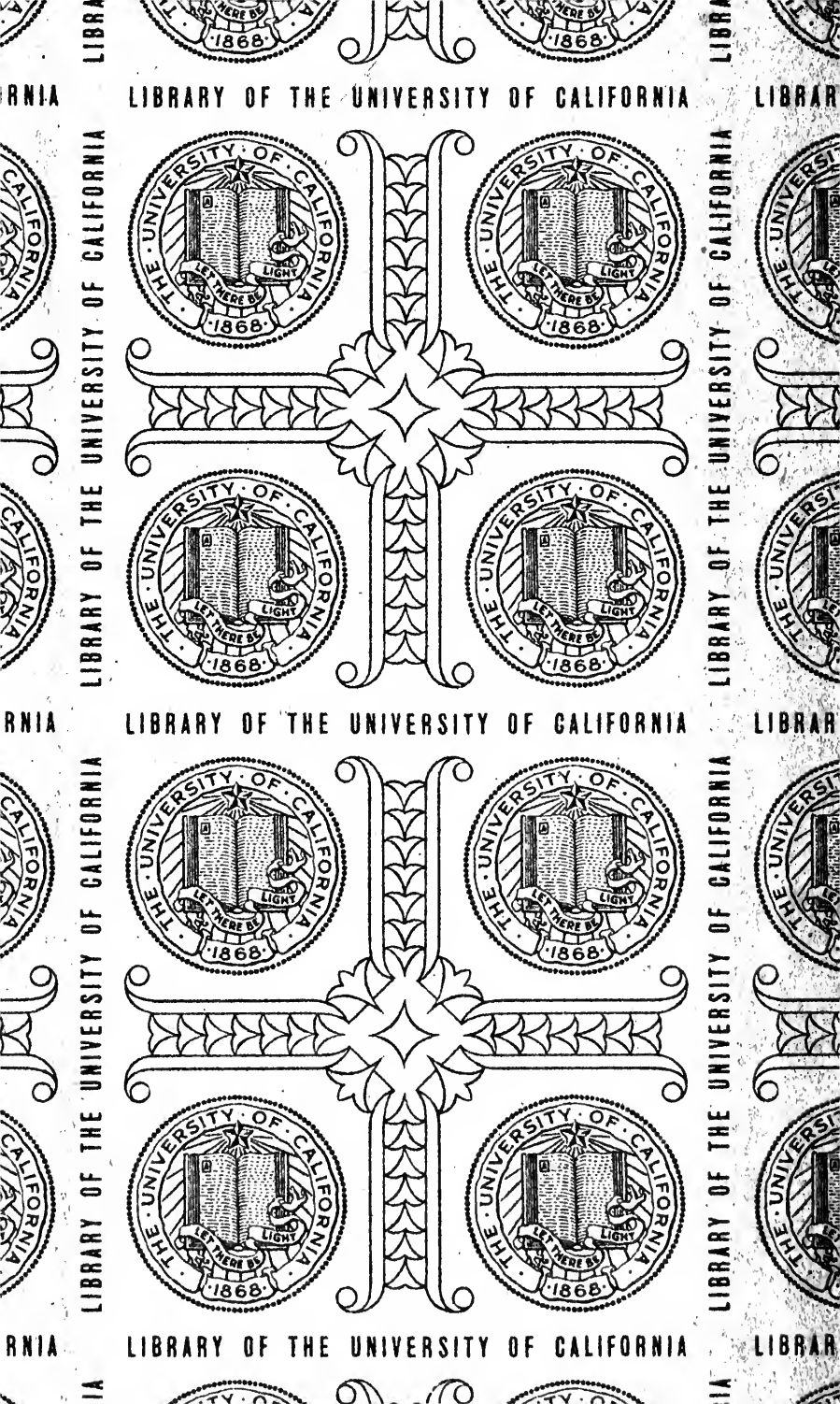


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THE
STRANGE GENTLEMAN;

A Comic Burletta,

IN TWO ACTS.

BY "BOZ."

FIRST PERFORMED

AT

THE ST. JAMES'S THEATRE,

ON

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1836.

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 186, STRAND.

MDCCCXXXVII.

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LONDON :
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS,
WHITEFRIARS.

THE STRANGE GENTLEMAN.



COSTUME.

MR. OWEN OVERTON.—*Black smalls, and high black boots. A blue body coat, rather long in the waist, with yellow buttons, buttoned close up to the chin. A white stock; ditto gloves. A broad-brimmed low-crowned white hat.*

STRANGE GENTLEMAN.—*A light blue plaid French-cut trousers and vest. A brown cloth frock coat, with full skirts scarcely covering the hips. A light blue kerchief, and eccentric low crowned broad-brimmed white hat. Boots.*

JOHN JOHNSON.—*White fashionable trousers, boots, light vest, frock coat, black hat, gloves, &c.*

CHARLES TOMKINS.—*Shepherd's plaid French-cut trousers; boots; mohair fashionable frock coat, buttoned up: black hat, gloves, &c.*

TOM SPARKS.—*Leather smalls, striped stockings, and lace-up half boots, red vest, and a Holland stable jacket; coloured kerchief, and red wig.*

THE WAITERS.—*All in black trousers, black stockings and shoes, white vests, striped jackets, and white kerchiefs.*

MARY WILSON.—*Fashionable walking dress, white silk stockings; shoes and gloves.*

FANNY WILSON.—*Precisely the same as Mary.*

JULIA DOBBS.—*A handsome white travelling dress, cachmere shawl, white silk stockings; shoes and gloves. A bonnet to correspond.*

MRS. NOAKES.—*A chintz gown, rather of a dark pattern, French apron, and handsome cap.*

SCENE.—A SMALL TOWN, ON THE ROAD TO GRETNA.

TIME.—PART OF A DAY AND NIGHT.

TIME IN ACTING—ONE HOUR AND TWENTY MINUTES.

THE STRANGE GENTLEMAN.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Room at the St. James's Arms; Door in Centre, with a Bolt on it. A Table with Cover, and Two Chairs.* R. H.

Enter MRS. NOAKES. C. DOOR.

MRS. NOAKES.

Bless us, what a coachful! Four inside—twelve out; and the guard blowing the key-bugle in the fore-boot, for fear the informers should see that they have got one over the number. Post-chaise and a gig besides.—We shall be filled to the very attics. Now, look alive, there—bustle about.

Enter FIRST WAITER, *running.* C. DOOR.

Now, John.

FIRST W. (*coming down* L. H.)

Single lady, inside the stage, wants a private room, ma'am.

MRS. NOAKES. R. H.

Much luggage?

FIRST W.

Four trunks, two bonnet boxes, six brown-paper parcels, and a basket.

MRS. NOAKES.

Give her a private room, directly. No. 1, on the first floor.

FIRST W.

Yes, ma'am.

[*Exit* FIRST WAITER, *running.* C. DOOR.

Enter SECOND WAITER, *running*. C. DOOR.

Now, Tom.

SECOND W. (*coming down R. H.*)

Two young ladies and one gentleman, in a post-chaise, want a private sitting-room d'rectly, ma'am.

MRS. NOAKES.

Brother and sisters, Tom?

SECOND W.

Ladies are something alike, ma'am. Gentleman like neither of 'em.

MRS. NOAKES.

Husband and wife and wife's sister, perhaps. Eh, Tom?

SECOND W.

Can't be husband and wife, ma'am, because I saw the gentleman kiss one of the ladies.

MRS. NOAKES.

Kissing one of the ladies! Put them in the small sitting room behind the bar, Tom, that I may have an eye on them through the little window, and see that nothing improper goes forward.

SECOND W.

Yes, ma'am. (*Going*.)

MRS. NOAKES.

And Tom! (*Crossing to L. H.*)

SECOND W. (*coming down R. H.*)

Yes, ma'am.

MRS. NOAKES.

Tell Cook to put together all the bones and pieces that were left on the plates at the great dinner yesterday, and make some nice soup to feed the stage-coach passengers with.

SECOND W.

Very well, ma'am.

[*Exit* SECOND WAITER. C. DOOR.

Enter THIRD WAITER, *running*. C. DOOR.

Now, Will.

THIRD W. (*coming down L. H.*)

A strange gentleman in a gig, ma'am, wants a private sitting room.

MRS. NOAKES.

Much luggage, Will?

THIRD W.

One portmanteau, and a great-coat.

MRS. NOAKES.

Oh! nonsense!—Tell him to go into the commercial room.

THIRD W.

I told him so, ma'am, but the Strange Gentleman says he *will* have a private apartment, and that it's as much as his life is worth, to sit in a public room.

MRS. NOAKES.

As much as his life is worth?

THIRD W.

Yes, ma'am.—Gentleman says he doesn't care if it's a dark closet; but a private room of some kind he must and will have.

MRS. NOAKES.

Very odd.—Did you ever see him before, Will?

THIRD W.

No, ma'am; he's quite a stranger here.—He's a wonderful man to talk, ma'am—keeps on like a steam engine. Here he is, ma'am.

STRANGE GENTLEMAN (*without*).

Now don't tell me, because that's all gammon and nonsense; and gammoned I never was, and never will be, by any waiter that ever drew the breath of life, or a cork.—And just have the goodness to leave my portmanteau alone, because I can carry it very well myself; and show me a private room without further delay; for a private room I must and will have.—Damme, do you think I'm going to be murdered!—

[*Enter the three Waiters, C. DOOR—they form down L. H., the STRANGE GENTLEMAN following, carrying his portmanteau and great-coat.*]

There—this room will do capitally well. Quite the thing,—just the fit.—How are you, ma'am? I suppose you are the landlady of this place? Just order those very attentive young fellows out, will you, and I'll order dinner.

MRS. NOAKES (*to Waiters*).

You may leave the room.

STRANGE G.

Hear that?—You may leave the room. Make yourselves scarce. Evaporate—disappear—come.

[*Exit Waiters, C. DOOR.*

That's right. And now, madam, while we're talking over this important matter of dinner, I'll just secure us effectually against further intrusion. (*Bolts the door.*)

MRS. NOAKES.

Lor, sir! Bolting the door, and *me* in the room!

STRANGE G.

Don't be afraid—I won't hurt you. I have no designs against you, my dear ma'am: but *I must be private*. (*Sits on the portmanteau, R. H.*)

MRS. NOAKES.

Well, sir—I have no objection to break through our rules for once; but it is not our way, when we're full, to give private rooms to solitary gentlemen, who come in a gig, and bring only one portmanteau. You're quite a stranger *here*, sir. If I'm not mistaken, it's your first appearance in this house.

STRANGE G.

You're right, ma'am. It *is* my first, my very first—but not my last, I can tell you.

MRS. NOAKES.

No?

STRANGE G.

No (*looking round him*). I like the look of this place. Snug and comfortable—neat and lively. You'll very often find me at the St. James's Arms, I can tell you, ma'am.

MRS. NOAKES (*aside*).

A civil gentleman. Are you a stranger in this town, sir?

STRANGE G.

Stranger! Bless you, no. I have been here for many years past, in the season.

MRS. NOAKES.

Indeed!

STRANGE G.

Oh, yes. Put up at the Royal Hotel regularly, for a long time; but I was obliged to leave it at last.

MRS. NOAKES.

I have heard a good many complaints of it.

STRANGE G.

O! terrible! such a noisy house.

MRS. NOAKES.

Ah!

STRANGE G.

Shocking! Din, din, din—Drum, drum, drum, all night. Nothing but noise, glare, and nonsense. I bore it a long time for old acquaintance sake; but what do you think they did at last, ma'am?

MRS. NOAKES.

I can't guess.

STRANGE G.

Turned the fine Old Assembly Room into a stable, and took to keeping horses. I tried that too, but I found I couldn't stand it; so I came away, ma'am, and—and—here I am (*rises*).

MRS. NOAKES.

And I'll be bound to say, sir, that you will have no cause to complain of the exchange.

STRANGE G.

I'm sure not, ma'am; I know it—I feel it, already.

MRS. NOAKES.

About dinner, sir; what would you like to take?

STRANGE G.

Let me see; will you be good enough to suggest something, ma'am?

MRS. NOAKES.

Why, a broiled fowl and mushrooms is a very nice dish.

STRANGE G.

You are right, ma'am; a broiled fowl and mushrooms form a very delightful and harmless amusement, either for one or two persons. Broiled fowl and mushrooms let it be, ma'am.

MRS. NOAKES.

In about an hour, I suppose, sir ?

STRANGE G.

For the second time, ma'am, you have anticipated my feelings.

MRS. NOAKES.

You'll want a bed to-night, I suppose, sir ; perhaps you'd like to see it ? Step this way, sir, and—(*going L. H.*)

STRANGE G.

No, no, never mind. (*Aside.*) This is a plot to get me out of the room. She's bribed by somebody who wants to identify me. I must be careful ; I am exposed to nothing but artifice and stratagem. Never mind, ma'am, never mind.

MRS. NOAKES.

If you'll give me your portmanteau, sir, the Boots will carry it into the next room for you.

STRANGE G. (*aside*).

Here's diabolical ingenuity ; she thinks it's got the name upon it. (*To her.*) I'm very much obliged to the Boots for his disinterested attention, ma'am, but with your kind permission this portmanteau will remain just exactly where it is ; consequently, ma'am, (*with great warmth,*) if the aforesaid Boots wishes to succeed in removing this portmanteau, he must previously remove *me*, ma'am, *me* ; and it will take a *pair* of very stout Boots to do that, ma'am, I promise you.

MRS. NOAKES.

Dear me, sir, you needn't fear for your portmanteau in this house ; I dare say nobody wants it.

STRANGE G.

I hope not, ma'am, because in that case nobody will be disappointed. (*Aside.*) How she fixes her old eyes on me !

MRS. NOAKES (*aside*).

I never saw such an extraordinary person in all my life. What can he be ? (*Looks at him very hard.*)

[*Exit* MRS. NOAKES, C. DOOR.]

STRANGE G.

She's gone at last ! Now let me commune with my own dreadful thoughts, and reflect on the best means of escaping

from my horrible position. (*Takes a letter from his pocket.*) Here's an illegal death warrant ; a pressing invitation to be slaughtered ; a polite request just to step out and be killed, thrust into my hand by some disguised assassin in a dirty black calico jacket, the very instant I got out of the gig at the door. I know the hand ; there's a ferocious recklessness in the cross to this "T," and a baleful malignity in the dot of that "I," which warns me that it comes from my desperate rival. (*Opens it, and reads.*) "Mr. Horatio Tinkles"—that's him—"presents his compliments to his enemy"—that's me—"and requests the pleasure of his company to-morrow morning, under the clump of trees, on Corpse Common,"—Corpse Common!—"to which any of the town's people will direct him, and where he hopes to have the satisfaction of giving him his gruel."—Giving him his gruel ! Ironical cut-throat!—"His punctuality will be esteemed a personal favour, as it will save Mr. Tinkles the trouble and inconvenience of calling with a horsewhip in his pocket. Mr. Tinkles has ordered breakfast at the Royal for *one*. It is paid for. The individual who returns alive, can eat it. Pistols—half past five—precisely."—Blood-thirsty miscreant ! *The* individual who returns alive ! I have seen him hit the painted man at the shooting gallery, regularly every time in his centre shirt plait, except when he varied the entertainments, by lodging the ball playfully in his left eye. Breakfast ! I shall want nothing beyond the gruel. What's to be done ? Escape ! I can't escape ; concealment's of no use, he knows I am here. He has dodged me all the way from London, and will dodge me all the way to the residence of Miss Emily Brown, whom my respected, but swine-headed, parents have picked out for my future wife. A pretty figure I should cut before the old people, whom I have never beheld more than once in my life, and Miss Emily Brown, whom I have never seen at all, if I went down there, pursued by this Salamander, who I suppose is her accepted lover ! What is to be done ? I can't go back again ; father would be furious. What can be done ? nothing ! (*Sinks into a chair.*) I must undergo this fiery ordeal, and submit to be packed up, and carried back to my weeping parents, like an unfortunate buck, with a

flat piece of lead in my head, and a brief epitaph on my breast, "Killed on Wednesday morning." No, I won't, (*starting up, and walking about*). I won't submit to it; I'll accept the challenge, but first I'll write an anonymous letter to the local authorities, giving them information of this intended duel, and desiring them to place me under immediate restraint. That's feasible; on further consideration, it's capital. My character will be saved—I shall be bound over—he'll be bound over—I shall resume my journey—reach the house—marry the girl—pocket the fortune, and laugh at him. No time to be lost; it shall be done forthwith. (*Goes to table, and writes.*) There; the challenge accepted, with a bold defiance, that'll look very brave when it comes to be printed. Now for the other. (*Writes.*) "To the Mayor—Sir—A strange Gentleman at the St. James's Arms, whose name is unknown to the writer of this communication, is bent upon committing a rash and sanguinary act, at an early hour to-morrow morning. As you value human life, secure the amiable youth, without delay. Think, I implore you, sir, think what would be the feelings of those to whom he is nearest and dearest, if any mischance befall the interesting young man. Do not neglect this solemn warning; the number of his room is seventeen." There—(*folding it up*). Now if I can find any one who will deliver it secretly.—

TOM SPARKS, *with a pair of boots in his hand, peeps in at the C. D.*

TOM.

Are these here your'n?

STRANGE G.

No.

TOM.

Oh! (*going back*).

STRANGE G.

Hallo! stop, are you the Boots?

TOM (*still at the door*).

I'm the head o' that branch o' the establishment. There's another man under me, as brushes the dirt off, and puts the

blacking on. The fancy work's my department ; I do the polishing, nothing else.

STRANGE G.

You are the upper Boots, then ?

TOM.

Yes, I'm the reg'lar ; t'other one's only the deputy ; top boots and half boots, I calls us.

STRANGE G.

You're a sharp fellow.

TOM.

Ah ! I'd better cut then (*going*).

STRANGE G.

Don't hurry, Boots—don't hurry ; I want you. (*Rises, and comes forward, R. H.*)

TOM (*coming forward, L. H.*).

Well !

STRANGE G.

Can—can—you be secret, Boots ?

TOM.

That depends entirely on accompanying circumstances ;—see the point ?

STRANGE G.

I think I comprehend your meaning, Boots. You insinuate that you could be secret (*putting his hand in his pocket*) if you had—five shillings for instance—isn't that it, Boots ?

TOM.

That's the line o' argument I should take up ; but that an't exactly my meaning.

STRANGE G.

No !

TOM.

No. A secret's a thing as is always a rising to one's lips. It requires an astonishing weight to keep one on 'em down.

STRANGE G.

Ah !

TOM.

Yes ; I don't think I could keep one snug—reg'lar snug, you know.

STRANGE G.

Yes, regularly snug, of course.

TOM.

—If it had a less weight a-top on it, than ten shillins.

STRANGE G.

You don't think three half-crowns would do it ?

TOM.

It might, I won't say it wouldn't, but I couldn't warrant it.

STRANGE G.

You could the other !

TOM.

Yes.

STRANGE G.

Then there it is. (*Gives him four half-crowns.*) You see these letters ?

TOM.

Yes, I can manage that without my spectacles.

STRANGE G.

Well; that's to be left at the Royal Hotel. This, *this*, is an anonymous one; and I want it to be delivered at the mayor's house, without his knowing from whom it came, or seeing who delivered it.

TOM (*taking the letters*).

I say—you're a rum 'un, you are.

STRANGE G.

Think so ! Ha, ha ! so are you.

TOM.

Aye, but you're a rummer one than me.

STRANGE G.

No, no, that's your modesty.

TOM.

No it an't. I say, how vell you did them last hay-stacks. How do you contrive that ere now, if it's a fair question. Is it done with a pipe, or do you use them Lucifer boxes ?

STRANGE G.

Pipe—Lucifer boxes—hay-stacks ! Why, what do you mean ?

TOM (*looking cautiously round*).

I know your name, old 'un.

STRANGE G.

You know my name! (*Aside.*) Now how the devil has he got hold of that, I wonder!

TOM.

Yes, I know it. It begins with a "S."

STRANGE G.

Begins with an S!

TOM.

And ends with a "G" (*winking*). We've all heard talk of *Swing* down here.

STRANGE G.

Heard talk of *Swing*! Here's a situation! Damme, d'ye think I'm a walking carbois of vitriol, and burn every thing I touch?—Will you go upon the errand you're paid for?

TOM.

Oh, I'm going—I'm going. It's nothing to me, you know; I don't care. I'll only just give these boots to the deputy, to take them to whoever they belong to, and then I'll pitch this here letter in at the Mayor's office-window, in no time.

STRANGE G.

Will you be off?

TOM.

Oh, I'm going, I'm going. Close, you knows, close!

[*Exit* TOM, c. DOOR.]

STRANGE G.

In five minutes more the letter will be delivered; in another half hour, if the Mayor does his duty, I shall be in custody, and secure from the vengeance of this infuriated monster. I wonder whether they'll take me away? Egad! I may as well be provided with a clean shirt and a night-cap in case. Let's see, she said the next room was my bed-room, and as I have accepted the challenge, I may venture so far now. (*Shouldering the portmantéau.*) What a capital notion it is; there'll be all the correspondence in large letters, in the county paper, and my name figuring away in roman capitals, with a long story, how I was such a desperate dragon, and so bent upon fighting, that it took four constables to carry me to the Mayor, and one boy to carry

my hat. It's a capital plan—must be done—the only way I have of escaping unpursued from this place, unless I could put myself in the General Post, and direct myself to a friend in town. And then it's a chance whether they'd take me in, being so much over weight.

[*Exit* STRANGE GENTLEMAN, *with portmanteau*, L. H.]

MRS. NOAKES, *peeping in* C. DOOR, *then entering*.

MRS. NOAKES.

This is the room, ladies, but the gentleman has stepped out somewhere, he won't be long, I dare say. Pray come in, Miss.

Enter MARY *and* FANNY WILSON, C. DOOR.

MARY (C.).

This is the Strange Gentleman's apartment, is it?

MRS. NOAKES (R.).

Yes, Miss; shall I see if I can find him, ladies, and tell him you are here?

MARY.

No; we should prefer waiting till he returns, if you please.

MRS. NOAKES.

Very well, ma'am. He'll be back directly, I dare say; for it's very near his dinner time.

[*Exit* MRS. NOAKES, C. DOOR.]

MARY.

Come, Fanny, dear; don't give way to these feelings of depression. Take pattern by me—I feel the absurdity of our situation acutely; but you see that I keep up, nevertheless.

FANNY.

It is easy for you to do so. *Your* situation is neither so embarrassing, nor so painful a one as mine.

MARY.

Well, my dear, it *may* not be, certainly; but the circumstances which render it less so are, I own, somewhat incomprehensible to me. My hare-brained, mad-cap swain, John Johnson, implores me to leave my guardian's house, and accompany him on an

expedition to Gretna Green. I with immense reluctance, and after considerable pressing—

FANNY.

Yield a very willing consent.

MARY.

Well, we won't quarrel about terms ; at all events I *do* consent. He bears me off, and when we get exactly half-way, discovers that his money is all gone, and that we must stop at this Inn, until he can procure a remittance from London, by post. I think, my dear, you'll own that *this* is rather an embarrassing position.

FANNY.

Compare it with mine. Taking advantage of your flight, I send express to *my* admirer, Charles Tomkins, to say that I have accompanied you ; first, because I should have been miserable if left behind with a peevish old man alone ; secondly, because I thought it proper that your sister should accompany you——

MARY.

And, thirdly, because you knew that he would immediately comply with this indirect assent to his entreaties of three months' duration, and follow you without delay, on the same errand. Eh, my dear ?

FANNY.

It by no means follows that such was my intention, or that I knew he would pursue such a course, but supposing he *has* done so ; supposing this Strange Gentleman should be himself——

MARY.

Supposing !—Why, you know it is. You told him not to disclose his name, on any account ; and the *Strange Gentleman* is not a very common travelling name, I should imagine ; besides the hasty note, in which he said he should join you here.

FANNY.

Well, granted that it is he. In what a situation am I placed. You tell me, for the first time, that *my* violent intended must on no account be beheld by *your* violent intended, just now, because of some old quarrel between them, of long standing, which has never been adjusted to this day. What an appearance this will

have! How am I to explain it, or relate your present situation? I should sink into the earth with shame and confusion.

MARY.

Leave it to me. It arises from my heedlessness. I will take it all upon myself, and see him alone. But tell me, my dear—as you got up this love affair with so much secrecy and expedition during the four months you spent at Aunt Martha's, I have never yet seen Mr. Tomkins, you know. Is he so very handsome?

FANNY.

See him, and judge for yourself.

MARY.

Well, I will; and you may retire, till I have paved the way for your appearance. But just assist me first, dear, in making a little noise to attract his attention, if he really be in the next room, or I may wait here all day.

DUET.

At end of which

[*Exit FANNY, C. DOOR. MARY retires up R. H.*

Enter STRANGE GENT., L. H.

STRANGE G.

There; now with a clean shirt in one pocket, and a night-cap in the other, I'm ready to be carried magnanimously to my dungeon in the cause of love.

MARY (*aside*).

He says, he's ready to be carried magnanimously to a dungeon in the cause of love. I thought it was Mr. Tomkins! Hem! (*coming down L. H.*)

STRANGE G. (*seeing her*).

Hallo! Who's this! Not a disguised peace officer in petticoats. Beg your pardon, ma'am. (*Advancing towards her.*) What—did—you—

MARY.

Oh, Sir; I feel the delicacy of my situation.

STRANGE G. (*aside*).

Feels the delicacy of her situation; Lord bless us, what's

the matter! Permit me to offer you a seat, ma'am, if you're in a delicate situation. (*He places chairs; they sit.*)

MARY.

You are very good, Sir. You are surprised to see me here, Sir.

STRANGE G.

No, no, at least not very; rather perhaps—rather. (*Aside.*) Never was more astonished in all my life!

MARY (*aside*).

His politeness, and the extraordinary tale I have to tell him, overpower me. I must summon up courage. Hem!

STRANGE G.

Hem!

MARY.

Sir!

STRANGE G.

Ma'am!

MARY.

You have arrived at this house in pursuit of a young lady, if I mistake not?

STRANGE G.

You are quite right, ma'am. (*Aside.*) Mysterious female!

MARY.

If you *are* the gentleman I'm in search of, you wrote a hasty note a short time since, stating that you would be found here this afternoon.

STRANGE G. (*drawing back his chair*).

I—I—wrote a note, ma'am!

MARY.

You need keep nothing secret from me, Sir. I know all.

STRANGE G. (*aside*).

That villain, Boots, has betrayed me! Know all, ma'am?

MARY.

Every thing.

STRANGE G. (*aside*).

It must be so. She's a constable's wife.

MARY.

You *are* the writer of that letter, Sir? I think I am not mistaken.

STRANGE G.

You are not, ma'am; I confess I did write it. What was I to do, ma'am? Consider the situation in which I was placed.

MARY.

In your situation, you had, as it appears to me, only one course to pursue.

STRANGE G.

You mean the course I adopted?

MARY.

Undoubtedly.

STRANGE G.

I am very happy to hear you say so, though of course I should like it to be kept a secret.

MARY.

Oh, of course.

STRANGE G. (*drawing his chair close to her, and speaking very softly*).

Will you allow me to ask you, whether the constables are down stairs?

MARY (*surprised*).

The Constables!

STRANGE G.

Because if I am to be apprehended, I should like to have it over. I am quite ready, if it must be done.

MARY.

No legal interference has been attempted. There is nothing to prevent your continuing your journey to-night.

STRANGE G.

But will not the other party follow?

MARY (*looking down*).

The other party, I am compelled to inform you, is detained here by—by want of funds.

STRANGE G. (*starting up*).

Detained here by want of funds! Hurrah! Hurrah! I

have caged him at last. I'm revenged for all his blustering and bullying. This is a glorious triumph, ha, ha, ha! I have nailed him—nailed him to the spot!

MARY.

(Rising indignantly.) This exulting over a fallen foe, sir, is mean and pitiful. In my presence too, it is an additional insult.

STRANGE G.

Insult! I wouldn't insult you for the world, after the joyful intelligence you have brought me.—I could hug you in my arms!—One kiss, my little constable's deputy. *(Seizing her.)*

MARY *(struggling with him)*.

Help! help!

Enter JOHN JOHNSON. C. DOOR.

JOHN.

What the devil do I see! *(Seizes STRANGE G. by the collar.)*

MARY. L. H.

John, and Mr. Tomkins, met together! They'll kill each other.—Here, help! help!

[Exit MARY running. C. DOOR.

JOHN *(shaking him)*.

What do you mean by that, scoundrel?

STRANGE G.

Come, none of your nonsense—there's no harm done.

JOHN.

No harm done.—How dare you offer to salute that lady?

STRANGE G.

What did you send her here for?

JOHN.

I send her here!

STRANGE G.

Yes, *you*; you gave her instructions, I suppose. *(Aside.)* Her husband, the constable, evidently.

JOHN.

That lady, sir, is attached to me.

STRANGE G.

Well, I know she is; and a very useful little person she must be, to be attached to any body,—it's a pity she can't be legally sworn in.

JOHN.

Legally sworn in! Sir, that is an insolent reflection upon the temporary embarrassment which prevents our taking the marriage vows. How dare you to insinuate—

STRANGE G.

Pooh! pooh!—don't talk about daring to insinuate; it doesn't become a man in your station of life—

JOHN.

My station of life!

STRANGE G.

But as you have managed this matter very quietly, and say you're in temporary embarrassment—here—here's five shillings for you. (*Offers it.*)

JOHN.

Five shillings! (*raises his cane.*)

STRANGE G. (*flourishing a chair.*)

Keep off, sir!

Enter MARY, TOM SPARKS, and Two Waiters.

MARY.

Separate them, or there'll be murder!

TOM *clasps* STRANGE G. *round the waist*—the Waiters seize JOHN JOHNSON.

TOM.

Come, none o' that 'ere, Mr. S. We don't let private rooms for such games as these.—If you want to try it on wery particler, we don't mind making a ring for you in the yard, but you mustn't do it here.

JOHN.

Let me get at him. Let me go; waiters—Mary, don't hold me. I insist on your letting me go.

STRANGE G.

Hold him fast.—Call yourself a *peace* officer, you prize-fighter!

JOHN (*struggling*).

Let me go, I say!

STRANGE G.

Hold him fast! Hold him fast!

[TOM *takes* STRANGE G. *off* R. H. *Waiters take* JOHN *off* L. H., MARY *following*.

SCENE II.—*Another Room in the Inn.*

Enter JULIA DOBBS *and* OVERTON. L. H.

JULIA.

You seem surprised, Overton.

OVERTON.

Surprised, Miss Dobbs! Well I may be, when, after seeing nothing of you for three years and more, you come down here without any previous notice, for the express purpose of running away—positively running away, with a young man. I am astonished, Miss Dobbs!

JULIA.

You would have had better reason to be astonished if I had come down here, with any notion of positively running away with an old one, Overton.

OVERTON.

Old or young, it would matter little to me, if you had not conceived the preposterous idea of entangling me—*me*, an attorney, and mayor of the town, in so ridiculous a scheme.—Miss Dobbs, I can't do it.—I really cannot consent to mix myself up with such an affair.

JULIA.

Very well, Overton, very well. You recollect that in the life-time of that poor old dear, Mr. Woolley, who——

OVERTON.

——Who would have married you, if he hadn't died ; and who, as it was, left you his property, free from all incumbrances, the incumbrance of himself, as a husband, not being among the least.

JULIA.

Well, you may recollect, that in the poor old dear's life-time, sundry advances of money were made to you, at my persuasion, which still remain unpaid. Oblige me by forwarding them to my agent in the course of the week, and I free you from any interference in this little matter. (*Crosses to L. H. and is going.*)

OVERTON.

Stay, Miss Dobbs, stay. As you say, we *are* old acquaintances, and there certainly *were* some small sums of money, which——which——

JULIA.

Which certainly *are* still outstanding.

OVERTON.

Just so, just so ; and which perhaps you would be likely to forget, if you had a husband——eh, Miss Dobbs, eh ?

JULIA.

I have little doubt that I should. If I gained one through your assistance, indeed—I can safely say I should forget all about them.

OVERTON.

My dear Miss Dobbs, we perfectly understand each other.—Pray proceed.

JULIA.

Well——dear Lord Peter——

OVERTON.

That's the young man you're going to run away with, I presume ?

JULIA.

That's the young *nobleman* who's going to run away with me, Mr. Overton.

OVERTON.

Yes, just so.—I beg your pardon—pray go on.

JULIA.

Dear Lord Peter is young and wild, and the fact is, his friends do not consider him very sagacious or strong-minded. To prevent their interference, our marriage is to be a secret one. In fact, he is stopping now at a friend's hunting seat in the neighbourhood; he is to join me here; and we are to be married at Gretna.

OVERTON.

Just so.—A matter, as it seems to me, which you can conclude without my interference.

JULIA.

Wait an instant. To avoid suspicion, and prevent our being recognised and followed, I settled with him that you should give out in this house that he was a lunatic, and that I—his aunt—was going to convey him in a chaise, to-night, to a private asylum at Berwick. I have ordered the chaise at half-past one in the morning. You can see him, and make our final arrangements. It will avert all suspicion, if I have no communication with him, till we start. You can say to the people of the house that the sight of me makes him furious.

OVERTON.

Where shall I find him?—Is he here?

JULIA.

You know best.

OVERTON.

I!

JULIA.

I desired him, immediately on his arrival, to write you some mysterious nonsense, acquainting you with the number of his room.

OVERTON (*producing a letter*).

Dear me! he has arrived, Miss Dobbs.

JULIA.

No!

OVERTON.

Yes—see here—a most mysterious and extraordinary composition, which was thrown in at my office window, this morning, and which I could make neither head nor tail of. Is that his handwriting? (*giving her the letter.*)

JULIA (*taking letter*).

I never saw it more than once, but I know he writes very large and straggling.—(*Looks at letter.*)—Ha, ha, ha! This is capital, isn't it?

OVERTON.

Excellent!—Ha, ha, ha!—So mysterious!

JULIA.

Ha, ha, ha!—So very good.—“Rash act.”

OVERTON.

Yes. Ha, ha!

JULIA.

“Interesting young man.”

OVERTON.

Yes.—Very good.

JULIA.

“Amiable youth!”

OVERTON.

Capital!

JULIA.

“Solemn warning!”

OVERTON.

Yes.—That's best of all. (*They both laugh.*)

JULIA.

Number seventeen, he says. See him at once, that's a good creature. (*Returning the letter.*)

OVERTON. (*Taking letter.*)

I will. (*He crosses to L. H. and rings a bell.*)

Enter WAITER. L. H.

Who is there in number seventeen, waiter?

WAITER.

Number seventeen, sir?—Oh!—the strange gentleman, sir.

OVERTON.

Show me the room.

[*Exit* WAITER. L. H.]

(*Looking at JULIA, and pointing to the letter.*) “The Strange Gentleman.”—Ha, ha, ha! Very good—very good indeed.—Excellent notion! (*They both laugh.*)

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE III.—*Same as the first.*—A small table, with wine, dessert, and lights on it, R. H. of C. DOOR; two chairs.

STRANGE G. *discovered seated at table.*

STRANGE G.

“The other party is detained here, by want of funds.” Ha, ha, ha! I can finish my wine at my leisure, order my gig when I please, and drive on to Brown’s in perfect security. I’ll drink the other party’s good health, and long may he be detained here. (*Fills a glass.*) Ha, ha, ha! The other party; and long may he—(*A knock at C. DOOR.*) Hallo! I hope *this* isn’t the other party. Talk of the—(*A knock at C. DOOR.*) Well—(*setting down his glass*)—this is the most extraordinary private room that was ever invented. I am continually disturbed by unaccountable knockings. (*A gentle tap at C. DOOR.*) There’s another; that was a gentle rap—a persuasive tap—like a friend’s fore-finger on one’s coat-sleeve. It *can’t* be Tinkles with the gruel.—Come in.

OVERTON *peeping in at C. DOOR.*

OVERTON.

Are you alone, my Lord?

STRANGE G. (*amazed.*)

Eh!

OVERTON.

Are you alone, my Lord?

STRANGE G.

My Lord!

OVERTON (*stepping in, and closing the door.*)

You are right, sir, we cannot be too cautious, for we do not know who may be within hearing. You are very right, sir.

STRANGE G. (*rising from table, and coming forward R. H.*)

It strikes me, sir, that you are very wrong.

OVERTON.

Very good, very good; I like this caution; it shows me you are wide awake.

STRANGE G.

Wide awake!—damme, I begin to think I am fast asleep, and have been for the last two hours.

OVERTON (*whispering.*)

I—am—the mayor.

STRANGE G. (*in the same tone.*)

Oh!

OVERTON.

This is your letter? (*Shows it; STRANGE G. nods assent solemnly.*) It will be necessary for you to leave here to-night, at half past one o'clock, in a postchaise and four; and the higher you bribe the postboys to drive at their utmost speed, the better.

STRANGE G.

You don't say so?

OVERTON.

I do indeed. You are not safe from pursuit here.

STRANGE G.

Bless my soul, can such dreadful things happen in a civilised community, Mr. Mayor?

OVERTON.

It certainly does at first sight appear rather a hard case that

people cannot marry whom they please, without being hunted down in this way.

STRANGE G.

To be sure. To be hunted down, and killed as if one was game, you know.

OVERTON.

Certainly ; and you *an't* game, you know.

STRANGE G.

Of course not. But can't you prevent it? can't you save me by the interposition of your power?

OVERTON.

My power can do nothing in such a case.

STRANGE G.

Can't it though?

OVERTON.

Nothing whatever.

STRANGE G.

I never heard of such dreadful revenge, never! Mr. Mayor, I am a victim, I am the unhappy victim, of parental obstinacy.

OVERTON.

Oh, no ; don't say that. You may escape yet.

STRANGE G. (*grasping his hand.*)

Do you think I may? Do you think I may, Mr. Mayor?

OVERTON.

Certainly! certainly! I have little doubt of it, if you manage properly.

STRANGE G.

I thought I *was* managing properly. I understood the other party was detained here, by want of funds.

OVERTON.

Want of funds!—There's no want of funds in that quarter, I can tell you.

STRANGE G.

An't there though?

OVERTON.

Bless you, no. Three thousand a year!—But who told you there was a want of funds?

STRANGE G.

Why, she did.

OVERTON.

She! you *have* seen her then? She told me you had not.

STRANGE G.

Nonsense ; don't believe her. She was in this very room half an hour ago.

OVERTON.

Then I must have misunderstood her, and you must have misunderstood her too.—But to return to business. Don't you think it would keep up appearances if I had you put under some restraint?

STRANGE G.

I think it would. I am very much obliged to you. (*Aside.*) This regard for my character in an utter stranger, and in a Mayor too, is quite affecting.

OVERTON.

I'll send somebody up, to mount guard over you.

STRANGE G.

Thank'ee, my dear friend, thank'ee.

OVERTON.

And if you make a little resistance, when we take you up stairs to your bed-room, or away in the chaise, it will be keeping up the character, you know.

STRANGE G.

To be sure.—So it will.—I'll do it.

OVERTON.

Very well then. I shall see your Lordship again by and bye.—For the present, my Lord, good evening. (*Going.*)

STRANGE G.

Lord !—Lordship !—Mr. Mayor !

OVERTON.

Eh?—Oh !—I see. (*Comes forward.*) Practising the lunatic, my Lord. Ah, very good—very vacant look indeed.—Admirable, my Lord, admirable!—I say, my Lord—(*pointing to letter*)—“*Amiable youth!*”—“Interesting young man.”—“Strange Gentleman.”—Eh? Ha, ha, ha! Knowing trick indeed, my Lord, very!

[*Exit* OVERTON. C. D.]

STRANGE G.

That mayor is either in the very last stage of mystified intoxication, or in the most hopeless state of incurable insanity.—I have no doubt of it. A little touched here (*tapping his forehead*). Never mind, he is sufficiently sane to understand my business at all events. (*Goes to table and takes a glass.*) Poor fellow!—I'll drink his health, and speedy recovery. (*A knock at c. DOOR.*) It is a most extraordinary thing, now, that every time I propose a toast to myself, some confounded fellow raps at that door, as if he were receiving it, with the utmost enthusiasm. Private room!—I might as well be sitting behind the little shutter of a Two-penny Post Office, where all the letters put in, were to be post-paid. (*A knock at c. DOOR.*) Perhaps it's the guard! I shall feel a great deal safer if it is. Come in.

(*He has brought a chair forward, and sits L. H.*)

Enter TOM SPARKS, C. DOOR, very slowly, with an enormous stick. He closes the door, and, after looking at the STRANGE G. very steadily, brings a chair down L. H., and sits opposite him.

STRANGE G.

Are you sent by the mayor of this place, to mount guard over me?

TOM.

Yes, yes.—It's all right.

STRANGE G. (*Aside*).

It's all right—I'm safe. (*To TOM, with affected indignation.*) Now mind, I have been insulted by receiving this challenge, and I want to fight the man who gave it me. I protest against being kept here. I denounce this treatment as an outrage.

TOM.

Ay, ay. Any thing you please—poor creature; don't put yourself in a passion. It'll only make you worse. (*Whistles.*)

STRANGE G.

This is most extraordinary behaviour.—I don't understand it.—What d'ye mean by behaving in this manner? (*Rising.*)

TOM. (*Aside.*)

He's a getting wiolent. I must frighten him with a steady look.—I say, young fellow, do you see this here eye? (*Staring at him, and pointing at his own eye.*)

STRANGE G. (*Aside.*)

Do I see his eye!—What can he mean by glaring upon me, with that large round optic!—Ha! a terrible light flashes upon me.—He thought I was "Swing" this morning, It was an insane delusion.—That eye is an insane eye.—He's a madman!

TOM.

Madman! Damme, I think he is a madman with a wengeance.

STRANGE G.

He acknowledges it. He is sensible of his misfortune!—Go away—leave the room instantly, and tell them to send somebody else.—Go away!

TOM.

Oh, you unhappy lunatic!

STRANGE G.

What a dreadful situation!—I shall be attacked, strangled, smothered, and mangled, by a madman! Where's the bell?

TOM. (*Advancing and brandishing his stick.*)

Leave that 'ere bell alone—leave that 'ere bell alone—and come here!

STRANGE G.

Certainly, Mr. Boots, certainly.—He's going to strangle me. (*Going towards table.*) Let me pour you out a glass of wine, Mr. Boots—pray do! (*Aside.*) If he said "Yes," I'd throw the decanter at his temple.

TOM.

None o' your nonsense.—Sit down there. (*Forces him into a chair. L. H.*) I'll sit here. (*Opposite him. R.H.*) Look me full in the face, and I won't hurt you. Move hand, foot, or eye, and you'll never want to move either of 'em again.

STRANGE G.

I'm paralysed with terror.

TOM.

Ha! (*Raising his stick in a threatening attitude.*)

STRANGE G.

I'm dumb, Mr. Boots—dumb, sir.

[They sit gazing intently on each other ; TOM with the stick raised, as the Act Drop slowly descends.]

END OF ACT FIRST.

FIRST ACT FIFTY MINUTES.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The same as SCENE III., ACT I.*

TOM SPARKS *discovered in the same attitude watching the STRANGE GENTLEMAN, who has fallen asleep with his head over the back of his Chair.*

TOM.

He's asleep ; poor unhappy wretch ! How very mad he looks with his mouth wide open and his eyes shut ! (STRANGE G. *snores.*) Ah ! there's a vacant snore ; no meaning in it at all. I cou'd ha' told he was out of his senses from the very tone of it. (*He snores again.*) That's a wery insane snore. I should say he was melan-cholly mad from the sound of it.

Enter, through C. DOOR, OVERTON, MRS. NOAKES, a Chambermaid, and Two Waiters ; MRS. N. with a warming-pan, the Maid with a light. STRANGE G. starts up, greatly exhausted.

TOM (*starting up in C.*).

Hallo !—Hallo ! keep quiet, young fellow. Keep quiet !

STRANGE G. L. H.

Out of the way, you savage maniac. Mr. Mayor (*crossing to him, R. H.*), the person you sent to keep guard over me is a madman, sir. What do you mean by shutting me up with a madman ?—what do you mean, sir, I ask ?

OVERTON. R. H. C. (*Aside to STRANGE G.*)

Bravo ! bravo ! very good indeed—excellent !

STRANGE G.

Excellent, sir!—It's horrible!—The bare recollection of what I have endured, makes me shudder, down to my very toe-nails.

MRS. NOAKES. (R. H.)

Poor dear!—Mad people always think other people mad.

STRANGE G.

Poor dear! Ma'am. What the devil do you mean by "Poor dear?" How dare you have a madman here, ma'am, to assault and terrify the visitors to your establishment?

MRS. NOAKES.

Ah! terrify indeed! I'll never have another, to please anybody, you may depend upon that, Mr. Overton. (*To* STRANGE G.) There, there.—Don't exert yourself, there's a dear.

STRANGE G. (C.)

Exert myself!—Damme! it's a mercy I have any life left to exert myself with. It's a special miracle, ma'am, that my existence has not long ago fallen a sacrifice to that sanguinary monster in the leather smalls.

OVERTON. R. C. (*Aside to s. g.*)

I never saw any passion more real in my life. Keep it up, it's an admirable joke.

STRANGE G.

Joke!—joke!—Peril a precious life, and call it a joke,—you, a man with a sleek head and a broad-brimmed hat, who ought to know better, calling it a joke.—Are you mad too, sir,—are you mad? (*Confronting* OVERTON.)

TOM. L. H. (*Very loud.*)

Keep your hands off. Would you murder the wery mayor, himself, you mis-rable being?

STRANGE G.

Mr. Mayor, I call upon you to issue your warrant for the instant confinement of that one-eyed Orson in some place of security.

OVERTON. (*Aside, advancing a little.*)

He reminds me that he had better be removed to his bed-room. He is right.—Waiters, carry the gentleman up stairs.—Boots, you will continue to watch him in his bed-room.

STRANGE G.

He continue!—What, am I to be boxed up again with this infuriated animal, and killed off, when he has done playing with me?—I won't go—I won't go—help there, help!

(The Waiters cross from R. H. to behind him.)

Enter JOHN JOHNSON hastily. C. DOOR.

JOHN. *(Coming forward* L. H.)

What on earth is the meaning of this dreadful outcry, which disturbs the whole house?

MRS. NOAKES.

Don't be alarmed, sir, I beg.—They're only going to carry an unfortunate gentleman, as is out of his senses, to his bed-room.

STRANGE G. C. *(To JOHN.)*

Constable—constable—do your duty—apprehend these persons—every one of them. Do you hear, officer, do you hear?—*(The Waiters seize him by the arms.)*—Here—here—you see this. You've seen the assault committed. Take them into custody—off with them.

MRS. NOAKES.

Poor creature!—He thinks you are a constable, sir.

JOHN.

Unfortunate man! It is the second time to-day that he has been the victim of this strange delusion.

STRANGE G. *(Breaking from Waiters and going to JOHN.)* L. H.

Unfortunate man!—What, do you think I am mad?

JOHN.

Poor fellow! His hopeless condition is pitiable indeed. *(Goes up.)*

STRANGE G. *(Returning to C.)*

They're all mad!—Every one of 'em!

MRS. NOAKES.

Come now, come to bed—there's a dear young man, do.

STRANGE G.

Who are you, you shameless old ghost, standing there before company, with a large warming-pan, and asking me to come to bed?—Are you mad?

MRS. NOAKES.

Oh! he's getting shocking now. Take him away.—Take him away.

OVERTON.

Ah, you had better remove him to his bed-room at once.

(The waiters take him up by the feet and shoulders.)

STRANGE G.

Mind, if I survive this, I'll bring an action of false imprisonment against every one of you. Mark my words—especially against that villanous old mayor.—Mind, I'll do it!

(They bear him off, struggling and talking—the others crowding round, and assisting.)

OVERTON *(following)*.

How well he does it!

[*Exeunt* L. H. 1st E.

Enter a Waiter, showing in CHARLES TOMKINS *in a travelling coat.* C. DOOR.

WAITER. L. H.

This room is disengaged now, sir. There *was* a gentleman in it, but he has just left it.

CHARLES.

Very well, this will do. I may want a bed here to-night, perhaps, waiter.

WAITER.

Yes, sir.—Shall I take your card to the bar, sir?

CHARLES.

My card!—No, never mind.

WAITER.

No name, sir?

CHARLES.

No—it doesn't matter.

WAITER. *(Aside, as going out.)*

Another Strange Gentleman!

[*Exit* WAITER. C. DOOR.

CHARLES.

Ah!—*(Takes off coat.)*—The sun and dust on this long ride have been almost suffocating. I wonder whether Fanny has arrived? If she has—the sooner we start forward on our journey further North the better. Let me see; she would be accompa-

nied by her sister, she said in her note—and they would both be on the look-out for me. Then the best thing I can do is to ask no questions, for the present at all events, and to be on the look-out for them. (*Looking towards* C. DOOR.) Why here she comes, walking slowly down the long passage, straight towards this room—she can't have seen me yet.—Poor girl, how melancholy she looks! I'll keep in the back ground for an instant, and give her a joyful surprise. (*He goes up* R. H.)

Enter FANNY. C. DOOR.

FANNY. L. H.

Was ever unhappy girl placed in so dreadful a situation!—Friendless, and almost alone, in a strange place—my dear, dear Charles a victim to an attack of mental derangement, and I unable to avow my interest in him, or express my anxious sympathy and solicitude for his sufferings! I cannot bear this dreadful torture of agonising suspense. I must and will see him, let the cost be what it may. (*She is going* L. H.)

CHARLES. (*Coming forward* R. H.)

Hist! Fanny!

FANNY. (*Starting, and repressing a scream.*)

Ch—Charles—here in this room!

CHARLES.

Bodily present, my dear, in this very room. My darling Fanny, let me strain you to my bosom. (*Advancing.*)

FANNY. (*Shrinking back.*)

N—n—no, dearest Charles, no, not now.—(*Aside.*)—How flushed he is!

CHARLES.

No!—Fanny, this cold reception is a very different one to what I looked forward to meeting with, from you.

FANNY. (*Advancing, and offering the tip of her finger.*)

N—n—no—not cold, Charles; not cold. I do not mean it to be so, indeed.—How is your head, now, dear?

CHARLES.

How is my head! After days and weeks of suspense and anxiety, when half our dangerous journey is gained, and I meet you here, to bear you whither you can be made mine for life, you

greet me with the tip of your longest finger, and inquire after my head.—Fanny, what can you mean ?

FANNY.

You—you have startled me rather, Charles.—I thought you had gone to bed.

CHARLES.

Gone to bed !—Why I have but this moment arrived.

FANNY. (*Aside.*)

Poor, poor Charles !

CHARLES.

Miss Wilson, what am I to—

FANNY.

No, no ; pray, pray, do not suffer yourself to be excited—

CHARLES.

Suffer myself to be excited !—Can I possibly avoid it ? can I do aught but wonder at this extraordinary and sudden change in your whole demeanour ?—Excited ! But five minutes since, I arrived here, brimfull of the hope and expectation which had buoyed up my spirits during my long journey. I find you cold, reserved, and embarrassed—every thing but what I expected to find you—and then you tell me not to be excited.

FANNY. (*Aside.*)

He is wandering again. The fever is evidently upon him.

CHARLES.

This altered manner and ill-disguised confusion all convince me of what you would fain conceal. Miss Wilson, you repent of your former determination, and love another !

FANNY.

Poor fellow !

CHARLES.

Poor fellow !—What, am I pitied ?

FANNY.

Oh, Charles, do not give way to this. Consider how much depends upon your being composed.

CHARLES.

I see how much depends upon my being composed, ma'am—well, very well.—A husband depends upon it, ma'am. Your new lover is in this house, and if he overhears my reproaches

he will become suspicious of the woman who has jilted *another*, and may jilt *him*. That's it, madam—a great deal depends, as you say, upon my being composed.—A great deal, ma'am.

FANNY.

Alas! these are indeed the ravings of frenzy!

CHARLES.

Upon my word, ma'am, you must form a very modest estimate of your own power, if you imagine that disappointment has impaired my senses. Ha, ha, ha!—I am delighted. I am delighted to have escaped you, ma'am. I am glad, ma'am—damn'd glad! (*Kicks a chair over.*)

FANNY. (*Aside.*)

I must call for assistance. He grows more incoherent and furious, every instant.

CHARLES.

I leave you, ma'am.—I am unwilling to interrupt the tender *tête-à-tête* with the other gentleman, to which you are, no doubt, anxiously looking forward.—To you I have no more to say. To *him* I must beg to offer a few rather unexpected congratulations on his approaching marriage.

[*Exit* CHARLES *hastily.* C. DOOR.

FANNY.

Alas! it is but too true. His senses have entirely left him.

[*Exit* L. H.

SCENE SECOND AND LAST.—*A Gallery in the Inn, leading to the Bed-rooms. Four Doors in the Flat, and one at each of the upper Entrances, numbered from 20 to 25, beginning at the R. H. A pair of boots at the door of 23.*

Enter CHAMBERMAID *with two lights; and* CHARLES TOMKINS.

R. H. 1st E.

MAID.

This is your room, sir, No. 21. (*Opening the door.*)

CHARLES.

Very well. Call me at seven in the morning.

MAID.

Yes, sir. (*Gives him a light, and*[*Exit* CHAMBERMAID. R. H. 1st E.

CHARLES.

And at nine, if I can previously obtain a few words of explanation with this unknown rival, I will just return to the place from whence I came, in the same coach that brought me down here. I wonder who he is and where he sleeps. (*Lookinground.*) I have a lurking suspicion of those boots (*pointing to No. 23.*) They are an ill-looking, underhanded sort of pair, and an undefinable instinct tells me that they have clothed the feet of the rascal I am in search of. Besides myself, the owner of those ugly articles is the only person who has yet come up to bed. I will keep my eyes open for half an hour or so ; and my ears too. [*Exit* CHARLES *into No. 21.*

Enter R. H. 1st E. MRS. NOAKES *with two lights, followed by* MARY *and* FANNY.

MRS. NOAKES.

Take care of the last step, ladies. This way, ma'am, if you please. No. 20 is your room, ladies : nice large double-bedded room, with coals and a rushlight.

FANNY. R. H. (*Aside to* MARY.)

I must ask which is his room. I cannot rest unless I know he has at length sunk into the slumber he so much needs. (*Crosses to* MRS. NOAKES, *who is* L. H.) Which is the room in which the Strange Gentleman sleeps ?

MRS. NOAKES.

No. 23, ma'am. There's his boots outside the door. Don't be frightened of him, ladies. He's very quiet now, and our Boots is a watching him.

FANNY.

Oh, no—we are not afraid of him. (*Aside.*) Poor Charles !

MRS. NOAKES. (*Going to door No. 20, which is* 3d E. R. H.)

This way if you please ; you'll find every thing very comfortable, and there's a bell-rope at the head of the bed, if you want any thing in the morning. Good night, ladies.

As MARY and FANNY pass MRS. NOAKES. FANNY takes a light.

[Exit FANNY and MARY into No. 20.]

MRS. NOAKES. (*Tapping at No. 23.*)

Tom—Tom—

Enter TOM from No. 23.

TOM. (*Coming forward, L. H.*)

Is that you, missis?

MRS. NOAKES. R. H.

Yes.—How's the Strange Gentleman, Tom?

TOM.

He vas wery boisterous half an hour ago, but I punched his head a little, and now he's uncommon comfortable. He's fallen asleep, but his snores is still wery incoherent.

MRS. NOAKES.

Mind you take care of him, Tom. They'll take him away in half an hour's time. It's very nearly one o'clock now.

TOM.

I'll pay ev'ry possible attention to him. If he offers to call out, I shall whop him again.

[Exit TOM into No. 23.]

MRS. NOAKES. (*Looking off R. H.*)

This way, ma'am, if you please. Up these stairs.

Enter JULIA DOBBS with a light. R. H. 1st E.

JULIA.

Which did you say was the room in which I could arrange my dress for travelling?

MRS. NOAKES.

No. 22, ma'am; the next room to your nephew's. Poor dear—he's fallen asleep, ma'am, and I dare say you'll be able to take him away very quietly by and bye.

JULIA. (*Aside.*)

Not so quietly as you imagine, if he plays his part half as well as Overton reports he does. (*To MRS. N.*) Thank you.—For the present, good night.

[Exit JULIA into No. 22.]

MRS. NOAKES.

Wish you good night, ma'am. There.—Now I think I may

go down stairs again, and see if Mr. Overton wants any more negus. Why who's this? (*Looking off R. H.*) Oh, I forgot—No. 24 an't a-bed yet.—It's him.

Enter JOHN JOHNSON with a light, R. H. 1st E.

MRS. NOAKES.

No. 24, sir, if you please.

JOHN.

Yes, yes, I know. The same room I slept in last night. (*Crossing L. H.*)

MRS. NOAKES.

Yes, sir.—Wish you good night, sir.

[*Exit MRS. NOAKES. R. H. 1st E.*]

JOHN.

Good night, ma'am. The same room I slept in last night, indeed, and the same room I may sleep in to-morrow night, and the next night, and the night after that, and just as many more nights as I can get credit here, unless this remittance arrives. I could raise the money to prosecute my journey without difficulty were I on the spot; but my confounded thoughtless liberality to the post-boys has left me absolutely pennyles. Well, we shall see what to-morrow brings forth. (*He goes into No. 24, but immediately returns and places his boots outside his room door, leaving it ajar.*)

[*Exit JOHN into No. 24.*]

CHARLES *peeping from No. 21, and putting out his boots.*

CHARLES.

There's another pair of boots. Now I wonder which of these two fellows is the man. I can't help thinking it's No. 23.—Hallo! (*He goes in and closes his door.*)

The door of No. 20 opens; FANNY comes out with a light in a night shade. No. 23 opens. She retires into No. 20.

Enter TOM SPARKS with a stable lantern from No. 23.

TOM. (*Closing the door gently.*)

Fast asleep still. I may as well go my rounds, and glean for the deputy. (*Pulls out a piece of chalk from his pocket, and takes*

up boots from No. 23.) Twenty-three. It's difficult to tell what a feller is ven he han't got his senses, but I think this here twenty-three's a timorous faint-hearted genus. (*Examines the boots.*) You want new soleing, No. 23. (*Goes to No. 24, takes up boots and looks at them.*) (Hallo! here's a *bust*: and there's been a piece put on in the corner.—I must let my missis know. The bill's always doubtful ven there's any mending. (*Goes to No. 21, takes up boots.*) French calf Vellingtons.—All's right here. These here French calves always comes it strong—light vines, and all that 'ere. (*Looking round.*) Werry happy to see there an't no high-lows—they never drinks nothing but gin and vater. Them and the cloth boots is the vurst customers an inn has.—The cloth boots is always obstemious, only drinks sherry vine and vater, and never eats no suppers. (*He chalks the No. of the room on each pair of boots as he takes them up.*) Lucky for you, my French calves, that you an't done with the patent polish, or you'd ha' been witrioled in no time. I don't like to put oil o' witriol on a well-made pair of boots; but ven they're rubbed vith that 'ere polish, it must be done, or the profession's ruined.

[*Exit TOM with boots, R. H. 1st E.*

Enter FANNY from No. 20, with light as before.

FANNY.

I tremble at the idea of going into his room, but surely at a moment like this, when he is left to be attended by rude and uninterested strangers, the strict rules of propriety which regulate our ordinary proceedings may be dispensed with. I will but satisfy myself that he sleeps, and has those comforts which his melancholy situation demands, and return immediately. (*Goes to No. 23, and knocks.*)

CHARLES TOMKINS *peeping at No. 21.*

CHARLES.

I'll swear I heard a knock.—A woman! Fanny Wilson—and at that door at this hour of the night!

(*FANNY comes forward.*)

Why what an ass I must have been ever to have loved that girl.—It is No. 23, tho'.—I'll throttle him presently. The next room-door open—I'll watch there. (*He crosses to No. 24, and goes in.*)

FANNY returns to No. 23, and knocks—the door opens and the STRANGE G. appears, night-cap on his head and a light in his hand—FANNY screams and runs back into No. 20.

STRANGE G. (*Coming forward.*)

Well, of all the wonderful and extraordinary houses that ever did exist, this particular tenement is the most extraordinary. I've got rid of the madman at last—and it's almost time for that vile old mayor to remove me. But where?—I'm lost, bewildered, confused, and actually begin to think I am mad. Half these things I've seen to-day must be visions of fancy—they never could have really happened. No, no, I'm clearly mad!—I've not the least doubt of it now. I've caught it from that horrid Boots. He has inoculated the whole establishment. We're all mad together.—(*Looking off R.H.*) Lights coming up stairs!—Some more lunatics.

[*Exit STRANGE G. in No. 23.*]

Enter R. H. 1st E. OVERTON with a cloak, MRS. NOAKES, TOM SPARKS with lantern, and Three Waiters with lights. The Waiters range up R. H. side. TOM is in R. H. corner and MRS. NOAKES next to him.

OVERTON.

Remain there till I call for your assistance. (*Goes up to No. 23, and knocks.*)

Enter STRANGE G. from No. 23.

Now, the chaise is ready.—Muffle yourself up in this cloak. (*Puts it on the STRANGE G.—They come forward.*)

STRANGE G. L. H.

Yes.

OVERTON. C.

Make a little noise when we take you away, you know.

STRANGE G.

Yes—yes.—I say, what a queer room this is of mine. Some-

body has been tapping at the wall for the last half hour, like a whole forest of woodpeckers.

OVERTON.

Don't you know who that was ?

STRANGE G.

No.

OVERTON.

The other party.

STRANGE G. (*Alarmed.*)

The other party !

OVERTON.

To be sure.—The other party is going with you.

STRANGE G.

Going with me !—In the same chaise !

OVERTON.

Of course.—Hush ! (*Goes to No. 22. Knocks.*)

Enter JULIA DOBBS from No. 22, wrapped up in a large cloak.

Look here ! (*Bringing her forward. JULIA is next to MRS. NOAKES.*)

STRANGE G. (*Starting into L. H. corner.*)

I won't go—I won't go. This is a plot—a conspiracy. I won't go, I tell you. I shall be assassinated.—I shall be murdered !

FANNY and MARY appear at No. 20, JOHNSON and TOMKINS at 24.

JOHN. (*At the door.*)

I told you he was mad.

CHARLES. (*At the door.*)

I see—I see—poor fellow !

JULIA. (*Crossing to STRANGE G. and taking his arm.*)

Come, dear, come.

MRS. NOAKES.

Yes, do go, there's a good soul. Go with your affectionate aunt.

STRANGE G. (*Breaking from her.*)

My affectionate aunt !

JULIA returns to her former position.

TOM.

He don't deserve no affection. I niver see such an un-fec-tionate fellow to his relations.

STRANGE G. L. H.

Take that wretch away, and smother him between two feather beds. Take him away, and make a sandwich of him directly.

JULIA. (*To OVERTON, who is in c.*)

What voice was that?—It was not Lord Peter's. (*Throwing off her cloak.*)

OVERTON.

Nonsense—nonsense.—Look at him. (*Pulls cloak off STRANGE G.*)

STRANGE G. (*Turning round.*)

A woman!

JULIA.

A stranger!

OVERTON.

A stranger! What, an't he your husband that is to—your mad nephew, I mean?

JULIA.

No!

ALL.

No!

STRANGE G.

No!—no, I'll be damn'd if I am. I an't any body's nephew.—My aunt's dead, and I never had an uncle.

MRS. NOAKES.

And an't he mad, ma'am?

JULIA.

No.

STRANGE G.

Oh, I'm *not* mad.—I was mistaken just now.

OVERTON.

And isn't he going away with you?

JULIA.

No.

MARY. (*Coming forward R. H., next to MRS. NOAKES.*)
And isn't his name Tomkins?

STRANGE G. (*Very loud.*)

No!

(*All these questions and answers should be very rapid. JOHN-
SON and TOMKINS advance to the ladies, and they all re-
tire up.*)

MRS. NOAKES.

What is his name? (*Producing a letter.*) It an't Mr. Walker
Trott, is it? (*She advances a little towards him.*)

STRANGE G.

Something so remarkably like it, ma'am, that, with your per-
mission, I'll open that epistle. (*Taking letter.*)

All go up, but JULIA, and STRANGE G.

(*Opening letter.*) Tinkle's hand. (*Reads.*) "The challenge
was a ruse. By this time I shall have been united at Gretna
Green to the charming Emily Brown."—Then, thro' a horror of
duels, I have lost a wife!

JULIA. (*R. H. with her handkerchief to her eyes.*)

And through Lord Peter's negligence, I have lost a husband!

STRANGE G.

Eh! (*Regards her a moment, then beckons OVERTON, who
comes forward, L. H.*) I say, didn't you say something about
three thousand a year this morning?

OVERTON.

I did.

STRANGE G.

You alluded to that party? (*Nodding towards JULIA.*)

OVERTON.

I did.

STRANGE G.

Hem! (*Puts OVERTON back.*) Permit me, ma'am (*Going to
her*) to sympathize most respectfully with your deep distress.

JULIA.

Oh, sir! your kindness penetrates to my very heart.

STRANGE G. (*Aside.*)

Penetrates to her heart!—It's taking the right direction.—If I understand your sorrowing murmur, ma'am, you contemplated taking a destined husband away with you, in the chaise at the door?

JULIA.

Oh! sir,—spare my feelings—I did.—The horses were ordered and paid for; and everything was ready. (*Weeps.*)

STRANGE G. (*Aside.*)

She weeps.—Expensive thing, posting, ma'am.

JULIA.

Very, sir.

STRANGE G.

Eighteen-pence a mile, ma'am, not including the boys.

JULIA.

Yes, sir.

STRANGE G.

You've lost a husband, ma'am—*I* have lost a wife.—Marriages are made above—I'm quite certain ours is booked.—Pity to have all this expense for nothing—let's go together.

JULIA. (*Drying her eyes.*)

The suddenness of this proposal, sir—

STRANGE G.

Requires a sudden answer, ma'am.—You don't say no—you mean yes. Permit me to—(*Kisses her.*)—All right! Old one, (*To* OVERTON, *who comes down* L. H.) I've done it.—Mrs. Noakes, (*She comes down* R. H.) don't countermand the chaise.—We're off directly.

CHARLES. (*Who with* FANNY *comes down* L. H. C.)

So are we.

JOHN. (*Who with* MARY *comes down* R. H. C.)

So are we, thanks to a negotiated loan, and an explanation as hasty as the quarrel that gave rise to it.

STRANGE G.

Three post chaises and four, on to Gretna, directly.

[*Exit* WAITERS. R. H. 1st E.]

I say—we'll stop here as we come back?

JOHN *and* CHARLES.

Certainly.

STRANGE G.

But before I go, as I fear I have given a great deal of trouble here to-night—permit me to inquire whether you will view my mistakes and perils with an indulgent eye, and consent to receive “*The Strange Gentleman*” again to-morrow.

JOHN. JULIA. STRANGE G.

MARY.

FANNY.

MRS. NOAKES.

CHARLES.

TOM.

OVERTON.

R. H.

L. H.

CURTAIN.

THE END.

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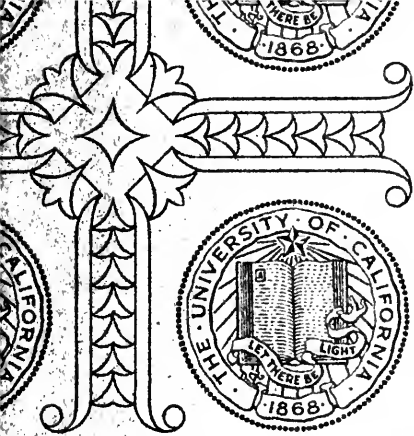
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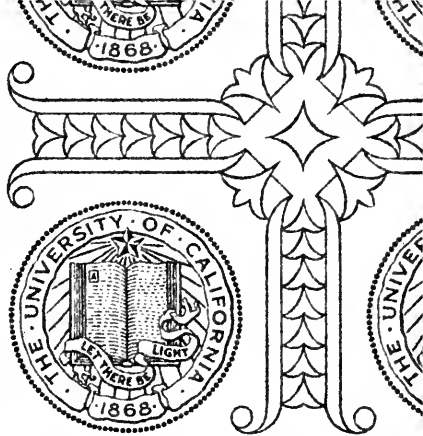
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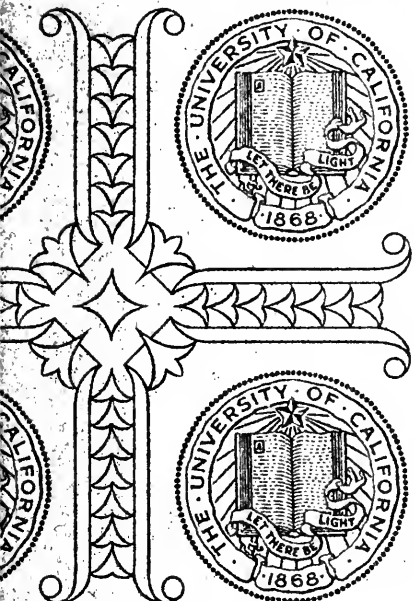


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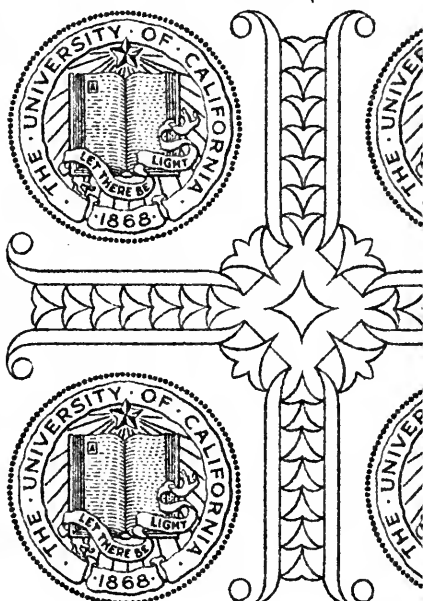


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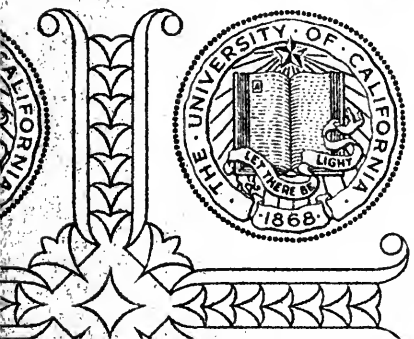


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