

THE
IDIOT WITNESS

OR

A TALE OF BLOOD

A Melodrama

IN

TWO ACTS

BY

JOHN THOMAS HAINES

AUTHOR OF

*Alice Gray—Ruth—Wizard of the Wave—Poll and my partner
Joe—Austerlitz—Life of a Woman—Claude Duval,
&c. &c. &c.*

LONDON:

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89, STRAND, W.C.,
Opposite Southampton Street, Covent Garden Market.

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IDIOT WITNESS.

First performed at the Royal Coburg Theatre, 1823.

CHARACTERS.

LE SIEUR ARNAUD	Mr. BENGOUGH.
HANS GERTHOLD, <i>A German in his pay</i>	Mr. BRADLEY.
ROBERT ARNAUD, <i>Son to Le Sieur</i>	Mr. HILL.
PAUL TUGSCULL, <i>a Ferryman</i>	Mr. DAVIDGE.
WALTER ARLINGTON, <i>Page to the Queen</i>	Mad. Le CLERCQ.
EARL OF SUSSEX	Mr. HORBS.
GILBERT, <i>the Idiot Witness</i>	Mr. HAINES.
DAME TUGSCULL	Mrs. WESTON.
JANET, <i>her Daughter</i>	Mrs. YOUNG.

COSTUMES.

- ARNAUD.—Black velvet doublet and trunks, large black cloak, black hose, shoes and rosettes.
ROBERT.—Brown doublet and trunks, puffed with orange, russet boots, black hat and feathers.
TUGSCULL.—Tabbed blue jacket, petticoat trousers, boots.
GERTHOLD.—Black and red tabbed jacket, full brown trunks, black boots, drab hat.
WALTER.—Blue and white doublet, trunks and cloak, handsomely trimmed, white hose, yellow boots, spurs, drab hat, white feathers.
EARL OF SUSSEX.—Richly trimmed doublet and trunks, crimson cloak, boots, black hat, white feathers.
GILBERT.—Black dress without trimming, tight to the shape, black shoes, long strait black hair, russet leather belt.
DAME.—Brown old English dress, with points.
JANET.—Light blue old English dress, black points, hat.

SCENERY AND PROPERTIES.

- ACT I. SCENE I.—(5 G.) Landscape—set waters, r. to l.—set ferry house, r. 2 e.—set shed, l. 3 e. 10 dumplings and flour in wooden bowl for Dame—oar in boat, and fishing net and basket of fish for Paul.
ACT II. SCENE I.—Same set as before. Stools on stage, and dumplings.
SCENE II.—(1 G.) Plain chamber.
SCENE III.—(4 G.) Gothic chamber—open window, l. in flat, backed by landscape, d. f. practicable, backed by Gothic wing. Low couch, c. covered with red—spike torch, l. 1 e.—daggers and purses—letter attached to stone.
SCENE IV.—(3 G.) Kitchen—door in flat, r. c. used, and backed. Rustic table, r. c. and two rustic chairs brought on—lamp burning on table—lightning.

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There is no charge for the performance of this Drama.

IDIOT WITNESS,

OR

A TALE OF BLOOD.

ACT FIRST.

SCENE FIRST.—*Ferry House on R. Shed, with oars, &c., L.—the river fills the back ground, with distant view of the opposite landing place—nets hung up against the house.—Morning.*

Lively Music—Enter DAME TUGSCULL, from house, R.

DAME. There—everything is as tidy and as clean as it can be. The fire blazes cheerfully, the tankard of ale and the beef are on the table for breakfast—and nothing is wanting but the return of my merry old man, to make all comfortable. Janet, too, stays long on her errand. (*PAUL heard without, L.*) There he is, bless his old heart! as jolly, and as good an old soul, my Paul is, as ever lived!

Music repeated—Enter PAUL, with basket, L. U. E.

PAUL. (*sings*) “So tug away—pull away, my hearties!” Here I am, my hearty old messmate, with a good cargo. Main good luck this morning. Here, Janet! help me to heave this in, will you? for my lame leg is so weak, that I’m as tired as a boatswain’s mate after a hard day’s flogging.

DAME. Janet has not yet returned from the village. I can’t think what keeps her. But *I’ll* carry the fish.

PAUL. No, you won't. Surely I'm as able to carry it as you are—so heave a-head, and I will haul it in.

DAME. Ah, Paul, that wound of thine is a sad job!

PAUL. No, dame, no—for I consider it as a sort of acknowledgment from the enemy for the many sound drubbings I helped to give them. But come, heave a-head. Janet will soon be back, I warrant her.

Music—Exit into cottage, r., singing, and dragging the basket after him, Dame following.

Enter JANET and ROBERT ARNAUD, l. 1 e.

ROBERT. Nay, listen to me, my sweet girl—why so perverse? why so coy?—a frown but ill becomes that pretty face.

JANET. I have already told you I will not listen to this language. Leave me, sir, or I will call my father.

ROBERT. Your father, my dear, will know his interest too well to interfere. But I mean not to insult you—you know me not, if you think so.

JANET. Yes, sir, I do know you—every one knows you! Though your father is a man of mystery and reserve to all, you are well known as the most abandoned libertine in existence. To be seen in the company of Robert Arnaud is death to the reputation of a young female. I beseech you, then, to retire, and force me not to call my aged parents. (ROBERT still following) Nay, sir, follow me not, or I will rouse the honest thunders of a seaman's vengeance, who shall level your impertinence with the dust. (*Breaks from him, and runs into the house, r.*)

ROBERT. Heroic, by all that's romantic! Egad, the girl's very resistance does but increase my determination to possess her. I will lay regular siege—I have nothing else at present to do with my time; I have exhausted all my stock of money. My father, angered by my repeated calls for it, refuses to supply me with more—so I must vegetate down here on the heath a short time, and see what my late addition of court manners will do among the girls. Some one is coming! so, to use one of the old ferryman's phrases, I had sheer off, and keep a good look out. I'll listen. (*retires behind shed, l. 2 e.*)

Music—Enter PAUL, from cottage, enraged—JANET and DAME endeavour to appease him.

PAUL. Don't tell me—I will follow the rascal to his father's, and to the end of the world, but I'll make him repent insulting the daughter of a British seaman! So d'ye hear, dame, fetch me my cudgel, and I'll run after him.

DAME. (l.) What, with that lame leg?

PAUL. (c.) I forgot the splintered pin—but I'll hobble.

JANET. (R.) My dear father, take no notice of him, this time—but if he does it again, then—

PAUL. No, I won't wait till then.

DAME. Yes, you must, Paul—and then I'll help you to bang him. Faith, and we'll rout the mysterious solitary, his father—and if he should not give us justice, bang him into the bargain.

PAUL. Bravo, my old girl! you are a fit wife for a British seaman—a woman who can temper his courage with wholesome advice, yet, if occasion require, has a heart bold enough to remind him he is a man. Yet, egad, my fingers itched to grapple with the fire-ship!

DAME. I think you've had enough of grappling with fire-ships—look at your lame leg!

PAUL. My lame leg is always in your mouth. Janet, what's that you have in your bosom—a letter?

JANET. Oh dear, yes, father, it was left in the village last night for you. I was so frightened, I forgot it till now.

DAME. I wonder who is it from?

PAUL. Now your curiosity is on the tiptoe. There, I will read it when I come back from the ferry—ha, ha!

DAME. No nonsense—read it now—you see Janet is quite impatient.

JANET. No, that I am not.

DAME. Yes, you are; for me, I don't care about it. Read it directly, there's a good soul.

PAUL. Well, let's overhaul it. Dame, bring yourself to anchor here, and don't be raking one fore and aft in this manner. (*opens letter*) Well, now, who do think it's from?

DAME. Why, from brother Anthony.

PAUL. No, not from brother Anthony.

DAME. Cousin Stephen?

PAUL. No, not from Cousin Stephen.

DAME. Why don't you say who it's from? Dear me, who does it come from?

PAUL. How impatient Janet is—ha, ha! Why it's from our little favourite, Walter.

JANET. From Walter! what does he say, father? read away!

PAUL. 'Gad, I think it is Janet that is impatient, after all. Why, he informs us that the queen has made him one of her pages!

ROBERT. (*behind*) From Walter! I'll listen—perhaps there is some intelligence that may please my father.

PAUL. Don't be crumpling the letter so—I will read it out; only I must first pipe all hands to order. Dame, you drop to

larboard—Janet, alongside. (*sits c.*) Now we're a-line, the devil take those astern. (*ROBERT returns*) Now for it! (*reads*) "My dear Paul and Dame, and dear, dear Janet,"—Oh, dear Janet! "I am so happy to say I shall soon have an opportunity of being with you, for 'tis the queen's intention to come down and inspect the college she has founded in your neighbourhood. I suppose you have heard of her munificence in giving her palace there to found an hospital for wounded seamen? I expect her majesty will send me forward to prepare for her reception, for she has lately added to my debt of gratitude by making me one of her pages. Janet will scarcely know her little Walter, I am so smart and tall. I have hardly time to say you may expect me on the heels of the messenger, for I have just received orders, and he is waiting impatiently for this. Love to all. Give Janet a kiss for me, and take care not to let my dreadful uncle of the heath know anything of my coming. Farewell! Yours, &c., Walter Arlington."

DAME. Bless his heart! I do so long to see him. I somehow love that boy as well as if he was my own son.

PAUL. And I love him because he is not my son, yet has proved one to me; when my wound was so bad that I scarce could sit in my boat to ferry passengers across the river, he was always ready to assist me; and though his tender strength would not permit him to take all the toil upon himself, his willing heart sparkled in his eyes, and he would have done it if he could.

DAME. And did he not always declare that I made dumplings better than the great cook at his uncle's?

JANET. And did he not always go with me to the village, and insist on carrying my basket back?

PAUL. And then he is such a brave little dog. How my heart leaped to see him dash into the water, and save the lady's life when the queen was returning from Tilbury Fort. Gad! he was a special good swimmer—he could scarcely have been eleven years old at the time—it was for this act of daring the queen took notice of him.

JANET. And now she has made him one of her pages! How handsome he must look. But, father, you haven't given me that which he sent me. (*PAUL kisses her*)

DAME. I wish he were here to give it you himself. But, Paul, his dread of his uncle seems undiminished—what can occasion it?

PAUL. I have no idea; but doesn't every one dread the solitary of the heath? I never saw him but once, and then his face was so pale, his eyes so sunk and glaring, that I turned from his gaze with a shudder; and, I believe for the first time

in my life I trembled—yes, I who have faced the enemy a hundred times, and helped to beat the invincible Armada, I trembled at the gaze of Michael Arnaud, the mysterious solitary of the heath. No wonder a boy like Walter should dread his presence.

DAME. Well, come along, Paul, and finish thy breakfast; and, egad, I must get about preparing for our favourite. I'll make some of my dumplings that he loves so. Well, come along, Janet, and put the pot on to boil,—and quick, good man, and put some beef into thy stomach. *Exeunt into house, R.*

ROBERT. (*advancing.*) So, so, he is expected instantly! this is news, indeed. My father, who wishes to get the boy in his power, will be pleased; and then I can wheedle him out of a further supply, for my extravagances, as he terms it. Here goes to inform him, and try the effect. *Music.—Exit R. 4 E.*

Enter WALTER ARLINGTON, muffled in a cloak, L. U. E.

WALTER. (*listens at the door, and looks round*) Yes, everything remains as it was—and I can hear Janet's pretty prattle. I wonder whether she is as much improved as I am! I must be grown a great deal. Let me see—I could just stand under here, (*goes to shed*) now, bless my soul! I'm a head higher—I'm quite a man—ay, and a good little man, too. There lies the old boat that I have helped to haul up and scull across the river many a time; my hands, no doubt, would blister now, if I attempted to handle an oar; and I dare say I have forgot the way—let me see, (*imitates sculling a boat*) —That's all right—(*imitates rowing a boat*) No, I have not forgot to help an old friend yet; and Janet shall find I've not forgot many other things, for I have had plenty of practice in kissing among the maids at Court. I wonder how the dame and her dumplings are? Now to try if they know me. Hollo! boat! ferryman, there—hollo! hem, ha, hem!

(*struts about.*)

Enter PAUL from house.

PAUL. Directly, your honour. Damme, what a strut!

WALTER. How are you, ferryman? how's the dame and her dumplings, hey? (*crosses R.*)

PAUL. (*aside*) Dame and her dumplings! why, how the devil does he know she is making dumplings? Why, dame is very well; but as for the dumplings—

WALTER. Oh, ah, I know. But how is your daughter, my pretty Janet, hey? hem! (*crosses L.*)

PAUL. Here, dame, Janet! come here, will ye? and bring

my cudgel, for I've an idea I shall want it. His pretty Janet, indeed!

Enter DAME and JANET, from house—DAME's hands covered with flour.

DAME. Well, what's the matter now, good man?

PAUL. Oh, here's a gentleman making particular inquiries about your dumplings.

DAME. Special good ones, your honour.

WALTER. I know it, good woman. Ha, how do you do, my pretty lass! (*chucks her under the chin*) Give me a kiss!

PAUL. Avast, there! or I shall shiver your maintop for you.

WALTER. (*throwing off cloak*) Do it, master Tugscull—and welcome, if you will.

PAUL. } Walter ! } (*each shaking a hand.*)

DAME. } My boy ! }

JANET. } I am so happy !

WALTER. Now won't you give me a kiss?

JANET. Yes, that I will! (*he kisses her*)

WALTER. Paul, give us a shake of your hand. Dame, give me a kiss. I see you knew I was fond of dumplings, for you have given me a handful, (*showing flour on his hand.*)

DAME. Let me look at thee. What a main fine dress! how folks would stare to see thee.

PAUL. You have grown a fine fellow, and I'm glad to find you have not altered in your heart.

WALTER. Not a bit! see what a strut I have got! What a martial air I have acquired—I have learned to swim the mazes of the dance—to make love—(Janet will have a specimen of that presently)—to ride—to fence—in full, I have become a courtier in all but my heart, which, ever amidst the vices and luxurious indolence of a court, remains uncorrupted and warm to its old friends.

PAUL. That I will be bound it does. But when is our good queen expected? and do you mean to take up your abode with us? for I find by your letter you do not wish to go to your uncle's.

WALTER. Oh, no, not for worlds!

JANET. Why this dread of him, Walter? has he ever ill-used you?

PAUL. He is a most mysterious man. Is it true, also, that he is a foreigner?

Enter HANS GERTHOLD, R. U. E.—he listens behind.

WALTER. He is a German; but I never could hear much of his history. I could never learn who my father was—he

always shrunk from the inquiry ; and I dreaded him too much to urge it. I have been from infancy taught to consider him as my uncle, but from several circumstances, I can't help thinking I am no relation. The sight of me, at times, was hateful to him ; and he has often gazed upon me, then rushed from the room in the greatest agitation. I am sure, Paul, between ourselves, he has some crime hanging heavy upon his heart—murder, perhaps.

DAME. Murder—gracious defend us !

PAUL. What ground have you think so ?

WALTER. From broken sentences in his sleep, and from a conversation I heard between him and his sweet valet, Gerthold. You have seen him ; as ferocious a looking fellow as ever drew the breath of heaven. They mentioned my likeness to some one, and spoke of the cry of blood—and murdering poor Gilbert the idiot ; but then my uncle talked of a prophecy in Germany forbidding it.

DAME. What could that poor harmless fellow have done to offend him ?

PAUL. What, indeed ? I have often wondered at Arnaud's keeping the unfortunate wretch in his service.

WALTER. (*aside to PAUL*) I will tell you more in private. Dame, how get the dumplings on ?

DAME. Ay, true—come in, and I'll finish them. Come, Janet, child.

(*Music.—The exit into cottage,—as PAUL is following, WALTER detains him—exit HANS GERTHOLD, R. U. E.*)

WALTER. Stay, and I'll tell you what more I've learned. You wonder at his detaining Gilbert, because he is an idiot ? I understand he was not alway so ; but the ill-usage of my uncle, on account of his being witness of some deed of darkness, robbed him of his senses, the poor wretch is absolutely Arnaud's prisoner—who never suffers him abroad, except accompanied by that villain, Gerthold. Now, Paul, I entreat your present silence on this subject. Heaven is all sufficient, and in its all-wise time, will hurl retribution on the guilty. Come, a truce to this grave subject—I'm as hungry as a hunter. I shall eat like a little glutton. I left my horse to be well fed at the village, and now I shall make an attack on your beef.

PAUL. Do so. I'll to the boat—but will soon return, and then you shall recount your adventures.

WALTER. I will, I will !

(*Music.—Exeunt WALTER into the cottage, R.—PAUL to the boat, L. U. E.*)

Enter HANS followed by GILBERT, the latter in dress and manner as an idiot, R. U. E.

HANS. Gilbert, come, I say—you are as slow as a snail. Come, or I shall kick you forward.

GILBERT. Kick ! la, how wonderful !

HANS. I shall, von day or other, cut your throat in a passion.

GILBERT. I should die then, shouldn't I ? La, how wonderful !

HANS. Ugh ! Dere is der cottage, (*looks through window*) and dere is der youngster. (*laugh heard without*) I shall spoil your laughing, Master Walter, shortly, (*going to Gilbert, L.*) Now you know your directions—d'ye hear ?

GILBERT. Yes, good Hans—don't be cross with me—I—I—la, how wonderful !

HANS. Den obey dem punctually, or, ven you return, you shall be punished. Oh, here he comes !

Enter ROBERT, R. U. E.

Well, Master Robert, he is safe in der house—vat are we to do? you have seen your vather?

ROBERT. Yes, and you are to summon Walter to his presence, and if he refuses, you must use force.

HANS. I like force. Gilbert ! (*he does not attend*) fool ! (*he comes down*) knock at der door.

GILBERT. I will ! (*knocks at the door*)

ROBERT. Retire.

GILBERT. I will. (*retires*)

Enter WALTER from cottage—he starts on seeing ROBERT—DAME and JANET following.

ROBERT. Walter, your uncle is amazed at your want of the respect due to him, and summons you to attend him on the Heath.

HANS. Ay, directly.

WALTER. Master Robert Arnaud, I must speak plainly with you. My uncle's conduct to me has never been such as could kindle affection in my breast—his character is not one I can respect. I will not accompany you.

ROBERT. Beware, young man—he is not to be trifled with. Do not oblige us to use force.

WALTER. You dare not do it—I am a servant of the queen.

ROBERT. No power will screen you from your uncle's vengeance. Gilbert, advance and seize him.

GILBERT. (L.) I will !

DAME. (R.) Do, if you dare—I'll crack your head with the ladle !

GILBERT. La, how wonderful ! (*retires*)

Music.—HANS crosses, and throws WALTER round to L. and is about to seize him, when PAUL enters, and throws himself in an attitude of defence between them, with an oar.

PAUL. Holloa ! my hearties, what means this ? Walter, drop along side of me, and let us parley a bit with them.

Exit DAME into house.

WALTER. My good friend, they wish to force me to my uncle's against my inclination. I will not go.

ROBERT. You must.

PAUL. Belay there a bit, will ye ? Why must he ? at whose orders ?

ROBERT. That of his own natural protector—his uncle.

PAUL. Has his uncle ever protected him ? No !—then how dare he pretend to a power over him ? This boy has been a son to me—he has soothed my pain, and eased my toil ! Think ye then, I will stand by and see him trampled upon ? No. My arm is an old one, 'tis true—it has, ere now, helped to beat the enemies of my country, and while I have a drop of blood left to animate it, it shall defend the cause of the oppressed and innocent. So sheer off, or damme if I don't scuttle some of your nobs for you. (*stands in a menacing attitude*)

ROBERT. Resistance is in vain. Hans, tear the boy from him !

Enter DAME, with a dumpling pot.

DAME. If you do, I'll give you dumplings, flour and all !

GILBERT. Dumplings ! La, how wonderful !

ROBERT. Why do you hesitate ? Tear him away, I say !!

(Music—They advance to seize him—PAUL defends him from them with an oar—DAME hurls the contents of the dumpling pot over GILBERT—ROBERT forces the oar from PAUL, and throws him to the ground, R. then seizes WALTER, L.—DAME pelts HANS and GILBERT with the dumplings—HANS levels pistol at PAUL.—Tableau.

A C T S E C O N D .

SCENE FIRST.—*As before—exactly the same as it was at the end of Act I—the dumplings, &c., lying about.*

PAUL discovered seated, L. and **DAME** at door of house, dejected
—**JANET** weeping in front of the stage.

PAUL. Why do you sit there, dame, mumchance? why don't you speak a word to cheer a poor body a bit? There's Janet, too, with all hands at her pumps. Come, come, cheer up, girl, the queen will soon be here—and when she arrives, I will find some way to force myself into her presence. Dame, dry your tears, and let us think of rescuing him from his dread uncle's power.

DAME. To think, too, that I should have the trouble of making my dumplings to be wasted on that idiot fool! but if I don't bustle, we shall all be starved. It is long past dinner-time now, and there is nothing prepared. Come, Janet, lass, stir thee!

JANET. Think you, my dear father, that they will dare to take his life?

PAUL. Never fear—never fear! There, help thy mother to pick up the dumplings.

DAME. (while busied) Poor lad! he seemed to dread going! That Arnaud can have no good motive for keeping him on the Heath. One, two, three—here they are, sure enough! but they may all go to the pig. Come, Janet, girl, follow me!

Exit into cottage.

JANET. Oh, father, if they harm Walter, I shall be miserable all the rest of my days.

Exit into cottage.

PAUL. Egad, so shall I. However, I'll look out to prevent all evil doings. Faith, it is later than we think, for the sun is down, and I feel as hungry—Here, dame, cut me a bit of junk, will ye? I'll just take a smack and then sheer off. *Exit into cottage.*

Enter ARNAUD, R. U. E.—looks cautiously round.

ARNAUD. So, now to question the ferryman! This intelligence of Gerthold's alarms me! but guilt is easily alarmed—the canker, conscience, gnawing at my heart, if startled by the breath of suspicion, becomes enraged, and drives me to madness. How could he learn the tale of blood?—impossible! and yet

Hans affirms he heard him in plain and undisguised terms, inform this ferryman. S'death! shall my life hang on the nod of two such instruments? No! thus deep in blood, I must plunge farther—the boy shall die to-night; thus shall I rid me of one adder in my path.

Enter PAUL, from house.

PAUL. Now, dame, I'm under weigh! (*sees ARNAUD*) Shiver my timbers! Arnaud of the Heath! (*starts, and retreats*)

ARNAUD. Are you the ferryman?

PAUL. Yes. (*aside*) I would not venture in the boat with him for his fortune.

ARNAUD. Are you acquainted with my nephew, Walter Arlington?

PAUL. I am. (*aside*) He'll get nothing from me.

ARNAUD. He was here this morning?

PAUL. Yes—and your son has dared to break in upon our comfort by tearing him away.

ARNAUD. 'Twas at my command. The stripling had refused obedience to my orders. I am not to be trifled with—but am always prepared with means to silence opposition.

PAUL. (*aside*) Yes, and silencing means they are, I take it.

(*crossing his throat*.)

ARNAUD. Did he ever speak of me?

PAUL. Yes.

ARNAUD. This morning in particular?

PAUL. Yes—that is—no. (*aside*) Why did he ask?

ARNAUD. (*aside*) He starts, and is confounded. Hans is right. What makes you take so strong an interest in the boy?

PAUL. The cause of innocence will ever find a helping hand in Paul—while that of hidden guilt will find in him a searching foe.

ARNAUD. (*aside*) 'Tis so. The boy, by some unknown means, has got the secret—he does but urge his fate.

PAUL. I must away. (*crosses*) I beseech you, Master Arnaud, as you value Heaven's pardon for the crimes you have committed, harm not the innocent boy—he has been a blessing to us in our age—our benisons are on him, and may our curses, thrice redoubled, fall on him who dare to do him wrong.

Exit, L. U. E.

ARNAUD. The secret I for years have hidden in my breast, is then at last discovered—and ruin, shame, and an ignominious death, now threaten me. Blinded by an unlawful passion for the wife of him I called my friend—I forgot our oath of lasting friendship, and Ratcliff fell beneath my murderous dagger.

Walter, I— But I must not yield myself to remorse, my safety requires instant action. Once dipped in blood, I must wade or perish. Gerthold approaches—and with him, another victim of my villanies. Oh, agony of recollection !

Enter HANS and GILBERT, R. U. E.

HANS. I have secured der boy, and wait for further orders.

ARNAUD. He must die to-night. 'Tis too true what you have informed me of. By some means he has gained a knowledge of our guilt. (*to GILBERT*) Come hither, fool!

GILBERT. Fool—la !

ARNAUD. Think ye, Hans, we dare trust him to wait the ferryman's return, and then inform us ?

HANS. Do as you like—I wouldn't suffer him from my sight. To-night, while sleep seals up their eyes, we may easily enter der cottage, and silence our fears of Paul.

ARNAUD. Right—(*to Gilbert*) retire.

GILBERT. I will. (*goes up near the door of cottage*)

ARNAUD. In what chamber have you put the boy ?

HANS. In der one between your own and Robert's.

ARNAUD. 'Tis well—'tis easy of access. And when he sleeps, strike home, or his cries may alarm the cottagers who dwell around us.

Enter DAME, from cottage—meets GILBERT face to face.

GILBERT. Dumplings ! la, how wonderful ! (*retires to L. corner*)

DAME. (*comes down, R.*) So you are here, Master Arnaud ! What do you want ?—to murder *us*, perhaps.

ARNAUD. Peace, beldame !

DAME. I shan't. It wouldn't be the first you have had a hand in, I take it.

ARNAUD. (*agitated*) Silence, or—

DAME. Do so—stab a defenceless woman, it suits with your bravery. But no, I am safe, I take it—you do all your murders in the dark.

ARNAUD. Fiends—tortures—agony ! *Rushes off, L. 1 E.*

GILBERT. (*goes to wing, and looks after him*) How wonderful !

HANS. Hark'ee, dame—you had better keep a civil tongue in your head—my master is not to be insulted mit impunity.

DAME. And you had better troop off before my good man returns, or you'll get an oar about your knave's sconce.

GILBERT. Yes, Hans, let us go home, I am sleepy—I'm sure 'tis bed time.

HANS. Look you repent it not.

DAME. Troop off, with your ill-looking visage. Come, fool, away with you!

GILBERT. I will.

HANS. You will be sorry for dis before twelve.

Exit grumbling, r. u. e.—GILBERT looks round, and approaches DAME, as if he had something to say.

HANS. (*calls without*) Gilbert!

GILBERT. Dumplings! la, how wonderful!

Exit GILBERT, r. u. e.—DAME into cottage.

SCENE SECOND.—*Chamber in Arnaud's House.*

Enter ROBERT ARNAUD, L.

ROBERT. He still refuses to supply me with money—and I must break my promise with my friends. There is but one way—'tis an unpleasant one—but I must resort to it. I observed a purse in Walter's bosom—it seemed well-stocked—and while he sleeps, I must make it mine. 'Tis not altogether honourable—but honour and I have long since shaken hands.

GILBERT runs across from L.

Ho, Gilbert! I'll question this fool. Come here.

GILBERT. I will.

ROBERT. Have you observed a purse Walter carries in his bosom?

GILBERT. A purse! la, what's a purse?

ROBERT. Fool!

GILBERT. Oh, then, I'm a purse. Hans often calls me fool!

ROBERT. Have you seen Walter with money?

GILBERT. Ha, I know what money is.

ROBERT. Have you seen a purse with money in his bosom?

GILBERT. Bosom! money! The woman pelted me with dumplings—la!

ROBERT. Idiot, leave me!

GILBERT. I will. La, how wonderful!

Exit, r. 1 e.

ROBERT. What my father's motive can be for retaining that witless being, I never could discover. He brought him over with him from Germany, and I heard him give Hans and the other servants charge never to lose sight of him. My father is mysterious in everything, and doubly so in this. But I must

have the purse, or I shall lose my character for punctuality to gain it, I must become a thief! Well, the wine the gold will purchase, will drown all recollection of the means by which I obtained it.

Music—Exit, R. 1 E.

SCENE THIRD.—*A Chamber at Arnaud's. (4th Grooves.) Stage dark—open window, L. C.—door, L.—a couch, C.—a table and chair, L., under the window.*

WALTER discovered, seated disconsolately on a couch, c.

Enter HANS GERTHOLD, with a light, from door, L.

HANS. Why, Master Walter, you look as dull as if you had been turned from a home, instead of being brought to von! Come, cheer up—you are mit your uncle, who, you know, loves you, and wishes you well—*(aside)* out of der way!

WALTER. Why, then, does he detain me, if he wishes me well? is it a proof of his love to make a prisoner of me?

HANS. For dat, I suppose, he has motives of his own. He will be here shortly, you may then inquire dem. *(places the lamp on the table L. C.)*

WALTER. *(aside)* Yes, it's all up with poor Walter! I shall be food for the birds before morning. I hope they don't intend to cut my throat! I should look so ugly with a great gash here! What a black looking dog it is! I think of the two, he is uglier than my uncle. Oh, lord! here he comes! Mercy defend me!

Enter ARNAUD, from door, L.

ARNAUD. Walter, come here!

WALTER. (R.) I'd rather not, if it's all the same to you, uncle.

ARNAUD. What fear you, boy? have I ever harmed you?

WALTER. No, but perhaps you intend to do it.

ARNAUD. Banish those fears—I love you, Walter.

WALTER. *(aside)* Well but you've a devilish odd way of showing it!

ARNAUD. But, hurt at your preferring the protection of others to mine, I have been, perhaps, harsh in forcing you here. Forgive me for it—I am glad to find you thrive so well at court, and do not forget your friends. But the ferryman, I will myself find means to reward.

HANS. (L.—*aside*) Yes, mit a few inches of cold steel.

WALTER. (R.—*aside*) Is it possible for the man who talks like this, to be guilty of murder?

ARNAUD. You will sleep here to-night, and in the morning you shall return to your duty.

WALTER. Thanks, my kind uncle.

ARNAUD. You must be wearied with your journey, and had better retire to rest.

WALTER. I will instantly, for I feel quite exhausted.

ARNAUD. Do so. Follow me, Hans. (*to HANS, aside*) Now, when he sleeps! Good night—dear Walter, good night!

Exeunt with HANS, l.—WALTER runs to door.

WALTER. Ha, there is no fastening. Well, I shall not need one—they will not harm me. Yaw! I'll have a sleep, then hey for morning and my dear little Janet. (*Music—he lays down—a letter, fastened to a stone, is thrown in at the window*) Hey—what is that, a rat?—no, it's a letter. Where did it come from?—through this window—and there is a ladder placed against it. What does it say? I do so love a bit of adventure. Perhaps some neighbouring damsel is in love with me! Poor things! they cannot help it. What does it say? (*reads*) "If you sleep you will be murdered.—There is a plot against your life.—Beware!" A pleasant appointment this, upon my soul! But I'll cheat them. Oh, some one is coming! I'll feign sleep.

(*Music—he lies upon the bed.*

Enter HANS, l. door, cautiously.

HANS. He sleeps—all is safe! Now to complete my work!

(*he steals towards WALTER, who starts up.*

WALTER. What do you want here, Hans, creeping about the room like a mouse.

HANS. I want der light (*takes it*) you can sleep in der dark.

WALTER. You've got the lamp. Why come you so near my bed?

HANS. To tell you dat you needn't fear to sleep in der dark, for Master Robert sleeps in that room. (*points to R. 1 E.*)

WALTER. Oh, well—good night!

HANS. Goot night. (*aside*) Eternal curses light on you!

Exit, with light, l.—stage dark.

WALTER. (*listens at door*) So—now he's off! And now I'll be off, presto, through the window. (*goes to window*) It's all over with me—the ladder's gone! Yes' I'm killed and cut up to a certainty! the window is too high to leap out of without endangering my neck—but better risk it by a jump, than stay and have it disfigured by Hans Gerthold's ugly knife. (*Music.* —*He is about to jump out, when he hears a noise at the door of Robert's chamber R. 1 E.*) Here they come again! (*throws himself on the bed*)

Music—Enter ROBERT ARNAUD, from R. 1 E., cautiously, and listens.

ROBERT. So, all is quiet—and now for the purse!

Enter LE SIEUR ARNAUD, L. D. with a dagger.

ARNAUD. I will not trust again to Gerthold—my own hand shall complete the work. (*Music*)

ROBERT. (*approaches the bed*) Yes, yes, the purse is mine. (*Music—at the moment he stoops to take the purse, ARNAUD stabs, as if at WALTER, and strikes ROBERT—WALTER slides off the bed—ROBERT falls on to the couch, and dies*)

ARNAUD. 'Tis done! (*Music—WALTER rushes down to the front of the stage, and kneels*)

WALTER. Father of Heaven, accept my thanks.

Enter HANS, L. D. with a light—WALTER, who has approached the door, starts back, and jumps through the window.

ARNAUD. (*starts on seeing WALTER*) Do my senses mock me? Whom, then, have I slain? Merciful heaven! my son! yes 'tis he. Oh, horror—my boy—revive! Dead—quite dead, and I his murderer! My guilty hand, stained with the blood of my own son! Oh, villain, villain! accursed—accursed for ever! (*Music—Sinks on the body—Tableau and closed in by*

SCENE FOURTH.—*Interior of Paul's Cottage. (2nd grooves) door, R. C.—Thunder and lightning, rain, &c.*

DAME and JANET enter, R. with a lamp.]

DAME. This is a dreadful night! What can have become of Paul? Janet, why don't you speak? there's no getting a word out of you since Walter was taken away. (*JANET brings on a chair and sits by the fire*) Come, don't sit there moping!

JANET. I am thinking, mother, that my father stays long at the ferry. I hope he has not got into danger.

DAME. Oh, no, we shall have him home again soon, with a fine wet jacket. Well, supper is ready—so the sooner he comes the better.

PAUL. (*without*) Dame Tugscull, ahoy!

Enter PAUL, door R. C.

Damme, here's a squall! Clear the house, dame—put everything in order—I've brought such a cargo of fine folks for shelter from the storm—the Earl of Sussex, and a whole crew of attendants. I've just ferried them across the river, and they are bearing down upon us for house-room. So, d'ye see, dame,

make 'em comfortable. They are not far astern, for my lame knee wouldn't let me get much to windward of them.

DAME. Gad a mercy, Paul, I'm in such a flurry! Janet, lass rub the chairs. Only to think, an earl—a right down real earnest earl coming to our cottage! Janet, girl, why don't you stir? you do nothing. (*during this speech, she is running about and doing nothing herself*)

JANET. I think it's you who are doing nothing, mother.

PAUL. Gad, I think so too—but it's too late now, for here comes his lordship.

Enter SUSSEX in a cloak, and ATTENDANTS, door, R. C.

PAUL. (L. C.) Welcome, my lord—wlecome to my humble habitation. You will find but poor accommodation, but wil-ling hearts, my lord!

DAME. (L. C.) Welcome, my lordship—welcome, gentlemen.
(curtseying.

SUSSEX. (C.) And do you not welcome me, my pretty lass?

JANET. That I do, my lord.

PAUL. Ay, that she does, with all her heart, my lord.

DAME. You'll excuse her, my lord—I know you will—she is bashful like me. But won't your lordship sit down. Will your lordship take a piece of special fine bacon—we've some fine cabbages—or a basin of broth?

SUSSEX. I thank you, my good dame, I do but need shelter while the storm lasts. You have heard, my worthy host, of her majesty's intended visit to open the Seaman's Hospital, in her palace of Greenwich.

PAUL. I have this morning had a visit from Walter Arling-ton, her page.

DAME. Tell his lordship how they seized him.

PAUL. I will do so, but—

Hurried music.—The door R. C. bursts open, and WALTER rushes in.

WALTER. My friend, protect me—save me!

Enter ARNAUD at door R. C., followed by HANS, and GILBERT.

PAUL. Mysterious man! why, is this boy thus perse-cuted?

ARNAUD. (R.) Resign him—he is guilty of murder! he has killed my son.

WALTER. No, no, no—do not believe him—I am not guilty—'twas he. Indeed I am innocent.

PAUL. That I will be sworn for. My Lord of Sussex, I claim

your protection for our sovereign's page. I will answer with my life for his innocence.

WALTER. Oh, my good lord ! in mercy shield me from that man—he would have murdered me. This dagger yet reeks with the blood of his own son. Oh, save—do not yield me to his power.

SUSSEX. (c.) I will not, boy, if it is as you have said.

ARNAUD. My lord, you will not surely listen to that guilty youth. Is it at all in reason that a father would stain his hand with the blood of a son, loved so tenderly as mine was ? no, my good lord, there is the viper I have nourished in my bosom —who has stung the fostering hand that fed him—and repaid my tenderness by murdering my beloved son. And see ! in damning evidence, he bears the proof on his breast. (*points to spots of blood on Walter's vest—Chord*)

PAUL. Walter !

WALTER. You surely do not think me guilty ? By heaven, I am innocent. Dame, Janet, my lord, he would have murdered me ! his dagger was uplifted when—ha, ha, ha ! (*over-powered by his emotion, he sinks on PAUL's shoulder*)

ARNAUD. You see, my lord, the consciousness of guilt confounds him.

SUSSEX. I confess that circumstances are against him—yet what could urge him to commit the dreadful deed ?

ARNAUD. His motives, my good lord, are palpable ; my son removed, he is my heir—added to which they quarrelled this morning, and it required my utmost authority to restore peace between them.

SUSSEX. I must order him under arrest till morning, then the queen shall be your judge.

PAUL. My good lord, I beseech you break not his noble heart by consigning him to a prison—I will answer, with my life for his innocence.

DAME. And I, my lord !

JANET. My lord, he is incapable of crime—his generous soul despairs the thought of guilt. Let me be your prisoner—but do not harm Walter.

ARNAUD. Will your lordship give him to my custody—I will be answerable for his appearance in the morning.

PAUL. No, my lord, in doing that you will yield him to certain death. Villain, have you not sufficient blood on your soul, but you must add to it the murder of this unoffending boy ?

ARNAUD. Back, meddler ! give me me the boy.

PAUL. Never ! I am a British seaman, and would scorn to

fight under the flag of villainy ; but damme, if I wouldn't shed my last drop of blood in conveying a cargo of innocence.

DAME. That's right, husband—and I will stand by you tooth and nail.

WALTER. I will go to prison, my lord—but do not give me into his power—full well he knows my innocence. I will go to prison, convinced that to-morrow will establish it beyond a doubt. Do not cry, Janet—why don't you look cheerful, like me ? Heaven bless you, dame. Paul, my friend, I'll bear it like a man.

PAUL. Ha, a thought strikes me ! my lord—from a conversation Walter had overheard, I have reason to believe I can prove a former murder committed by the hand of Arnaud.

ARNUAD. A former murder ! what—where ?—My lord 'tis but a shallow artifice to invalidate my evidence.

SUSSEX. You say he heard this conversation ? did any other person hear it ?

PAUL. No, my lord, but—

ARNAUD. No, my lord, 'tis plain 'tis but a wretched artifice. Where are his witnesses ? I dare him to the proof. He has none, my lord—not one.

GILBERT *rushes down from back.*

GILBERT. (c.) 'Tis false ! I, Gilbert, your idiot slave, was witness of your guilt, and am here to crush thee.

ARNAUD. How—Gilbert ! heaven itself conspires against me. Fool ! idiot !

GILBERT. I am not an idiot, nor ever was one. Villain, the hour of retribution has arrived ; and that heaven which saw you perpetrate your crime, makes me an instrument to hurl its thunders on you. My lord, behold the assassin of your brother—these eyes were witness to the murder of the best of masters. Eight years I was his prisoner, chained in a loathsome dungeon—still I lived upon the hope of revenge—I prayed for it—I have thirsted for it—and I have gained it. By affecting idiocy, I regained my liberty, in part ; but they still kept a wary eye on me. With a bursting heart I played the heedless fool ; and oft, whilst tears were gushing from my eyes, and wild emotions choked me in my throat, with vacant laugh I've hid my aching heart—for what ? to right my master's son, and hurl destruction on his villain murderer. (*crosses L.*)

SUSSEX. It seems, then, Walter, thou art my nephew. My poor unhappy brother !

GILBERT. He was the kindest master.

WALTER. It seems, then, Gilbert, it was you who informed me of Arnaud's base intentions?

GILBERT. I overheard their murderous plan, and threw that letter to acquaint you of it.

SUSSEX. (*to ARNAUD*) Wretched man! (*to PAUL*) For you, my friend, you shall not lack reward for the kindness you have shown my nephew.

PAUL. My lord, if Walter will, there is poor Janet—for myself, I wish no reward.

WALTER. My friend, in whatever my fortune, it shall not affect my love. (*takes JANET by the hand*.)

SUSSEX. Seize that villain!

(*to SERVANTS, who approach ARNAUD, who has been standing stupefied at the discovery of his guilt.*)

ARNAUD. (*starts*) Off, slaves! thou reptile! would I could crush thee into nothingness! Fooled—baffled! See, see—the murdered Ratcliff smiles contemptuously on my agonies—while yelling spectres shriek my name aloud, and claim me for their own. A liquid fire runs through my veins. Off, fiends! I come to join you in your world of flames. (*stabs himself and dies—tableau*)

HANS. ATTENDANTS.

ARNAUD. SUSSEX. WALTER. JANET. PAUL. DAME.

R.

CURTAIN.

L.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R means Right of the Stage, facing the Audience; L Left; C Centre; R.C. Right of Centre; L.C. Left of Centre; D.F. Door in the Flat, or Scene running across the back of the Stage; C.D.F. Centre Door in the Flat; D.R.C. Right Door in the Flat; L.C.F. Left Door in the Flat; R.D. Right Door; L.D. Left Door; 2 E. Second Entrance; U.E. Upper Entrance.