

THE
D U M B B E L L E ,

AN ORIGINAL COMEDIETTA

IN ONE ACT

WITH ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS,

BY

BAYLE BERNARD.

AUTHOR OF

A Practical Man; The Four Sisters; Middy Ashore; Man About Town; Balance of Comfort; His Last Legs; Irish Attorney; Boarding School; Farmer's Story; Lucille; Passing Cloud; Woman's Faith; Conquering Game; Mummy; Nervous Man; Marie Ducange; Maiden's Fame; Storm in a Tea-cup; Platonic Attachments, &c., &c., &c.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,

WELLINGTON STREET,

STRAND,

LONDON.

THE DUMB BELLE.

As originally produced at the Royal Olympic Theatre.

CHARACTERS.

VIVIAN	MR. JAMES Vining.
MANVERS	MR. WILLIAM Vining.
O'SMIRK	MR. BROUGHAM.
ELIZA ARDENTON	MADAME VESTRIS
MARY	MISS PINCOTT.

COSTUMES.—Modern.

THE DUMB BELLE.

SCENE.—*Parlour of a Villa, elegantly furnished. French windows at back, open on lawn and garden; a bow window, L. H. 3 E., contains table and chairs; doors R. H. and L., to other apartments: table, sofa, piano, &c. MANVERS discovered at table L. H., looking at his watch.*

MAN. No—it's past three, and no signs of him yet. What a task I've undertaken, to bring together a couple whose only resemblance is their youth and absurdity; who agree but in one thing—their constant caprice. Then, on what's my reliance? Only one hope, I own. It's a principle, I believe, that extremes produce mediums, and so, if antagonized, their opposite qualities may cause a reaction, and mutual excess lead to mutual reform.—But still he delays; now that's very provoking—and here comes Eliza to make the most of the fact.

ELIZA comes from the garden.

ELIZA. Well, uncle, well, who's prejudiced now?

MAN. Well, certainly, Lizzy, I—

ELIZA. Who now is unjust to an old and dear friend, that couldn't eat, drink, or sleep, in his ardour to see me?

MAN. I own it's very strange, but—

ELIZA. Who lives on my image, and, in his hurry to get here—like a horse at full speed—I suppose has run by the house?

MAN. But, as I've twice said already, there must be a cause.

ELIZA. Oh, of course there's a cause, which I could

have told you at first—the man isn't come, because he never intended it.

MAN. A solution that certainly doesn't flatter yourself, and, I think, is hard upon him, seeing he was the son of a neighbour, who only left you when his regiment was ordered abroad.

ELIZA. When he pack'd up his memory as well as his knapsack—a man who returns, only to run off to Paris.

MAN. From whence, as you're aware, he sends me a long letter—

ELIZA. Which, I am also aware, you've made a point to conceal.

MAN. Why, yes, my love, yes—because it's chiefly on business; but still you shall hear it—or, that is, a part of it. I can easily omit what you've no right to know, and—(*feeling his pockets.*) Eh? Why it's gone!

ELIZA. Well, never mind—you can remember the best of it—all that's about me.

MAN. And all raptures, of course: he dwells on your memory, and the support that your image ever gave to his duties—and so I'll just ask whether such a man is not—

(*still searching.*)

ELIZA. A wretch, sir!

MAN. A what, Lizzy?

ELIZA. A savage—only fit for the woods he was sent to. Here is your letter, which I this morning picked up.

MAN. (*aside.*) The deuce you did!

ELIZA. And, as it's so wonderfully flattering, perhaps you'll allow me to read it—not omitting those parts which I've no right to know.

MAN. (*aside.*) Now, was ever so cruel, so vile a mischance?

ELIZA. (*reads.*) "My dear Mr. Manvers, many thanks for your kindness. I am anxious, believe me, to see my old home again, and also my little playmate, now changed to a woman, and with a mind as developed and fair as her person. I am sorry, however, to hear of one small distinction. Is it true, my dear sir, that she *talks* so incessantly? A neighbour of yours says so—says her tongue's grown proverbial—says, as you live near a station, she's called the 'Belle of the Railway!'" (There, sir—that's

flattery.) I really hope he exaggerates — (generous being) for, I must confess, this is a point on which I'm grown rather sensitive—I can't tell you what I've suffered from talkative woman, (how very deplorable.) Our quartermaster's wife had a tongue like a roll call—and so had the major's, and the doctor's to boot. (poor soul!) And, now I'm in Paris, my fate's just as bad—they actually talk me to death, sir! (there—there's a martyr!) So, you really mustn't wonder if I've been forced into wishing that some of her sex were born dumb, (dumb! do you hear? dumb!) as a refuge for the victims of their clamorous sisters. A young and sensible dumb woman I could fancy invaluable, and I shouldn't at all scruple to run half over Europe to—" but there—there's your raptures, sir—I've had enough of 'em.

(throwing down the letter; he picks it up.)

MAN. Well, certainly, Eliza, I can't but acknowledge—

ELIZA. You're laughing — actually laughing at this monster's impertinence!

MAN. No, no—on the contrary, I'm convinced that he thinks you—

ELIZA. The "Belle of the Railway,"—much obliged to him, certainly!

MAN. But you must see through this nonsense, that it's a mere moment's folly; and if it doesn't affect his real feelings towards you—

ELIZA. You'll, of course, not object to put that fact to the proof: since he comes with such notions, I'm resolved he shall test them; since he would run half over Europe to discover a dumb woman, he shall be satisfied *here*.

MAN. Here!

ELIZA. Here—I will oblige him.

MAN. Now, now, Eliza—

ELIZA. Nay, nay—you've no right to refuse, after the trick of that letter; and you must own he deserves one for its precious contents—so, you must say "Yes" at once, when I will tell you my scheme, and—

(O'SMIRK is heard outside in the garden.)

O'SMIRK. Oh, very well, very well—only show me the door, and—

MAN. Eh—an arrival?

(he appears at back with carpet-bag, coats, &c.)

O'SMIRK. The top of the morning to every one present.
Is it Mr. Manvers I've the honour to spake to?

MAN. Yes—Mr. Manvers.

O'SMIRK. Then, I hope before long, sir, we shall be better acquainted.

MAN. But pray, may I ask—

O'SMIRK. Who I am! Oh, you may, sir—that's natural enough. Well, sir, I'm a man that I'll engage you'll like better, the better you know me.

MAN. Perhaps so—but, in the meantime, as I suppose you've a master—

O'SMIRK. A master! Of course, sir, and a nate lad he is—a very sensible—well-behaved boy, I assure you—tho' you'll say it's no wonder, seeing I've been with him this five years, and—

MAN. And pray what's detained him?

O'SMIRK. As dirty a reason as you'd guess in a month, sir—as pretty a ditch as ever gaped for a breakfast.

MAN. A ditch!

O'SMIRK. Yes, a ditch, sir—or, that's to say, half of it, for we shared it betwixt us, as we had done the post-chaise. By way of knowing the country—we rowled into a hole, and—

MAN. And so all's explained. Well, there's his room, where you can put down his things, and, of course, as he's coming—

ELIZA. (*aside.*) We'll go and prepare, uncle

MAN. Nay, nay—not a step till I know your design.

ELIZA. And you shall, sir, you shall. You're fond of the arts, and you shall judge of my design when you see the execution. (*they go off by L. H. door.*)

O'SMIRK. And that's the darling, is it, that he's coming to see here, that has got such a clapper. Well, and more power to it! Is it for a soldier to quarrel with the music it makes,—when let it roll as it likes, it's a hint for saluting.

(*VIVIAN is heard outside at back.*

VIVIAN. Hallo! Gate, gate!

O'SMIRK. Eh—there's my master: so I must put down his traps, and then find out the kitchen. It's yonder, I smell it. I know no better subaltern than an Irishman's nose, when the service he's on is to recruit the main body.

(*he goes into room, R. H.*

THE DUMB BELLE.

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VIVIAN. No one coming—very well. I used to jump over it—try again!

He enters at back with a bound, and advances.

MANVERS enters from L. H. door.

Cleared it, by Jove! Only six paces, and—ah, my old friend!

MAN. Welcome, Henry, welcome—a dozen welcomes to Harewood!

VIVIAN. And one from your hand is worth a dozen elsewhere. Well, and how have you been; sir, during our long separation? You see I'm not altered—remember all my old tricks—my cool way of entering your friendly domain. Nor do I see a change here—every tree, every flower-plot stands where I left it, and I could almost swear, too, that—there are the identical sunflowers that waved their adieux to me.

MAN. You've not forgot your romance, Henry?

VIVIAN. Hardly, sir, hardly, if that means my sympathy with nature and man. Well—and where's Eliza?

MAN. She'll be here presently.

VIVIAN. To prove to me, of course, how poor a painter is fame.

MAN. I think so, indeed.

VIVIAN. She's had throngs of admirers?

MAN. They've been like motes in the sunbeam.

VIVIAN. Or a flight of Indian arrows that darken the day.

MAN. For which reason, I suppose, you'll infer she's not caught one.

VIVIAN. That or *another*. I did hear another cause; but we can't expect perfection; the best must have some defects: and so young and so clever, and so exceedingly charming, one can hardly complain if she has *one* little fault; though, oddly enough, it's just that I object to, as my letter explained—didn't offend you, I hope?

MAN. Oh, not at all.

VIVIAN. I stated, as you perceived, sir, my peculiar experience—my singular sufferings from a certain propensity; but that was among strangers: with an old friend, of course, I should make due allowance: with an old friend I trust I should endure an affliction which—

MAN. Which you'll never encounter.

VIVIAN. What, sir?

MAN. It's time to make known to you a very sad piece of news—to tell you she has met with a very serious calamity.

VIVIAN. A calamity!

MAN. Yes—that on the lakes, some months since, she was upset in a boat—when the cold and the terror striking through her together, fastened, at length, upon her throat, and deprived her of speech.

VIVIAN. What do you say?

MAN. Deprived her of speech—at this moment she is tongue-tied.

VIVIAN. What, Eliza?

MAN. Eliza—you can't get a word from her.

VIVIAN. Ha! ha! ha! Why, my dear Mr. Manvers, I'm perfectly enraptured!

MAN. Enraptured!

VIVIAN. That is, at her escape, sir—her escape, sir, of course.

MAN. She's had all the best advice, as you'll easily suppose; but as some months have elapsed, and the defect still continues—

VIVIAN. Yes, sir—continues.

MAN. I now begin to doubt that she'll ever recover.

VIVIAN. You're certain of that—don't think she'll recover.

MAN. I doubt it, indeed.

VIVIAN. Ha! ha! poor thing—dear soul—how very affecting—how delighted I am to—to offer my sympathy! (aside.) A dumb girl—a dumb girl—a young and sensible dumb girl—I've found her at last.

MAN. So, I hope you'll excuse my reserve on this point, as I was really afraid it might—

VIVIAN. Might what, sir? It charms me—it draws me towards her—makes me eager to congratulate—I mean to condole with her; so go to her, I beg, sir—let her know that I'm here, and panting to speak to her.

MAN. Yes, yes; but you've only heard *half* her calamity: the cold has seized on her hearing—she's deaf, as well as dumb.

VIVIAN. Well and what of that, sir?

MAN. Why, as her ears have a sinecure as well as her lips—

VIVIAN. Her eyes are still left me—her eyes, sir, her eyes: and would you compare their intelligence with that of the tongue—light itself—electricity with poor crawling sound—

MAN. Well that I know, but—

VIVIAN. Her eyes, sir, that pause not to frame signs for the soul, but reveal it at once.

MAN. And you actually pretend you'd be willing to marry—

VIVIAN. To marry—to worship her—devote my whole life to her—sing to her—play to her—dance if she wished it—till thus grown united in thought and in feeling, one pulse and one mainspring should link heart to heart.

MAN. And are you then serious?

VIVIAN. Serious! I'm frantic, sir!

MAN. But, my dear boy, consider—

VIVIAN. My fever! Go, go, sir.

MAN. A deaf and dumb woman—

VIVIAN. Extacy—extacy!

MAN. Who never can say to you—

VIVIAN. Raptures! Oh, go, sir.

(pushes him out through L. H. door, and walks about.

O'SMIRK comes from R. H. door.)

But can this be truth—Eliza this treasure—the girl I've avoided the very one I would find? She the being—the angel who would convey the assurance that—

O'SMIRK. Your clane shirt is ready, sir.

VIVIAN. Shirts! Don't talk of shirts to a man who's scarce conscious he's wearing a body. Phelim, get ready for a run up to town. I shall be married in a month.

O'SMIRK. Married, sir!

VIVIAN. Married—and to whom—guess to whom—my own loved Eliza. She is the being I have sought for so long—an intellectual dumb woman.

O'SMIRK. A dumb woman!

VIVIAN. Yes, that *rara avis in terra*.

O'SMIRK. Why, then, by my soul, she'd be a terror to any one.

VIVIAN. So you shall run up, to-morrow, order a travelling carriage, and—

O'SMIRK. Oh, be aisy, be aisy, sir.

VIVIAN. I say I'm resolved, sir.

O'SMIRK. Ye are—mighty fine; but just tell me this, When the clargyman bids her say that she'll love and obey you, how's she to do it?

VIVIAN. I suppose she could nod, sir?

O'SMIRK. Nod is it—nod; and ye'd have a wife nodding instead of opening her lips? Mightn't ye as well marry a head in a tay shop? Suppose, sir, she were to bring you a little brood of Chinese mandarins, sir, stuck in every hole and corner, and doing nothing all day but nodding their heads at ye.

VIVIAN. Silence, you raven, and bring me my boots! Every moment I delay is a treason to Eliza. Oh, with that name how childhood comes back with all its early freshness, and the future brightens with a richer smile. Get out you villain. (*kicks him into R. H. room, and follows.* MARY looks in from garden, then enters, followed by ELIZA, with a reticule, which she puts on table in bow window.

MARY. All's safe; he's in his room, miss.

ELIZA. Then now I may enter, with my little auxilliaries.

(She takes an ear trumpet and note book from her bag, and places them on table.)

Well, Mary, you've seen him, and how does he look? Grown a great fright, of course? Round shouldered—short necked—hair, a fine furze bush—and skin a deep snuff colour.

MARY. Oh, no, ma'am, he hasn't; his skin is quite clean—got a natural blush in it.

ELIZA. Well, I'm glad to hear that, for it's certainly wanted.

MARY. And so you really intend, Miss, to be dumb all to-day?

ELIZA. Yes, all to-day.

MARY. But—but are you sure, Miss, you *can*?

ELIZA. Can, indeed! Can!

MARY. Why, you know, you never tried; so to make sure, wouldn't it be as well just to practice a little?

ELIZA. So you believe I love chattering as much as yourself; to prove to you the contrary, I'll be dumb from this moment; mind, I don't speak another word after I've told you to go. Mary, go. (*she turns away to table. MARY is going off.*) Mary!

MARY. Yes, Miss.

ELIZA. Bless me, I forgot. It's really not so easy a thing as I thought. Well, and now for the trial. If he proves the sort of man that his letter implies, why restraint will be easy, and silence agreeable; but if, on the contrary, I should find all this folly to be merely affected, why then I'm afraid that the first time he murmurs "Poor afflicted Eliza!" I shall surprise him by saying—"Oh, my dear Henry, how glad I am to see you."

MANVERS comes from L. H. door.

MAN. Now, Eliza, are you ready?

ELIZA. Yes, uncle, quite; only Mary, you know, you've to take charge of his servant; take him to the kitchen, or do what you like, only keep him away.

MARY. He shall have an obstacle, Miss, that he'll never get over—a shoulder of mutton.

(ELIZA seating herself at table in bow window. MANVERS taps at R. H. door.

MAN. Now, Harry, may I enter?

VIVIAN. Of course, sir, or I'll come to you; and now—

He comes out, followed by O'SMIRK, to whom MARY beckons; they go off at back.

Lead me to the dear one—to our own loved Eliza! Do I see her—it must be—yet how changed—how improved! Fame—fame has slandered her. She's an angel! Eliza—

(He advances—she turns and extends her hand to him, which he kisses; leading her forward.

Dear Eliza, you know not the joy that this meeting affords me—joy tempered with sympathy—with the profoundest regret. Though parted so long, and by the space of wide oceans, be assured they'd no power to bury the past; your face was ever present to me, your eyes, and your thoughts, like the same moon and stars, which—

(VIVIAN pausing, ELIZA goes to table, takes up the ear trumpet, and returning to his side, puts it to her ear, and nods.

MAN. You must say that again.

VIVIAN. Through a trumpet?

MAN. Didn't I tell you that the cold had deprived her of hearing?

VIVIAN. Oh, I forgot. My dearest Eliza—

MAN. A little louder.

VIVIAN. My dearest Eliza—

MAN. Too low.

VIVIAN. Would you have me alarm the neighbourhood?

MAN. Oh, they've got used to it.

VIVIAN. (shouting.) My angelic Eliza—

(ELIZA nods her head and smiles.

MAN. Ah, now she hears you.

VIVIAN. Well, I should think so.

MAN. Proceed.

VIVIAN. After our long separation—

MAN. Your sinking again.

VIVIAN. (bawling.) After our long separation, you can't imagine the joy I now feel to address you.

MAN. What do you say?

VIVIAN. Well, sir?

MAN. Consider her affliction; you mean to say the pain you now feel to address her.

VIVIAN. Well, there's no lie in that.

MAN. Go on.

VIVIAN. I can't.

MAN. Is your heart so very full?

VIVIAN. No! My lungs are so empty.

(ELIZA goes to the table, sits and writes.

MAN. She will write you a reply.

VIVIAN. Write! Well of course; that never struck me—and of all things in the world, an epistolary correspondence is what I like most—(ELIZA comes forward and gives him tablets—reads.) "I am truly delighted to see my old friend, and regret I cannot say so." Oh never heed that, never mind your tongue, dear Eliza, I read it in your eyes—

MAN. You know that can't be heard.

VIVIAN. (*shouting.*) Never mind your tongue, dear Eliza. Oh d——n it, this is too ridiculous !

MAN. Well, well, you now know how to communicate, so as I've a letter to write, I'll leave you together.

(*he goes off at the back; she stands twirling the trumpet.*)

VIVIAN. What a horrible nuisance ! We must do without that, or I must go a sea voyage, and take a lesson in hailing—learn to bawl as if I was telling her to pull down her jib. We surely could light upon some other means to—our fingers ! Of course, we must learn to talk with them—that's the plan. The first week of our marriage we'll pass in a dumb school ; but what to do now—now. Why I'll write—I'll write, and she'll answer. Yes, yes, I—(*going to table at back; he takes up drawings.*) Views of the lake ! And how exquisite—all of them. Are these yours, Eliza, yours ? (*he makes signs to her; she nods in return.*) Come, we're getting on : that's the way to talk to her ! Natural pantomime. Yes, treasured scenes, sacred ever to memory, here you live again as you first met my senses. Do you remember this, Lizzy, our old summer ramble, when, with hearts like the breeze, we ran off together, and—(*ELIZA taps his shoulder, and puts up the trumpet.*) What an ass to forget ; but we may as well sit ; after such exertion one's rather exhausted (*he brings chairs, and they seat themselves.*) I've a thousand things to say to you, and as I see you've your tablets—(*she again puts up her trumpet.*) No, no—not that ; we must converse without that : feelings like ours protest against mechanism—it destroys all emotion, not to say health. No, no—no art : if we must have a resource, let me rather go to nature—let me adopt the old primitive mode of the sand-bag—ahoy ! (*exemplifying—he takes the trumpet from her, which she parts with unwillingly.*) Do you remember, Eliza—oh, I'm too low ! (*bawling.*) You remember Colonel Johnson—heard he was married—yes, married in Paris—a nice little woman—couple of excellent souls. (*she nods and writes, then hands him the tablets—reads.*) “Yes, soles are very excellent, but they're not in the market.” In the market, my darling ! I didn't mean fish—ahem ! You remember the Wilsons—piano again ! (*bawling.*) You remember the Wilsons—heard of their

failure—the general distress ? (*she nods and writes rapidly.*) Ah ! understands me this time ; thought we should do without that infernal conductor—a conductor, by-the-bye, that doesn't lead to a bus. (*she hands him the tablet, wiping her eyes.*) Dear soul, how it affects her ! She loved the Wilsons, I know. (*reads.*) “ Yes, I do well remember the general distress : poor little Pompey was everyone's favourite.” D——n little Pompey ! Have I been threatening my blood-vessels on account of a poodle ? (*a dinner bell rings outside, violently.* VIVIAN *claps his hands to his ears* ; ELIZA *takes no notice.*) Hallo ! What's the matter ? House on fire ! Stop ! Eliza ! Eliza, don't you hear some one ringing ? (*he makes signs of a bell ringing violently, which she doesn't understand.*) Gracious powers ! Not hear that : then we must have the conductor. Eliza, my darling, put up your trumpet. (*he gives it to her ; she listens, then nods and writes.*) And now I shall hear what all that noise was about. (*she gives him the tablets, then rises, and goes out through L. H. door—reads.*) “ I've a young friend in the next room who always rings the alarm bell when she wishes to see me—pray excuse me a moment.” Rings the alarm bell ! A comfortable house this, with an alarm bell and a speaking trumpet going all day. If this is their quiet, what do they call a disturbance ? Talk of my old quarters ; why when did even Billingsgate make such a clangor ? Besides, there the noise is natural—at least it is human, and—(*ELIZA sings in the next room.*) Why, how charming ! How that voice floated towards me, as some spirit that glides here to calm this confusion. And that is her friend ! Ah, if 'twere herself ! If *she* breathed these sounds—because I do not object to singing, though I do to a chatter. Music and uproar are very distinct things ; and yet, of course, if a woman's dumb, she isn't able to sing. Now, that's a great bore ! Why can't a woman sing, and not be able to *talk* ?

MANVERS *returns from the back.*

MAN. You'll excuse my delay, but—oh, where's Eliza ?

VIVIAN. Gone to her friend in the next room ; a young lady that sings.

MAN. Sings !

VIVIAN. And divinely. I think I never listened to a voice so entrancing—such feeling—such sweetness.

MAN. But what's this to you? I thought your great object was to discover a dumb woman?

VIVIAN. Dumb, did I say? Dumb—or comparatively dumb.

MAN. Dumb said your letter.

VIVIAN. I really think you mistake! I think I said comparatively—that the passage ran thus—"I wish 'twere possible for women to be comparatively dumb, that they might sing, but not speak."

MAN. Sing!

VIVIAN. Oh, yes, sing. I said sing, because music's my passion—comparatively dumb—that they might sing but not speak; you see these are nice distinctions.

MAN. Very, indeed.

VIVIAN. And of course I shall have the pleasure of meeting this lady!

MAN. Meeting her! Hardly! She's going away to avoid you.

VIVIAN. To avoid me!

MAN. Of course, we especially begged it.

VIVIAN. And why, pray?

MAN. Because the girl chatters; and tho' her voice is a soft one, yet remembering your sufferings—

VIVIAN. But not from soft voices! Loud talking is my horror; that's your mistake, sir; a soft and low voice I should never object to—indeed, I should prefer it to absolute silence.

MAN. (*aside.*) So, so; it's begun.

VIVIAN. A soft and low voice would give a charming variety, and you've sent her away because—why how rude she must think me! I ought to go after her, and make an apology. (*going off L. H.* MANVERS *seizes him.*)

MAN. No, no—there's no occasion.

VIVIAN. But, my dear sir, there is—in your zeal for my comfort, you've injured my character—you've offered an insult which I'm bound to retract—bound as a gentleman to regret—and atone for, and—(*MARY is seen crossing the garden at back, in an elegant cloak and bonnet.*) Eh—why who's that?

MAN. That! Why that's her, on the way to her carriage.

VIVIAN. And no one escorting her—why worse, sir, and worse—

MAN. (*holding him.*) But you mustn't do it—for you know you're a stranger—

VIVIAN. Not to civility—I really must go, sir—

MAN. But I've said you'd avoid her.

VIVIAN. Well, sir, that's your fault.

MAN. And as she is reserved—

VIVIAN. Well—and that's hers.

MAN. But here comes Eliza.

VIVIAN. But you can excuse me.

MAN. But what shall I say to her?

VIVIAN. Say, sir! Why say that—(*ELIZA enters from L. H. door hastily! and puts up her trumpet.*) Confound that conductor! (*he runs off at back.*)

ELIZA. Ha! ha! And now, uncle, what do you think of my scheme?

MAN. It succeeds, beyond doubt;—he has run after Miss Rivers.

ELIZA. Under which gentle name, my Mary will lead him a chase round the grounds, and at length bring him back to be exposed on this spot.

MAN. I own he deserves it.

ELIZA. Deserves it, indeed! A creature who gives up the substance for shadow; and will endure in a stranger what he denies to a friend! I thought my japan, here, would bring him to reason.

MAN. And that done—what do you think of him?

ELIZA. Oh, the man's well enough—but I could scarcely enjoy a talk which he had all to himself.

MAN. Why no, Lizzy, no.

ELIZA. Or be in the happiest of moods whilst enduring such agony.

MAN. Agony!

ELIZA. Yes—to keep my tongue quiet; I had to bite it till it bled.

MAN. What singular courage? Talk of the boy and the wolf—

ELIZA. So you see I'm entitled to some compensation—

and may honestly tax you for further assistance—to follow him to the grounds, and delay his pursuit till Mary's enabled to return to the house.

MAN. When, of course, he will enter it—

ELIZA. Like a criminal into court, to be duly convicted. Now you see what's my aim, to assert the rights of our sex; let me but force him to own them, to confess that our speech is a sacred possession—

MAN. And then, I suppose—

ELIZA. I may reward him with mine for the rest of his days. (*he goes off at the back.*) Yes, Mr. Harry, I think you'll meet with a proper exposure. Here Mary shall sit, duly veil'd, on her return, and here, you'll approach to enjoy a tête-à-tête. She'll remain silent—you'll beg her to speak—and then when I looking in—(*O'SMIRK looks in from the garden.*) you implore her to utter one merciful word—I shall promptly repay you with a flood from myself.

O'SMIRK. Pillaloo!

ELIZA. (*turning.*) Oh, la!

O'SMIRK. And is it you are the dumb lady, ma'am, if you please?

ELIZA. (*aside.*) Was ever anything so provoking.

O'SMIRK. Is it you that can't speake for the cowld that you caught? 'Pon my word, then, I never heard such a beautiful whisper.

ELIZA. (*aside.*) Now all's at an end; my whole scheme is overthrown.

O'SMIRK. Oh, it's no use, my lady, to nod your head now, ma'am; if you're dumb, only say so, only say that you're dumb, and I'll be dumb with joy myself for the rest of the day.

ELIZA. Well, it's no use disguising, but you'll surely not betray me; my secret is safe with you?

O'SMIRK. Safe with me, ma'am! Is it an Irishman you speake to! By my sowl, it's as safe with me as a keg of bad cyder.

ELIZA. Especially when you're aware of the end I have in view, which is to cure your master of his present unnatural taste. I'm sure you'd never wish that our sex should be speechless.

O'SMIRK. Spacheless, the darlings! Would I rob the

world of its music, or man of his monitor? Ain't the women our watches; and would I have 'em stop ticking?

ELIZA. Ah! What a thought! Then perhaps you'd do more, you'd not object to assist me?

O'SMIRK. Do what, ma'am?

ELIZA. To take the place of my maid, and represent a young lady?

O'SMIRK. A young lady!

ELIZA. Yes—an interesting girl, who's in delicate health.

O'SMIRK. Oh nothing's more aisy.

ELIZA. Why, how kind of you—how charming; then as soon as she enters—(*MARY runs in from the garden.*)

MARY. Oh, miss, are you there! Such a terrible chase!

ELIZA. But you escaped him, I hope?

MARY. Yes—and that's all—for he ran like a greyhound, twice round the shrubbery, and all through the maze, and but for my master—(*sees O'SMIRK.*) Eh? bless me?

ELIZA. Never fear, he's our friend—who will strengthen my project by taking your place; so whilst I array him, do you, Mary, keep watch.

MARY. And Mr. O'Smirk to be a lady of fashion?

O'SMIRK. And ain't he the boy for it? Isn't she a sharp-shooter—and don't both of us know how to bring a man on his knees? (*MARY surrendering the cloak and bonnet, goes to the back—ELIZA arrays O'SMIRK.*)

ELIZA. Now your master, you see, will be here in an instant; but, my uncle will follow, to prevent a discovery.

O'SMIRK. You're certain of that? Not that I mind a kicking, but it would be a pity, you know, to spoil such a nice cloak.

ELIZA. Never fear! That will do! And really that's famous—why you might pass for a female—on a very dark night.

O'SMIRK. Oh I might—and be run after by half the police.

ELIZA. And now here's your seat—here are drawings to engage you—to divert your attention—and—

(*He sits at table at bow window. She arranging the cloak and bonnet.*)

MARY. If you please, Miss, he's coming.

ELIZA. Very good—then we'll go; now be cautious—be cautious!

MARY. And do pray sit up? Whoever saw a lady sprawl about so?

O'SMIRK. Oh be aisy—be aisy, don't it show I've a taste; here's beautiful pictures, and ain't I bound to go over 'em.

(They go off through L. H. door as VIVIAN comes from the garden.

VIVIAN. No, not on the lawn; so she must have run in; why what is this mystery—what can they have said to her to cause all this terror? She could'nt have run faster to escape a mad bull—I'll have an explanation let it cost what it may, and—Eh? There she sits; her own charming person. Exquisite being!

O'SMIRK. (aside.) That's me.

VIVIAN. What a fool must be he that would dispense with your faculty.

O'SMIRK. (aside.) And the fool is my master.

VIVIAN. Fortune's my friend; and I'll not be ungrateful. I believe I've the honour of addressing Miss Rivers?

O'SMIRK. Ahem!

VIVIAN. I trust she'll pardon this abruptness, but as I fear that she's labouring under some signal delusion, some belief to my prejudice which I am bound to remove, will she allow me to state that some half hour since I listened to her singing—to a voice so enchanting that I fairly forgot everything but the desire to thank her.

O'SMIRK. (aside.) Oh, the cracher! Ahem!

(he shakes his leg and head.)

VIVIAN. (aside.) Why she's trembling; yes trembling—what can cause this emotion? The mystery of this being increases every instant. Now why can't she speak? What's the use of a tongue if a woman won't use it? What a treason to nature—to silence, a faculty which—

MANVERS enters from the garden.

MAN. And so, Harry, I've caught you.

VIVIAN. (aside.) Plague take it—now he here.

MAN. And by the side of this lady! Now what does this mean? I thought, sir, your aim was to discover a dumb woman?

VIVIAN. Yes, but not a *deaf* one; I never said deaf, sir; one I could never talk to but through a yard of Japan, nor breathe the fondest wish to, but in the tone of a bassoon.

MAN. What's this?

VIVIAN. That I couldn't love without letting the whole parish know it, nor praise without scaring the cats on the tiles.

MAN. But permit me to say this is a change in your sentiments.

VIVIAN. Not at all, sir, not at all—imagine a man's fate who's linked to such a being; robbed of all social and intellectual pleasure, because robbed of speech; conceive him for instance at any great crisis: say he enters her room after a certain joyful event—he finds her, dear girl, in a state of touching exhaustion—of pensive composure—of sweet and soft dishabille—everything is hush'd down to the song of the kettle—the nurse treads like a fairy, and breathes like a zephyr; then, when she looks up to him for kind consolation, he must shout in her ears, "Eliza, my darling, pray how's the baby?" Oh, confound it!

MAN. I see, sir, your meaning; you're in love with Miss Rivers, and merely because she can sing.

VIVIAN. Sing! Hang her singing! Because she can *talk*, sir. I wouldn't marry a woman wanting an eye or a leg; and why wanting speech? Speech, the great distinction that divides us from brutes; brutes, sir, can see; man only can talk.

MAN. And in the case of a woman, no matter how loudly.

VIVIAN. Not a bit, sir, occasionally; if she always talked softly she might grow monotonous—might weary us, like the sky of the South with its brightness: a cloud, as in England, gives brightness its zest; and so a quarrel in wedlock might stir up affection.

MAN. Well, this is a change, certainly; and if it's likely to last—

VIVIAN. To last! — As a rock, sir. Nothing can shake it.

MAN. Then here comes Eliza to encounter its shock.

ELIZA comes from the garden, followed by **MARY**.

VIVIAN. And the sooner it's over, sir, the happier for all of us; though, in addition, I must tell you there are many other reasons why I never could marry her.

MAN. Many others!

VIVIAN. Yes, sir; she may have grown out of them, but, you know, when a child, she had all the tricks of a wild cat.

MAN. Hollo! Softly—softly.

VIVIAN. What's the matter? She can't hear me, you know: then that defect in her eyes hasn't worn off at all; rather increased, sir—she squints!

MAN. Squints! Hush, for Heaven's sake!

VIVIAN. But, above all, she has a defect which, with me, settles the matter. I heard, on the honour of a Guardsman who waltzed with her lately, that she has infernally thick legs.

ELIZA. What do you say?

VIVIAN. Eliza!

ELIZA. You monster!

VIVIAN. She speaks!

ELIZA. And enough to make one, you horrible villifier!

VIVIAN. Oh, ye lakes, let me run to you, and hide my confusion!

ELIZA. No, no, sir; not before you've enjoyed, at least, one of your wishes—an introduction to Miss Rivers, whom you're dying to know.

(she takes off the bonnet from O'SMIRK,

VIVIAN. Phelim! You scoundrel!

O'SMIRK. Don't say that, sir, I beg. I'll do you justice to say you made love like an Irishman.

VIVIAN. So I've been prettily laughed at, it seems, after all. Well, I wont deny 'twas deserved; but, as the lesson's been given, you'll allow me, at least, to endure it elsewhere. (he is going off at back.)

ELIZA. Henry!

VIVIAN. (turning.) Eliza!

ELIZA. After six years' separation, did I think you'd listen to slanders, rather than judge for yourself; or, in

our first hour of meeting, would desert an old friend at the mere voice of a stranger.

VIVIAN. I cannot defend it.

ELIZA. Your letter to my uncle suggested my stratagem ; but what was the result ? A proof that you're incapable of any lasting attachment.

VIVIAN. But not of compunction, or respect for your feelings ; and as I cannot hope to be forgiven—

ELIZA. Do you wish to be forgiven ?

VIVIAN. Can you ask it ?

ELIZA. Then kneel, sir. (*he does so.*) Are you sorry—very sorry for all the libels you've uttered on that privilege of the sex which ranks among the oldest of earth's institutions ?

VIVIAN. I am,

ELIZA. Do you confess, with your whole heart, that it's right to be exercised ; and not only that—but that it is as pleasant for man to bear, as for woman to minister ?

VIVIAN. I do.

ELIZA. And will you evermore maintain this invaluable creed—against all social heretics, of all classes whatever ; whether autocratic fathers, revolutionary husbands, anarchical brothers, or barbarized bachelors ?

VIVIAN. I will.

ELIZA. Then rise, sir ; I forgive you.

VIVIAN. And may I really believe you are so allied to an angel that—

ELIZA. (*puts up her trumpet.*) Speak a little louder, Harry.

VIVIAN. Oh, confound that conductor ! Throw it away, I beseech you.

ELIZA. I must first ask the consent of those who are around me. (*to the audience.*) My experiment in one case, it seems, is successful ; will it prove so in all ? May I hope, in consideration of all I've suffered to-day—I'm sure the ladies will feel for me—its faults may be forgiven ? And, now the "Dumb Belle" has recovered her speech, she will never again need the aid of her little assistant.