

8

A BLIGHTED BEING.

A FARCE,

IN ONE ACT.

ADAPTED FROM THE FRENCH VAUDEVILLE

“ UNE EXISTENCE DÉCOLORÉE.”

BY

TOM TAYLOR, ESQ.

Author of a Trip to Kissengen, Diogenes and his Lantern, The Philosopher's Stone, The Vicar of Wakefield, To Parents and Guardians, Our Clerks, Little Red Riding Hood, &c., &c.; 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.

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LONDON.

90954

A BLIGHTED BEING.

*Originally produced at the Royal Olympic Theatre, on Monday,
October 16th, 1854.*

CHARACTERS.

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|---|----------------|
| JOB WORT..... | MR. F. ROBSON. |
| NED SPANKER | MR. H. LESLIE. |
| CUMMING | MR. H. COOPER. |
| THE O'RAFFERTY (<i>an Irish Apothecary</i>) | MR. DANVERS. |
| SUSAN SPANKER | MISS E. TURNER |

COSTUMES.

Job Wort—A suit of grey tweed, modern cut; a dark red stripe down the trousers; Byron collar; black wig with long hair.

Ned Spanker—Blue frock coat, with brass buttons; blue trousers and waistcoat; a waterproof over-coat and shiny cap.

Cumming—Suit of black, and white cravat; shoes.

O'Rafferty—1st dress: Shabby morning gown and slippers.
2nd dress: Seedy black coat and fancy tweed trousers; straggling head of hair.

Susan Spanker—Silk dress of dark colour; silk apron; mart cap.

SCENE—A SEA-SIDE WATERING PLACE.

TIME—THE PRESENT DAY.

Time of Representation—44 Minutes.

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A BLIGHTED BEING.

SCENE.—(An enclosed one)—The coffee-room of a coast hotel in the 3rd grooves. Two windows painted in flat. Side flat L., with practicable door. Side flat R., with painted window and practicable door. In centre of back, between the windows, a sideboard furnished with the requisites of a coffee-room—glasses, &c. On L.H., at back, a table (covered) with pens, ink, paper, envelopes, &c. A chair behind the table. On R.H., at back, a table with white table-cloth, knives and forks laid, and a chair on each side of table. In centre of stage a larger table, with white table-cloth, knife, fork, salt, &c., laid on it (on R.H.), chairs R. and L. of table. A carpet down on stage.

Enter NED SPANKER, L.D., shewn in by CUMMING, with a carpet bag or valise (SPANKER is dressed rather roughly, half sailor fashion, hale, and bronzed, with a large pair of whiskers meeting under his chin).

CUMMING. (quickly, and flourishing his napkin) Room, sir? Yez, sir; this way, sir. Breakfast, sir? Srimps, sir? Yez, sir.

SPANKER. Just clap a stopper on your jaw, my man—I tell you I want to see Miss Spanker.

CUM. Yez, sir, that's me, sir.

SPAN. You?

CUM. That is for gents, sir. Missus receives the married parties and the ladies. I receive the gents, sir; it's missus's order, sir.

SPAN. But I'm not a gent—and I want to see Miss Spanker herself.

CUM. Yez, sir, Certainly, sir. What would you please to take, sir?

SPAN. The liberty of looking for her myself, if you won't shew me the way (*crossing to R.H.*)

CUM. Beg parding, sir, but I've my orders. You see missus is a young person, new to business, sir; we've such a many queer customers here, sometimes, sir—no offence, sir! If it had been *old* missus, sir, I'd have shewn you to her with pleasure, sir; but old missus is dead, sir (L.).

SPAN. (R.) I know, I know.

CUM. Oh, you know, sir—yes, sir! and you see, sir, a young person, sir, like missus, is nat'rally timid; and gents, sir, they likes their fun, sir.

SPAN. And Miss Spanker doesn't like it—eh?

CUM. Exactly, sir—you're up to it, I see, sir. So when old missus died, and young missus came into the 'ouse, sir, and the business, finding me on the premises, sir, why, nat'rally, she trusts a good deal to me, sir, as a protection, sir.

SPAN. *You* a protection! Poor Susan! However, I'll soon set that all to rights.

CUM. You, sir! Beg parding, but—

SUSAN. (*without, R.D.*) Cumming!

CUM. Coming, miss! That's me, sir; I'm Cumming, sir. I must be going, sir.

SPAN. Hold on, I tell you; I'm—(*with his back to R.H.*)

Enter SUSAN impatiently, R.D.

SUSAN. How often am I to call, Cumming?

SPAN. (*turning round*) Suzy!

SUSAN. (*with a scream of pleased surprise*) Ned! dear Ned! (*rushes into his arms*)

CUM. (L.) Well!

SPAN. (c.) Didn't expect *me*, Suzy darling! The steamer's just in at Southampton. I've a week's leave, and I thought I couldn't spend it better than with you.

CUM. (L.) Well!

SUSAN. (R.) Oh, I am so glad to see you! Get a room ready for my brother, Cumming—it's my brother.

CUM. Oh, yes, miss; directly, miss.

SUSAN. This is Cumming, Ned; he's the waiter, and *so* attentive; I don't know what I should have done when poor aunt died and left the house on my shoulders if it hadn't been for Cumming.

SPAN. Tip us your fist, old boy; and I'm much obliged to you. By Jove, Suzy, he guards you like a blockade ship! Wouldn't let me see you just now!

CUM. Beg parding, I'm sure, sir; but not knowing you were missus's brother—

SPAN. You were quite right, old boy; I know what an hotel is, at a watering place, with a pretty girl in the bar.

SUSAN. But go and see the best room got ready directly. Cumming.

CUM. Yes, miss; directly, miss. Take your bag, sir? Hope no offence, sir! Took you for a gent, sir! (*crosses behind to R.H.*)

Exit CUMMING, R.H.D., taking carpet bag, then re-enter, crosses at back, and exit, L.D.

SUSAN. Oh, Ned! I'm so glad you've come at last. Good gracious! why it's two years since you've been at home.

SPAN. Yes; and I've been round the world in the time, Suzy. But now I've got a capital berth with the Peninsular and Oriental, and I shall be able to run down on you every six months or so, between our trips.

SUSAN. Every six months or so! Oh, dear! that's a long time to wait, and I feel so lonely and strange sometimes, Ned; you've no idea what a poor girl's difficulties are, managing an hotel at a watering-place.

SPAN. I can fancy 'em, Sue, with no protector but a waiter. But we must find you a better—that's all.

SUSAN. Oh, Ned, if you'd only come and set up here as a surgeon.

SPAN. No, no; people don't come to the sea-side to be doctored, but to escape the doctors. I should starve; besides, I like fresh air and a roving life.

SUSAN. And never think of your poor little Susan left all alone here.

SPAN. She sha'n't be left alone any longer. I'll find her a husband, and as I've only a week to do it in, the sooner I begin the better.

SUSAN. Oh, nonsense, Ned, you sailors are such tearing, hasty fellows.

SPAN. Perhaps you can help me; come, is there anybody you've a fancy for?

SUSAN. Oh, how can you ask me such a ridiculous question?

SPAN. Is there anybody has a fancy for you ?

SUSAN. Oh !—well—no—really—Ned—

SPAN. Out with it !

SUSAN. There was Mr. O'Rafferty, the Surgeon and Apothecary, in the High Street. He did, *once*, rather—but then he's so hasty, and, besides, they say he's dreadfully wild ; and then I really don't think I care a bit about him.

SPN. Anybody else ?

SUSAN. Well, there is a young man—

SPAN. I thought there must be. Heave ahead !

SUSAN. A most amiable young man, and so unhappy, and so fond of poetry ! Oh, you've no idea. He writes quantities of such melancholy verses, and reads them all to me, and they make me cry so you can't think, and then he cries too.

SPAN. Pleasant style of messmate, I should think. And how long have you known this lively party ?

SUSAN. About six weeks ; he came here to spend the day.

SPAN. And he has taken six weeks to spend it in ! If he makes his money go as far as his time, he'll be an economical husband ; and I suppose all this six weeks he has been making love to you, eh ?

SUSAN. Making love ? oh no, making verses !

SPAN. But what's his business ?

SUSAN. He says he's a " Blighted Being."

SPAN. Hang it ! that's not a business ; but I must look after this gentleman, for if he is playing the fool with you—

SUSAN. Oh, I assure you nothing can be more respectful.

Enter CUMMING, L. D., with newspapers, which he puts on c. table.

CUM. The papers, Miss, from London. And there's a party by the train as wants apartments—a lady and gentleman, Miss, looks married, and has lots of luggage.

SUSAN. Very well. I'll wait on them. I shall be back directly, Ned, (*crosses to L.*)

SPAN. Meantime I'll overhaul this verse-making chap.

SUSAN. (L.) Is Mr. Wort in the house, Cumming ?

CUM. (*at back, busying himself at sideboard*) Not at present, Miss ; (*coming forward, c.*) he received a letter on business this morning, and he's walked down to consult Mr.

Bran—that's the attorney, sir—he ordered breakfast agin he come back, sir—srumps and a muffing.

SPAN. (R.) Very well. Run away, Suzy, and I'll take a spell at the *Times* till he heaves in sight. (*taking up paper*)

SUSAN. (L.) But mind, Ned, don't breathe a syllable of what I've told you, because he's never said a word about love to me, and I've never said a word to him, and you sailors are so rash—

SPAN. (*kissing her*) Never fear, Suzy—I'll be as cautious as a North Sea pilot.

Exit SUSAN, followed by CUMMING, L. D.

SPAN. (*goes up to table by R. window and sits, looking at paper*) Holloa! here's the last news from the Baltic! Confound those *Rooshians*! won't come out of their holes, and have a stand up fight, like men..

Enter JOB WORT, L. D.

JOB. (*sighs*) It's too bad! The attornies are like all the rest of the species—can't comprehend moral sufferings—ain't up to

“The stinging of a heart the world has stung.”

I've tried to make that hard headed lawyer understand my position as a wretch. He charges me 6s. 8d. as a client. When I painted my sufferings as a human being, he asked me if I'd tried “Gregory's powder!” Disgusting!

SPAN. (R. *looking up from the paper*) Eh! I know that voice! Why—yes—of course it is—the very man—Job! (*rises and comes forward R.*)

JOB. (L. c.) Who is it that addresses me by that detested monosyllable?

SPAN. (R. c.) Why, Job Wort, don't you remember Ned Spanker?

JOB. (*starts, examines his face, then shakes his hands*) My mind has been the abode of so much misery since I heard that name—

SPAN. Your old chum in Gower-street, man—when you were digging up Latin roots at the college, and I was studying anatomy.

JOB. Ah! that was eight years ago. A waste of wretchedness lies between then and now; but I remember your being plucked, and how drunk we got together on that melancholy occasion.

SPAN. What a spree we had that night !

JOB. And what a headache I had the next morning !

SPAN. But what the deuce has come over you ? You were a jolly fellow enough in those days.

JOB. Yes, life smiled upon me then—I had not tasted the fruits of the Dead Sea, and found them ashes on my lips !—I have lived on those fruits ever since.

SPAN. Uncommon dry eating, I should think ! But what have you been about since we parted ? I—to try my fortune as a surgeon on board an emigrant ship—and you—

JOB. To enter my uncle's brewery, at Little Pedlington, as a clerk, with the prospect of a partnership.—Ha ! ha ! ha ! I a clerk in a provincial brewery, with my literary aspirations—my deep susceptibilities ! Oh ! how bitter was the bread I earned—how bitter was the beer I brewed !

SPAN. Well, that's a recommendation for the India trade, you know.

JOB. I allude to its moral bitterness. Speaking as a brewer, I believe it was insipid. My uncle soon found out that I was not worth my salt, as he coarsely expressed it, and I cut Little Pedlington and the mash tub for London and literature.

SPAN. I should have stuck to the tap.

JOB. I dare say you would. (*crosses to R.*) But I felt within me thoughts that “the world,” I fancied, “would not willingly let die,” and I determined to give them to the world. Sir—the world wouldn't have em—that is, the block-head editors and the sordid publishers would not give me a rap for the verses that flowed from me like a lava flood, hot from the volcano of the heart.

SPAN. (*R. C.*) Perhaps they were afraid it might set the shop on fire. Paper's a very combustible cargo.

JOB. (*R. C.*) Luckily I had enough to live upon without their aid, so I determined to be my own publisher. I brought out my antediluvian epic in sixteen books. It fell dead from the press.

SPAN. I hope it didn't hurt anybody.

JOB. Sir, if my sufferings are to be made the subject of coarse jokes, I will not trouble you with them further. I thought I had found a friend. It is one more added to the catalogue of deceptions ! (*crosses behind SPANKER to L.*)

SPAN. (R. C.) No, no, old fellow. I feel for you—in-deed I do. Heave ahead!

JOB. (L. C.) I tried the stage—Ha! ha! ha! Poor fool that I was—I tried the stage, sir!

SPAN. And was damn'd—eh?

JOB. No, sir, I wasn't damn'd. The low hirelings, who have the ears of the idiotic managers nowadays, took good care that my tragedies should not find their way to the public. My works were returned, sir, as unsuitable—and so they were unsuitable, sir—I am proud of it!

SPAN. That's right! keep your pecker up, old boy, whatever you do.

JOB. And then I felt that the brand of Cain was upon me—that I was one of the world's accursed—and ever since that time I have dragged my load of misery about the various watering places of the United Kingdom—a Blighted Being!—awaiting with anxiety the time when "I shall shuffle off this mortal coil."

SPAN. Have you travelled much by railway?

JOB. Yes, by excursion trains—but no accident ever happens to the trains I go by. (*crosses to R.*)

SPAN. (L.) That's extraordinary! you should try a trip in one of our steamers. But what are you doing in this out of the way place?

JOB. What I do every where—suffering—waiting and wooing the annihilation that will not come to me. My uncle died a year ago.

SPAN. And left you something, I hope?

JOB. Not a rap! His fortune went to his wife—unless she married again—when it reverts to me.

SPAN. I'm afraid that's a bad look out.

JOB. My man of business in London thought there was a flaw in the will. I consulted the attorney here, this morning, about it—but he says it's all right—so there's £800 a year gone—that I once looked forward to—another deception!

SPAN. But you said you'd something of your own?

JOB. I had—but what with the expenses of my epic—and some railway transactions—that's pretty well gone.

SPAN. What! you've been speculating?

JOB. In the restless search after excitement, I did dabble a little in shares. I got my excitement—but I lost my

money. I've a hundred pounds left—and that spent—I shall be a beggar.

SPAN. And what do you mean to do then?

JOB. Do! Ha! ha! Chalk a mackerel on the pavement and sit by it in gloomy meditation!

SPAN. And what will you turn to then?

JOB. Ah! What! Ha! ha! ha! When a man believes in nothing—succeeds in nothing—looks forward to nothing—and has got nothing—what is there to look forward to—but one thing. (*crosses to L.*)

SPAN. (R.) The bench?

JOB. (*sits L. of C. table*) The grave!

SPAN. (*getting to L. of Job, in front of him*) I say old fellow, I'm a doctor. I've practised in hot climates. I've seen the infernal tricks bile plays with the constitution.

JOB. Bile!

SPAN. Let me prescribe for you.

JOB. Poison?

SPAN. No—blue pill—two grains a day—mutton chop at breakfast—aswingeing walk—a light dinner—two glasses of old sherry—no supper—and early hours. Follow my regimen, and I'll set you right as a trivet in a couple of months.

JOB. Oh! this is bitter! the friend in whose bosom I have shed my flood of anguish, proposes to me a mutton chop and blue pill. Oh, man! man! Can you trifle thus with a misery like mine!

Enter CUMMING, L. D. with breakfast, on tray, which he arranges on C. table.

CUM. Breakfast, sir! (*at back of table c.*)

JOB. Breakfast! Mocker! (*crosses to R.*)

CUM. Mocha, sir! No, sir. Tea, sir—but you can have coffee, sir.

JOB. Away! Away! (*sits R. of c. table*)

CUM. (*aside.*) He'll be peckish enough by and bye! (*to Spanker*) Your room's quite ready, sir—first floor front, sir—Beautiful view of the Hesplanade and the hinnocent hinfants on the beach, sir.

SPAN. Very well. (*aside.*) This dismal party would break Suzy's heart in a week. (*crosses to R. behind table. To WORT*) I say, old fellow—you had better try my prescription.

JOB. (*starting up.*) Mr. Spanker, sir!

"Cans't thou minister to a mind diseased—
"Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow—
"Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
"Which weighs upon the heart?"

SPAN. No—but I can clean out your liver, old fellow.

JOB. "Throw physic to the dogs—I'll none of it."
(*walks up and down*)

SPAN. Very well—as you like.

Exit SPANKER, R. D.

CUM. (*coming down L. H.*) I didn't know you knew missus's brother, sir.

JOB. (R.) What brother?

CUM. Mr. Spanker, sir; the gent who was here just now. Come from sea, sir, to find missus a husband, I think, sir.

JOB. A husband for your mistress! Who?

CUM. Well, he ain't particular, sir, I think, so as the party's respectable, sootable in fortin', and agreeable to missus. Leastways, that's as I make it out from what I heard.

JOB. Ah, poor thing! She, too, is to be sacrificed at the altar of mammon! I had thoughts sometimes that Miss Spanker—, but let them go. Oh! the world! the world! how I loathe the world!

CUM. Sir?

JOB. I say I loathe the world!

CUM. No, do you, sir?

JOB. (*apostrophizing CUMMING*) Even this wretched waiter—he has done me no harm, and yet I loathe him.

CUM. Who, sir?

JOB. You. I say you have done me no harm, and yet I loathe you.

CUM. Sorry for that, sir, I'm sure, sir. Might I ask what for, sir?

JOB. Simply as a unit in the sum of human selfishness; personally, I have every reason to be satisfied with you—you are quiet, clean, attentive.

CUM. I 'ope so, sir, I'm sure.

JOB. Though, by the bye, Cumming, you didn't come to shave me this morning.

CUM. Why, you never asked me this morning, sir, and I thought perhaps you was taking to shave yourself again.

JOB. (*aside*) Ah ! he doesn't comprehend the frightful temptation of a razor ! No ! I don't think my hand's steady enough yet.—Cumming.

CUM. Very well, sir.

JOB. But in the course of the morning, perhaps, Cumming—

CUM. Yez, sir.

JOB. I respect you as a man—I am grateful to you as waiter, Cumming.

CUM. Yez, sir.

JOB: If anything should happen to me, Cumming, one of these days—if I should go out bathing, you know, and never come back, Cumming, you'll find I've not forgotten your attention.

CUM. Oh ! I'm sure, sir—I 'ope there's no fear.

JOB. I've left a will, Cumming. It's in my writing case.

CUM. Bless me, sir, I 'ope there's no occasion for talking in this way, sir. Why, you're as 'ale and 'earty a gent—

JOB. Outside, Cumming ; but if you could look into the hited sepulchre, and see the bones, Cumming !

CUM. Lor' bless me, sir ! (*aside*) Something wrong with his bones ! Poor gentleman !

JOB. You will take charge of my will, Cumming. You will find I've not forgotten you.

CUM. Very much obliged, I'm sure, sir.

JOB. I had hoped that Miss Spanker—but as she's going to be married—

CUM. (*goes up to table*) But the tea's getting cold, sir ! Will you take breakfast, sir ?

JOB. No ! no !

CUM. Anything I can get you, sir ? Veal cutlet, chop, steak, or kidney ? Small glass of brandy, neat, sir ? Fine thing to steady the 'and, sir.

JOB. All I have to ask is—that you will leave me alone with my misery.

CUM. In course, sir—if you prefer it, sir. You wouldn't like a fresh muffing, sir ?

JOB. No, no ! leave me !

CUM. If you want more 'ot water, sir, you've only to ring.

JOB. Thank you, I've quite enough. *Exit CUMMING, L.*

Alone at last ! Alone with my blighted heart, and my despair. Why don't I make an end of it at once ? What o'clock is it, I wonder ? (*looks at his watch*) Half-past ten ! Eh ! Perhaps as I've ordered breakfast, I may as well go through with the hollow mockery of the morning meal. (*sits at R. of table, c.*) I'll put it off till five. Yes, at five to night, Job Wort will be—By the bye, though, I forgot I had ordered a broiled mackerel and a steak at five ! Perhaps I had better play out the day's farce, and to-night—Job Wort—what's this ? Are you a coward or a humbug ? No ! The marriage of that girl is the last deception I will suffer from—I will at once wind up the miserable concern called life ! But the means ? Drowning is tedious—and here, where everybody bathes—they might pull me out—the chances are ten to one against a man being allowed to drown himself in peace. A razor ! But judging by the cuts one gets in shaving one's self, I fancy it must be painful. And then it would shock poor Miss Spanker, and might ruin the hotel ! When one comes to think, what objections one finds to every road out of this maze called existence ! If anybody else would do it for one when one wasn't expecting it ! It would be such a comfort to slip out of life by the back door, as one may say.

Enter O'RAFFERTY, L.D., hastily ; he crosses quickly to the window in R. H. side flat, and looks cautiously out.

O'RAF. Hurroo ! I've done the scoundrels ! Yes, there they go—the bloodhounds !—into the Assembly Rooms. Go along with ye there, ye rapparees ! ye murthing ruffians !

JOB. Murthing ruffians, sir ! Where ? (L.)

O'RAF. (*turning round, R.*) Sure it wasn't to you, sir, I was addressing myself !

JOB. I trust not, sir.

O'RAF. And why wouldn't I be addressing myself to you, sir, or any man ? Sir, I'm the most unfortunate of human craythers !

JOB. You don't say so, sir ! Allow me to have the pleasure of shaking hands with you.

O'RAF. Sir to you ! Proud to make your acquaintance. (*shakes hands*)

JOB. Might I enquire, without impertinence, the cause of your distress ?

O'RAF. Sir, you see before you a victim—

JOB. A victim ! (*shaking hands again*)

O'RAF. To over confidence in my fellow-man.

JOB. (*shaking hands again*) My dear sir ! You, too, have found the world hollow ?

O'RAF. As an ould pill-box ! The being to whom in a rash hour I gave—

JOB. Your heart ?

O'RAF. My acceptance—has taken advantage of a temporary embarrassment to get judgment against me, and at this moment I'm a fugitive from the myrmidons of the law—the myrmidons of the law ! (*crossing, L.*) I am at this moment forced to lave my purshuits in the abstruse branches of chemistry—

JOB. (R.) A chemist !

O'RAF. (L.) And dhruggist, sir. Yes ! Thaddeus O'Rafferty, Mimber of the Royal College of Surgeons, and formerly of Trinity, Doblin, has been reduced to keep a shop for the sale of dhrugs by retail in this remote quarther of the United Kingdom, and is at this moment on the point of being what is vulgarly called "sould up," for the want of a dirty hundhred pound note ! But it's not that that breaks my heart entirely, sir : its being forced to lave my sublime investigations in toxicology ! You're a scholar, sir ?

JOB. (L.) Yes ; I understand—the science of poisons; a subject of the deepest interest to me.

O'RAF. (R.) Yes, sir, you see before you the author of an unpublished threatise "on the art of poisoning mad dogs without suffering to the animals."

JOB. Poisoning mad dogs without suffering—

O'RAF. My method is aiually applicable to individuals bitten by the rabid animals. I was about to presint my manuscript to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, when that durty wholesale London dhruggist came down upon me for his bill. But the sheriff's officer had better think twice of it that lays his hands on Thaddeus O'Rafferty !

JOB. You surely would not resist the law !

O'RAF. Sir, I'm a native of Tipperary, and am used to defy the Saxon—especially if he's a bailiff. The law ! A fig for the law, sir ! (*snaps his fingers*) I'm a desperate man, sir ! (*crosses to L.*)

JOB. (*aside R.*) Desperate and an Irishman ! Perhaps

he wouldn't mind—Sir, you're in want of a hundred pounds?

O'RAF. I'm not particular, sir, to the figures: if it was £200 I'd not quarrel with it.

JOB. I've £100 at your service.

O'RAF. I accept it, sir.

JOB. But on one condition.

O'RAF. Bother the conditions, sir! I'll give you my acceptance at three months.

JOB. No; I don't want to be repaid.

O'RAF. Then you'd better take my bill.

JOB. But you must do me a service for the money.

O'RAF. A service! name it. I'm your man! (*sits carelessly on chair, L.*)

JOB. (*sits c.*) You must promise to do what I ask you, blindly, exactly, and above all, secretly.

O'RAF. I'm blind and dumb.

JOB. Mind, it's what scrupulous people would call a crime!

O'RAF. Sir, I'm above any paltry feeling on that score.

JOB. If discovered, it might bring you within the pale of the law.

O'RAF. Sir, that's a pale I've a pleasure in laping over. But stop, there's one difficulty! will I be afther having to lave this asylum?

JOB. It will probably require you to return to your shop.

O'RAF. The devil! I'm afraid that'll be mighty difficult, barrin' I'd the money first.

JOB. I understand—to get rid of the bailiffs, here's the money. (*gives notes*)

O'RAF. (*flourishing the notes*) Hurroo! Look at that, ye spalpeens! Thaddeus O'Rafferty walks abroad agin, in the proud consciousness of freedom. And what'll I do for it?

JOB. (*aside*) I can't bring myself to tell him; it will be less startling if communicated in writing! Go at once, settle with the bailiffs, return to your shop, and there you will receive a letter, with a full, true, and particular account of the service for which this sum is payment.

O'RAF. An' you wouldn't like my bill?

JOB. Not the least occasion for it.

O'RAF. Sir, I'll not be afther denying that I receive this dirty dthross wid pleasure, but what's that to the flattering

satisfaction I derive from your confidence in the honour of Thaddeus O'Rafferty. Send me the letter, and consider the thing done—if it was murder.

Exit O'RAFFERTY, L. D.

JOB. Murder! He doesn't know how nearly he has hit it! For once destiny has proved my friend, to send this desperate man, just as I was looking for an instrument of self-destruction. Now to write my letter. (*sits at table L. and writes*)—“My dear friend, the service I wish you to do for me is this: be kind enough to consider me one of the rabid animals for whose painless removal from this world you have invented a method. I am not particular as to the mode, provided it acts without my knowing anything about it. Poison would, on the whole, be preferable to me, and probably most congenial to your habits as a Professor of the healing art. I remain, your humble servant, Job Wort.” (*he folds, and is about to direct the letter*)

Enter SUSAN and SPANKER, R.D., with a double-barrelled gun in his hand.

SPAN. (r.) I tell you, Susan, it's out of the question! Why, he'll croak you to death in the honeymoon!

SUSAN. (r.c.) Well, I always found him very kind and good-tempered.

JOB. (*at table L., looking up from directing the letter*) Who's there? Must even a man's last moments be embittered by society?

SPAN. I beg your pardon for disturbing you, Mr. Wort, but Cumming told me you hadn't touched your breakfast.

JOB. Breakfast! Talk not to me of breakfast! Miss Spanker, I'm not hungry.

SUSAN. Your tea is stone cold. Do let me make you some more, nice and hot.

SPAN. Now, Susan, I'll be off, and take a crack at the gulls; and, by the way, I'll just have a look at this Mr. O'Rafferty. (*crossing to L.*)

JOB. (*coming down L.C.*) O'Rafferty? Do you know him?

SPAN. No; but Susan here does, and I've my reasons for making his acquaintance.

JOB (*agitated*) Another good turn of destiny! Extraordinary coincidence! just as I wanted somebody to carry this letter to him! If you'd take charge of it for me——

SPAN. (L.) Hand it over. (WORT gives him letter) Why, what's the matter, man? you're shaking like a nigger in the ague.

SUSAN. (R.) You really do look very ill, sir. It's going so long without breakfast. Oh, please do let me give you some hot tea.

JOB. No, no; I'm all right—as well as can be expected—that is—

SPAN. (*who has been watching him, aside*) There's mischief in that letter, or I'm a Dutchman! I didn't know you knew this Irish apothecary.

JOB. No more I do—that is—yes—I made his acquaintance here this morning—a most agreeable man. I was merely writing to him—in fact, to amuse myself. Why shouldn't one amuse one's self by writing—to—an apothecary? People are continually writing to apothecaries. One wants some carbonate of soda for the heartburn, or a black draught, or a box of jujubes. (*looking at SUSAN*) What a sweet girl that is!

SPAN. (*aside*) I must fathom this business. Very well, I'll deliver the letter. (*going L.*)

JOB. Eh! (*looking at SUSAN—stops SPANKER*) Well—I don't know—

SPAN. (*stopping*) Eh!

JOB. No, nothing—good bye—Heaven bless you! (*shakes his hand warmly*)

SPAN. (*aside*) There's mania in his eye! and, after our talk this morning—yes, this letter must be overhauled.

Exit SPANKER, L.D.

SUSAN goes to door and beckons on CUMMING at L.D.; gives him an order in a low tone, and CUMMING exits, taking the tea-pot with him. WORT sits buried in thought, L. of C. table, his head resting on his hands. SUSAN fidgets about the breakfast equipage, round at back of table to R., pausing to look with interest at WORT.

SUSAN. (*getting very near him, R.C.*) What are you thinking of, Mr. Wort?

JOB. (*startled*) Eh! nothing—that is (*starts up suddenly and kisses her*) I believe that's what I was thinking of.

SUSAN. Oh! (*blushing and recoiling, R.*) Mr. Wort, how can you?

JOB. I don't know—I beg your pardon—Susan—I really beg your pardon for calling you by your Christian name, Susan.

SUSAN. (R.) Oh, I'm not angry, Mr. Wort.

JOB. (L.) Couldn't you pay me off for my impertinence by calling me Job—no—don't; that d—d monosyllable! Or Wort—that's worse. There's a couple of names! Why wasn't it in the comparative, *Wort-er!* You remember Werther, Susan?

SUSAN. (R. of table) Oh, the poor young man you read to me about, who fell in love with Charlotte as she was cutting bread and butter. (*she cuts bread and butter*)

JOB. (L.) Yes. How gracefully she handles the knife! And afterwards blew out his brains! I'll read you the passage.

SUSAN. (R. stopping her ears) Oh, dreadful! No, I can't bear to hear it! Suicide always seems to me so wicked, and so cowardly, too!

JOB. Cowardly! Ah! Susan, there are agonies that Hercules himself had not strength to bear up against. He called for death to free him from the torments of the fiery shirt of Dejanira; but what was that suffering to his who wears his fiery shirt inside, as I do, Susan!

SUSAN. Oh, Mr. Wort, how can you talk so dreadfully.

JOB. Because I feel it, Susan! Alone as I am in this miserable cold world, without name, fame, fortune, friends.

SUSAN. Friends, no, don't say without friends, Mr. Wort. Not without one friend, at least—a very humble one, I know—but one I'm sure who feels a real sympathy for you, and would show it, if she only knew how—that is—(embarrassed)

JOB. One! Is it possible?

SUSAN. I beg your pardon if I say anything to give you offence, but for this long time past I have seen how unhappy you have been often and often, and wished so I could comfort you, but I didn't know how. But since my brother saw you this morning, he has hinted to me—now, please, don't be vexed—that you had been disappointed in money matters; and if that's all—But you're angry with me?

JOB. Oh! no, no! Bless your kind heart! Go on; pray go on.

SUSAN. I was going to say, that if that's all—I'm not

very rich, but I've a capital business—and I've saved already—oh, so much, you can't think—and if £100 or £200 would be of any use to you, and you would honour me by borrowing it, I should be so happy and so proud, and—Now, you're sure you're not offended?

JOB. Offended! And so you would deprive yourself of your hard earned savings to help me—a poor, nervous, helpless, miserable devil like me—a blighted being, whom destiny has made a plaything of! Oh! Susan, Susan, bless your kind heart! bless you! (*he seizes her hands and kisses them passionately, then rises to her cheek and kisses it, clasping her in his arms*) I beg your pardon! (*kisses her*) I beg your pardon! (*kisses her*) I beg your pardon! (*kisses her*) You don't repulse me, Susan! Oh! Susan, Susan! You love me! (*she hides her head on his shoulder*) You'll be my comforter—my companion—my wife! Oh, my head! Oh, my heart! (*puts his hand on his heart*) Oh! this must be happiness! I never knew what it was till now. (*suddenly recollecting*) And that letter to O'Rafferty! Oh! perhaps he's still within hearing. (*runs to L.D. and calls*) Spanker! Ned Spanker! Ned! Holloa! Hoy!

Enter CUMMING, L.D., with tea pot, which he puts on c. table.

CUM. Beg parding, sir; but if you want Mr. Spanker, sir, I see him go down by the Assembly Rooms just now, sir. He was talking to Mr. O'Rafferty, at his shop door, sir. I see him give a letter.

JOB. (L.) My letter!—Good Heavens, if it should be too late! Well, after all, perhaps it's as well. I'm a beggar—I can't marry this poor girl. (*sinks into chair, L. of c. table*) Yes—yes—let me banish hope from my bosom, and meet my fate with composure.

CUM. (*at back of c. table*) I've brought you some 'ot tea, sir. (*pours it out*) Sugar, sir?—Yez, sir. Cream, sir?—Yez, sir. (*he makes a cup of tea, and sets it by WORT, who drinks it mechanically and convulsively*) Beg parding, Miss, but the parties as come by the train has called for their bill, Miss, and settled; and Boots 'ave called a fly, as they're a-goin'.

SUSAN. So soon?

CUM. Yes, Miss. It appears that the lady, Miss—leastways she's dressed like one—can't a-bear the 'ouse, Miss,

nor the place ; and she said the prawns was stale, Miss—*as if she warn't stale herself.*

SUSAN. (R.) I'm glad they're going, I'm sure—she seemed a very ill-tempered person.

CUM. Uncommon, Miss—and their wedding trip, too, Miss—leastways so I understood from the bad language she gave the gent as was with her, when he flew out a little, and she said as how she'd give up £800 a-year for him, and as she'd never been used to such treatment from poor dear Spilepeg.

JOB. (*starting up*) Did you say Spilepeg ?

CUM. Yez, sir—*wich* I suppose he was her fust 'usband, Poor man !

JOB. Spilepeg ! By Jove, it's my uncle's widow !

CUM. (*goes to window, R. side flat*) Look, Miss !—she's a-gettin' into the fly, Miss, without remembering any of the servants ! There's a *hankle* !

JOB. (*goes to window, R.*) By George ! It is my aunt !—and she's married again, and forfeited the fortune—Huzza ! huzza ! (*jumping about*)

CUM. Sir ! (*at back, C.*)

JOB. Susan, my dear Susan ! I'm worth £800 a-year ; and with a wife like you, and £800 a-year to enjoy ourselves with— But that letter ! No, no !—he's had no time yet to carry out his atrocious design ! Run, Cumming—run directly to Mr. O'Rafferty—say he may keep the £100, but I don't want the prescription I wrote for. He'll understand, Say I've changed my mind—that I'm the happiest of men ; Run, run ! there's not a moment to be lost!—run, run, run ! (*he pushes CUMMING out, L.D.*)

SUSAN. (R.) What fortune ?—what letter ? What is the meaning of this excitement ?

JOB. (L.) It means, Susan, that I am now in a position to recompense your generous kindness by something better than gratitude—by offering you my hand, Susan, with a nice little fortune in it.

SUSAN. Oh, I feel we shall be so happy ? And dear Ned needn't go to sea any more, need he ?—And we'll all live together, shan't we ? (*claps her hands with delight*) But what is that letter, dear, you are so anxious about ?

JOB. Nothing, nothing—merely a prescription. I thought half-an-hour ago it would do me good ; but I

don't seem to want it now. (*re-enter CUMMING, L.D.*) Well, Cumming, well?

CUM. I've seen Mr. O'Rafferty, sir—and I gave him your message, sir. He was just going out, sir, to meet a friend—but he give me this letter for you, sir, and said it was all right, sir. (*gives letter to WORT*)

Exit CUMMING, L.D.

JOB. Capital! capital!—I'll tell you all about it bye and bye, darling! It will serve us to laugh at. (*he opens the letter and reads*) "My generous benefactor—As I am obliged to go out to take a bottle of sherry with Mr. Levi, who has behaved in every respect like a gentleman, I write to say that I've entrusted the business to a sure hand!" The business! "You may depend on it's being administered without your knowing a ha'porth about it." Good gracious! "Administered without your knowing a ha'porth about it." Merciful Powers! (*he drops in chair L. of C., and lets the letter fall*)

SUSAN. (*alarmed*) What's the matter, dear?—no bad news, I hope? (*takes the letter up*) Here's a postscript! (*reads*) "When I've finished the bottle I'll call to see how you look."

JOB. (*starting up*) How I look! The savage!—come to gloat over the body of his victim! It's too horrible!

SUSAN. (*R.*) For mercy's sake, what is the matter?

JOB. (*L.*) Susan, if you've any regard for me—if you value my life—stand sentinel at all the doors, plug the key-holes, nail down all the chimney-boards, barricade the windows,

owls, don't give me anything to eat or drink, except boiled eggs—they can't put anything into them. Promise me—It's life or death. Go, go!

SUSAN. Oh, he's mad! he's mad! I must send Ned to speak to him. (*crossing to L.*) *Exit SUSAN, L.D.*

JOB. (*eagerly reading the letter*) "I've entrusted the business to a sure hand." Whose hand, I wonder? How am I to find out the man? The man!—how do I know it mayn't be a woman?—Susan herself, perhaps! Horrible idea! Destruction is about me. I feel as if there were mines under my feet—swords hanging over my head! And Susan can only look to one door at a time. Let me lock the others inside. (*he goes to the door, R., and is locking it, just as CUMMING enters at the other door, L., with shaving*

things. WORT starts round in terror. CUMMING stands amazed at his appearance) Who's there? (supporting himself by chair, R.)

CUM. (L.) Only me, sir—Cumming, sir—to shave you, sir, as usual.

JOB. (aside) I must not betray myself. Let me affect composure—Oh, very well. (*he sits down, R. H., CUMMING puts the napkin round his neck—as he is tucking it in, WORT starts up*) Ha! should he purpose to do it by strangulation, like the Thugs! No, no, it can't be! Pooh! what a fool I am! He'd never have entrusted the crime to a waiter. Go on, Cumming. (*sits R. of c. table*)

CUM. (R. soaping WORT) I beg your parding, sir, but about what you was kind enough to say this morning, sir—about having remembered me, sir, in your will. You know, sir—(*stropping his razor*)

JOB. (to himself) If one had only a hint of the means he proposes to use—whether it's poison or—

CUM. (flourishing the razor) Now, sir!

JOB. (starts up and rushes to L. H.) Stand off! Stand off! Help!

CUM. (R.) Dear me, sir, what's the matter?

JOB. Don't come near me! I'll resist, I tell you, to the death! (*a shot is heard without*) Oh, I'm hit! I don't know where—but I'm hit! (*crosses to R.*) But I'll sell my life dearly. Murder! (*seizes CUMMING by the throat*)

CUN. (L. c.) Sir! Sir!

JOB. (R.) Fire at a man at arm's length! Coward!

CUM. Fire, sir! Bless you, sir, I never fired, sir—it was outside of the 'ouse, sir.

JOB. Outside! (*going up towards window. A second shot is heard*) Oh! the house is surrounded! Help! Murder! Help!

Enter O'RAFFERTY, L. D.

O'RAF. What's the row? (L.)

JOB. (R.) Ah! 'tis he! (*rushes to and seizes O'RAFFERTY*) Mr. O'Rafferty, don't you understand—I don't want it now—I've changed my mind—given up my idea.

O'RAF. (L.) Want to be off the bargain, eh

JOB. (C.) Not the £100. Keep that—but the dose, you know—

O'RAF. What, you don't want it now? Faix, and I'm sorry for that, for you're too late.

JOB. (c.) Too late!

O'RAF. (l.) It's done, my boy.

JOB. Done!

O'RAB. Administhered.

JOB. Administered!

O'RAF. Safe inside o' you, as a naggin of whiskey in a car-driver.

CUM. (r, *gaily*) Didn't you taste it, sir?

JOB. Taste it?

O'RAF. In the cup o' tay he gave you just now.

CUM. I put it in with my own 'and Sir.

O'RAF. Av coarse! I put him up to it.

JOB. Horrible! I thought it had a strange taste.

CUM. Certainly, sir! Bitter, like.

JOB. I feel the effects already—I'm in a cold sweat—my eyes feel heavy—I've a swimming—(*O'RAFFERTY and CUMMING each run for a chair and offer one on each side. He repulses them*) Stand off, murderer! (*falls between the two chairs they are offering at the same moment*)

Enter SUSAN and SPANKER, l. d.

SUSAN. What is it? }
SPAN. Holloa! . } (together)

(*CUMMING and O'RAFFERTY both get to r. h. SUSAN and SPANKER raise WORT and place him in chair c.*)

JOB. Come near me, Susan. Spanker, let me hold your hands for the few moments I've yet to live—Susan, let me press you to my heart while it still beats.

SUSAN. (l. of WORT) Oh! what is the matter with you?

JOB. Pen and ink, Spanker, and paper—quick—and write. I leave all I have to Susan—here—we were to have been married—but I charge you, if you'd have me rest quiet in my grave, don't let those wretches escape.

O'RAF. (r.) Escape! Me a wretch!

CUM. (r.) What 'ave we done wrong, sir?

JOB. (c.) Wrong! A couple of villains, who, for a paltry consideration, are ready to administer the deadly dose to a man who never did them any harm!

O'RAF. Sure, you asked me to prescribe for you!

JOB. Happily for the ends of justice poison leaves traces!

O'RAF. Poison! Devil a poison I gave you! I won't be thraduced in this way! I demand a *post mortem* examination! (r.c.) Open the body!

JOB. No! no!

O'RAF. Can you deny your own black and white? (produces letter and reads) "Sir, I've changed my mind, and instead of poison, I'll thank you to administer four grains of blue pill without my knowing anything about it, as I hate taking physic. Yours ever, Job Wort." Look at that! (shows letter)

JOB. Eh! Blue pill! That's not my writing!

SPAN. (r.c.) No, old boy; but it's mine. As a doctor, I read the prescription you asked for, and took the liberty of altering it.

JOB. (l.c.) And the shots I heard just now?

SPAN. Were at a gull outside, there—not the gull inside, here.

JOB. Not at me! Then I'm not shot! (to CUMMING) You didn't want to strangle me? (to O'RAFFERTY) I'm not poisoned! Huzza, huzza! I'm none the worse. I'm all the better—by a blue pill!—I like it! It was delicious! Thank you, Spanker! (SPANKER gets to L.H.) O'Rafferty, I forgive you! Susan! Cumming! Come to my arms! No, no! You Susan, not Cumming! Cumming, you're an angel! Susan, you're a trump! That is, *vice versa*—we're all trumps! Oh, Lord! Everything's for the best! It's a beautiful world! Oh dear! Oh dear! I'm a new man! I rise from my ashes, like the Phoenix of antiquity. Susan, you shall have a Phœnix for your husband.

O'RAF. You her husband! And what's to become o' me?

JOB. You shall fill the responsible situation of family apothecary. (aside) It will be a sinecure, for if I ever take another dose of physic—

SPAN. Oh, yes, you will Job, now and then.

JOB. Now, I ask you—(to audience)—you know my constitution. Do I want another dose? Eh? Well, if you think so—I'll take one—but it must be at your hands. (pause) Well, I certainly feel the better for it, and I really think, while you administer that sort of cordial, we'll say—"The mixture as before"—every evening till further notice.

R. CUMMING, O'RAFFERTY, WORT, SUSAN, SPANKER, L.

CURTAIN.