm have I ever done you that you should make yourself my persecutor, and dog my steps, and watch my looks, and play the spy upon me? Do you want to drive me mad? Do you know what it is to wrestle with a mad woman? No, (*laughing wildly*) you do not or you would never—(*stopping abruptly and drawing herself up*) Go away, Mr. Audley, (*changing her tone*) You are mad, I tell you, you are mad!

ROBERT. (*walking towards door*) You have refused to accept my mercy; I wished to have pity upon the living, I shall henceforth only remember my duty to the dead.

LADY A. What will you do? What need I fear from one who has lost his wits? (*defiantly*) What will you do?

ROBERT. That question will be answered when you stand upon the scaffold, "Murderess!" *Exit, R. door.*

(LADY AUDLEY utters a wild shriek of agony, presses her hand to her heart, staggers back and falls senseless to the ground, one arm resting on the couch, which she could not entirely reach—*Music*)

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

ACT II.

SCENE FIRST.—*The Castle Inn at Mount Stanning.—Old wainscoted room; fireplace, R.; doors, L. 2 E. and R. U. E.; a raised gallery runs across the stage at back, in the centre of which a door, short flight of stairs, R., lead up to the gallery.*

Music—LUKE MARKS and BUBBLES are discovered near fireplace seated at table, on which are jugs, bottles, glasses and a lighted candle—LUKE is flushed with drink,* BUBBLES quite tipsy, a long pipe in his hand.

LUKE. (*L. of table*) Don't talk to me; I tell you I am the most unfortunate man in all the world.

BUBBLES. (*maudlin*) What's your troubles to mine? See how I have come down in the world only in two months, since that pompous fool Bibbles bundled me off. (*standing up*) Look at me! Are these clothes anything like the handsome livery I used to wear?

LUKE. Hold your noise and sit down.

BUBBLES. Wait till I light my pipe. (*trying to light it at the candle*) Come, I say, no tricks.

LUKE. (*savagely*) What do you mean?

BUBBLES. Why, let the candle alone; what do you keep shaking it about for?

LUKE. Bah. (*seizing the candle and thrusting it into Bubbles' face*) Here.

BUBBLES. Oh! (*flopping back into his chair, and dropping his pipe to the ground*) Mr. Marks, you have set light to my nose.

LUKE. And you have broken a pipe. No wonder the bailiffs are going to sell me up to-morrow, when people come into my house and destroy my property in this audacious manner.

BUBBLES. Yes, Mr. Marks; there's been an inve—inve—a what dy'e call it—on your goods, and I'm the man in possession.

LUKE. Curse this house; I might have done some trade, I dare say, only I've always had the blue-devils ever since I came to it, it's so dull, so I was obliged to drink up my own liquors to keep up my spirits.

BUBBLES. Seems to me that that was the way to lower 'em.

LUKE. And when I'm drunk I'm apt to be quarrelsome, and so I frightened away the few customers there was, and now I'm to be sold up for nine pound rent.

BUBBLES. And I'm the man in possession; a most degrading occupation for a sober and industrious young man. Where's the brandy? no—I drunk that last; where's the gin? no—I'll have some beer this time. (*takes up jug and drinks*)

LUKE. Sold up for nine pounds! (*rising*) but it won't come off. I've got a friend; I've sent Phœbe to Lady Audley—she'll dub up, she must.

BUBBLES. I had a kind of hankering after Phœbe, she's a pretty girl; and to think that she should marry such an awful ugly fellow as you are.

LUKE. (*threatening him*) What!

BUBBLES. You mustn't, my good man; it's against the law to strike a man in possession.

LUKE. Hold your tongue, then: 'taint long since Lady Audley sent me the money to pay the brewer; but I didn't pay him though. I went about among my friends, and spent the money that way.

BUBBLES. That beer don't agree with me. I must have a drop more gin. (*drinks*)

LUKE. It's worth someut to know someut that you didn't ought to know.

BUBBLES. It was through Phœbe that I lost my place—nothing else; for, as I was a steady, sober, young man—I don't like that gin, where's the brandy? (*drinks*)

LUKE (*returning to his seat*) Drop that bottle.

BUBBLES. No; I won't drop the bottle. I should spill it, and break the brandy.

LUKE. Bah! (*snatching bottle*) give it here.

BUBBLES. (*thrusting his hands into his pockets*) Yaw—I'm dreadfully drowsy.

LUKE. (*filling a glass*) Well; go to sleep. (*drinks, and lights his pipe*)

BUBBLES. Yes; and when I woke, I should find you had bolted with all the furniture. (*his head sinks upon his breast*)

Enter PHŒBE L. door.-(Music.)

LUKE. (*brutally*) So you've condescended to come home at last, ma'am. I thought you was never coming no more.

BUBBLES. (*half-a-sleep*) That's pretty Phœbe's voice; and she's married to an ugly, drunken brute, instead of a good-looking, sober,

LUKE. (*to BUBBLES raising jug*) Do you want me to split your skull?

PHŒBE. (*mildly*) I've been longer than I intended to be, Luke; but I've seen my lady, and she's been very kind, and—and she'll settle this business for us.

LUKE. (*rising, smoking his pipe*) She's been "very kind," has she? (*with a drunken chuckle*) Thank her for nothing. I know the vally of her kindness. She'd be uncommon kind, I dessay, if she wasn't obligated to be it.

PHŒBE. Hush; Luke, not so loud.

LUKE. (*pointing to BUBBLES*) Oh! that fellow—

PHŒBE. I was not thinking of him: but Mr. Robert Audley is yonder, in his room (*pointing up to door on gallery*)—and—

LUKE. Oh, he is fast asleep long ago, was as tired as a dog he said, and wanted to be up early to-morrow. I asked him to sit down here a bit, but he wouldn't, and went off to bed.

PHŒBE. So much the better.

LUKE. Rather strange, when Mr. Robert Audley is so handy to Audley Court that he should take up his quarters in our ricketty place; there's a reason for it, no doubt—something the matter between him and my lady I fancy.

PHŒBE. Yes, Luke, I—I think so.

LUKE. You jade, you know so; he told us that he had an objection to going to Audley Court just now, and so as he didn't want to leave the neighbourhood for a day or two he came here.

PHŒBE. Yes, Luke, we know all that, but—

LUKE. None of your sarce! where's the nine pound to pay the rent?

PHŒBE. My lady has promised to settle the business for us, and she's coming down here to see about it to-night, Luke.

LUKE. What? (*starting, and letting his pipe fall*)

BUBBLES. (*half asleep*) You mustn't damage the furniture; I'm the man in possession.

LUKE. My lady coming here to-night!

PHŒBE. Yes, Luke, she said that she would follow me immediately, and—

LUKE. Ah! I know. (*aside*) She fears that when the liquor is in I shall let the secret out. Well, let her come.

Music—L. door opens and LADY AUDLEY appears; she glances round the room and then advances c.

LADY A. (*pointing to BUBBLES*) That, I suppose, is the—

BUBBLES. (*half asleep*) I'm the man in possession.

LADY A. I have come to pay him and to send him about his business.

LUKE. (R. C.) Bah! you might have given the money to Phœbe as well as have brought it yourself. We don't want no fine ladies up here, pryin' and poking their precious noses into everything.

PHŒBE. (L.) Luke, Luke! when my lady has been so kind.

LUKE. Oh! curse her kindness! it ain't her kindness as we want, gal, it's her money. She won't get no snivellin' gratitude from me. Whatever she does for us she does because she is obliged, and if she wasn't obliged she wouldn't do it.

LADY A. (*turning violently towards him*) Stop! I didn't

come up here in the dead of the night to listen to your insolence. (LUKE *is cowed*.) How much is this debt?

LUKE. Nine pounds.

LADY A. (*taking out her purse*) Let that man give me a receipt for the money before I go.

LUKE. (*shaking BUBBLES*) Don't you hear, wake up.

BUBBLES. (*rousing*) Let the furniture alone! I'm the man in possession! (LADY AUDLEY *places a note and four sovereigns on the table, and goes up looking towards the gallery*.)

PHÆBE. I have the receipt all ready. (*goes over and places it on the table before BUBBLES*)

LUKE. Sign this—there's your money! (*putting a pen into BUBBLES' hand*)

BUBBLES. Which paper am I to sign? seems to me there's two or three of 'em.

LUKE. What's your name?

BUBBLES. William Bubbles.

LUKE. Here then, (*seizing his hand, and guiding it to sign, spelling the letters*) W-i-l-l-e-m.

BUBBLES. It don't seem to me to be very plain!

LUKE. How do you spell Bubbles?

BUBBLES. B-u-ebbles.

LUKE. (*guiding his hand*) There!

BUBBLES. That's only a blot.

LUKE. Never mind, 'twill do, there are plenty of witnesses—here—(*giving receipt to PHÆBE, who goes up with it to LADY AUDLEY, who places it in her purse*) take your money, (*wrapping sovereigns in note, and giving them to BUBBLES*) and now (*seizing BUBBLES by the collar, pulling him from his chair and bundling him over to L.*) go to the devil.

BUBBLES. I shan't! I shall go home, I know I've nothing more to do with your goods and chappels, but as far as your beer, and your brandy, and gin are concerned—why as to them, you see (*rubbing his stomach*) I'm still the man in possession.

Exit. L. door.—LADY AUDLEY and PHÆBE *advance*.

PHÆBE. You mustn't go home alone, my lady, you'll let me go with you?

LADY A. Yes, yes, you shall go home with me, and remain until morning dawns, if your husband—

LUKE. (R.) Oh! let her go, I don't want her, and now that I'm once more master here, I shall go into the little bar parlour and have a glass of good strong stuff before I turn in. Good night, my lady, (*going up*) I dessay you'll hear from me again before long, somehow I'm always in trouble, always short of money.

Exit. door R. U. E.

LADY A. (*aside*) Ruffian;—(*suddenly*)—Phæbe, in which room does Mr. Robert Audley sleep?

PHŒBE. (R., looking surprised at the question) That, my lady, (pointing to door on gallery) is the room he always occupies when here.

LADY A. Oh, indeed! Well, Phœbe, now let us go. (takes a step towards L. door, then suddenly stops as if remembering) Ah!

PHŒBE. What is it, my lady?

LADY A. I had forgotten something very particular which I have yet to say to your brute of a husband.

PHŒBE. I will fetch him to you, my lady.

LADY A. (stopping her) No; I will call him myself. Go you forward, and wait for me at the turn of the road; I shall not be a moment.

PHŒBE. But, my lady—

LADY A. Go, I tell you! That which I have to say to Luke is for his ear alone, and I must be certain that you are not within hearing. (Music.—PHŒBE looks wonderingly at LADY AUDLEY, who goes to and opens door, L., signing to PHŒBE, who crosses and goes off—LADY AUDLEY looks after her a moment, and then closes door—advancing) If this old house were burnt to the ground, who would wonder? All would cry, "A fire caused by the landlord in one of his drunken fits, and there would be an end. Once set a-going, how rapidly this old building would be levelled with the earth; and my two enemies shall perish with it. (goes up to door, R. U. E., and looks off) Luke is there, drunk. Robert Audley in yonder chamber. (pointing, and advancing slowly) A light applied to the curtains, the dresses, and the old tapestry in Phœbe's room—Yes, 'tis there the fire must commence. (Music—she takes the candle from the table, and slowly and cautiously ascends the stairs on to balcony—stops and listens at the door there). Not a sound. Ah! the key is here in the lock. (she turns it twice, then takes out the key, and listens again at the door) Still quiet; he has not heard.

Goes cautiously off, R.

A short pause—lights down—and LUKE staggers on, door R. U. L.

LUKE. (very tipsy) Now I am drunk; that last strong dose has settled me. Hey, no light! (blundering forward) The draught, I s'pose. (knocks against chair, L. of table) And a man is more drunk in the darkness than he is in the— (falls into the chair, spreads his arms on table, and lays his head on them)

Music.—Enter LADY AUDLEY—the candle still in her hand—on gallery from R., slowly and cautiously as before, descends stairs and advances, C., not seeing LUKE—lights partly up.

LADY A. 'Tis done! a short while and this house, my enemies, too, will be ashes. Now I must hasten and rejoin

Phœbe, or—(Music—she turns and takes a step towards table to replace the candle on it; sees LUKE, starts and drops the candle to the ground, uttering a suppressed cry. LUKE raises his head. LADY AUDLEY hastily gropes her way to the door, finds it, and disappears, closing door behind her)

LUKE. What the devil was that? something seemed to—
(pulling himself to his feet—a red flame from R., on balcony)
I shall bolt the door and go to bed. (staggering towards door, he swirls round, coming with his back against it) Curse me, if ever I shall be able to get to bed. (suddenly sees the flame)
Why, what's that? (Music—he staggers up and partly ascends the stairs)

LUKE. The old house is on fire. (with a drunken chuckle)
Well, I shan't put it out; I'll leave it to burn itself out—let it burn, let it burn. (Music—he sways about, and then rolls helpless off the steps on to the ground—flames and red fire burst strongly forth)

SCENE SECOND.—Front Chamber.

Enter BIBBLES slowly, L.—stops, draws forth his handkerchief, and applies it to his eyes.

BIBBLES. I'm a bereaved butler: I've lost a charming creature, a great favourite with her mistress, receiving, besides her liberal salary, handsome presents that—oh! isn't it an affliction; I know no longer what I'm about. Sir Michael asks for vinegar and I give him pepper. Well, and why shouldn't I—goodness knows that Phœbe Marks has given me pepper; what I suffer nobody knows, I don't know myself. I'm falling away to a skeleton; in the first week of Phœbe's marriage, it's a positive fact that I lost seven stone and a half—seven stone and a half of my manly flesh—and I have every reason to believe that that's been going on ever since, and when a man comes to lose seven stone and a half a week for upwards of two months, just consider what that must reduce him to. (putting his handkerchief to his eyes)

Enter MARTIN, R.

MARTIN. Poor Mr. Bibbles, how can you go on fretting in this way about Phœbe Marks, who never cared a straw for you! I didn't think you were so weak, Mr. Bibbles.

BIBBLES. Yes, I am weak Mr. Bibbles; and so would you be weak, if you had lost seven stone and a half for nine weeks together—nine times seven are sixty-three, and nine halves—Oh, the total is something awful!

MARTIN. I can't think what could make you so fond of her.

BIBBLES. She was a charming creature, receiving, besides her liberal, handsome salary, presents that—

MARTIN. I am afraid you are mercenary, Mr. Bibbles.

BIBBLES. Not at all; it's my feelings—how am I to get them back? how am I to recover the seven stone and a half a week that I—when shall I be again the fine, portly man that I used to be? Oh! (*putting his handkerchief to his eyes*)

MARTIN. It's all fancy, Mr. Bibbles; there is not the slightest difference in you. (*looking at him admiringly*) You are the same fine man you always were.

BIBBLES. Nonsense, nothing of the sort. I am sorry you should drive me to make an indelicate observation, but where's my stomach? What has become of my noble stomach?

MARTIN. Why, there it is, as rotund as ever!

BIBBLES. Nonsense, I tell you, I know better. No stomach that was ever born could—no, it couldn't sustain unmoved for two months a weekly loss of seven stone and a half!

MARTIN. (*crosses to L.*) It's my opinion you have taken to tippling, Mr. Bibbles.

Exit, L.

BIBBLES. There never was a man more proud of his stomach; and to see it reduced to a mere skeleton of an abdomen—I never know now that I have got a stomach at all, except at dinner-time; I'm very miserable, and so low that when I'm in the cellar, bottling, I'm sure to be deeply affected. (*puts his handkerchief to his eyes*)

ALICIA. (*entering R.*) No, he will never return; he doesn't love me, and has gone away to be rid of me, for he sees—(*half crying*) he sees that I love him, and—

BIBBLES. (*seeing her*) I beg your pardon, Miss Alicia.

ALICIA. Oh! what will become of me! *putting her handkerchief to her eyes*)

BIBBLES. (*aside*) She is affected at beholding my sorrow; how very kind of her. (*putting his handkerchief to his eyes*)

ALICIA. What is the matter with you, Mr. Bibbles?

BIBBLES. A charming creature, receiving besides her liberal mistress, salary presents.

ALICIA. Don't be a fool, Mr. Bibbles. (*wiping her eyes*)

BIBBLES. You are in sorrow, Miss Alicia; it can't be so great as mine—you haven't lost seven stone and a half a week for—

ALICIA. Bibbles, you are an idiot. (*hurries off, R.*)

BIBBLES. How sweet to us in grief is the sympathy of our fellow creatures—especially of our superiors. Oh! Phœbe, charming salary, receiving besides her liberal creature, handsome Lady Audley from her presents. Oh! (*goes off with his handkerchief to his eyes, L.*)

SCENE THIRD.—*Apartment; window, R. C., door, R.*

Music.—LADY AUDLEY seated L., PHŒBE at the window.

PHŒBE. My lady! my lady!

LADY A. What is the matter?

PHŒBE. There is a fire! a fire, my lady! (LADY AUDLEY rises and walks to the window)

LADY A. Yes, I am afraid it is a fire—at Brentwood, most likely—at any rate, it is nothing to us. (*turning from the window*)

PHŒBE. Oh! my lady, it's nearer, much nearer, it's at Mount Stanning! (LADY AUDLEY walks over to R. to conceal her agitation from PHŒBE) It's the inn that's on fire! (*hurrying forward, L.*) I know it is! I know it is! I have always feared this would happen in some one of Luke's drunken bouts. I wouldn't mind if it was only the wretched place; but there'll be life lost! there'll be life lost! (*crying and wringing her hands distractedly*) There's Luke, too tipsy to help himself, unless others help him! There's Mr. Audley, asleep. (PHŒBE observes LADY AUDLEY as she smiles triumphantly.—struck with a thought, falling on her knees and clasping her hands) Oh, heavens! say it's not true, my lady! say it isn't true! It's too horrible! it's too horrible!

LADY A. What's too horrible?

PHŒBE. The thought that's in my mind,—the dreadful thought that's in my mind.

LADY A. (*fiercely*) What do you mean, girl?

PHŒBE. Why did you go up to the castle to-night, my lady? you who are so 'bittered against Mr. Audley and against Luke, and who knew that they were both under that roof? As there is a heaven above me, I think you went to that place to-night on purpose to set fire to it!

LADY A. (*grasping PHŒBE's arm and dragging her to her feet*) Fool! idiot! coward! is your husband such a precious bargain that you should be lamenting and groaning for him? What is Robert Audley to you, that you behave like a maniac because you think he is in danger? You see a red patch in the sky, and you cry out directly that your own paltry hovel is in flames—as if there were no place in the world that could burn except that. Go home and look after your husband and your lodger—go! (*going up to R. door, and dashing it open*) I don't want you.

PHŒBE. I don't mind your cruel words, my lady—I don't mind anything if I'm wrong.

LADY A. (*sternly*) Go back and see for yourself—I tell you again, I don't want you here. (*Music—she walks forward to L., PHŒBE hurries off, R. door, leaving door open*) It is more than I can bear—suspected—hunted—forced before the world to

wreath my face with smiles, and chatter idle gossip, while my heart is torn with torture—is rent with agony! (*producing a phial*) Oh, that I had courage to swallow but a few drops of this, and so end all for ever! (*reflecting*) Yet, no—why should I, now? (*putting away phial*) That girl will not dare even to hint her suspicions to the world, and I have nothing now to fear. Luke, in his drunkenness, would fall an easy prey, and for the other, I took good care that he should not escape the flames my hand had kindled. Yes, the devouring fire has consumed his life—has left of him nothing but a charred and blackened mass which—

ROBERT AUDLEY enters suddenly, R. door—*Music*—**LADY AUDLEY** utters a wild cry, and staggering back to L., clings to the back of a chair, glaring terror-stricken on **ROBERT**.

ROBERT. You are surprised to see me, my lady! Do you know how I escaped perishing in the fire last night at Mount Stanning?

LADY A. (*hoarsely and with difficulty whispering*) No.

ROBERT. I did not sleep in the room that had been prepared for me, so that the door of that room was double locked to no purpose. The place seemed wretchedly damp and chilly, and the chimney smoked abominably, and I persuaded the servant to make me up a bed upon the sofa in the small ground floor sitting room which I had occupied during the evening. (*LADY AUDLEY's head droops upon her breast*) My Lady Audley, you were the incendiary. It was you whose murderous hand kindled those flames. It was you who thought by that thrice horrible deed to rid yourself of me—your enemy and denouncer. What was it to you that other lives might be sacrificed? If you could have ridded yourself of me, you would have freely sacrificed an army of victims. (*LADY AUDLEY sinks groaning into the chair*) I bore the poor drunken wretch through the flames, but not till he was burnt beyond hope of recovery, grateful to me, he has desired to see me ere he dies; he has, he says, a confession to make to me which concerns yourself and George Talboys. (*LADY AUDLEY shivers convulsively*) For the last time I ask you, will you confess what you are, and who you are, in the presence of the man you have deceived so long. (*LADY AUDLEY starts suddenly to her feet, erect and resolute, dashing her hair from her face*)

LADY A. Bring Sir Michael! bring him here, and I will confess everything—everything! what do I care? Heaven knows I have struggled hard enough against you, and fought the battle patiently enough, but you have conquered, Mr. Robert Audley. It is a great triumph is it not? a wonderful victory! You have used your cool, calculating, frigid,

luminous intellect to a noble purpose. You have conquered a madwoman.

ROBERT. A madwoman?

LADY A. Yes! when you say that I killed George Talboys, you say the truth. When you say that I murdered him treacherously and foully, you lie—I killed him because *I am mad!* because when George Talboys goaded me, as you have goaded me, and reproached me, and threatened me, my mind never properly balanced, utterly lost its balance, and I was mad! Shall I tell you where you may find the mangled body of your friend? at the bottom of the well in the old lime tree walk. Now bring Sir Michael, and let him rightly know the woman he has wedded, let him know that she is a bigamist, an incendiary and a murderer! let him know too that she is mad! that she is mad! (*laughs wildly, tossing up her arms, and then dashing herself to the ground.* ROBERT is standing petrified.—Music.)

SCENE FOURTH.—*Front Chamber.*

Enter ALICIA, R.

ALICIA. Robert has entirely deserted me, fallen in love with some one else, I dare say. As if it wasn't always expected that a cousin was to fall in love with his cousin, when his cousin is a female cousin, *I mean*. If I had known that he intended never to propose to me, I might have turned my attention to somebody else! Oh! the wretch, why did he make himself so agreeable, and compel me to fall in love with him, if he never intended to marry me.

Enter ROBERT, R.

ROBERT. Alicia, my dear, where is Sir Michael?

ALICIA. My father! in the library, I believe. Goodness, what is the matter with you? You look so doleful—that is enough to make one burst into tears only to look at you!

ROBERT. Nonsense, Alicia; there is nothing the matter with me except that—

ALICIA. Yes, you?

ROBERT. Nothing!

ALICIA. Nothing?

ROBERT. Yes, that is all that is the matter with me, I assure you.

ALICIA. I know better, sir; the wax doll has struck you!

ROBERT. (*preoccupied*) Upon my word, nobody has struck me with a wax doll! Oh, now I see; you mean—

ALICIA. Do you know, sir, that I have many admirers; that I might, if I liked, marry half-a-dozen young gentlemen?

ROBERT. No you might not; there is an Act of Parliament which expressly forbids such terrible immorality!

ALICIA. How silly !

ROBERT. Yes, very silly—I quite agree with you. But you mean, I suppose, that there are fellows in love with you; and I am not at all surprised, for you are a fine, generous-hearted, bouncing girl !

ALICIA. I don't like to be called bouncing; I hate to be thought a bouncer. I know you would think more of me if I were pale and consumptive.

ROBERT. Well, then, can't you contrive to procure an interesting inflammation of the lungs? Alicia, I am your cousin; so consider me your brother.

ALICIA. I don't want a brother.

ROBERT. No; because you would not be allowed to marry your brother. Alicia, if you have set your heart on being my wife, say so; for in that case it would become my duty—

ALICIA. I don't want a dutiful husband: I want one that would lové me.

ROBERT. Well, I love you—

ALICIA. You do?

ROBERT. Have always loved you—

ALICIA. You have?

ROBERT. In the most cousinly manner; and, of course, if you wish it, I will marry you.

ALICIA. You will?

ROBERT. Some day: and you will have to wait; I can't tell how long? for just now I have something far more important to attend to.

ALICIA. But, Robert, —

ROBERT. Don't detain me, I must seek Sir Michael.

ALICIA. Yes; but —

ROBERT. (*crosses to L.*) Don't bother me, now, there's a good girl; say no more about it now, and we'll talk the matter over, when I come back here, next winter.

Exit, L.

ALICIA. He wants me to wait till the spring-time of my life is gone; but now that it is arranged that we are to be married, it is for me to fix the day; and I'll name an early one, and if he objects, I'll have half-a-dozen stout men to carry him to church.

Exit, L.

Enter BIBBLES slowly, R., stops and puts his handkerchief to his eyes.

BIBBLES. A charming creature! her lady is a great favourite, receiving, besides her present mistress, a handsome—oh! the more I think of it, the more I feel the loss I have sustained—young women with a little bit of property are so very scarce.

MARTIN. (*entering L.*) You know, I suppose, that the lady of your love has been burnt out?

BIBBLES. Yes, and my heart is frozen out. Oh! Phœbe Marks!

MARTIN. Why grieve now that she is lost to you for ever?

BIBBLES. You don't know what a cruel blow it is, to be disappointed when you have set your heart on a charming creature, who, receiving besides—

MARTIN. Yes, I know, but there are other charming creatures who having been careful of their wages and perquisites, have a nice little bit of money.

BIBBLES. I don't care about money, but such a man as I am ought not to go to any woman for nothing; and when I hear of sensible females who have saved some money, I always wish that I could marry them all, and take them and their property in a lump. But where find these charming creatures?

MARTIN. Well, here is one of them.

BIBBLES. You? you have saved a sum of money?

MARTIN. Yes, I have lived in this service almost from my childhood, and have been very careful.

BIBBLES. Martin, my dear, I have long entertained a secret affection for you.

MARTIN. For Phœbe you mean?

BIBBLES. Never! what do I care for the poor burnt-out wretch? My grief for her loss was all a pretence, because my manly pride could not endure that you should behold a love I feared you could never requite.

MARTIN. Why should you fear that, and you in such a responsible situation, and such a fine and portly man.

BIBBLES. I was, till I lost my— (*placing his hand on his stomach*)

MARTIN. If I must confess it, I have long entertained a partiality for you, Mr. Bibbles.

BIBBLES. And you are the girl that I have all my life been looking for.

MARTIN. Your noble presence, your dignified bearing—

BIBBLES. Your sparkling eyes, and the bit of money you have saved—

MARTIN. I always said my husband should be a fine, tall, stout man.

BIBBLES. And I made up my mind that my wife should be a little creature, timid as a fawn, and slim and delicate as a clothes prop. Come to my majestic arms. (*embracing her*)

Enter BUBBLES, R.

BUBBLES. Oh! here's goings on. Is it part of a butler's duty to cuddle the female domestics?

BIBBLES. What business have you here? None at all with this young lady of property, I am quite certain.

BUBBLES. No, for I see that it's you who are the man in possession.

BUBBLES. What do you want?

BUBBLES. I thought you wouldn't bear malice, and as I am out of place—nobody seems to know when they have got a steady, and sober young man!

BUBBLES. Why you are drunk now!

BUBBLES. That's to celebrate my return to sobriety, for I left off drinking half an hour ago, and I'll never drink any more!

MARTIN. Give him one more trial?

BUBBLES. At this blissful moment I can refuse you nothing, dearest!

BUBBLES. And you shall find that I'll be sober every day of my life—*(aside)* and I won't let him see me when I'm drunk every night.

MARTIN. How is Luke Marks?

BUBBLES. Dead! burnt and crushed; couldn't get over it. I am sorry to say he was far from being a sober young man!

BUBBLES. Oh! gracious, then, Phœbe is now a widow!

MARTIN. Well, Mr. Bubbles, what is that to you?

BUBBLES. Nothing my love, merely an observation, nothing more. *(aside—crosses, L.)* I forgot for the moment that the charming was no longer receiving her lady with a liberal besides, and—no—that's not right; but never mind.

Trio.—“Come Lasses and Lads.”

MARTIN. Upon the hill brow is the church you know,
And thither we soon will hie.

BUBBLES. And when we are wed, we'll have such a spread,
And to eat a good lot I'll try;
With lots of choicest wine—

BUBBLES. That's quite understood;
And I'll drink it, drink it, drink it, drink it,
'Cause I know it's good.

OMNES. And we'll drink it, &c., &c.,
'Cause we know its good.

MARTIN. I'll talk very loud, and I'll feel very proud,
When I am a butler's wife.

BUBBLES. And we'll have a boy, to be our joy
And the glory of our life;
To make him grow up smart,
I'll do the best I can.

BUBBLES. And make him a steady, steady, steady, steady,
and sober man.

OMNES. And we'll make him, a steady, steady, steady,
steady, and sober man;
Fol, lol, tol, lol, &c. *Reel, sing, and dance off, L.*

SCENE FIFTH.—*Apartment as before.*

Music.—ROBERT, L.; SIR MICHAEL, R., looking horror-stricken on LADY AUDLEY, who is c., crouching on both knees before him, her face covered with her hands.

SIR M. I cannot hear any more of this terrible secret which, now revealed to me, must embitter all the years yet left to me. Robert, you will not act too harshly with her whom I have thought—my wife. You will remember in all you do, that I have loved her very dearly and truly. I cannot say farewell to her. I can but pity her, as I now pray that heaven may pity her. (*going slowly, R.*)

LADY A. (*raising her head*) I should be sorry for you if I could, for you have been very good to me; but I can't, I can't. I can feel nothing but my own misery. I have ever been selfish, now more selfish than ever in my misery. Happy, prosperous people may feel for others—I laugh at other people's sufferings, they seem so small compared to my own. (*SIR MICHAEL goes dejectedly off, D. R.; LADY AUDLEY rising*) Let me go—my brain is on fire. (*crosses, L.*)

ROBERT. My uncle may believe that you are insane—I do not deem you mad, but dangerous; yet, for all our sakes, madness shall be supposed the excuse for your crimes, and the rest of your life shall pass in the mad woman's proper home.

LADY A. (*alarmed*) What mean you?

ROBERT. A lunatic asylum, my lady.

LADY A. No, no, not that, oh, heaven! not that.

ROBERT. It is a fate too merciful for you—double murdereress, that you are!

LADY A. Double murdereress?

ROBERT. Yes, Luke Marks is dead of the hurts received in the fire you kindled.

LADY A. Ah! but you shall not take me to a madhouse—I will not be buried while yet alive—I would laugh at you and defy you if I dared. I would kill myself and defy you if I dared. But I am a poor pitiful coward, and have been so from the first, afraid of my mother's horrible inheritance, afraid of poverty, afraid of George Talboys, afraid of you; but you shall not take me to a madhouse, you shall not! you shall not! (*rushing wildly off, L.*)

ROBERT. I will do that which I think just to others and merciful to her—I will give her time and opportunity for repentance.

Enter GEORGE TALBOYS, hastily, R. door, very pale.

TALBOYS. Robert! Robert! dear friend.

ROBERT. (*recoiling, amazed*) Great heavens! George Talboys, and living!

TALBOYS. Yes, yes, dear friend. (*they embrace*)

ROBERT. I have mourned you as dead; believed that your wife—but, where have you been? Why did she confess to having slain you, if—oh! can it be true that she is mad indeed.

TALBOYS. Luke Marks rescued me, with much difficulty, from the well into which I had fallen, after receiving the murderous blow intended for my slaughter; he conveyed me to his home, and there I have languished until now, his prisoner. His death has set me free.

ROBERT. And why—why—

TALBOYS. That he might have power o'er my wife—I mean o'er Lady Audley. Oh! Robert, you will be silent—I could not bear to see her perish shamefully. I will return to foreign climes, and leave her to the wealth and splendour she has sinned so horribly to obtain.

ROBERT. Oh! too late, too late for that; to Sir Michael she has confessed her guilt—and now—

LADY A. (*entering totteringly, L.*) I shall not go to a madhouse—I shall not! I—(*seeing TALBOYS and standing petrified*) Ah! It is his spirit!—I have seen it in my dreams! but thus—oh! mercy!—mercy!

TALBOYS. Helen, let it comfort you to know that you have failed in your dreadful purpose—that I pardon you, and will go where you may never more behold me—where I shall be as though I were, indeed, dead to you!

LADY A. Talk not to me thus; it is to mock my agony, for I am dying!

BOTH. Dying!

LADY A. Your threat (*to ROBERT*)—the madhouse! I have taken poison—death is on me even now! (*sinking to the ground*) If I had but delayed a few minutes only!—but this torture heaven had reserved for the supreme moment! Oh, agony more terrible than those with which the poison racks my frame! but 'tis almost over. You will not give my memory to infamy? No, you will not dare!—for your own sakes you will not dare! and buried in the grave with her will be “Lady Audley’s Secret”—ah!

(*half raises herself, presses both hands to her heart, and falls back dead; SIR MICHAEL appears, door R., and gazes on her with grief and terror; TALBOYS kneels beside her, covering his face with his hands; ROBERT raises his hands towards heaven. Music*)

Curtain.