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Title: Dandy Dick
A Play in Three Acts

Author: Arthur Pinero

Release Date: September 7, 2012 [EBook #40700]

Language: English

Character set encoding: UTF-8

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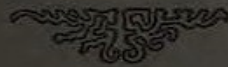
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DANDY DICK

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

DANDY DICK

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE

DANDY DICK

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

By

ARTHUR W. PINERO

AUTHOR OF "SWEET LAVENDER," "THE TIMES," "THE CABINET MINISTER," "LADY BOUNTIFUL," ETC.

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BOSTON

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

"Dandy Dick" was the third of the farces which Mr. Pinero wrote for the old Court Theatre—a series of plays which, besides giving playgoers a fresh source of laughter, and the English stage a new order of comic play, brought plentiful prosperity to the joint management of Mr. Arthur Cecil and the late Mr. John Clayton. But a kind of melancholy interest attaches to "Dandy Dick," for this play was, as it were, the swan-song of the old theatre and of the Clayton and Cecil partnership; and it was the piece in which Mr. Clayton was acting when death overtook him, to the general grief.

The production of “Dandy Dick” may be considered as something of a *tour de force* in its way. “The Schoolmistress” was at the end of its successful run, and Mr. Pinero was under contract to supply its successor by a certain date, when Mr. Clayton one day went down to Brighton, where the dramatist was then at work, to hear him read the two completed acts of the new play. To Mr. Clayton’s consternation, however, Mr. Pinero announced that he was dissatisfied with his work, and proposed to begin an entirely new play, as he had a more promising [Pg 6] idea. But time was pressing, and a successor to “The Schoolmistress” was an immediate necessity. However, Mr. Pinero’s idea of writing a play round a dean, who, while being a paragon of dignity and decorum, should be driven by an indiscreet act into a most undignified dilemma, appealed to Mr. Clayton, and hastening back to London with the sketches for the requisite scenes, he left Mr. Pinero to set to work at once upon the new scheme. And within a few weeks, indeed by the time the scenery was ready, the new play was completed, the rural constable of a village adjacent to Brighton having suggested the character of Noah Topping. “Dandy Dick” was produced at the Court Theatre on January 27th, 1887, and, meeting with a most favorable initial reception, it settled down immediately into a complete success. The following is a copy of the first-night programme:—

ROYAL COURT THEATRE,

SLOANE SQUARE, S.W.

Lessees and Managers:

MR. JOHN CLAYTON AND MR. ARTHUR CECIL.

Programme

THIS EVENING, THURSDAY, JANUARY 27,

At 8.30 punctually,

[Pg 7]

DANDY DICK.

AN ORIGINAL FARCE, IN THREE ACTS,

BY

A. W. PINERO.

THE VERY REV. AUGUSTIN JEDD, D.D. (Dean of St. Marvell’s)

SIR TRISTRAM MARDON, Bart

MAJOR TARVER

MR. DARBEY { —th Hussars, quartered at Durnstone, near St. Marvell’s }

BLORE (Butler at the Deanery)

NOAH TOPPING (Constable at St. Marvell’s)

HATCHAM (Sir Tristram’s groom)

GEORGIANA TIDMAN (a Widow, the Dean’s sister)

MR. JOHN CLAYTON.

MR. EDMUND MAURICE.

MR. F. KERR.

MR. H. EVERSFIELD.

MR. ARTHUR CECIL.

MR. W. H. DENNY.

MR. W. LUGG.

MRS. JOHN WOOD.

SALOME } the Dean's Daughters
SHEBA }
HANNAH TOPPING (formerly in Service at the Deanery)

{ MISS MARIE LEWES.
{ MISS NORREYS.
MISS LAURA LINDEN.

ACT I.

AT THE DEANERY, ST. MARVELL'S.
(MORNING.)

ACT II.

THE SAME PLACE.
(EVENING.)

[Pg 8]

ACT III.—THE NEXT DAY.

SCENE 1:—“*The Strong Box*,” St. Marvell's.
SCENE 2.—*The Deanery again.*

The curtain will be lowered for a few minutes between the two scenes.

New Scenery by Mr. T. W. Hall.

PRECEDED, AT EIGHT O'CLOCK, BY

“THE NETTLE.”

AN ORIGINAL COMEDIETTA BY ERNEST WARREN.

“Dandy Dick” was performed 171 times between the first night and the 22d of July, when, the old theatre being demolished, Mr. Clayton took a temporary lease of Toole's Theatre, and transferred the play thither, where it ran 75 nights more.

A company had already been sent out, under the auspices of the Court management, to perform “Dandy Dick” in the provinces; but, when the play was withdrawn from the London boards, Mr. Clayton set out himself with a company, and it was during this tour that he died at Liverpool.

In America Mr. Daly produced “Dandy Dick” with Miss Ada Rehan in Mrs. John Wood's part, but no very great success was achieved; whereas in Australia its reception was so enthusiastic that it [Pg 9] ran for quite an unusual time both in Melbourne and Sydney. In the character of the Dean, Mr. G. W. Anson achieved perhaps the greatest of his Australian successes, and Mr. Robert Brough made his mark as the policeman.

Malcolm C. Salamak.

DANDY DICK.

THE FIRST ACT.

The morning-room in the Deanery of St. Marvells, with a large arched opening leading to the library on the right, and a deeply-recessed window opening out to the garden on the left. It is a bright spring morning, and an air of comfort and serenity pervades the place.

Salome, a tall, handsome, dark girl, of about three-and-twenty, is sitting with her elbows resting on her knees, staring wildly into vacancy. Sheba, a fair little girl of about seventeen, wearing short petticoats, shares her despondency, and lies prostrate upon the settee.

Salome.

Oh! oh my! oh my! oh my!

Sheba.

[*Sitting upright.*] Oh, my gracious goodness, goodness gracious me!

[*They both walk about excitedly.*

Salome.

There's only one terrible word for it—it's a fix!

Sheba.

It's worse than that! It's a scrape! How did you ever get led into it?[Pg 12]

Salome.

How did we get led into it? Halves, Sheba, please.

Sheba.

It was Major Tarver's proposal, and I believe, Salome, that it is to *you* Major Tarver is paying attention.

Salome.

The Fancy Dress Masked Ball at Durnstone is promoted by the Officers of the Hussars. I believe that the young gentleman you have impressed calls himself an officer, though he is merely a lieutenant.

Sheba.

[*Indignantly.*] Mr. Darbey is *certainly* an officer—a small officer. How dare you gird at me, Salome?

Salome.

Very well, then. When to-night we appear at the Durnstone Athenæum, unknown to dear Papa, on the arms of Major Tarver and Mr. Darbey, I consider that we shall be equally wicked. Oh, how can we be so wrong?

Sheba.

Well, we're not wrong yet. We're only *going* to be wrong; that's a very different matter.

Salome.

That's true. Besides, there's this to remember—we're inexperienced girls and have only dear Papa. But oh, now that the Ball is to-night, I repent, Sheba, I repent!

Sheba.

I sha'n't do that till to-morrow. But oh, how I *shall* repent to-morrow![Pg 13]

Salome.

[*Taking an envelope from her pocket, and almost crying.*] You'd repent now if you had seen the account for the fancy dresses.

Sheba.

Has it come in?

Salome.

Yes, the Major enclosed it to me this morning. You know, Sheba, Major Tarver promised to get the dresses made in London, so I gave him our brown paper patterns to send to the *costumier*.

Sheba.

[*Shocked.*] Oh, Salome, do you think he quizzed them?

Salome.

No; I sealed them up and marked outside "To be opened only by a lady."

Sheba.

That's all right. I hate the plan of myself in brown paper.

Salome.

Well, of course Major Tarver begged to be allowed to pay for the dresses, and I said I couldn't dream of permitting it, and then he said he should be most unhappy if he didn't, and, just as I thought he was going to have his own way, [*bursting into tears*] he cheered up and said he'd yield to a lady. [*Taking a large account from the envelope.*] And oh! he's yielded.

Sheba.

Read it! Don't spare me![Pg 14]

Salome.

[*Reading.*] "Debtor to Lewis Isaacs, *Costumier* to the Queen, Bow Street. One gown—period French Revolution, 1798—Fifteen guineas!"

Sheba.

[*Sinking on her knees, clutching the table.*] Oh!

Salome.

"Trimmings, linings, buttons, frillings—Seven guineas!"

Sheba.

[*Hysterically.*] Yah!

Salome.

That's mine!

Sheba.

[*Putting her fingers into her ears.*] Now for mine, oooh!

Salome.

[*Reading.*] "One skirt and bodice—flower girl—period uncertain—Ten guineas."

Sheba.

Less than yours! What a shame!

Salome.

“Trimmings, linings, buttons, frillings—Five guineas! Extras, Two guineas. Total, Forty pounds, nineteen. Ladies’ own brown paper patterns mislaid. Terms, Cash!”

[They throw themselves into each other’s arms.]

Salome.

Oh, Sheba! [Pg 15]

Sheba.

Salome! Are there forty pounds in the wide world?

Salome.

My heart weighs twenty. What shall we do?

Sheba.

If we were only a few years older I should suggest that we wrote nice notes to Papa and committed suicide.

Salome.

Brought up as we have been, that’s out of the question!

Sheba.

Then let us be brave women and wear the dresses!

Salome.

Of course we’ll do that, but—the bill!

Sheba.

We must get dear Papa in a good humor and coax him to make us a present of money. He knows we haven’t been charitable in the town for ever so long.

Salome.

Poor dear Papa! He hasn’t paid our proper dressmaker’s bill yet, and I’m sure he’s pressed for money.

Sheba.

But we can’t help that when *we’re* pressed for money—poor dear Papa!

Salome.

Suppose poor Papa refuses to give us a present? [Pg 16]

Sheba.

Then we must play the piano when he's at work on his Concordance—poor dear Papa!

Salome.

However, don't let us wrong poor Papa in advance. Let us try to think how nice we shall look.

Sheba.

Oh yes—sha'n't I!

Salome.

Oh, I shall! And as for stealing out of the house with Major Tarver when poor dear Papa has gone to bed, why, Gerald Tarver would die for me!

Sheba.

So would Nugent Darbey for me; besides I'm not old enough to know better.

Salome.

You're not so very much younger than I, Sheba!

Sheba.

Indeed, Salome! Then why do you keep me in short skirts?

Salome.

Why! you cruel girl! You know I can't lengthen you till I'm married!

[Blore, the butler, a venerable-looking person, with rather a clerical suggestion about his dress, enters by the window.]

Blore.

[Benignly.] The two soldier gentlemen have just rode hup, Miss Salome.

[The girls clutch each other's hands.]

Salome.

You mean Major Tarver?[Pg 17]

Sheba.

And Mr. Darbey. They have called to inquire after poor Papa.

Salome.

Poor Papa!

Blore.

Shall I show them him, Miss Sheba?

Sheba.

Yes, Blore, dear, and hang your h's on the hat-stand.

[Blore *laughs sweetly at Sheba and shakes his fingers at her playfully.*

Blore.

[*Vindictively, behind their backs.*] 'Ussies!

[*He goes out.*

Salome.

Am I all right, Sheba?

Sheba.

Yes. Am I?

Salome.

Yes. [*Looking out at window.*] Here they are! How well Gerald Tarver dismounts! Oh!

Sheba.

He left his liver in India, didn't he?

Salome.

No—only part of it.[Pg 18]

Sheba.

Well—part of it.

Salome.

And that he gave to his Queen, brave fellow!

Sheba.

[*Seating herself in an artificial attitude.*] Where shall we be—here?

Salome.

[*Running to the piano.*] All right; you be admiring my voice!

Sheba.

Oh, I dare say!

Salome.

Here they are, and we're doing nothing!

Sheba.

Let's run away and then come in unconsciously.

Salome.

Yes—unconsciously.

[*They run off through the Library. Blore shows in Major Tarver and Mr. Darbey, who are both in regimentals. Major Tarver is a middle-aged, tall, angular officer, with a thin face, yellow complexion, and red eyes. He is alternately in a state of great excitement and depression. Mr. Darbey is a mere boy, but with a pompous, patronizing manner.*]

Darbey.

The Dean's out of the way, eh! [Pg 19]

Blore.

Yes, sir, he his.

Tarver.

Eh? How is the Dean? Never mind—perhaps Miss Jedd is at home?

Blore.

Yes, sir, she his.

Tarver.

It would be discourteous to run away without asking Miss Jedd after her father.

Darbey.

[*Throwing himself on the settee.*] Deuced bad form!

Blore.

The ladies were 'ere a minute ago.

[Salome and Sheba walk in together. Salome has her arm round her sister's waist and looks up to her with a sweet, trusting smile. They start in confusion on seeing Tarver and Darbey.]

Salome.

Major Tarver.

Sheba.

Mr. Darbey.

Tarver.

[Taking Salome's hand eagerly.] My dear Miss Jedd!

Darbey.

[Rising and putting a glass to his eye.] Hah yah! Hah yah![Pg 20]

Salome.

[With her hand on her heart.] You quite startled us.

Tarver.

[In an agony of contrition.] Oh, did we?

Darbey.

Awfully cut up to hear it.

Sheba.

We never dreamt of finding two visitors for Papa.

Blore.

Why, you told me to show the gentlemen hin, Miss Sheba!

[The two girls start guiltily and glare at Blore.]

Salome.

[With suppressed rage.] You needn't wait, Blore!

Blore.

[*To himself.*] Let 'em 'ang that on the 'atstand!

[Blore *goes out.* Darbey and Sheba *stroll together into the Library.*

Tarver.

[*To Salome.*] We thought we'd ride over directly after parade to make the final arrangements for tonight. Have the costumes arrived?

Salome.

Yes, they came yesterday in a hamper labeled "Miss Jedd, Secretary, Cast-off Clothing Distribution League." [Pg 21]

Tarver.

That was my idea—came to me in the middle of the night.

Salome.

Dear Major Tarver, surely this terrible strain on your nerves is very, very bad for you with your—your——

Tarver.

My liver—say the word, Miss Jedd.

Salome.

[*Drooping her head.*] Oh, Major Tarver!

Tarver.

It is frightfully injurious. Of course I'm excited now, and you see me at my best, but the alternating fits of hopeless despondency are shocking to witness and to endure!

Salome.

Oh!

Tarver.

It's all that damned India! Oh! what have I said! You will never forgive me.

Salome.

Indeed, indeed I will!

Tarver.

Never. Oh, Miss Jedd, my forgetfulness has brought me—one of my—terrible attacks—of depression!

Salome.

Major Tarver!

[She leads him to a chair into which he sinks in a ghastly state. Darbey strolls in from the Library with Sheba.]

Darbey.

[To Sheba.] Your remarks about the army are extremely complimentary. On behalf of the army I thank you. We fellows are not a bad sort, take us all round.[Pg 22]

Sheba.

There's a grand future before you, isn't there?

Darbey.

Well, I suppose there is if I go on as I'm going now.

Tarver.

[To Salome.] Thanks, the attack has passed. Now about to-night; at what time is the house entirely quiet?

Salome.

Poor dear Papa goes round with Blore at half-past nine—after that all is rest and peacefulness.

Tarver.

Then if we're here with the closed carriage at ten—!

[They go together into the library.]

Darbey.

[To Sheba.] Some of us army men can slave too. Tarver's queer livah has thrown all the arrangements for the Fancy Ball on my shoulders. *[Salome and Tarver re-enter.]* Look at him—that's when he's enjoying life!

Tarver.

[*Laughing convulsively.*] Ha! ha! ha! ho! he! he! Good, eh, Miss Jedd?

Salome.

But suppose dear Papa should hear us crunching down the gravel path! [Pg 23]

Tarver.

Oh!

[*He sinks on to the settee with a vacant stare, his arms hanging helplessly.*]

Darbey.

[*To Sheba.*] There—now his career is a burden to him!

Sheba.

Oh!

Salome.

Would you like a glass of water, Major Tarver?

Tarver.

[*Taking Salome's hand.*] Thank you, dear Miss Jedd, with the least suggestion of cayenne pepper in it.

Sheba.

[*Looking out at window.*] Oh, Salome! Papa! Papa!

Tarver.

The Dean?

Darbey.

The Dean!

[*They all collect themselves in a fluster. The two girls go to meet their father, who enters at the window with his head bowed and his hands behind his back, in deep thought. The Dean is a portly man of about fifty, with a dignified demeanor, a suave voice and persuasive manner, and a noble brow surmounted by silver-gray hair. Blore follows The*]

Dean, *carrying some books, a small bunch of flowers, and an umbrella.*

Salome.

[*Tenderly.*] Papa! [Pg 24]

Sheba.

Papsey!

[*The Dean rouses himself, discovers his children and removes his hat.*

The Dean.

[*To Salome.*] Salome! [*To Sheba.*] My toy-child! [*He draws the girls to him and embraces them, then sees Tarver and Darbey.*] Dear me! Strangers!

Tarver *and* Darbey.

[*Coughing uncomfortably.*] H'm!

Salome.

[*Reproachfully, taking his hat from him.*] Papa! Major Tarver and Mr. Darbey have ridden over from Durnstone to ask how your cold is.

[*Sheba takes the gold-rimmed pince-nez which hangs upon The Dean's waistcoat and places it before his eyes.*

The Dean.

Dear me! Major! Mr. Garvey.

Sheba.

Mr. Darbey!

The Dean.

Darbey! How good of you! [*With his girls still embracing him he extends a hand to each of the men.*] My cold is better. [*Bloregoes out through the Library.*] Major—Mr. Garvey—these inquiries strike me as being so kind that I insist—no, no, I *beg* that you will share our simple dinner with us to-night at six o'clock! [Pg 25]

Tarver.

[*Disconcerted.*] Oh!

Darbey.

H'm!

The Dean.

Let me see—Tuesday night is——

Salome.

Leg of mutton, Papa!

The Dean.

Thank you. Mutton, hot.

Sheba.

And custards, Papsey.

The Dean.

Thank you, toy-child—custards, cold. And a welcome—warm.

Tarver.

[*Looking to Salome.*] Well, I—ah—[*Salome nods her head to him violently.*] That is, certainly, Dean, certainly.

Darbey.

Delighted, my dear Dean—delighted!

[*The Dean gives Darbey a severe look, and with an important cough walks into the Library. The men and the girls speak in undertones.*]

Tarver.

[*Depressed.*] Now, what will happen to-night?[Pg 26]

Salome.

Why, don't you see, as you will have to drive over to dine, you will both be here, on the spot, ready to take us back to Durnstone?

[*The Dean sits at his desk in the Library.*]

Darbey.

Of course; when we're turned out we can hang about in the lane till you're ready.

Tarver.

Yes, but when are we to make our preparations? It'll take me a long time to look like Charles the First!

Sheba.

We can drive about Durnstone while you dress.

Salome.

[*To Tarver, admiringly.*] Charles the First! Oh, Major!

Darbey.

That was my idea—Charles the Martyr, you know. Tarver's a martyr to his liver—see?

Sheba.

Oh! sha'n't we all look magnificent?

Salome.

Oh!

Tarver.

Grand idea—the whole thing!

Darbey.

Regular army notion![Pg 27]

[*They are all in a state of great excitement when The Dean re-enters, with an anxious look, carrying a bundle of papers.*]

Salome.

Here is Papa!

[*They rush to various seats, all in constrained attitudes.*]

Tarver.

[*To The Dean.*] We waited to say—good-morning.

The Dean.

[*Taking his hand, abstractedly.*] How kind! Good-morning!

Darbey.

Six o'clock sharp, Dean?

The Dean.

At six, punctually. Salome, represent me by escorting these gentlemen to the gate.
[Salome, Tarver, and Darbey go out. Sheba is following slyly when The Dean looks up
from his papers.] Sheba!

Sheba.

Papsey!

The Dean.

Check me in a growing tendency to dislike Mr. Garvey. At dinner, Sheba, watch that I
carve for him fairly.

Sheba.

Yes, Papsey!

[The Dean turns away and sits on the settee. Sheba, with her
head down and her hands folded, walks towards the door, and
then bounds out.

The Dean.

[Turning the papers over in his hand, solemnly.] Bills! [He rises, walks thoughtfully to a
chair, sits [Pg 28] and examines papers again.] Bills! [He rises again, walks to another
chair, and sinks into it with a groan.] Bills!

Salome and Sheba re-enter.

Salome.

[To Sheba, in a whisper.] Papa's alone!

Sheba.

A beautiful opportunity to ask for that little present of money. Poor dear Papa!

Salome and Sheba.

Poor dear Papa!

[They link their hands together and walk as if going out
through the Library.

The Dean.

[*Looking up.*] Don't go, children!

[*He rises, the girls rush to him, and laughing with joy they turn him like a top, dancing round him.*]

[*Panting.*] Stop, children!

Sheba.

Papsey's in a good humor!

Salome.

[*Pinching his chin.*] He always is!

Sheba.

Papsey will listen to our little wants!

[*They force him into a chair. Salome sits on the ground embracing his legs, Sheba lies on the top of the table.*]

The Dean.

Oh dear, oh dear! Your wants are very little ones. What are they, Salome? What are they, toy-child?[Pg 29]

Salome.

Papa! Have you any spare cash?

The Dean.

Spare cash! Playful Salome!

Sheba.

£—s—d, Papsey, or £—s, Papsey, and never mind the—d.

The Dean.

Ha! ha! I am glad, really glad, children, that you have broken through a reserve which has existed on this point for at least a fortnight—and babbled for money.

Sheba *and* Salome.

[*Laughing with delight.*] Ha! ha!

The Dean.

It gives me the opportunity of meeting your demands with candor. Children, I have love for you, solicitude for you, but—I have no spare cash for anybody.

[He rises and walks gloomily across to the piano, on the top of which he commences to arrange his bills. In horror Salome scrambles up from the floor, and Sheba wriggles off the table. Simultaneously they drop on to the same chair and huddle together.]

Salome.

[To herself.] Lost! [Pg 30]

Sheba.

[To herself.] Done for!

The Dean.

And now you have so cheerily opened the subject, let me tell you with equal good humor *[emphatically flourishing the bills]* that this sort of thing must be put a stop to. Your dressmaker's bill is shocking; your milliner gives an analytical record of the feverish beatings of the hot pulse of fashion; your general draper blows a rancorous blast which would bring dismay to the stoutest heart. Let me for once peal out a deep paternal bass to your childish treble and say emphatically—I've had enough of it!

[He paces up and down. The two girls utter a loud yell of grief.]

Sheba.

[Through her tears.] We've been brought up as young ladies—that can't be done for nothing!

Salome.

Sheba's small, but she cuts into a lot of material.

The Dean.

My girls, it is such unbosomings as this which preserve the domestic unison of a family. Weep, howl, but listen. The total of these weeds which spring up in the beautiful garden of paternity is a hundred and fifty-six, eighteen, three. Now, all the money I can immediately command is considerably under five hundred pounds.

Salome.

Sheba.

Oh! what a lot!

The Dean.

Hush! But read, Salome, read aloud this paragraph in “The Times” of yesterday. There, my child.

[He hands a copy of “The Times” to Salome with his finger upon a paragraph.]

Salome.

[Reading.] “A Munificent Offer. Dr. Jedd, the Dean of St. Marvells, whose anxiety for the preservation of the Minister Spire threatens to undermine his health, has subscribed the munificent sum of one thousand pounds to the Restoration Fund.” *[Indignantly.]* Oh!

Sheba.

Oh! and we gasping for clothing!

The Dean.

Read on, my child.

Salome.

[Reading.] “On condition that seven other donors come forward, each with the like sum.”

Salome.

And will they?

The Dean.

[Anxiously.] My darling, times are bad, but one never knows.

Sheba.

If they don't![Pg 32]

The Dean.

Then you will have your new summer dresses as usual.

Salome.

[*Hoarsely.*] But if they do! Speak, Father!

The Dean.

[*Gloomily.*] Then we will all rejoice!

Sheba *and* Salome.

Rejoice!

The Dean.

And retrench. Two R's, little ones. Retrench and Rejoice.

[*The two girls cling to each other as Blore comes from the Library with two letters on a salver.*

Blore.

The second post, sir—just hin.

The Dean.

[*Blandly.*] Thank you.

Blore.

[*Hearing Salome and Sheba crying.*] They've 'ad a scolding, 'ussies. Let 'em 'ang that on the 'atstand!

[*He is going out.*

The Dean.

[*Opening letters.*] Oh, Blore! This note from Mr. Hodder, the Secretary of "The Sport and Relaxation Repression Guild," reminds me that to-morrow is the first day of the Races—the St. Marvells Spring Meeting, as it is called.[Pg 33]

Blore.

Hindeed, sir—fancy that! And I not know it!

The Dean.

All our servants may not resemble you, Blore. Pray remind them in the kitchen and the stable of the rule of the house——

Blore.

No servant allowed to leave the Deanery, on hany pretence, while the Races is on.

The Dean.

[*Kindly.*] While the races *are* on—thank you, Blore.

[*Opens his second letter.*

Blore.

Thank you, sir. [*To himself.*] Oh, if the Dean only knew the good thing I could put him on to for the Durnstone Handicap!

[*He goes out.*

The Dean.

Children! Salome! Sheba! Here is good news!

Salome.

[*Running to him.*] Good news!

Sheba.

What is it?

The Dean.

Your Aunt!

Sheba.

Left us some money?

The Dean.

Your Aunt is coming to live with us.[Pg 34]

Sheba.

To what?

Salome.

To live with us! What Aunt?

The Dean.

My dear widowed sister, Georgiana Tidman.

Salome.

What's she like?

Sheba.

We don't want her.

The Dean.

Good gracious! Georgiana and I reconciled after all these years! She will help us to keep the expenses down.

Salome.

Keep the expenses down!

The Dean.

[*Embracing his daughters.*] A second mother to my girls. She will implant the precepts of retrenchment if their father cannot!

Salome.

But, Papa, who is Aunt what's-her-name?

Sheba.

Who is she?

The Dean.

My dears—a mournful, miserable history! [*With his head bent he walks to a chair, and holds out his hands to the girls, who go to him and kneel at his feet.*] When you were infants your Aunt Georgiana married an individual whose existence I felt it my sad duty never to recognize.[Pg 35]

Salome.

A bad man?

The Dean.

He died ten years ago, and, therefore, we will say a misguided man. He was a person who bred horses to run in races for amusement combined with profit. He was also what is called a Gentleman Jockey, and it was your aunt's wifely boast that if ever he vexed her she could take a stone off his weight in half an hour. In due course his neck was dislocated.

Sheba.

By Aunt?

The Dean.

Hush, child, no! You will be little wiser when I tell you he came a cropper!

Salome.

How awful it all sounds!

The Dean.

Left a widow, you would think it natural that Georgiana Tidman would have flown to her brother, himself a widower. Not at all. Maddened, I hope, by grief, she continued the career of her misguided husband, and for years, to use her own terrible words, she was “the Daisy of the Turf.”

Sheba.

What’s that?

The Dean.

I don’t know, toy-child. But at length retribution came. Ill luck fell upon her—her horses, stock, everything, came to the hammer. That was my hour. “Come to me,” I wrote, “my children yearn for you.”[Pg 36]

Sheba *and* Salome.

[*With wry faces.*] Oh!

The Dean.

“At the Deanery of St. Marvells, with the cares of a household, and a stable which contains only a thirteen-year-old pony, you may obtain rest and forgetfulness.” And she is coming!

Sheba *and* Salome.

When? Oh! when?

The Dean.

She merely says, “Soon.”

Sheba *and* Salome.

[*Stamping with vexation.*] Ugh!

The Dean.

Salome, Sheba, you will, I fear, find her a sad broken creature, a weary fragment, a wave-tossed derelict. Let it be your patient endeavor to win back a flickering smile to the wan features of this chastened widow.

Blore enters with a telegram.

Blore.

A telegram, sir!

[The Dean opens telegram.]

Sheba.

No Aunt Tidman flickers a smile at me!

Salome.

I wouldn't be in her shoes for something!

Sheba.

Salt in her bed, Salome! [Pg 37]

Salome.

Yes, and the peg out of the rattling window!

[They grip hands earnestly.]

The Dean.

Good gracious! Bless me! Girls, your Aunt Georgiana slept at the "Wheatsheaf," at Durnstone, last night, and is coming on this morning!

Salome *and* Sheba.

To-day!

The Dean.

Blore, tell Willis to get the chaise out.

[Blore hurries out.]

The Dean.

Salome, child, you and I will drive into Durnstone—we may be in time to bring your Aunt over. My hat, Sheba! Quick! *[The clang of the gate bell is heard in the distance.]*

The bell! [*Looking out of window.*] No—yes—it can't be! [*Speaking in an altered voice.*]
Children! I wonder if this is your Aunt Georgiana?

[*Blore appears with a half-frightened, surprised look.*

Blore.

Mrs. Tidman.

Georgiana Tidman enters. She is a jovial, noisy woman, very "horsey" in manners and appearance, and dressed in pronounced masculine style, with billy cock hat and coaching coat. The girls cling to each other; The Dean recoils.

Georgiana.

Well, Gus, my boy, how are you?[Pg 38]

The Dean.

[*Shocked.*] Georgiana!

Georgiana.

[*Patting The Dean's cheeks.*] You're putting on too much flesh, Augustin; they should give you a ten-miler daily in a blanket.

The Dean.

[*With dignity.*] My dear sister!

Georgiana.

Are these your two-year-olds? [*To Salome.*] Kiss your Aunt! [*She kisses Salome with a good hearty smack.*] [*To Sheba.*] Kiss your Aunt! [*She embraces Sheba, then stands between the two girls and surveys them critically, touching them alternately with the end of her cane.*] Lord bless you both! What names do you run under?

Salome.

I—I am Salome.

Sheba.

I am Sheba.

Georgiana.

[*Looking at Sheba.*] Why, little 'un, your stable companion could give you a stone and then get her nose in front!

The Dean.

[*Who has been impatiently fuming.*] Georgiana, I fear these poor innocents don't follow your well-intentioned but inappropriate illustrations.

Georgiana.

Oh, we'll soon wake 'em up. Well, Augustin, my [Pg 39] boy, it's nearly twenty years since you and I munched our corn together.

The Dean.

Our estrangement has been painfully prolonged.

Georgiana.

Since then we've both run many races, though we've never met in the same events. The world has ridden us both pretty hard at times, Gus, hasn't it? We've been punished and pulled and led down pretty often, but here we are [*tapping him sharply in the chest with her cane*] sound in the wind yet. You're doing well, Gus, and they say you're going up the hill neck-and-neck with your Bishop. I've dropped out of it—the mares don't last, Gus—and it's good and kind of you to give me a dry stable and a clean litter, and to keep me out of the shafts of a "Shrewsbury and Talbot."

Sheba.

[*In a whisper to Salome.*] Salome, I don't quite understand her—but I like Aunt.

Salome.

So do I. But she's not my idea of a weary fragment or a chastened widow.

The Dean.

My dear Georgiana, I rejoice that you meet me in this affectionate spirit, and when—pardon me—when you have a little caught the *tone* of the Deanery——

Georgiana.

Oh, I'll catch it; if I don't the Deanery will a little catch *my* tone—the same thing.

[*Sheba laughs.*]

The Dean.

[*Reprovingly.*] Toy-child! [Pg 40]

Georgiana.

Trust George Tidd for setting things quite square in a palace or a puddle.

The Dean.

George Tidd! Who is George Tidd?

Georgiana.

I am George Tidd—that was my racing name. Ask after George Tidd at Newmarket—they'll tell you all about me. My colors were crimson and black diamonds. There you are.

[Producing her pocket-handkerchief, which is crimson and black.]

The Dean.

Dear me! Very interesting! Georgiana, my dear. One moment, children.

[The girls go into the Library.]

The Dean.

[Tapping the handkerchief.] I understand distinctly from your letter that all this is finally abandoned?

Georgiana.

Worse luck! They'll never see my colors at the post again!

The Dean.

And the contemplation of sport generally as a mental distraction——?[Pg 41]

Georgiana.

Oh, yes—I dare say you'll manage to wean me from that, too, in time.

The Dean.

In time! Well, but—Georgiana!

[The gate bell is heard again, the girls re-enter.]

Georgiana.

There's a visitor. I'll tootle upstairs and have a groom down. *[To Salome and Sheba.]*

Make the running, girls. At what time do we feed, Augustin?

The Dean.

There is luncheon at one o'clock.

Georgiana.

Right. The air here is so fresh I sha'n't be sorry to get my nose-bag on.

[She stalks out, accompanied by the girls.]

The Dean.

My sister, Georgiana—my widowed sister, Georgiana. Dear me, I am quite disturbed. Surely, surely the serene atmosphere of the Deanery will work a change. It must! It must! If not, what a grave mistake I have made. Good gracious! No, no, I won't think of it! Still, it is a little unfortunate that poor Georgiana should arrive here on the very eve of these terrible races at St. Marvells.

Blore enters with a card.

The Dean.

Who is it, Blore? *[Reading the card.]* "Sir Tristram Mardon." Dear, dear! Certainly, Blore, *[Pg 42]* certainly. *[Blore goes out.]* Mardon—why, Mardon and I haven't met since Oxford.

[Blore re-enters, showing in Sir Tristram Mardon, a well-preserved man of about fifty, with a ruddy face and jovial manner, the type of the thorough English sporting gentleman. Blore goes out.]

Sir Tristram.

Hullo, Jedd, how are you?

The Dean.

My dear Mardon—are we boys again?

Sir Tristram.

[Boisterously.] Of course we are! Boys again!

[He hits The Dean violently in the chest.]

The Dean.

[Breathing heavily—to himself.] I quite forgot how rough Mardon used to be. How it all comes back to me!

Sir Tristram.

Think I'm changed?

The Dean.

Only in appearance!

Sir Tristram.

I'm still a bachelor—got terribly jilted by a woman years ago and have run in blinkers ever since. Can't be helped, can it? You're married, aren't you?

The Dean.

[*With dignity.*] I have been a widower for fifteen years.[Pg 43]

Sir Tristram.

Oh lor'! awfully sorry—can't be helped though, can it? [*Seizing The Dean's hand and squeezing it.*] Forgive me, old chap.

The Dean.

[*Withdrawing his hand with pain.*] O-o-oh!

Sir Tristram.

I've re-opened an old wound—damned stupid of me!

The Dean.

Hush, Mardon! Please!

Sir Tristram.

All right. What do you think I'm down here for?

The Dean.

For the benefit of your health, Mardon?

Sir Tristram.

Ha! ha! Never had an ache in my life; sha'n't come and hear you preach next Sunday, Gus.

The Dean.

I do not preach next Sunday!

Sir Tristram.

You'd better not! No, I'm here for the races.

The Dean.

The races! Hush, my dear Mardon, my girls——

Sir Tristram.

Girls! May I trot 'em into the paddock to-morrow?[Pg 44]

The Dean.

Thank you, no.

Sir Tristram.

Think it over. You've seen the list of Starters for the Durnstone Handicap——?

The Dean.

No, I haven't.

Sir Tristram.

Not! Look here! Sir Tristram Mardon's Dandy Dick, nine stone two, Tom Gallawood up!
What do you think of that?

The Dean.

I don't think of anything like that!

Sir Tristram.

[*Digging* The Dean *in the ribs.*] Look out for my colors—black and white, and a pink
cap—first past the post to-morrow.

The Dean.

Really, my dear Mardon——

Sir Tristram.

Good heavens! Jedd, they talk about Bonny Betsy.

The Dean.

I grieve to hear it. The tongue of scandal——

Sir Tristram.

[*Taking The Dean's arm and walking him about.*] Do you imagine, sir, for one moment, that Bonny Betsy, with a boy on her back, can get down that bill with those legs of hers?
[Pg 45]

The Dean.

Another *horse*, I presume?

Sir Tristram.

No, a bay mare. George Tidd knew what she was about when she stuck to Dandy Dick to the very last.

The Dean.

[*Aghast.*] George—Tidd?

Sir Tristram.

Georgiana Tidman. Dandy came out of her stable after she smashed.

The Dean.

Bless me!

Sir Tristram.

Poor old George! I wonder what's become of her.

The Dean.

My dear Mardon, I am of course heartily pleased to revive in this way our old acquaintance. I wish it were in my power to offer you the hospitality of the Deanery—but——

Sir Tristram.

Don't name it. My horse and I are over the way at "The Swan." Come and look at Dandy Dick!

The Dean.

Mardon, you don't understand. My position in St. Marvells——

Sir Tristram.

Oh, I see, Jedd. I beg your pardon. You mean that the colors you ride in don't show up well on the hill yonder or in the stable of the "Swan" Inn.[Pg 46]

The Dean.

You must remember——

Sir Tristram.

I remember that in your young days you made the heaviest book on the Derby of any of our fellows.

The Dean.

I always lost, Mardon; indeed, I always lost!

Sir Tristram.

I remember that you once matched a mare of your own against another of Lord Beckslade's for fifty pounds!

The Dean.

Yes, but she wasn't in it, Mardon—I mean she was dreadfully beaten.

Sir Tristram.

[*Shaking his head sorrowfully.*] Oh Jedd, Jedd—other times, other manners. Good-bye, old boy.

The Dean.

You're not—you're not offended, Mardon?

Sir Tristram.

[*Taking The Dean's hand.*] Offended! No—only sorry, Dean, damned sorry, to see a promising lad come to an end like this. [*Georgiana enters with Salome on one side of her and Sheba on the other—all three laughing and chatting, apparently the best of friends.*] By Jove! No! what—Tidd?

Georgiana.

Hullo, Mardon!

[*They shake hands warmly.*]

Sir Tristram.

Of all places in the world, to find “Mr. Tidd!” [*Roaring with laughter.*] Ho! ho! ho! [Pg

Georgiana.

[*Laughing.*] Ha! ha!

Sir Tristram.

Why, Dean, you've been chaffing me, have you?

The Dean.

No!

Sir Tristram.

Yes, you have—you've been roasting your old friend!

The Dean.

[*With dignity.*] Mardon!

Sir Tristram.

Tidd is a pal of yours, eh? Ho! ho!

Georgiana.

Ha! ha!

The Dean.

Sir Tristram Mardon, Mrs. Tidman is my sister.

Sir Tristram.

Your sister?

Georgiana.

Yes, I've been running a bit dark, Mardon, but that stout, well-seasoned animal over there and this skittish creature come of the same stock and were foaled in the same stable. [*Pointing to Salome and Sheba.*] There are a couple of yearlings here, you don't know. My nieces—Salome and Sheba.[Pg 48]

Sir Tristram.

[*Bowing.*] How do you do? [*Heartily taking Georgiana's hand again.*] Well, I don't care whose sister you are, but I'm jolly glad to see you, George, my boy.

Georgiana.

Gracious, Tris, don't squeeze my hand so!

The Dean.

[*In horror.*] Salome, Sheba, children! I must speak to you. Excuse me, Mardon. [*To himself.*] Oh, what shall I do with my widowed sister?

[*He goes into the garden.*

Sheba.

[*To Salome.*] That's like pa, just as we were getting interested.

Salome.

We'll come back in a minute.

[*They go out by the window.*

Sir Tristram.

Lord! How odd! You know your brother and I were at Oxford together, George?

Georgiana.

Were you, Tris! Then are you putting up here?

Sir Tristram.

He won't have me.

Georgiana.

Won't have you!

Sir Tristram.

Because I'm down here racing. You see, he's a Dean.[Pg 49]

Georgiana.

Is he? Well, then, you just lay a thousand sovereigns to a gooseberry that in this house I'm a Dean, too!

Sir Tristram.

I suppose he's thinking of the Canons—and the Bishop—and those chaps.

Georgiana.

Lord bless your heart, they're all right when you cheer them up a bit! If I'm here till the autumn meeting you'll find me lunching on the hill, with the Canons marking my card

and the dear old Bishop mixing the salad. So say the word, Tris—I'll make it all right with Augustin.

Sir Tristram.

No, thanks, old fellow. The fact is I'm fixed at the "Swan" with—what do you think, George?—with Dandy Dick.

Georgiana.

Oh! my old Dandy!

Sir Tristram.

I brought him down with me in lavender. You know he runs for the Durnstone Handicap to-morrow.

Georgiana.

Know! There's precious little that horse does that I don't know, and what I don't know I dream. Is he fit?

Sir Tristram.

As a fiddle—shines like a mirror—not an ounce too much or too little. He'll romp in! [Pg 50]

Georgiana.

He'll dance in! Tris Mardon!

Sir Tristram.

Eh?

Georgiana.

[*Mysteriously.*] Tris, Dandy Dick doesn't belong to you—not *all* of him.

Sir Tristram.

No—I've only a half share. At your sale he was knocked down to John Fielder the trainer. The other half belongs to John.

Georgiana.

No, it doesn't, it belongs to *me!*

Sir Tristram.

George!

Georgiana.

Yes, directly I saw Dandy Dick marched out before the auctioneer I asked John Fielder to help me, and he did, like a Briton. For I can't live without horseflesh, if it's only a piece of cat's meat on a skewer. But when I condescended to keep company with the Canons and the Bishop here I promised Augustin that I wouldn't own anything on four legs, so John sold you half of Dick, and I can swear I don't own a horse—and I don't—not a whole one. But half a horse is better than no bread, Tris—and we're partners.

Sir Tristram.

[*Roaring with laughter.*] Ho! ho! ha! ha! ha!

Georgiana.

What are you laughing at, man?[Pg 51]

Sir Tristram.

Oh, the Dean! the Dean!

Salome and Sheba enter unperceived.

Sir Tristram.

[*Still laughing.*] I—ho! ho!—I beg your pardon, George—ha! ha! Well, now you know he's fit, of course, you're going to back Dandy Dick for the Durnstone Handicap.

Georgiana.

Back him! For every penny I've got in the world. That isn't much, but if I'm not a richer woman by a thousand pounds to-morrow night I shall have had a bad day.

Salome.

Oh, Sheba!

[The girls come towards the Library.]

Georgiana.

[*Discovering them.*] Hush! [*To the girls.*] Hallo!

Sheba.

It's only us, Aunt.

[The girls go into the Library.]

Sir Tristram.

I'll be off.

Georgiana.

Keep your eye on the old horse, Tristram.

Sir Tristram.

Don't fear. Good-morning, George! [Pg 52]

Georgiana.

Good-morning, partner! [Sir Tristram *bursts out laughing again, she joining in the laughter.*] Oh, do be quiet!

Sir Tristram.

Ho! ho! ho! Ha! ha! Oh, say good-bye for me to the Dean! [*She gives him a push and he goes out.*]

Sheba and Salome immediately re-enter from the Library.

Sheba.

Aunt—dear Aunt——

Georgiana.

Well, girls?

Sheba.

Aunt—Salome has something to say to you.

Salome.

No, it's Sheba.

Georgiana.

Why, you're shivering all over. [*Catching hold of Sheba.*] Hallo, little 'un!

Sheba.

Aunt—dear Aunt Georgiana—we heard you say something about a thousand pounds.

Georgiana.

You've been listening?

Sheba.

No—we only merely heard. And, oh, Aunt, a thousand pounds is such a lot, and we poor girls want such a little.[Pg 53]

Georgiana.

Money?

Sheba.

Yes. Salome has rather got into debt.

Georgiana.

My gracious!

Salome.

I haven't, any more than you have, Sheba.

Sheba.

Well, I'm in debt too, but I only meant to beg for Salome; but now I ask for both of us. Oh, Aunt Tidman, papa has told us that you have known troubles.

Georgiana.

So I have—heaps of them.

Sheba.

Oh, I'm so glad. Because Salome and I are weary fragments too—we're everything awful but chastened widows. We owe forty pounds unknown to Pa!

Salome.

Forty pounds, nineteen.

Georgiana.

Why, you ought to be ashamed of yourselves, you girls!

Sheba.

We are!

Salome.

Georgiana.

To cry and go on like this about forty pounds!

Sheba.

But we've only got fifteen and threepence of our own in the world! And, oh, Aunt, you know something about the Races, don't you?

Georgiana.

Eh?

Sheba.

If you do, help two poor creatures to win forty pounds, nineteen. Aunt Georgiana, what's "Dandy Dick" you were talking to that gentleman about?

Georgiana.

Child! Dandy Dick's a horse.

Sheba.

We thought so. Then let Dandy Dick win *us* some money.

Georgiana.

No, no! I won't hear of it!

Sheba.

Oh, do, do!

Salome.

Oh, do, do, do!

Georgiana.

Go away—I won't. I say decidedly, I will not!

Sheba.

Oh, do, do![Pg 55]

Salome.

Do! Do, and we'll love you for ever and ever, Aunt Georgiana.

Georgiana.

You will! [*She embraces them heartily.*] Bless your little innocent faces! Do you want to win forty pounds?

Salome *and* Sheba.

Yes, yes!

Georgiana.

Do you want to win *fifty* pounds?

Sheba and Salome.

Oh, yes, yes!

Georgiana.

[*Taking her betting book from her pocket.*] Very well, then, put your very petticoats on Dandy Dick!

[*The girls stand clutching their skirts, frightened.*]

Salome.

Oh!

Sheba.

Oh!

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

[Pg 56]

THE SECOND ACT.

The morning-room at the Deanery, with the fire and the lamps lighted. It is after dinner.

Sheba is playing the piano, Salome lolling upon the settee, and Georgiana pouring out tea. They are in evening dress.

Georgiana.

Sugar, Sally? I call you Sally, Salome—the evening's too short for your name.

Salome.

All right, Aunt George—two lumps, please.

Georgiana.

[To Sheba.] Little 'un?

Sheba.

Two lumps and one in the saucer, to eat.

Georgiana.

Quite a relief to shake off the gentlemen, isn't it?

Salome.

Do you think so, Aunt?

Sheba.

Oh, I don't think so.[Pg 57]

Georgiana.

H'm! Now I understand why my foot was always in the way under the dinner-table.

[She holds out two cups, which the girls take from her.]

Salome.

I thought the dinner was an overwhelming success.

Sheba.

All our dinners are at the Deanery.

Georgiana.

Awfully jolly. Mutton was overdone.

Salome.

That's our new cook's one failing.

Georgiana.

But the potatoes weren't—they rattled.

Sheba.

Cook never can manage potatoes.

Georgiana.

What was wrong with the custards?

Salome.

Well, it was Cook's first attempt at custards.

Georgiana.

However, they served one useful end. Now we *know* the chimney wants sweeping.

Salome.

But it was a frightfully jolly dinner—take it all round.[Pg 58]

Sheba.

Yes, take it all round. One has to take things all round.

Georgiana.

What made us all so sad and silent—taking us all round?

Sheba.

Dear Papa was as lively as an owl with neuralgia.

Georgiana.

Major Tarver isn't a conversational cracker.

Salome.

Gerald Tarver has no liver—to speak of.

Georgiana.

He might have spoken about his lungs or something, to cheer us up.

Sheba.

I fancy Mr. Darbey was about to make a witty remark once.

Georgiana.

Yes, and then the servant handed him a dish and he shied at it. So we lost that.

Salome.

Still, we ought to congratulate ourselves upon—upon a——

Sheba.

Upon a—upon a——

Georgiana.

Upon a frightfully jolly dinner. [*Taking her betting book from her pocket.*] Excuse me, girls. I've [Pg 59] some figures to work out. If Dandy Dick hasn't fed better at the "Swan" than we have at the Deanery, he won't be in the first three. [*Reckoning.*] Let me see.

Salome.

[*To Sheba.*] All's settled, Sheba, isn't it?

Sheba.

[*To Salome.*] Yes—everything. Directly the house is silent we let ourselves out at the front door.

Salome.

How do we get in again?

Sheba.

By this window. It has a patent safety fastening, so it can be opened with a hairpin.

Salome.

We're courageous girls, aren't we?

Sheba.

Yes, I don't consider we're ordinary young ladies, at all.

Salome.

If we had known Aunt a little longer we might have confided in her and taken her with us.

Sheba.

Poor Aunt—we mustn't spoil her.

Darbey.

[*Speaking outside.*] I venture to differ with you, my dear Dean. [Pg 60]

Georgiana.

Here come the wax-works!

[*She joins the girls as Darbey enters through the Library, patronizing The Dean, who accompanies him.*]

Darbey.

Haw! I've just been putting the Dean right about a little army question, Mrs.—Mrs.— I can't catch your name.

Georgiana.

Don't try—you'd come out in spots, like measles.

[*Darbey stands by her, blankly, then attempts a conversation.*]

The Dean.

[*To Salome and Sheba.*] Children, it is useless to battle against it much longer.

Salome.

Against what, Papa?

The Dean.

A feeling of positive distaste for Mr. Darbey.

Sheba.

Oh, Papsey—think what Wellington was at his age.

Major Tarver *enters, pale and haggard.*

Salome *meets him.*

Salome.

Major!

Tarver.

[*With a gasp.*] Oh! [Pg 61]

Salome.

Not well again?

Tarver.

Indigestion. I'm always like this after dinner.

Salome.

But what would you do if the trumpet summoned you to battle?

Tarver.

Oh, I suppose I should pack up a few charcoal biscuits and toddle out, you know.

Georgiana.

[*To Darbey.*] I've never studied the Army Guide.

Darbey.

You're thinking of——

Georgiana.

The Turf Guide—beg pardon. I mean, the Army keeps a string of trained nurses, doesn't it?

Darbey.

There *are* Army nurses.

Georgiana.

Certainly. I was wondering whether your Colonel will send one with a perambulator to fetch you at about half-past eight.

[*She leaves Darbey and goes to The Dean. Sheba joins Darbey at the piano.*]

Georgiana.

Well, Gus, my boy, you seem out of condition.[Pg 62]

The Dean.

I'm rather anxious for the post to bring to-day's "Times." You know I've offered a thousand pounds to our Restoration Fund.

Georgiana.

What!

The Dean.

Hush—I'll tell you.

[*They talk in undertones. Blore enters to remove the tea-tray.*]

Tarver.

[*Jumping up excitedly—to Salome.*] Eh? Oh, certainly—delighted! [*Singing to himself.*]
“Come into the garden, Maud, for the black bat——”

Salome.

Now you’re yourself again.

Tarver.

I’m always dreadfully excited when I’m asked to sing. It’s as good as a carbonate of soda lozenge to me to be asked to sing. [*To Blore.*] My music is in my overcoat pocket.

[*Blore crosses to the door.*

Sheba.

And Mr. Darbey has brought his violin.

Tarver.

[*In a rage, glaring at Darbey.*] Hah! There now!

Darbey.

[*To Blore.*] You’ll find it in the hall.[Pg 63]

[*Blore goes out. The Dean dozes in a chair. Salome and Sheba talk to Georgiana at the table.*

Tarver.

[*To himself.*] He always presumes with his confounded fiddle when I’m going to entertain. He knows that his fiddle’s never hoarse and that I am, sometimes.

Darbey.

[*To himself.*] Tarver always tries to cut me out with his elderly Chest C. He ought to put it on the Retired List.

Tarver.

I’ll sing him off his legs to-night—I’m in lovely voice.

[*He walks into the Library and is heard trying his voice, singing “Come into the garden, Maud.”*

Darbey.

[*To himself.*] He needn't bother himself. While he was dozing in the carriage I threw his music out of the window.

Tarver *re-enters triumphantly.*

Blore *re-enters, carrying a violin-case and a leather music roll. Darbey takes the violin-case, opens it, and produces his violin and music. Blore hands the music roll to Tarver and goes out.*

Tarver.

[*To Salome, trembling with excitement.*] My tones are like a beautiful bell this evening. I'm so glad, for all our sakes. [*As he takes the leather music roll from Blore.*] Thank you, that's it.

Salome.

What will you begin with?[Pg 64]

Tarver.

"Come into the garden, Maud." I've begun with "Come into the garden, Maud" for years and years. [*He opens the music roll—it is empty.*] Oh! Miss Jedd, I've forgotten my music!

Salome *and* Sheba.

Oh! Major Tarver!

[*Tarver with a groan of despair sinks on to the settee.*

Sheba.

Never mind—Mr. Darbey will play.

Darbey.

[*Tuning his violin.*] Will you accompany me?

Sheba.

[*Raising her eyes.*] To the end of the world.

[*She sits at the piano.*

Darbey.

My mother says that my bowing is something like Joachim's, and she ought to know.

Sheba.

Why?

Darbey.

Oh, because she's heard Joachim.

[Darbey *plays and Sheba accompanies him. Salome sits beside Tarver.*

Georgiana.

[*To herself.*] Well, after all, George, my boy, you're not stabled in such a bad box! Here is a regular pure, simple, English Evening at Home! [Pg 65]

The Dean.

[*Mumbling to himself.*] A thousand pounds to the Restoration Fund and all those bills to settle—oh dear! oh dear! What shall I do?

Salome.

[*To herself.*] I hope my ball-dress will drive all the other women mad!

Tarver.

[*To himself—glaring at Darbey.*] I feel I should like to garrote him with his bass string.

Georgiana.

[*Frowning at her betting book.*] I think I shall hedge a bit over the Crumbleigh Stakes.

Darbey.

[*As he plays, glancing at Tarver.*] I wonder how old Tarver's Chest C likes a holiday.

Sheba.

[*As she plays.*] We must get Pa to bed early. Dear Papa's always so dreadfully in the way.

Georgiana.

[*Looking around.*] No—there's nothing like it in any other country. A regular, pure, simple, English Evening at Home!

Blore enters quickly, cutting "The Times" with a paper-knife as he enters.

Blore.

The paper's just arrived.

[The music stops abruptly—all the ladies glare at Blore and hush him down.]

Georgiana, Salome, *and* Sheba.

Sssssh![Pg 66]

The Dean.

[Taking the paper from Blore.] This is my fault—there may be something in “The Times” of special interest to me. Thank you, Blore.

[Blore goes out.]

Tarver.

Ha, ha, ha! spoilt his pianissimo!

The Dean.

[Scanning the paper.] Oh, I can't believe it!

Georgiana.

What's the matter?

Salome *and* Sheba.

Papa!

Tarver *and* Darbey.

The Dean!

The Dean.

Children! Georgiana! Friends! My munificent offer has produced the desired result.

Salome *and* Sheba.

Oh!

The Dean.

Seven wealthy people, including three brewers, have come forward with a thousand pounds apiece in aid of the restoration of the Minster Spire!

Salome *and* Sheba.

[*Horried.*] Ah!

Georgiana.

That means a cool thousand out of your pocket, Gus.[Pg 67]

The Dean.

Yes. [*Reading.*] “The anxiety to which The Dean of St. Marvells has so long been a victim will now doubtless be relieved.” [*With his hand to his head.*] I suppose I shall feel the relief to-morrow.

Georgiana.

What’s wrong with the Spire? Nobody sleeps in it?

The Dean.

It is a little out of repair—but hardly sufficiently so to warrant the presumptuous interference of three brewers. Excuse me, I think I’ll enjoy the fresh air for a moment. [*He goes to the window and draws back the curtains—a bright red glare is seen in the sky.*] Bless me! Look there!

Georgiana, Salome, and Sheba.

Oh! what’s that?

The Dean.

It’s a conflagration!

Salome.

[*Clinging to Tarver.*] Where is it? Are we safe?

Sheba.

[*Clinging to Darbey.*] Where is it? Are we safe?

Georgiana.

Where is it?

Blore enters with a scared look.

The Dean.

[*To Blore.*] Where is it?[Pg 68]

All.

Where is it?

Blore.

The old Swan Inn's a-fire!

[The gate-bell is heard ringing violently in the distance. Blore goes out.]

Georgiana.

[Uttering a loud screech.] The Swan Inn! *[Madly.]* You girls, get me a hat and coat. Somebody fetch me a pair of boots!

[Salome, Sheba, and Tarver go to the window.]

The Dean.

Georgiana!

Georgiana.

Don't talk to me! *[To Tarver.]* Lend me your boots!

Tarver.

I daren't. If I once get cold extremities——

Georgiana.

Ah!

[She is going, The Dean stops her.]

The Dean.

Respect yourself, Georgiana—where are you going?

Georgiana.

Going! I'm going to help clear the stables at The Swan!

The Dean.

Remember what you are—my sister—a lady! [Pg 69]

Georgiana.

I'm not. George Tidd's a man, every inch of her! *[Sir Tristram rushes in breathlessly. Georgiana rushes at him and clutches his coat.]* Tris Mardon, speak!

Sir Tristram.

[*Exhausted.*] Oh!

Georgiana.

The horse? The horse! You've got him out?

Sir Tristram.

Yes, safe and sound.

Georgiana.

Safe and sound! That old horse has backed himself to win the handicap.

[*She sinks into a chair. Tarver and Darbey with Salome and Sheba stand looking out of the window.*]

Sir Tristram.

George, his tail is singed a bit.

Georgiana.

The less weight for him to carry to-morrow. [*Beginning to cry.*] Dear old Dandy, he never was much to look at.

Sir Tristram.

The worst of it is, the fools threw two pails of cold water over him to put it out.

Georgiana.

Oh! that's done him! [Pg 70]

The Dean.

Now, my dear Georgiana! what is a horse?

Georgiana.

A living example to a Dean. [*The Dean goes distractedly into the Library.*] Where is the animal?

Sir Tristram.

My man Hatcham is running him up and down the lane here to try to get him warm again.

Georgiana.

Where are you going to put the homeless beast up now?

Sir Tristram.

I don't know.

Georgiana.

[*Starting up.*] I do though!

The Dean.

Madwoman! What are you going to do?

Georgiana.

Bring Dandy Dick into our stables!

The Dean.

No, no!

Sir Tristram.

The very place!

The Dean.

Georgiana, pray consider *me!*

Georgiana.

So I will, when you've had two pails of water thrown over you.[Pg 71]

[*The Dean walks about in despair.*

The Dean.

Mardon, I appeal to *you!*

Sir Tristram.

Oh, Dean, Dean, I'm ashamed of you!

Georgiana.

[*To Sir Tristram.*] Are you ready?

Sir Tristram.

[Takes off his coat and throws it over Georgiana's shoulders.] George, you're a brick!

Georgiana.

A brick, am I? *[Quietly to him.]* One partner pulls Dandy out of the Swan—t'other one leads Dandy into the Deanery. Quits, my lad!

[They go out together.]

The Dean.

What is happening to me! It will be in all the sporting papers. "Sir Tristram Mardon's Dandy Dick reflected great credit upon the Deanery Stables!" "The Sporting Dean!"

[He walks into the Library, where he sinks into a chair, as Salome, Tarver, Darbey and Sheba come from the window.]

Tarver.

They're getting the flames under. If I had had my goloshes with me I should have been here, there, and everywhere.

Darbey.

Where there's a crowd of Civilians the Military exercise a wise discretion in restraining themselves. [Pg 72]

Sheba.

[To Tarver and Darbey.] You had better go now; then we'll get the house quiet as soon as possible. Poor Papa looks worried.

Sheba *and* Salome.

Poor Papa!

Tarver.

We will wait with the carriage in the lane.

Salome.

Yes, yes. *[Calling.]* Papa, Major Tarver and Mr. Darbey must go.

[She rings the bell. The Dean comes from the Library.]

The Dean.

Dear me, I'm very remiss!

Tarver.

[*Shaking hands.*] Most fascinating evening!

Darbey.

[*Shaking hands.*] Charming, my dear Dean.

Blore *enters*.

Salome.

Major Tarver's carriage.

Blore.

Hat the gate, Miss Salome.

Salome.

Don't risk the cold, Papa.[Pg 73]

[*Blore goes out, followed by Sheba, Salome, and Tarver.*

Darbey is going, when he returns to The Dean.

Darbey.

By-the-bye, my dear Dean—come over and see me. We ought to know more of each other. Say Monday.

The Dean.

[*Restraining his anger.*] I will *not* say Monday!

Darbey.

Any time you like. Oh—and I say—let me know when you preach, and I'll get some of our fellows to give their patronage!

[*He goes out.*

The Dean.

[*Closing the door after him with a bang.*] Another moment—another moment—and I fear I should have been violently rude to him, a guest under my roof! [*He walks up to the fireplace and stands looking into the fire, as Darbey, having forgotten his violin, returns to the room.*] Oh, Blore, now understand me, if that Mr. Darbey ever again presumes to present himself at the Deanery I will not see him!

Darbey.

[*With his violin in his hand, haughtily.*] I've come back for my violin.

[*Goes out with dignity.*

The Dean.

[*Horried.*] Oh, Mr. Darbey! Hear an explanation, Mr. Darbey!

[*He runs out after Darbey. Georgiana and Sir Tristram enter by the window.*

Georgiana.

Don't be down, Tris, my boy; cheer up, lad, he'll be fit yet, bar a chill! Aha! he knew me, he knew me when I kissed his dear old nose! [Pg 74]

Sir Tristram.

He'd be a fool of a horse if he hadn't felt deuced flattered at that.

Georgiana.

He's no fool. He knows he's in the Deanery too. Did you see him cast up his eyes and lay his ears back when I led him in?

Sir Tristram.

Oh, George, George, it's such a pity about his tail!

Georgiana.

[*Cheerily.*] Not it. You watch his head to-morrow—that'll come in first.

[*Hatcham, a groom, looks in at the window.*

Hatcham.

Are you there, Sir?

Sir Tristram.

What is it?

Hatcham.

I jest run round to tell you that Dandy is a feedin' as steady as a baby with a bottle.

Georgiana.

Don't you close your eyes all night.

Hatcham.

Not me, mum. And I've got hold of the constable 'ere, Mr. Topping—he's going to sit up with me, for company's sake.

Sir Tristram.

The constable?[Pg 75]

Hatcham.

Yes, Sir Tristram. [*Coming forward mysteriously.*] Why, bless you and the lady, sir—supposin' the fire at the "Swan" warn't no accident!

Georgiana.

Eh?

Hatcham.

Supposin' it were inciderism—and supposin' our 'orse was the hobject.

Sir Tristram.

Good gracious!

Hatcham.

That's why I ain't goin' to watch single-handed.

Sir Tristram.

Get back then—get back!

[*Sir Tristram and Georgiana pace up and down excitedly.*]

Hatcham.

Right, Sir. There's only one mortal fear I've got about our Dandy.

Georgiana and Sir Tristram.

What's that?

Hatcham.

He 'asn't found out about 'is tail yet, sir, and when he does it'll fret him, as sure as my name's Bob Hatcham.

Sir Tristram.

Keep the stable pitch dark—he mayn't notice it.

Hatcham.

Not to-night, sir, but he's a proud 'orse and what'll [Pg 76] he think of 'isself on the 'ill to-morrow? You and me and the lady, sir—it 'ud be different with us, but how's our Dandy to hide his bereavement?

[Hatcham goes out of the window with Sir Tristram as The Dean enters, followed by Blore, who carries a lighted lantern.

The Dean.

[Looking reproachfully at Georgiana.] You have returned, Georgiana?

Georgiana.

Yes, thank ye.

The Dean.

And that animal?

Georgiana.

In our stables, safe and snug.

The Dean.

[With a groan.] Oh!

Georgiana.

You can sleep to-night with the happy consciousness of having sheltered the outcast.

The Dean.

We're locking up now. The poor children, exhausted with the alarm, beg me to say good-night for them. The fire is quite extinguished.

Blore.

Yes, sir; but I hear they've just sent into Durnstone hasking for the Military to watch the ruins in case of another houtbreak. It'll stop the wicked Ball at the Hathanæum, it will!

[Pg 77]

[Drawing the window curtains.

Sir Tristram.

[*Having re-entered.*] I suppose you want to see the last of me, Jedd.

The Dean.

Mardon!

Georgiana.

Don't be unkind, Tris. Where shall we stow the dear old chap, Gus, my boy?

The Dean.

Where shall we stow the dear old chap! I really don't know.

Georgiana.

Let me see. We don't want to pitch you out of your loft if we can help it, Gus.

Sir Tristram.

No, no—we won't do that.

The Dean.

Don't consider me in this manner. But there's Sheba's little cot still standing in the old nursery.

Sir Tristram.

Just the thing for me—the old nursery.

Georgiana.

The old nursery. Toys to play with if you wake early.

The Dean.

[*Looking round.*] Is there anyone else before we lock up?[Pg 78]

[*Blore has fastened the window and drawn the curtain.*

Georgiana.

Put Sir Tristram to bed carefully in the nursery, Blore.

Sir Tristram.

[*Grasping The Dean's hand.*] Good-night, old boy. I'm too done for a hand of Piquet to-night.

The Dean.

I never play cards.

Sir Tristram.

[*Slapping him on the back.*] I'll teach you during my stay at the Deanery.

The Dean.

[*Helplessly to himself.*] Then he's staying with me!

Sir Tristram.

Good-night, George.

Georgiana.

Good-night, partner. Heaven bless the little innocent in his cot.

[*Sir Tristram goes out with Blore.*]

Georgiana.

[*Calling after him.*] Tris! You may take your pipe up with you. We smoke all over the Deanery.

The Dean.

[*To himself.*] I never smoke! Does *she*?

Georgiana.

[*Closes the door, humming a tune merrily.*] Tra la, tra la! Now, Mr. Tidd, we'll toddle. Tra la! tra la! [*She stops, looking at The Dean, who is muttering to himself.*] Gus, I don't like your looks, I[Pg 79] shall let the Vet see you in the morning. What's wrong with you?

[*The Dean shakes his head mournfully, and sinks on the settee.*]

Georgiana.

Money?

The Dean.

There *are* bills, which, at a more convenient time, it will be my grateful duty to discharge.

Georgiana.

And you're short?

The Dean.

Short?

Georgiana.

Stumped—out of coin—run low. What'll square the bills?

The Dean.

Very little would settle the bills—but—but——

Georgiana.

I know—the Spire. Why, Gus, you haven't got that thousand.

The Dean.

There is a very large number of estimable worthy men who do not possess a thousand pounds. With that number I have the mournful pleasure of enrolling myself.

Georgiana.

When's the settling day?

The Dean.

Eh?[Pg 80]

Georgiana.

When will you have to fork out?

The Dean.

Unless the restoration is immediately commenced the spire will certainly crumble.

Georgiana.

Then it's a match between you and the spire which parts first. Gus, will you let your little sister lend you a hand?

The Dean.

My dear Georgiana, impossible!

Georgiana.

No, no—not out of my own pocket. Come here. [*She takes his arm and whispers in his ear.*] Can you squeeze a pair of ponies?

The Dean.

Can I what?

Georgiana.

Can you raise fifty pounds?

The Dean.

Certainly. More than fifty pounds.

Georgiana.

No—no, don't be rash! That's the worst of you beginners. Only fifty by to-morrow morning.

The Dean.

Most assuredly.

Georgiana.

Very well then—clap it on to Dandy Dick! [Pg 81]

The Dean.

[*With horror.*] What!

Georgiana.

He's a certainty—if those two buckets of water haven't put him off it! He's a moral—if he doesn't think of his tail coming down the hill. There's nothing like him at the weight. Keep it dark, Gus—don't breathe a word to any of your Canons or Archdeacons, or they'll rush at it and shorten the price for us. Go in, Gus, my boy—take your poor widowed sister's tip and sleep as peacefully as a blessed baby!

[*She presses him warmly to her and kisses him.*]

The Dean.

[*Extricating himself.*] Oh! Mrs. Tidman! Go to your room!

Georgiana.

Augustin!

The Dean.

In the morning I will endeavor to frame some verbal expression of the horror with which I regard your proposal. For the present, you are my parents' child and I trust your bed is well aired.

Georgiana.

Oh, very well, Augustin. I've done all I can for the Spire. *Bon soir*, old boy!

The Dean.

Good-night.

Georgiana.

If you're wiser in the morning just send Blore on to the course and he'll put the money
on for you.[Pg 82]

The Dean.

Blore! My poor devoted old servant would be lost on a race-course.

Georgiana.

Would he! He was quite at home in Tattersall's Ring when I was at St. Marvells last summer.

The Dean.

Blore!

Georgiana.

Blore. I recognized the veteran sportsman the moment I came into the Deanery.

The Dean.

What was my butler doing at St. Marvells Races?

Blore enters with his lantern.

Georgiana.

Investing the savings of your cook and housemaid, of course. You don't think your servants are as narrow as you are!

The Dean.

Oh!

Blore.

I beg your pardon, sir, shall I go the rounds, sir?

[The Dean *gives Blore a fierce look, but Blore beams sweetly.*

Georgiana.

Blore!

Blore.

Mum?[Pg 83]

Georgiana.

Breakfast at nine, sharp. And pack a hamper with a cold chicken, some French rolls, and two bottles of Heidsieck—label it “George Tidd,” and send it on to the Hill. I’ll stand the racket. Goodnight.

[*She goes out. The Dean sinks into a chair and clasps his forehead.*

Blore.

A dear, ’igh-sperited lady. [*Leaning over The Dean.*] Aren’t you well, sir?

The Dean.

Serpent!

Blore.

Meanin’ *me*, sir?

The Dean

Lock up; I’ll speak to you in the morning. Lock up.

[*Blore goes into the Library, turns out the lamp there, and disappears.*

What dreadful wave threatens to engulf the Deanery? What has come to us in a few fatal hours? A horse of sporting tendencies contaminating my stables, his equally vicious owner nestling in the nursery, and my own widowed sister, in all probability, smoking a cigarette at her bedroom window with her feet on the window-ledge! [*Listening.*] What’s that? [*He peers through the window curtains.*] I thought I heard footsteps in the garden. I can see nothing—only the old spire standing out against the threatening sky. [*Leaving*

the window shudderingly.] The Spire! My principal creditor![Pg 84] My principal creditor, the most conspicuous object in the city!

Blore *re-enters with his lantern, carrying some bank-notes in his hand.*

Blore.

[*Laying the notes on the table.*] I found these, sir, on your dressing-table—they're bank-notes, sir.

The Dean.

[*Taking the notes.*] Thank you. I placed them there to be sent to the Bank to-morrow.

[*Counting the notes.*] Ten—ten—twenty—five—five, fifty. Fifty pounds! The very sum Georgiana urged me to—oh! [*To Blore, waving him away.*] Leave me—go to bed—go to bed—go to bed! [*Blore is going.*] Blore!

Blore.

Sir?

The Dean.

What made you tempt me with these at such a moment?

Blore.

Temp' you, sir! The window was hopen, and I feared they might blow away.

The Dean.

[*Catching him by the coat collar.*] Man, what were you doing at St. Marvells Races last summer?

Blore.

[*With a cry, falling on his knees.*] Oh, sir! Oh, sir! I knew that 'igh-sperited lady would bring grief and sorrow to the peaceful, 'appy Deanery! Oh, sir, I 'ave done a little on my hown account from time to time on the 'ill, halso hon commission for the kitchen![Pg 85]

The Dean.

I knew it—I knew it!

Blore.

Oh, sir, you are a old gentleman—turn a charitable 'art to the Races! It's a vicious institution what spends more ready money in St. Marvells than us good people do in a year.

The Dean.

Get up, Blore—get up. Oh, Edward Blore, Edward Blore, what weak creatures we are!

Blore.

We are, sir—we are—'specially when we've got a tip, sir. Think of the temptation of a tip, sir.

The Dean.

I do, Blore—I do.

Blore.

I confess heverything, sir. Bonny Betsy's bound for to win the 'andicap.

The Dean.

No, no—she isn't.

Blore.

She is, sir.

The Dean.

I know better; she can never get down the hill with those legs of hers.

Blore.

She can, sir—what's to beat her?

The Dean.

The horse in my stable—Dandy Dick! [Pg 86]

Blore.

Dandy Dick! That old bit of ma'ogany, sir. They're layin' ten to one against him.

The Dean.

[*With hysterical eagerness.*] Are they? I'll take it! I'll take it!

Blore.

Lord love you, sir—fur how much?

The Dean.

Fifty! There's the money. [*Impulsively he crams the notes into Blore's hand and then recoils in horror.*] Oh!

[*Sinks into a chair with a groan.*]

Blore.

[*In a whisper.*] Lor', who'd 'ave thought the Dean was such a ardent sportsman at 'art? He dursn't give me my notice after this. [*To The Dean.*] Of course it's understood, sir, that we keep our little weaknesses dark. Houtwardly, sir, we remain respectable, and, I 'ope, respected. [*Putting the notes into his pocket.*] I wish you good-night, sir. [*He walks to the door. The Dean makes an effort to recall him but fails.*] And that old man 'as been my pattern and example for years and years! Oh, Edward Blore, your hidol is shattered! [*Turning to The Dean.*] Good-night, sir. May your dreams be calm and 'appy, and may you have a good run for your money!

[*Blore goes out—The Dean gradually recovers his self-possession.*]

The Dean.

I—I am upset to-night, Blore. Of course you leave this day month. I—I [*looking round.*] Blore! He's[Pg 87] gone! If I don't call him back the Spire may be richer to-morrow by five hundred pounds. I won't dwell on it. I'll read—I'll read. [*Snatches a book at haphazard from the bookshelf. There is the sound of falling rain and distant thunder.*] Rain, thunder. How it assimilates with the tempest of my mind! I'll read. Bless me! This is very strange. [*Reading.*] "The Horse and its Ailments, by John Cox, M. R. C. V. S." It was with the aid of this volume that I used to doctor my old mare at Oxford. A leaf turned down. [*Reading.*] "Simple remedies for chills—the Bolus." The helpless beast in my stable is suffering from a chill. Good gracious! If I allow Blore to risk my fifty pounds on Dandy Dick, surely it would be advisable to administer this Bolus to the poor animal without delay. [*Referring to the book hastily.*] I have these drugs in my chest. There's not a moment to be lost! [*Going to the bell and ringing.*] I shall want help. I'll fetch my medicine chest.

[*He lays the book upon the table and goes into the Library.*]

Blore enters.

Blore.

[*Looking round.*] Where is he? The bell rang. The Dean's puzzling me with his uncommon behavior, that he is.

[*The Dean comes from the Library, carrying a large medicine chest. On encountering Blore he starts and turns away his head, the picture of guilt.*]

The Dean.

Blore, I feel it would be a humane act to administer to the poor ignorant animal in my stable a simple Bolus as a precaution against chill. I rely [Pg 88] upon your aid and discretion in ministering to any guest in the Deanery.

Blore.

[*In a whisper.*] I see, sir—you ain't going to lose half a chance for to-morrow, sir—you're a knowin' one, sir, as the sayin' goes!

The Dean.

[*Shrinking from Blore with a groan.*] Oh! [*He places the medicine chest on the table and takes up the book. Handing the book to Blore with his finger on a page.*] Fetch these humble but necessary articles from the kitchen—quick. I'll mix the Bolus here. [*Blore goes out quickly.*] It is exactly seven and twenty years since I last approached a horse medically. [*He takes off his coat and lays it on a chair, then rolls his shirt-sleeves up above his elbows and puts on his glasses.*] I trust that this Bolus will not give the animal an unfair advantage over his competitors. I don't desire that! I don't desire that! [*Blore re-enters carrying a tray, on which are a small flour-barrel and rolling-pin, a white china basin, a carafe of water, a napkin, and the book. The Dean recoils, then guiltily takes the tray from Blore and puts it on the table.*] Thank you.

Blore.

[*Holding on to the window curtain and watching The Dean.*] His eyes is awful; I don't seem to know the 'appy Deanery when I see such proceedings a'goin' on at the dead of night. [Pg 89]

[*There is a heavy roll of thunder—The Dean mixes a pudding and stirs it with the rolling-pin.*]

The Dean.

The old half-forgotten time returns to me. I am once again a promising youth at college.

Blore.

[*To himself.*] One would think by his looks that he was goin' to poison his family instead of—Poison! Poison! Oh, if hanything serious 'appened to the hanimal in our stable there would be nothing in the way of Bonny-Betsy, the deservin' 'orse I've trusted with my 'ard-earned savings!

The Dean.

I am walking once again in the old streets at Oxford, avoiding the shops where I owe my youthful bills. Bills!

[*He pounds away vigorously with the rolling-pin.*]

Blore.

[*To himself.*] Where's the stuff I got a month ago to destroy the hold black retriever that fell hill?

The Dean.

Bills!

Blore.

The dog died—the poison's in my pantry—it couldn't have got used for cooking purposes.

The Dean.

I see the broad meadows and the tall Spire of the college—the Spire! Oh, my whole life seems made up of Bills and Spires!

Blore.

[*To himself.*] I'll do it! I'll do it![Pg 90]

[*Unseen by The Dean he quickly and quietly steals out by the door.*]

The Dean.

Where are the drugs—the drugs? [*Opening the medicine chest and bending down over the bottles he pours some drops from a bottle into the basin.*] [*Counting.*] Three—four—five—six. [*He replaces the bottle and takes another.*] How fortunate some animals are! [*Counting.*] One—two—three, four. It's done!

[Taking up the medicine chest he goes with it into the Library.

As he disappears Blore re-enters stealthily fingering a small paper packet.

Blore.

[In a whisper.] Strychnine! [There is a heavy roll of thunder—Blore darts to the table, empties the contents of the packet into the basin, and stirs vigorously with the rolling-pin.] I've cooked Dandy Dick! I've cooked Dandy Dick! [He moves from the table in horror.] Oh! I'm only a hamatoor sportsman and I can't afford a uncertainty. [As The Dean returns, Blore starts up guiltily.] Can I help you any more, Sir?

The Dean.

No, remove these dreadful things, and don't let me see you again to-night!

[Sits with the basin on his knees, and proceeds to roll the paste.

Blore.

[Removing the tray.] It's only an 'orse—it's only an 'orse! But after to-morrow I'll retire from the Turf, if only to reclaim 'im.[Pg 91]

[He goes out.

The Dean.

[Putting on his coat.] I don't contemplate my humane task with resignation. The stable is small, and if the animal is restive we shall be cramped for room. [The rain is heard.] I shall get a chill too. [Seeing Sir Tristram's coat and cap lying upon the settee.] I am sure Mardon will lend me this gladly. [Putting on the coat, which completely envelops him.] The animal may recognize the garment, and receive me with kindly feeling. [Putting on the sealskin cap, which almost conceals his face.] Ugh! why do I feel this dreadful sinking at the heart? [Taking the basin and turning out the lamp.] Oh! if all followers of the veterinary science are as truly wretched as I am, what a noble band they must be!

[The thunder rolls as he goes through the window curtains. Sir Tristram then enters quietly, smoking, and carrying a lighted candle.

Sir Tristram.

All right; fire still burning. *[Blowing out the candle.]* I shall doze here till daybreak. What a night! I never thought there was so much thunder in these small country places.

[Georgiana, *looking pale and agitated, and wearing a dressing-gown, enters quickly, carrying an umbrella and a lighted candle.*

Georgiana.

Which is the nearer way to the stable? I must satisfy myself—I must—I must! [*Going to the door.*]

Sir Tristram.

[*Rising suddenly.*] Hullo! [Pg 92]

Georgiana.

[*Shrieks with fright.*] Ah!

Sir Tristram.

Hush!

Georgiana.

[*Holding out her umbrella.*] Stand where you are or I'll fire! [*Recognizing Sir Tristram.*]

Tris!

Sir Tristram.

Why, George!

Georgiana.

Oh, Tris, I've been dreaming! [*Falling helplessly against Sir Tristram, who deposits her in a chair.*] Oh! oh! oh! Don't look at me! I'm overtrained. I shall be on my legs again in a minute.

[*She opens her umbrella and hides herself behind it, sobbing violently.*

Sir Tristram.

[*Standing over the umbrella in great concern.*] My goodness! George, whatever shall I do? Shall I trot you up and down outside?

Georgiana.

Be quiet! [*Sobbing.*] What are you fooling about here for? Why can't you lie quietly in your cot?

Sir Tristram.

Confound that cot! Why, it wouldn't hold my photograph. Where are you going?

Georgiana.

Into the stable to sit with Dandy. The thunder's awful in my room; when it gets tired it seems to sit[Pg 93] down on my particular bit of roof. I did doze once, and then I had a frightful dream. I dreamt that Dandy had sold himself to a circus, and that they were hooting him because he had lost his tail. There's an omen!

Sir Tristram.

Don't, don't—be a man, George, be a man!

Georgiana.

[*Shutting her umbrella.*] I know I'm dreadfully effeminate. There—Tidd's himself again!

Sir Tristram.

Bravo!

Georgiana.

Ah, Tris—don't think me soft, old man. I'm a lonely, unlucky woman, and the tail end of this horse is all that's left me in the world to love and to cling to!

Sir Tristram.

No, by Jove! I'm not such a mean cur as that! Swop halves and take his head, George, my boy.

Georgiana.

Not I! I'm like a doating mother to my share of Dandy, and it's all the dearer because it's an invalid. I'm off.

Sir Tristram.

Come along! [*Turning towards the window, she following him, he suddenly stops and looks at her, and seizes her hand.*] George, I never guessed that you were so tender-hearted.

Georgiana.

Well, I'm not.[Pg 94]

Sir Tristram.

And you've robbed me to-night of an old friend—a pal.

Georgiana.

I—what d'ye mean?

Sir Tristram.

I mean that I seem to have dropped the acquaintance of George Tidd, Esquire, forever.

Georgiana.

Tris—no.

Sir Tristram.

I have—but I've got an introduction to his twin-sister, Georgiana!

Georgiana.

[Snatching her hand away angrily.] Stay where you are; I'll nurse my half alone. *[She goes towards the window, then starts back.]* Hush!

Sir Tristram.

What's the matter?

Georgiana.

Didn't you hear something?

Sir Tristram.

Where?

Georgiana.

[Pointing to the window.] There.

Sir Tristram.

[Peeping through the curtains.] You're right. Some people moving about the garden. [Pg
95]

Georgiana.

Tris! The horse!

Sir Tristram.

They're not near the stables. They're coming in here. Hush! We'll clear out and watch!

[Sir Tristram *takes the candlestick and they go out leaving the room in darkness. The curtains at the window are pushed aside, and Salome and Sheba enter; both in their fancy dresses.*

Salome.

[*In a rage, lighting the candles on the mantelpiece.*] Oh! oh! oh!

Sheba.

Oh! oh! No ball after all!

Salome.

If we only had a brother to avenge us!

Sheba.

I shall try and borrow a brother to-morrow!

Salome.

Cold, wretched, splashed, in debt—for nothing!

Sheba.

To think that we've had all the inconvenience of being wicked and rebellious and have only half done it!

Salome.

This comes of stooping to the Military!

Sheba.

It serves us right—we've been trained for clergymen's wives. I hate Nugent Darbey. I hope he may grow bald early! [Pg 96]

Salome.

Gerald Tarver's nose is inclined to pink—may it deepen and deepen till it frightens cows!

[*Voices are heard from the curtained window recess.*

Darbey.

[*Outside.*] Miss Jedd—Sheba!

Tarver.

[*Outside.*] Pray hear two wretched men! Miss Jedd!

Salome.

[*In a whisper.*] There they are.

Sheba.

Shall we grant them a dignified interview?

Salome.

Yes. Curl your lip, Sheba.

Sheba.

You curl your lip better than I—I'll dilate my nostrils.

[*Salome draws aside the curtain. Tarver and Darbey enter. They are both very badly and shabbily dressed as Cavaliers.*]

Tarver.

[*A most miserable object, carrying a carriage umbrella.*] Oh, don't reproach us, Miss Jedd. It isn't our fault that the Military were summoned to St. Marvells.

Darbey.

You don't blame officers and gentlemen for responding to the sacred call of duty?[Pg
97]

Sheba.

We blame officers for subjecting two motherless girls to the shock of alighting at the Durnstone Athenæum to find a notice on the front door: "Ball knocked on the head—Vivat Regina."

Salome.

We blame gentlemen for inflicting upon us the unspeakable agony of being jeered at by boys.

Tarver.

I took the address of the boy who suggested that we should call again on the fifth of November. It is on the back of your admission card.

Darbey.

Everything will be done. We shall both wait on the boy's mother for an explanation.

Tarver.

Oh, smile on us once again, Miss Jedd—a forced, hollow smile, if you will—only smile.
Salome!

Georgiana *enters*.

Georgiana.

Salome! Sheba!

Salome *and* Sheba.

Aunt!

Georgiana.

You bad girls!

Salome.

[*Weeping.*] No, Aunt, no!

Sheba.

Not bad. Aunt—trustful and confiding.[Pg 98]

Georgiana.

[*Advancing to Tarver.*] How dare you encourage these two simple children to enjoy themselves! How dare you take them out—without their Aunt! Do you think *I* can't keep a thing quiet?

Sheba.

They didn't even ask Papa's permission!

Salome.

Poor Papa!

Sheba.

Poor, dear Papa!

Georgiana.

[*Shaking Tarver.*] I'm speaking to you—Field-Marshal.

Tarver.

Madam, you are addressing an invalid.

Darbey.

We shall be happy to receive your representative in the morning. At present we are on duty.

Tarver.

On heavy duty.

Darbey.

Guarding the ruins of the "Swan" Inn. You mustn't distract our attention.

Georgiana.

Guarding the ruins of the "Swan," are you? [*Calling.*] Tris! Sir Tristram! [Sir Tristram *appears.*] Tris, I'm a feeble woman, but I hope I've a keen sense of right and wrong. Run these[Pg 99] outsiders into the road, and let them guard their own ruins.

[*Salome and Sheba shriek, and throw themselves at the feet of Tarver and Darbey, clinging to their legs.*]

Salome.

No, no. Spare him!

Sheba.

You shall not harm a hair of their heads.

[*Sir Tristram twists Tarver's wig round so that it covers his face. The gate bell is heard ringing violently.*]

Georgiana, Salome, and Sheba.

What's that?

Salome.

It will wake Papa!

Sheba.

Stop the bell!

[*Georgiana runs to the door and opens it.*

Salome.

[*To Tarver and Darbey.*] Fly!

[*Tarver and Darbey disappear through the curtains at the window.*

Sheba.

[*Falling into Salome's arms.*] We have saved them!

Georgiana.

Oh, Tris, your man from the stable! [Pg 100]

Sir Tristram.

Hatcham!

Georgiana.

[*Calling.*] Hatcham!

[*Hatcham, carrying the basin with the bolus, runs in breathlessly—followed by Blore.*

Hatcham.

Oh, Sir Tristram!

Georgiana *and* Sir Tristram.

What is it?

Hatcham.

The villain that set fire to the "Swan," sir—in the act of administering a dose to the 'orse!

Georgiana.

Nobbling our Dandy?

Sir Tristram.

Where is the scoundrel?

Hatcham.

Topping the constable's collared him, Sir—he's taken him in a cart to the lock-up!

Georgiana *and* Sir Tristram.

Oh!

Blore.

[*In agony.*] They've got the Dean!

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

[Pg 101]

THE THIRD ACT.

The first scene is the interior of a country Police Station, a quaint old room with plaster walls, oaken beams, and a gothic mullioned window looking on to the street. A massive door, with a small sliding wicket and an iron grating, opens to a prisoner's cell. The room is partly furnished as a kitchen, partly as a police station, a copy of the Police Regulations and other official documents and implements hanging on the wall. It is the morning after the events of the previous act.

Hannah, a buxom, fresh-looking young woman, in a print gown, has been engaged in cooking while singing gayly.

Hannah.

[*Opening a door and calling with a slight dialect.*] Noah darling!

Noah.

[*From another room—in a rough, country voice.*] Yaas!

Hannah.

You'll have your dinner before you drive your prisoner over to Durnstone, won't ye, darling?

Noah.

Yaas! [Pg 102]

Hannah.

[*Closing the door.*] Yaas! Noah's in a nice temper to-day over summat. Ah well, I suppose all public characters is liable to irritation. [*There is a knock at the outer*

door. Hannah opening it, sees Blore with a troubled look on his face.] Well I never! Mr. Blore from the Deanery! Come in! You might knock me down with a——!

Blore.

[Entering and shaking hands mournfully.] How do you do, Mrs. Topping?

Hannah.

And how is the dear Dean, bless him; the sweetest soul in the world?

Blore.

[To himself.] Good gracious! She doesn't know of her misfortune. *[To Hannah.]* I—I 'aven't seen him this morning!

Hannah.

Well, this is real kind of you, calling on an old friend, Edward. When I think that I were cook at the Deanery seven years, and that since I left you, to get wedded, not a soul of you has been nigh me, it do seem hard.

Blore.

Well, you see, 'Annah, the kitchen took humbrage at your marryin' a policeman at Durnstone. It was regarded as a messyliance.

Hannah.

Well, now Mr. Topping's got the appointment of Head Constable at St. Marvells, what's that regarded as?*[Pg 103]*

Blore.

A rise on the scales, 'Annah, a decided rise—but still you've honly been a week in St. Marvells and you've got to fight your way hup.

Hannah.

I think I'm as hup as ever I'm like to be.

Blore.

'Owever, Jane and Sarah and Willis the stable boy 'ave hunbent so far as to hask me to leave their cards, knowin' I was a callin'.

[He produces from an old leather pocket-book three very dirty pieces of paste-board, which he gives to Hannah.]

Hannah.

[*Taking them in her apron with pride.*] Thank 'em kindly. When's their evening?

Blore.

We receive on Toosdays, at the side gate. And 'ow are you, my dear?

[*Kissing her cheek.*

Hannah.

Don't, Edward Blore!

Blore.

Don't! When you was Miss Hevans there wasn't these social barriers, 'Annah!

Hannah.

Shut up! Noah's jealous of the very apron-strings what go round my waist. I'm not so free and 'andy with my kisses now, I can tell you.

Blore.

Then "what is friendship but a name!" But Mr. Topping isn't indoors now, surely! [Pg
104]

Hannah.

[*Nodding her head.*] Um—um!

Blore.

Why, he took a man up last night!

Hannah.

What of it?

Blore.

Why, I thought that when hany harrest was made in St. Marvells, the prisoner was lodged here honly for the night and that the 'ead Constable 'ad to drive 'im over to Durnstone Police Station the first thing in the morning.

Hannah.

That's the rule, but Noah's behindhand to-day, and ain't going into Durnstone till after dinner.

Blore.

Then the prisoner is now hon the premises!

Hannah.

Yes, he's in our cell.

Blore.

Ah! And where is the hapartment in question?

Hannah.

The cell? That's it!

Blore.

[*Looking round in horror.*] Oh!

Hannah.

The "Strong-box" they call it in St. Marvells.

Blore.

Oh, my goodness, honly fancy! [*Whimpering to*[Pg 105] *himself.*] And 'im accustomed to his shavin' water at h' eight and my kindly hand to button his gaiters. Oh, here's a warnin'!

Hannah.

Whatever is the matter with you, Edward?

Blore.

'Annah, 'Annah, my dear, it's this very prisoner what I 'ave called on you respectin'.

Hannah.

Oh, then the honor ain't a compliment to me, after all, Mr. Blore?

Blore.

I'm killing two birds with one stone, my dear.

Hannah.

[*Throwing the cards into Blore's hat.*] You can take them back to the Deanery with Mrs. Topping's comps.

Blore.

[*Shaking the cards out of his hat and replacing them in his pocket-book.*] I will leave them hon you again to-morrow, 'Annah. But, 'Annah deary, do you know that this hunfortunate man was took in our stables last night.

Hannah.

No, I never ask Noah nothing about Queen's business. He don't want *two* women over him!

Blore.

Then you 'aven't seen the miserable culprit?

Hannah.

Lor' no. I was in bed hours when Noah brought[Pg 106] 'im 'ome. I take no interest in it all. They tell us it's only a wretched poacher or a petty larcery we'll get in St. Marvells. My poor Noah ain't never likely to have the chance of a horrid murder in a place what returns a Conservative. My joint's burning.

[*Kneeling to look into the oven.*]

Blore.

But, 'Annah, suppose this case you've got 'old of now is a case what'll shake old England to its basis! Suppose it means columns in the paper with Topping's name a-figurin'! Suppose as family readin', it 'old its own with divorce cases!

Hannah.

Hullo! You know something about this arrest, you do!

Blore.

No, no, I don't! I merely said suppose. I merely wish to encourage you, 'Annah; to implant an 'ope that crime may brighten your wedded life.

Hannah.

[*Sitting at the table and referring to an official book.*] The man was found trespassing in the Deanery Stables with intent—refuses to give his name or any account of 'isself.

Blore.

[*To himself.*] If I could honly find hout whether Dandy Dick had any of the medicine it would so guide me at the Races. What am I to do? It doesn't appear that the 'orse in the stables—took it, does it?[Pg 107]

Hannah.

[*Looking up sharply.*] Took what?

Blore.

Er—took fright. You're sure there's no confession of any sort, 'Annah dear?

[*As he is bending over Hannah, Noah Topping appears. Noah is a dense-looking ugly countryman, with red hair, a bristling heard, and a vindictive leer. He is dressed in ill-fitting clothes, as a rural Police Constable.*]

Noah.

[*Fiercely.*] 'Annah!

Hannah.

[*Starting and replacing the book.*] Oh don't! This is Mr. Blore from the Deanery come to see us—an old friend o' mine!

[*Blore advances to Noah with a nervous smile, extending his hand.*]

Noah.

[*Taking Blore's hand and holding it firmly.*] A friend of hern is a friend o' mian!

Blore.

I 'ope so, Mr. Topping. I thank you.

Noah.

She's gettin' me a lot o' nice noo friends this week, since we coom to St. Marvells.

Blore.

Of course, dear 'Annah was a lovin' favorite with heverybody.[Pg 108]

Noah.

Ay. Well then, as her friends be mian, I'm takin' the liberty, one by one, of gradually droppin' on 'em all.

Blore.

[*Getting his hand away.*] Dear me!

Noah.

And if I catch any old fly a buzzin' round my lady I'll venture to break his 'ead in wi' my staff!

Hannah.

Oh, Noah!

Blore.

[*Preparing to depart.*] I—I merely called to know if hanything had been found hout about the ruffian took in our stables last night!

Noah.

Is that your business?

Blore.

It—it's my master's business.

Noah.

He's the De-an, ain't he?

Hannah.

Yes, Noah, of course.

Noah.

[*Fiercely.*] Shut oop, darlin'. Very well, then—give Mr. Topping's respects to the Dean, and say I'll run up to the Deanery and see him after I've took my man over to Durnstone.[Pg 109]

Blore.

Thank you—I 'ope the Dean will be at 'ome. Good-day, 'Annah! Good-day, Mr. Topping!

[*Offering his hand, into which Noah significantly places his truncheon. Blore goes out quickly.*]

Hannah.

[*Whimpering.*] Oh, Noah, Noah, I don't believe as we shall ever get a large circle of friends round us!

Noah.

Now then! [*Selecting a pair of handcuffs and examining them critically.*] Them'll do. [*Slipping them into his pocket, and turning upon Hannah suddenly.*] 'Annah!

Hannah.

Yes, Noahry——

Noah.

Brighten oop, my darlin', the little time you 'ave me at 'ome with you.

Hannah.

Yes, Noahry.

[*She bustles about and begins to lay the cloth.*]

Noah.

I'm just a' goin' round to the stable to put old Nick in the cart.

Hannah.

Oh, dont'ee trust to Nick, Noah dear—he's such a vicious brute. Kitty's safer in the cart.

Noah.

Shut oop, darlin'. Nick can take me on to the edge o' the hill in half the time.

Hannah.

The hill![Pg 110]

Noah.

Ah, what d'ye think I've put off taking my man to Durnstone to now for? Why, I'm a goin' to get a glimpse of the racin', on my way over. [*Opening the wicket in the cell door and looking in.*] There he is! Sulky! [*To Hannah.*] Hopen the hoven door, 'Annah, and let the smell of the cookin' get into him.

Hannah.

Oh, no, Noah—it's torture!

Noah.

Do as I tell'ee. [*She opens the oven door.*] Torture! Of course it's torture! That's my rule! Whenever I get a 'old of a darned obstinate creature wot won't reveal his hindentity I hopens the hoven door.

[*He goes out into the street, and as he departs, the woful face of The Dean appears at the wicket, his head being still enveloped in the fur cap.*]

Hannah.

[*Shutting the oven door.*] Not me! Torturing prisoners might a' done for them Middling Ages what Noah's always clattering about, but not for my time o' life. I'll shut that wicket. [*Crossing close to the wicket, her face almost comes against The Dean's. She gives a cry.*] The Dean!

The Dean.

Oh!

[*He disappears.*]

Hannah.

Oh, no! Not my old master! Never the master! [Pg 111] [*Tottering to the wicket and looking in.*] Master! Look at me! It's 'Annah, your poor faithful servant, 'Annah!

[*The face of The Dean re-appears.*]

The Dean.

[*In a deep sad voice.*] Hannah Evans.

Hannah.

It's 'Annah Topping, Knee Evans, wife o' the Constable what's goin' to take you to cruel Durnstone. [*Sinking weeping upon the ground at the door.*] Oh, Mr. Dean, sir, what have you been up to? What have you been up to? What have you been up to?

The Dean.

Woman, I am the victim of a misfortune only partially merited.

Hannah.

[*On her knees, clasping her hands.*] Tell me what you've done, Master dear; give it a name, for the love of goodness

The Dean.

My poor Hannah, I fear I have placed myself in an equivocal position.

Hannah.

[*With a shriek of despair.*] Ah!

The Dean.

Be quiet, woman!

Hannah.

Is it a change o' cooking that's brought you to such ways? I cooked for you for seven 'appy years!

The Dean.

[*Sniffing.*] Alas! you seem to have lost none of your culinary skill.[Pg 112]

Hannah.

Master, are you hungry?

The Dean.

I am sorely tried by your domestic preparations.

Hannah.

[*With clenched hands and a determined look.*] Oh! [*Quickly locking and bolting the street door.*] Noah can't put that brute of a horse to under ten minutes. The dupplikit key o' the Strong Box! [*Producing a large key, with which she unlocks the cell door.*] Master, you'll give me your patrol not to cut, won't you?

The Dean.

Under any other circumstances, Hannah, I should resent that insinuation.

Hannah.

Don't resent nothing! Shove! Shove your hardest, Dean dear!

[*Pulling the door which opens sufficiently to let out* The Dean.

The Dean.

[*As he enters the room.*] Good day, Hannah; you have bettered yourself, I hope?

Hannah.

[*Hysterically flinging herself upon* The Dean.] Oh, Master, Master!

The Dean.

[*Putting her from him sternly.*] Hannah! Mrs. Topping!

Hannah.

Oh, I know, I know, but crime levels all, dear sir! [Pg 113]

The Dean.

You appear to misapprehend the precise degree of criminality which attaches to me, Mrs. Topping. In the eyes of that majestic, but imperfect instrument, the law, I am an innocent if not an injured man.

Hannah.

Ah, stick to that, sir! Stick to it, if you think it's likely to serve your wicked ends!

[*Placing bread with other things on the table.*]

The Dean.

My good woman, a single word from me to those at the Deanery, would instantly restore me to home, family, and accustomed diet.

Hannah.

Ah, they all tell that tale what comes here. Why don't you send word, Dean dear?

The Dean.

Because it would involve revelations of my temporary moral aberration!

Hannah.

[*Putting her apron to her eyes with a howl.*] Owh!

The Dean.

Because I should return to the Deanery with my dignity—that priceless possession of man's middle age!—with my dignity seriously impaired!

Hannah.

Oh, don't, sir, don't!

The Dean.

How could I face my simple children who have hitherto, not unreasonably, regarded me as faultless? How could I again walk erect in the streets of St.[Pg 114] Marvells with my name blazoned on the Records of a Police Station of the very humblest description?

[Sinking into a chair and snatching up a piece of breads which he begins munching.]

Hannah.

[Wiping her eyes.] Oh, sir, it's a treat to hear you, compared with the hordinary criminal class. But, master, dear, though my Noah don't recognize you—through his being a stranger to St. Marvells—how'll you fare when you get to Durnstone?

The Dean.

I have one great buoyant hope—that a word in the ear of the Durnstone Superintendent will send me forth an unquestioned man. You and he will be the sole keepers of my precious secret. May its possession be a lasting comfort to you both.

Hannah.

Master, is what you've told me your only chance of getting off unknown?

The Dean.

It is the sole remaining chance of averting a calamity of almost national importance.

Hannah.

Then you're as done as that joint in my oven!

The Dean.

Woman!

Hannah.

The Superintendent at Durnstone—John Ruggles—also the two Inspectors, Whitaker and Parker——

The Dean.

Well![Pg 115]

Hannah.

Them and their wives and families are chapel folk!

The Dean.

[*Aghast.*] No!

Hannah.

Yes. [The Dean *totters across to a chair, into which he sinks with his head upon the table.*] Master! Listen!

The Dean.

It's all over! It's all over!

Hannah.

No, no—Listen! I was well fed and kept seven years at the Deanery—I've been wed to Noah Topping eight weeks—that's six years and ten months' lovin' duty doo to you and yours before I owe nothing to my darling Noah. Master dear, you shan't be took to Durnstone!

The Dean.

Silence! Hannah Topping, formerly Evans, it is my duty to inform you that your reasoning does more credit to your heart than to your head.

Hannah.

I can't help that. The Devil's always in a woman's heart because it's the warmest place to get to! [*Taking a small key from the table drawer.*] Here, take that! [*Pushing the key into the pocket of his coat.*] When you once get free from my darling Noah that key unlocks your handcuffs!

The Dean.

Handcuffs![Pg 116]

Hannah.

How are you to get free, that's the question now, isn't it? I'll tell you. My Noah drives you over to Durnstone with old Nick in the cart.

The Dean.

Old Nick!

Hannah.

That's the horse. Now Nick was formerly in the Durnstone Fire Brigade, and when he hears the familiar signal of a double whistle you can't hold him in. There's the whistle. [*Putting it into The Dean's pocket.*] Directly you turn into Pear Tree Lane, blow once

and you'll see Noah with his nose in the air, pullin' fit to wrench his 'ands off. Jump out—roll clear of the wheel—keep cool and 'opeful and blow again. Before you can get the mud out of your eyes Noah and the horse and cart will be well into Durnstone, and may Providence restore a young 'usband safe to his doatin' wife!

The Dean.

Hannah! How dare you! [*Recoiling horror-stricken.*

Hannah.

[*Crying.*] Oh—ooh—ooh!

The Dean.

Is this the fruit of your seven years' constant cookery at the Deanery?

Hannah.

Oh dear! I wouldn't have done it, only this is your first offence!

The Dean.

My first offence, oh! [Pg 117]

Hannah.

You're not too old; I want to give you another start in life!

The Dean.

Another start! Woman, do you think I've no conscience? Do you think I don't realize the enormity of the—of the difficulties in alighting from a vehicle in rapid motion?

Hannah.

[*Opening the oven and taking out a small joint in a baking tin, which she places on the table.*] It's 'unger what makes you feel conscientious!

The Dean.

[*Waving her away.*] I have done with you!

Hannah.

With me, sir—but not with the joint! You'll feel wickeder when you've had a little nourishment. [*He looks hungrily at the dish.*] That's right, Dean, dear—taste my darling Noah's favorite dish.

The Dean.

[*Advancing towards the table.*] Oh, Hannah Topping—Hannah Topping! [*Clutching the carving-knife despairingly.*] I'll have no more women cooks at the Deanery! This reads me a lesson.

[*Sitting and carving with desperation.*]

Hannah.

Don't stint yourself, sir. You can't blow that whistle on an empty frame. [The Dean *begins to eat.*] Don't my cooking carry you back, sir? Oh, say it do! [Pg 118]

The Dean.

Ah, if every mouthful would carry me back one little hour I would finish this joint!

[Noah Topping, *unperceived by Hannah and The Dean, climbs in by the window, his eyes bolting with rage—he glares round the room, taking in everything at a glance.*]

Noah.

[*Under his breath.*] My man o' mystery—a waited on by my nooly made wife—a heating o' my favorite meal.

[*Touching Hannah on the arm, she turns and faces him, speechless with fright.*]

The Dean.

[*Still eating.*] If my mind were calmer this would be an all-sufficient repast. [Hannah *tries to speak, then clasps her hands and sinks on her knees to Noah.*] Hannah, a little plain cold water in a simple tumbler, please.

Noah.

[*Grimly—folding his arms.*] 'Annah, hintrodooce me. [Hannah *gives a cry and clings to Noah's legs.*]

The Dean.

[*Calmly to Noah.*] Am I to gather, constable, from your respective attitudes that you object to these little kindnesses extended to me by your worthy wife?

Noah.

I'm wishin' to know the name o' my worthy wife's friend. A friend o' hern is a friend o' mian.

Hannah.

Noahry! Noahry![Pg 119]

Noah.

She's gettin' me a lot o' nice noo friends since we coom to St. Marvells.

Hannah.

Noahry! I made this gentleman's acquaintance through the wicket, in a casual way.

Noah.

Ay. Cooks and railins—cooks and railins! I might a guessed my wedded life 'ud a coom to this.

Hannah.

He spoke to me just as a strange gentleman ought to speak to a lady! Didn't you, sir—didn't you?

The Dean.

Hannah, do not let us even under these circumstances prevaricate; such is not quite the case!

[Noah *advances savagely* to The Dean. *There is a knocking at the door.*—Noah *restrains himself and faces* The Dean.

Noah.

Noa, this is neither the toime nor pla-ace, wi' people at the door and dinner on t' table, to spill a strange man's blood.

The Dean.

I trust that your self-respect as an officer of the law will avert anything so unseemly.

Noah.

Ay. That's it! You've touched me on my point o' pride. There ain't another police-station in all Durnstone conducted more strict and rigid nor what mian is, and it shall so continue. You and me is a goin' to set out for Durnstone, and when the charges[Pg 120]now standin' agen you is entered, it's I, Noah Topping, what'll hadd another!

[There is another knock at the door.]

Hannah.

Noah!

Noah.

The charge of allynating the affections o' my wife, 'Annah!

The Dean.

[Horried.] No, no!

Noah.

Ay, and worse—the embezzlin' o' my mid-day meal prepared by her 'ands. *[Points into the cell.]* Go in; you 'ave five minutes more in the 'ome you 'ave ruined and laid waste.

The Dean.

[Going to the door and turning to Noah.] You will at least receive my earnest assurance that this worthy woman is extremely innocent?

Noah.

Hinnocent? *[Points to the joint on the table.]* Look theer! *[The Dean, much overcome, disappears through the cell door, which Noah closes and locks. The knock at the door is repeated. To Hannah, pointing to the outer door.]* Hunlock that door!

Hannah.

[Weeping.] Oh, Noahry, you'll never be popular in St. Marvells.

Noah.

Hunlock that door!*[Pg 121]*

[Hannah unlocks the door, and admits Georgiana and Sir Tristram, both dressed for the race-course.]

Georgiana.

Dear me! Is this the Police-Station?

Hannah.

Yes, lady. Take a chair, lady, near the fire. *[To Sir Tristram.]* Sit down, sir.

Georgiana.

This is my first visit to a police-station, my good woman; I hope it will be the last.

Hannah.

Oh, don't say that, ma'am. We're honly hauxilliary 'ere, ma'am—the Bench sets at Durnstone.

Georgiana.

I must say you try to make everybody feel at home.

[Hannah *curtseys*.

Sir Tristram.

It's beautifully Arcadian.

Georgiana.

[*To Hannah.*] Perhaps this is only a police-station for the young?

Hannah.

No, ma'am, we take ladies and gentlemen like yourselves.

Noah.

[*Who has not been noticed, surveying Georgiana and Sir Tristram, gloomily.*] 'Annah,
hintrodooce me.[Pg 122]

Georgiana.

[*Facing Noah.*] Good gracious! What's that! Oh, good-morning.

Noah.

'Annah's a gettin' me a lot o' nice noo friends this week since we coom to St. Marvells.

Hannah.

Noah, Noah—the lady and gentlemen is strange.

Noah.

Ho!

Georgiana.

Are you the man in charge here?

Noah.

Ay; are you seeing me on business or pleasure?

Sir Tristram.

Do you imagine people come here to see you?

Noah.

Noa—they generally come to see my wife. 'Owever, if it's business [*pointing to the other side of the room*] that's the hofficial side—this is domestic. You'll hall kindly move over.

Sir Tristram *and* Georgiana.

Oh, certainly.

[*Changing their seats.*]

Sir Tristram.

Now, look here, my man. This lady is Mrs. Tidman. Mrs. Tidman is the sister of Dr. Jedd, the Dean of St. Marvells.

Hannah.

[*With a gasp.*] Oh![Pg 123]

Georgiana.

There's something wrong with your wife.

Noah.

Ay. She's profligate—proceedins are pendin'!

Georgiana.

[*To Sir Tristram.*] Strange police station! My flesh creeps.

Sir Tristram.

[*To Noah.*] Well, my good man, to come to the point. My poor friend and this lady's brother, Dr. Jedd, the Dean, you know—has mysteriously and unaccountably disappeared.

Georgiana.

Vanished.

Sir Tristram.

Gone.

Noah.

Absconded.

Georgiana.

Absconded! How dare you.

Noah.

Respectable man, was 'e?

Georgiana.

What do you mean?

Sir Tristram.

This lady is his sister!

Noah.

Now, look 'ere—it's no good a gettin' 'asty and irritable with the law. I'll coom over to yer, officially.[Pg 124]

[Putting the baking tin under his arm he crosses over to Sir Tristram and Georgiana.]

Sir Tristram.

[Putting his handkerchief to his face.] Don't bring that horrible odor of cooking over here.

Georgiana.

Take it away! What is it?

Noah.

It's evidence against my profligate wife.

[Sir Tristram and Georgiana exchange looks of impatience.]

Georgiana.

Do you realize that my poor brother the Dean is missing?

Noah.

Ay. Touching this missin' De-an.

Georgiana.

I left him last night to retire to rest.

Sir Tristram.

This morning he is not to be found!

Noah.

Ay. 'As it struck you to look in 'is bed?

Georgiana *and* Sir Tristram.

Of course!

Georgiana.

Everybody did that![Pg 125]

Noah.

One 'ud a done. It's only confusin'—hall doin' it! Money matters right or wrong?

[Georgiana *puts her handkerchief to her eyes.*

Sir Tristram.

Do put your questions more feelingly! This is his sister—I am his friend!

Noah.

You will push yourselves forrard. Had he anything on his mind?

Georgiana.

Yes!

Noah.

Then I've got a the'ry.

Georgiana *and* Sir Tristram.

What is it?

Noah.

A the'ry that will put you all out o' suspense!

Georgiana *and* Sir Tristram.

Yes, yes!

Noah.

I've been a good bit about, I read a deal, and I'm a shrewd experienced man. I should say this is nothin' but a hordinary case of sooicide.

[Georgiana *sits faintly*.

Sir Tristram.

[*Savagely to Noah.*] Get out of the way! Georgiana?[Pg 126]

Georgiana.

Oh, Tris, if this were true how could we break it to the girls?

Noah.

I could run oop, durin' the evenin', and break it to the girls.

Sir Tristram.

[*Turns upon Noah.*] Look here, all you've got to do is to hold your tongue and take down my description of the Dean, and report his disappearance at Durnstone. [*Pushing him into a chair.*] Go on! [*Dictating.*] "Missing. The Very Reverend Augustin Jedd, Dean of St. Marvells." Poor Gus! Poor Gus!

Hannah.

[*Softly to Georgiana.*] Lady, lady.

[*Noah prepares to write, depositing the baking-tin on the table.*

Georgiana.

[*Turning.*] Eh?

Hannah.

Hush! Listen to me!

[*Speaks to Georgiana excitedly.*

Sir Tristram.

[*To Noah.*] Have you got that?

Noah.

[*Writing laboriously with his legs curled round the chair and his head on the table.*] Ay.
I'm spelling it my own way.[Pg 127]

Sir Tristram.

Poor dear old Gus! [*Dictating.*] "Description!"

Noah.

Oh noa!

Sir Tristram.

"Description!"

Noah.

I suppose he was jest the hordinary sort o' lookin' man.

Sir Tristram.

No, no! "Description!"

Georgiana.

[*Turning from Hannah, excitedly.*] Description—a little, short, thin man, with black hair
and a squint!

Sir Tristram.

[*To Georgiana.*] No, no, he isn't.

Georgiana.

Yes, he is!

Sir Tristram.

Georgiana! What are you talking about?

Georgiana.

I'm Gus's sister—I ought to know what he's like!

Sir Tristram.

Good heavens, Georgiana—your mind is not going?

Georgiana.

[Clutching Sir Tristram's arm and whispering in his ear, as she points to the cell door.]
He's in there! [Pg 128]

Sir Tristram.

Eh!

Georgiana.

Gus is the villain found dosing Dandy Dick last night!

Sir Tristram.

[Falling back.] Oh! [Hannah seizes Sir Tristram and talks to him rapidly.] [To Noah.]
What have you written?

Noah.

I've written "Hanswers to the name o' Gus!"

Georgiana.

[Snatching the paper from him.] It's not wanted. I've altered my mind. I'm too busy to bother about him this week.

Noah.

What! Hafter wasting my time?

Georgiana.

Look here—you're the constable who took the man in the Deanery Stables last night?

Noah.

Ay. [Looking out of the window.] There's my cart outside ready to take the scoundrel over to Durnstone.

Georgiana.

I should like to see him.

Noah.

You can view him passin' out.

[He tucks the baking-tin under his arm and goes up to the cell door.]

Georgiana.

[*To herself.*] Oh, Gus, Gus! [Pg 129]

Noah.

[*Unlocking the door.*] I warn yer. 'E's a awful looking creature.

Georgiana.

I can stand it; I love horrors!

[*Noah goes into the cell, closing the door after him.*

Tris!

Sir Tristram.

Georgiana!

Georgiana.

What was my brother's motive in bolusing Dandy last night?

Sir Tristram.

I can't think. The first thing to do is to get him out of this hole. This good woman has arranged for his escape.

Georgiana.

But we can't trust to Gus rolling out of a flying dogcart! Why, it's as much as I could do!

Hannah.

Oh, yes, lady, he'll do it. I've prewided for everything. Don't betray him to Noah! There's another—a awfuller charge hangin' over his reverend 'ead.

Sir Tristram.

Another charge! [Pg 130]

Georgiana.

Another! Oh Tris! To think my own stock should run vicious like this.

Hannah.

Hush, lady!

[*Noah comes out of the cell with The Dean, who is in handcuffs.*

Georgiana *and* Sir Tristram.

Oh!

The Dean.

[*Raising his eyes, sees Sir Tristram and Georgiana, and recoils with a groan, sinking on to a chair.*] Oh!

Noah.

Oop you get!

Sir Tristram.

No, no, stay! I am the owner of the horse stabled at the Deanery. I make no charge against this wretched person. [*To The Dean.*] Oh man, man!

The Dean.

I was discovered administering to a suffering beast a simple remedy for chills. I am an unfortunate creature. Do with me what you will.

Georgiana.

The analysis hasn't come home from the chemist's yet. Is this the truth?

The Dean.

Yes.[Pg 131]

Sir Tristram.

[*To Noah.*] Release this man.

Noah.

Release him! He was found trespassin' in the stables of the la-ate De-an, who has committed sooicide.

The Dean.

Oh! I——

Sir Tristram, Georgiana *and* Hannah.

Hush!

Noah.

The Diseased De-an is the honly man wot can withdraw one charge——

The Dean.

I—listen!

Sir Tristram, Georgiana *and* Hannah.

Hush!

Noah.

And I'm the honly man wot can withdraw the other.

Sir Tristram.

You? Get out!

Georgiana.

Get out!

Noah.

I charge this person unknown with allynating the affections o' my wife while I was puttin' my 'orse to. And I'm goin' to drive him over to Durnstone with the hevidence.[Pg
132]

Hannah.

Oh lady, lady, it's appearances what is against us.

Noah.

[*Through the opening of the door.*] Woa! Steady there! Get back!

Georgiana.

[*Whispering to The Dean.*] I am disappointed in you, Angustin. Have you got this wretched woman's whistle?

The Dean.

Yes.

Sir Tristram.

[*Softly to The Dean.*] Oh Jedd, Jedd—and these are what you call Principles! Have you got the key of your handcuffs?

The Dean.

Yes.

Noah.

[*Appearing in the doorway.*] Time's oop. Coom on!

The Dean.

May I say a few parting words in the home I have apparently wrecked?

Noah.

Say' em and 'a done.[Pg 133]

The Dean.

In setting out upon a journey, the termination of which is problematical, I desire to attest that this erring constable is the husband of a wife from whom it is impossible to withhold respect, if not admiration.

Noah.

You 'ear' im!

The Dean.

As for my wretched self, the confession of my weaknesses must be reserved for another time—another place. [*To Georgiana.*] To you, whose privilege it is to shelter in the sanctity of the Deanery, I give this earnest admonition. Within an hour from this terrible moment, let the fire be lighted in the drawing-room—let the missing man's warm bath be waiting for its master—a change of linen prepared. Withhold your judgments. Wait.

Noah.

This is none of your business. Coom on.

The Dean.

I am ready!

[*Noah takes him by the arm and leads him out.*]

Georgiana.

Oh, what am I to think of my brother?

Hannah.

[*Kneeling at Georgiana's feet.*] Think! That he's the beautifullest, sweetest man in all Durnshire!

Georgiana.

Woman! [Pg 134]

Hannah.

It's I and my whistle and Nick the fire-brigade horse what'll bring him back to the Deanery safe and unharmed. Not a soul but we three'll ever know of his misfortune. [*Listening.*] Hark! They're off!

Noah.

[*Outside.*] Get up, now! Get-oop, old girl!

Hannah.

[*With a cry.*] Ah! [*Rushing to the door and looking out.*] He's done for!

Georgiana and Sir Tristram.

Done for!

Hannah.

The Dean can whistle himself blue! Noah's put Kitty in the cart, and left Old Nick at home!

THE END OF THE FIRST SCENE.

The second scene is the Morning Room at the Deanery again.

Salome and Sheba are sitting there gloomily.

Salome.

Poor Papa!

Sheba.

Poor dear Papa!

Salome.

He must return very soon—he must! [Pg 135]

Sheba.

He must! In the meantime it is such a comfort to feel that we have no cause for self-reproach.

Salome.

But the anxiety is terribly wearing.

Sheba.

Nothing is so weakening, Salome.

Salome.

Sheba, dear.

Sheba.

[*Clinging to Salome.*] If I should pine and ultimately die of this suspense I want you to have my workbox.

Salome.

[*Shaking her head and sadly turning away.*] Thank you, dear, but if Papa is not home for afternoon tea you will outlive me.

[*Turning towards the window as Major Tarver and Mr. Darbey appear outside.*]

Darbey.

[*Outside.*] Miss Jedd! Miss Jedd!

Salome.

Sheba! Here are Gerald Tarver and Mr. Darbey!

Sheba.

Oh, the presumption! Open the window and dare them to enter! [Pg 136]

[*Salome unfastens the window.*]

Darbey.

[*Outside.*] Thank you. Don't be shocked when you see Tarver.

Tarver and Darbey enter, dressed for the Races, but Darbey is supporting Tarver, who looks extremely weakly.

Tarver.

Pardon this informal method of presenting ourselves.

Salome.

You do well, gentlemen, to intrude upon two feeble women at a moment of sorrow.

Sheba.

One step further, and I shall ask Major Tarver, who is nearest the bell, to ring for help.

[Tarver *sinks into a chair*.

Darbey.

[*Standing by the side of Tarver.*] There now. The fact is. Miss Jedd, that Tarver is in an exceedingly critical condition. Feeling that he has incurred your displeasure he has failed even in the struggle to gain the race-course. I have taken him to Dr. Middleton and I explained that Major Tarver loved with a passion [*looking at Sheba*] second only to my own.

Salome.

[*Sitting comfortably on the settee.*] Oh, we cannot listen to you, Mr. Darbey.

Sheba.

Go on, sir, if you can.[Pg 137]

[*The two girls exchange looks.*

Darbey.

The Doctor made a searching examination of the Major's tongue and diagnosed that, unless the Major at once proposed to the lady in question and was accepted, three weeks or a month at the seaside would be absolutely imperative. Shall I continue?

Salome.

Oh, certainly. I am helpless.

Sheba.

We are curious to see to what lengths you will go.

Darbey.

The pitiable condition of my poor friend speaks for itself.

Salome.

I beg your pardon—it does nothing of the kind.

Tarver.

[*Rising with difficulty and approaching Salome.*] Salome—I have loved you distractedly for upwards of eight weeks.

Salome.

[*Going to him.*] Oh, Major Tarver, let me pass; [*holding his coat firmly*] let me pass, I say.

Tarver.

Unless you push me, never!

Sheba.

Spare me this scene, Mr. Darbey.[Pg 138]

[*Darbey follows Sheba across the room.*]

Tarver.

To a man in my condition love is either a rapid and fatal malady, or it is an admirable digestive. Accept me, and my merry laugh once more rings through the Mess Room. Reject me, and my collection of vocal music, loose and in volumes, will be brought to the hammer, and the bird, as it were, will trill no more.

Salome.

And is it really I who would hush the little throaty songster?

Tarver.

Certainly. [*Taking a sheet of paper from his pocket.*] I have the Doctor's certificate to that effect.

[*Both reading the certificate they walk into Library.*]

Sheba.

Oh, Mr. Darbey, I have never thought of marriage seriously.

Darbey.

People never do till they *are* married.

Sheba.

But think, only think of my age.

Darbey.

Pardon me, Sheba—but what is your age?

Sheba.

Oh, it is so very little—it is not worth mentioning. Cannot we remain friends and occasionally correspond?[Pg 139]

Darbey.

Well, of course—if you insist——

Sheba.

No, no, I see that is impracticable. It must be wed or part. All I ask is time—time to ponder over such a question, time to know myself better.

Darbey.

Certainly, how long?

Sheba.

Give me two or three minutes. Hush!

[They separate as Tarver and Salome re-enter the room. Tarver is glaring excitedly and biting his nails.]

Tarver.

I never thought I should live to be accepted by anyone. I shall buy some gay songs. Er—when can I see the Dean?

Salome.

Oh, don't!

Tarver.

Salome!

Salome.

Papa has been out all night.

Darbey *and* Tarver.

All night?

Salome.

Isn't it terrible! Oh, what do you think of it, Mr. Darbey?[Pg 140]

Darbey.

Shocking, but we oughtn't to condemn him unheard.

Salome.

Condemn my Papa!

Sheba.

[*At the window.*] Here's Aunt Georgiana!

Darbey.

Eh! Look out, Tarver.

[*Going out quickly.*

Salome.

[*Pulling Tarver after her.*] Come this way and let us take cuttings in the conservatory.

[*They go out.*

Sheba.

Mr. Darbey! Mr. Darbey, wait for me—I have decided. *Yes.*

[*She goes out by the door as Georgiana enters excitedly at the window.*

Georgiana.

[*Waving her handkerchief.*] Come on, Tris! The course is clear! Mind the gate-post! Hold him up! Now give him his head!

Sir Tristram and Hatcham enter by the window carrying The Dean. *They all look as though they have been recently engaged in a prolonged struggle.*

Sir Tristram.

Put him down!

Georgiana.

Put him down![Pg 141]

Hatcham.

That I will, ma'am, and gladly.

[They deposit The Dean in a chair and Georgiana and Sir Tristram each seize a hand, feeling The Dean's pulse, while Hatcham puts his hand on The Dean's heart.]

The Dean.

[Opening his eyes.] Where am I now?

Georgiana.

He lives! Hurrah! Cheer man, cheer!

Sir Tristram *and* Hatcham.

[Quietly.] Hurrah! *[To Hatcham.]* We can't shout here; go and cheer as loudly as you can in the roadway by yourself.

Hatcham.

Yes, Sir.

[Hatcham runs out at the window.]

The Dean.

[Gradually recovering.] Georgiana—Mardon.

Sir Tristram.

How are you, Jedd, old boy?

Georgiana.

How do you feel now, Gus?

The Dean.

Torn to fragments.

Sir Tristram.

So you are. Thank heaven, he's conscious.[Pg 142]

The Dean.

I feel as if I had been walked over carefully by a large concourse of the lower orders!

Georgiana.

So you have been. Thank heaven, his memory is all right.

[Hatcham's *voice is heard in the distance cheering. They all listen.*

Sir Tristram.

That's Hatcham; I'll raise his wages.

The Dean.

Do I understand that I have been forcibly and illegally rescued?

Sir Tristram.

That's it, old fellow.

The Dean.

Who has committed such a reprehensible act?

Sir Tristram.

A woman who would have been a heroine in any age—Georgiana!

The Dean.

Georgiana, I am bound to overlook it, in a relative, but never let this occur again.

Sir Tristram.

Tell him.

Georgiana.

You found out that that other woman's plan went lame, didn't you?[Pg 143]

The Dean.

I discovered its inefficacy, after a prolonged period of ineffectual whistling.

Georgiana.

But we ascertained the road the genial constable was going to follow. He was bound for the edge of the hill, up Pear Tree Lane, to watch the Races. Directly we knew this, Tris and I made for the Hill. Bless your soul, there were hundreds of my old friends there—welshers, pick-pockets, card-sharpers, all the lowest race-course cads in the kingdom. In a minute I was in the middle of 'em, as much at home as a Duchess in a Drawing-room.

Sir Tristram.

A Queen in a Palace!

Georgiana.

Boadicea among the Druids! “Do you know me?” I holloaed out. Instantly there was a cry of “Blessed if it ain’t George Tidd!” Tears of real joy sprang to my eyes—while I was wiping them away Tris had his pockets emptied and I lost my watch.

Sir Tristram.

Ah, Jedd, it was a glorious moment!

Georgiana.

Tris made a back, and I stood on it, supported by a correct-card merchant on either side. “Dear friends,” I said; “Brothers! I’m with you once again.” You should have heard the shouts of honest welcome. Before I could obtain silence my field glasses had gone on their long journey. “Listen to[Pg 144] me,” I said. “A very dear relative of mine has been collared for playing the three-card trick on his way down from town.” There was a groan of sympathy. “He’ll be on the brow of the Hill with a bobby in half-an-hour,” said I, “who’s for the rescue?” A dead deep silence followed, broken only by the sweet voice of a young child, saying, “What’ll we get for it?” “A pound a-piece,” said I. There was a roar of assent, and my concluding words, “and possibly six months,” were never heard. At that moment Tris’ back could stand it no longer, and we came heavily to the ground together. [*Seizing The Dean by the hand and dragging him up.*] Now you know whose hands have led you back to your own manger. [*Embracing him.*] And oh, brother, confess—isn’t there something good and noble in true English sport after all?

The Dean.

Every abused institution has its redeeming characteristic. But whence is the money to come to reward these dreadful persons? I cannot reasonably ask my girls to organize a bazaar or concert.

Georgiana.

Concert! I’m a rich woman.

The Dean.

Rich!

Georgiana.

Well, I’ve cleared fifteen hundred over the Handicap.

The Dean.

[*Recoiling.*] No! Then the horse who enjoyed the shelter of the Deanery last night——

[Pg 145]

Sir Tristram.

Dandy Dick!

The Dean.

Won!

Georgiana.

In a common canter! All the rest nowhere, and Bonny Betsy walked in with the policeman.

The Dean.

[*To himself.*] Five hundred pounds towards the Spire! Five hundred! Oh, where is Blore with the good news!

Sir Tristram.

Look at him! Lively as a cricket!

The Dean.

Sir Tristram, I am under the impression that your horse swallowed reluctantly a small portion of that bolus last night before I was surprised and removed.

Sir Tristram.

By the bye, I am expecting the analysis of that concoction every minute.

The Dean.

Spare yourself the trouble—the secret is with me. I seek no acknowledgment from either of you, but in your moment of deplorable triumph remember with gratitude the little volume of “The Horse and its Ailments” and the prosaic name of its humane author—John Cox.

[*He goes out through the Library.*]

Georgiana.

But oh, Tris Mardon, what can I ever say to you?[Pg 146]

Sir Tristram.

Anything you like except “Thank you!”

Georgiana.

Don’t stop me? Why, you were the man who hauled Augustin out of the cart by his legs!

Sir Tristram.

Oh, but why mention such trifles?

Georgiana.

They’re not trifles. And when his cap fell off, it was you—brave fellow that you are—who pulled the horse’s nose-bag over my brother’s head so that he shouldn’t be recognized.

Sir Tristram.

My dear Georgiana, these are the common courtesies of every-day life.

Georgiana.

They are acts which any true woman would esteem. Gus won’t readily forget the critical moment when all the cut chaff ran down the back of his neck—nor shall I.

Sir Tristram.

Nor shall I forget the way in which you gave Dandy his whisky out of a soda water bottle just before the race.

Georgiana.

That’s nothing—any lady would do the same.

Sir Tristram.

Nothing! You looked like the Florence Nightingale of the paddock! Oh, Georgiana, why, why, why won’t you marry me?[Pg 147]

Georgiana.

Why!

Sir Tristram.

Why?

Georgiana.

Why! Because you’ve only just asked me, Tris!

[Goes to him cordially.]

Sir Tristram.

But when I touched your hand last night, you reared!

Georgiana.

Yes, Tris, old man, but love is founded on mutual esteem; last night you hadn't put my brother's head in that nose-bag.

[They go together to the fireplace, he with his arm round her waist.]

Sheba.

[Looking in at the door.] How annoying! There's Aunt and Sir Tristram in this room—Salome and Major Tarver are sitting on the hot pipes in the conservatory—where am I and Mr. Darbey to go? Papa! Come back!

[She withdraws quickly as The Dean enters through the Library carrying a paper in his hand; he has now resumed his normal appearance.]

The Dean.

Home! What sonorous music is in the word! Home, with the secret of my sad misfortune buried in the bosoms of a faithful few. Home, with my family influence intact! Home, with the sceptre of [Pg 148] my dignity still tight in my grasp! What is this I have picked up on the stairs?

[Reads with a horrified look, as Hatcham enters at the window.]

Hatcham.

Beg pardon, Sir Tristram.

Sir Tristram.

What is it?

Hatcham.

The chemist has just brought the annalasis.

Sir Tristram.

Where is he?

[Sir Tristram *and* Georgiana *go out at the window,*
following Hatcham.

The Dean.

It is too horrible! [*Reading.*] “Debtor to Lewis Isaacs, Costumier to the Queen, Bow Street—Total, Forty pounds, nineteen!” There was a fancy masked ball at Durnstone last night! Salome—Sheba—no, no!

Salome *and* Sheba.

[*Bounding in and rushing at* The Dean.] Papa, Papa!

Salome.

Our own Papa!

Sheba.

Papsey!

[*Salome seizes his hands, Sheba his coat-tails, and turn him*
round violently.

Salome.

Our parent returned! [Pg 149]

Sheba.

Papsey—come back!

The Dean.

Stop!

Salome.

Papa, why have you tortured us with anxiety?

Sheba.

Where have you been, you naughty man?

The Dean.

Before I answer a question, which, from a child to its parent, partakes of the unpardonable vice of curiosity, I demand an explanation of this disreputable document. [*Reading.*] “Debtor to Lewis Isaacs, Costumier to the Queen.”

Salome *and* Sheba.

Oh!

[Sheba *sits aghast on the table*—Salome *distractedly falls on the floor.*

The Dean.

I will not follow this legend in all its revolting intricacies. Suffice it, its moral is inculcated by the mournful total. Forty pounds, nineteen! Imps of deceit! [*Looking from one to the other.*] There was a ball at Durnstone last night. I know it.

Sheba.

Spare us!

Salome.

You couldn't have been there, Papa! [Pg 150]

The Dean.

There! I trust I was better—that is, otherwise employed. [*Referring to the bill.*] Which of my hitherto trusted daughters was a lady—no, I will say a person—of the period of the French Revolution?

[Sheba *points to* Salome.

The Dean.

And a flower-girl of an unknown epoch. [Salome *points to* Sheba.] To your respective rooms! [*The girls cling together.*] Let your blinds be drawn. At seven porridge will be brought to you.

Salome.

Papa!

The Dean.

Go!

Sheba.

Papsey!

The Dean.

Go!

Salome.

Papa, we, poor girls as we are, can pay the bill.

The Dean.

You cannot—go!

Sheba.

Through the kindness of our Aunt——

Salome.

We have won fifty pounds.

The Dean.

What!

Sheba.

At the Races! [Pg 150]

The Dean.

[*Recoiling.*] You too! You too drawn into the vortex! Is there no conscience that is clear—is there no guilelessness left in this house, with the possible exception of my own!

Sheba.

[*Sobbing.*] We always knew a little more than you gave us credit for, Papa.

The Dean.

[*Handing Sheba the bill.*] Take this horrid thing—never let it meet my eyes again. As for the scandalous costumes, they shall be raffled for in aid of local charities. Confidence, that precious pearl in the snug shell of domesticity, is at an end between us. I chastise you both by permanently withholding from you the reason of my absence from home last night. Go!

[*The girls totter out as Sir Tristram enters quickly at the window, followed by Georgiana, carrying the basin containing the bolus. Sir Tristram has an opened letter in his hand.*]

Sir Tristram.

Good heavens, Jedd! the analysis has arrived!

The Dean.

I am absolutely indifferent!

Georgiana *and* Sir Tristram.

Indifferent!

The Dean.

[*To* Georgiana.] How dare you confront me without even the semblance of a blush—you who have[Pg 152] enabled my innocent babies, for the first time in their lives, to discharge one of their own accounts.

Georgiana.

There isn't a blush in our family—if there were, you'd want it.

[*Sheba and Salome appear outside the window, looking in.*]

Sir Tristram.

Jedd, you were once my friend, and you are to be my relative.

The Dean.

[*Looking at* Georgiana.] My sister! [*To* Sir Tristram.] I offer no opposition.

Sir Tristram.

But not even our approaching family tie prevents my designating you as one of the most atrocious conspirators known in the history of the Turf.

The Dean.

Conspirator!

Sir Tristram.

As the owner of one-half of Dandy Dick, I denounce you!

Georgiana.

As the owner of the other half, *I* denounce you!

The Dean.

You!

Sheba and Salome enter, and remain standing in the recess, listening.

Sir Tristram.

The chief ingredient of your infernal preparation is known.[Pg 153]

The Dean.

It contains nothing that I would not cheerfully administer to my own children.

Georgiana.

[*In horror.*] Oh!

Sir Tristram.

I believe you. [*Pointing to the paper.*] Strychnine! Sixteen grains!

Salome and Sheba.

[*Clinging to each other terrified.*] Oh!

The Dean.

Strychnine! Summon my devoted servant Blore, in whose presence the innocuous mixture was compounded. [*Georgiana rings the bell. The girls hide behind the window curtains.*] This analysis is simply the pardonable result of over-enthusiasm on the part of our local chemist.

Georgiana.

You're a disgrace to the pretty little police station where you slept last night!

[*Blore enters and stands unnoticed.*]

The Dean.

I will prove that in the Deanery Stables the common laws of hospitality have never been transgressed. Give me the bowl! [*Georgiana hands The Dean the basin from the table.*] A simple remedy for a chill.[Pg 154]

Georgiana and Sir Tristram.

Strychnine—sixteen grains!

The Dean.

I, myself, am suffering from the exposure of last night. [*Taking the remaining bolus and opening his mouth.*] Observe me!

Blore.

[Rushing forward, snatching the basin from The Dean and sinking on to his knees.] No, no! Don't, don't! You wouldn't 'ang the holdest servant in the Deanery.

The Dean.

Blore!

Blore.

I did it! I 'ad a honest fancy for Bonny Betsy, and I wanted this gentleman's 'orse out of the way. And while you was mixing the dose with the best ecclesiastical intentions, I hintroduced a foreign element.

The Dean.

[Pulling Blore up by his coat collar.] Viper!

Blore.

Oh sir, it was hall for the sake of the Dean.

Sir Tristram.

The Dean?

Blore.

The dear Dean had only Fifty Pounds to spare for sporting purposes, and I thought a gentleman of 'is 'igh standing ought to have a certainty.[Pg 155]

Sir Tristram.

Jedd!

Georgiana.

Augustin!

The Dean.

I can conceal it no longer—I—I instructed this unworthy creature to back Dandy Dick on behalf of the Restoration Fund.

Sir Tristram.

[Shaking Blore.] And didn't you do it?

Blore.

No.

The Dean.

Why not? In the name of that tottering Spire, why not?

Blore.

Oh, sir, thinking as you'd given some of the mixture to Dandy I put your cheerful little offering on to Bonny Betsy.

[*Salome and Sheba disappear.*]

The Dean.

Oh! [*To Blore.*] I could have pardoned everything but this last act of disobedience. You are unworthy of the Deanery. Leave it for some ordinary household.

Blore.

If I leave the Deanery, I shall give my reasons, and then what'll folks think of you and me in our old age?

The Dean.

You wouldn't spread this tale in St. Marvells?[Pg 156]

Blore.

Not if sober, sir—but suppose grief drove me to my cups?

The Dean.

I must save you from intemperance at any cost. Remain in my service—a sad, sober and, above all, a silent man!

[*Salome and Sheba appear as Blore goes out through the window.*]

Salome.

Papa!

The Dean.

To your rooms! I am distracted!

Salome.

Major Tarver and Mr. Darbey!—

The Dean.

If you have sufficiently merged all sense of moral rectitude as to declare that I am not at home, do so.

Sheba.

No, no. Papa; we have accidentally discovered that you, our parent, have stooped to deception, if not to crime.

The Dean.

[*Staggering back.*] Oh!

Sheba.

We are still young—the sooner, therefore, we are removed from any unfortunate influence the better.[Pg 157]

Salome.

We have an opportunity of beginning life afresh.

Sheba.

These two gallant gentlemen have proposed for us.

The Dean.

Then I *am* at home. Where are they?

[*He goes out rapidly, followed by Salome and Sheba. Directly they have disappeared, Noah Topping, looking dishevelled, rushes in at the window, with Hannah clinging to him.*]

Noah.

[*Glaring round the room.*] Is this 'ere the Deanery?

[*Georgiana and Sir Tristram come to him.*]

Hannah.

Noahry, Noah, come back!

Noah.

Theer's been a man rescued from my lawful custody while my face was unofficially held downwards in the mud. The villain has been traced back to the Deanery.

Sir Tristram.

Go away!

Hannah.

Come away!

Noah.

The man was a unknown lover of my nooly made wife! [Pg 158]

Georgiana.

You mustn't bring your domestic affairs here; this is a subject for your own fireside of an evening.

[The Dean *appears outside the window with* Salome, Sheba, Tarver *and* Darbey.]

The Dean.

[*Outside.*] Come in, Major Tarver—come in, Mr. Darbey!

Noah.

That's his voice!

The Dean *enters, followed by* Salome, Tarver, Sheba *and* Darbey.

Noah.

[*Confronting* The Dean.] My man.

Hannah.

No, no, Noahry!

Georgiana.

You're speaking to Dr. Jedd, the Dean of St. Marvells.

Noah.

I'm speaking to the man I took last night—the culprit as 'as allynated the affections of my wife.

Sir Tristram.

Wait—one moment! [*Going out at the window.*] [Pg 159]

[Salome and Tarver go into the Library and sit at the writing-table. Darbey sits in an arm-chair with Sheba on the arm.

The Dean.

[*Mildly.*] Do not let us chide a man who is conscientious even in error. [*Looking at Hannah.*] I think I see Hannah Evans, once an excellent cook under this very roof.

Hannah.

I'm Mrs. Topping now, sir—bride o' the constable. And oh, do forgive him—he's a mass o' ignorance.

Noah.

Coom away!

[Hannah returns to Noah, as Sir Tristram re-enters with Hatcham.

Sir Tristram.

[*To Hatcham.*] Hatcham—[*pointing to The Dean*—Is that the man you and the Constable secured in the stable last night?

Hatcham.

That, sir! Bless your 'art, sir, that's the Dean 'imself.

Sir Tristram.

That'll do.

Hatcham.

[*To Noah.*] Why, our man was a short, thin individual!

[Hatcham goes out at the window.

The Dean.

[*To Noah.*] I trust you are perfectly satisfied.

Noah.

[*Wiping his brow and looking puzzled.*] I'm doon.[Pg 160]

The Dean.

Don't trouble further. I withdraw unreservedly any charge against this unknown person found on my premises last night. I attribute to him the most innocent intentions. Hannah, you and your worthy husband will stay and dine in my kitchen. Good afternoon.

Noah.

Is it a 'ot dinner?

The Dean.

Hot—with ale.

Noah.

[*Turning angrily to Hannah.*] Now then, you don't know a real gentleman when you see one. Why don't 'ee thank the Dean warmly?

Hannah.

[*Kissing The Dean's hands with a curtsey.*] Thank you, sir.

The Dean.

[*Benignly.*] Go—go. I take a kindly interest in you both.

[*They back out, bowing and curtseying.*]

Georgiana.

Well, Gus, you're out of all your troubles. Are you happy?

The Dean.

Happy! My family influence gone forever—my dignity crushed out of all recognition—the genial summer of the Deanery frosted by the winter of Deceit.[Pg 161]

Georgiana.

Ah, Gus, when once you lay the whip about the withers of the horse called Deception he takes the bit between his teeth, and only the devil can stop him—and he'd rather not. Shall I tell you who has been riding the horse hardest?

The Dean.

Who?

Georgiana.

The Dean.

The Dean.

Georgiana! I'm surprised at you.

[*Sheba sits at the piano and plays a bright air softly—
Darbey standing behind her—Salome and Tarver stand in the
archway.*

Georgiana.

[*Slapping The Dean on the back.*] Look here, Augustin, George Tidd will lend you that
thousand for the poor, innocent old Spire.

The Dean.

[*Taking her hand.*] Oh, Georgiana!

Georgiana.

On one condition—that you'll admit there's no harm in our laughing at a Sporting Dean.

The Dean.

No, no—I cannot allow it!

Georgiana.

Tris! My brother Gus doesn't want us to be merry at his expense.[Pg 162]

[*They both laugh.*

The Dean.

[*Trying to silence them.*] No, no! I forbid it! Hush!

Sir Tristram.

Why, Jedd, there's no harm in laughter, for those who laugh or those who are laughed at.

Georgiana.

Provided always—firstly, that it is Folly that is laughed at and not Virtue; secondly, that
it is our friends who laugh at us, [*to the audience*] as we hope they all will, for our pains.

THE END

Transcriber's Note

This transcription is based on the scan images posted by The Internet Archive at:

archive.org/details/dandydickplayint00pinerich

In addition, when there was a question about the printed text, another edition posted by The Internet Archive was consulted:

archive.org/details/dandydickplayint00pineiala

The following changes were made to the text:

- Throughout the text, dashes at the end of lines have been normalized.
- Throughout the text, “and” in the character titles preceding dialogue has been italicized consistently and names in stage directions have been consistently either capitalized (in the text version) or set in small caps (in the html version).
- In the Introductory Note, “St. Marvells” has an apostrophe, whereas in the text of the play it almost always does not. The inconsistency has been allowed to stand in the Introductory Note, but the apostrophe has been removed in the few instances in the text.
 - Pg. 25: “The Dean *gives* Darbey a severe look...”—A bracket has been added to the beginning of this line.
 - Pg. 91: “Sir Tristram, *then enters quietly, smoking...*”—The comma after “Sir Tristram” has been deleted.
- Pg. 97: “No, Aunt, No!”—The second “No” has been changed to lower case.
- Pg. 139: “Oh, what do you think of it. Mr. Darbey?”—The period after “it” has been changed to a comma.
- Pg. 141: “We can’t shout here, go and cheer...”—The comma has been changed to a semicolon.
- Pg. 142: “That’s Hatcham, I’ll raise his wages.”—The comma has been changed to a semicolon.
- Pg. 143: “’aint” has been changed to “ain’t”.
- Pg. 147: “...mutual esteem, last night...”—The comma has been changed to a semicolon.
- Pg. 154: “I did it?” has been changed to “I did it!”

The html version of this etext attempts to reproduce the layout of the printed text. However, some concessions have been made, particularly in the handling of stage directions enclosed by brackets on at least one side. (Entrances were usually without brackets.) In general, the stage directions were typeset in the printed text as follows:

- Before and within dialogue.
- Flush right, on the same line as the end of dialogue if there was enough space; on the next line, if there was not.
- If the stage directions were two lines, they were indented from the left margin as hanging paragraphs. How much the stage directions were indented varied.

In the text, all stage directions not before or within dialogue are placed on the next line, indented the same amount from the left margin, and coded as hanging paragraphs.

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