

BOXANDCOX MARRIED AND SETTLED!

An original farce.

IN ONE ACT.

BY

J. STIRLING COYNE,

AUTHOR OF

*"Wanted a Thousand Young Milliners," "Binks the Bagman,"
"How to settle Accounts with your Laundress," "Did you ever
Send Your Wife to Camberwell?" "Duel in the Dark,"
"My Wife's Daughter," &c..*

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
WELLINGTON STREET, STRAND,
LONDON.

*First performed at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket,
on Thursday, October 15, 1852.*

Characters.

MR. BOX (*a retired Printer*) MR. BUCKSTONE.
MR. COX (*a retired Hatter*) MR. KEELEY.
AN ANONYMOUS GENT (*in the
Street*).....MR. COE.
MRS. BOX (*late Sophy Dawes*)... MRS. CAULFIELD.
MRS. COX (*late Fanny Hawes*)... MRS. BUCKINGHAM.
MRS. BOUNCER (*always the same*) MRS. SELBY.

Costumes.

BOX.—Dressing gown, and night cap. *Second dress*.—Plaid
trousers, light waistcoat, dark frock coat.

COX. - Dark trousers, light waistcoat, drab paletot, drab felt hat.
After the fight change to another suit similar to the above, very
much torn and soiled.

Mrs. BOX.—Pink spotted muslin dress.

MRS. COX.—Light muslin dress, with many flounces.

MRS. BOUNCER.—Coloured cotton gown, apron, and cap.

Time in Representation—40 minutes.

BOX AND COX MARRIED AND SETTLED!

SCENE—A well-furnished Sitting Room in Mrs. BOUNCER'S House; door, 2 E.L., to Box's chamber; general entrance door, 3 E.L.; door, 2 E.L., to Cox's chamber; fireplace and chimney glass, 3 E.L.; two practicable windows, looking on street, R. and L. C. flat; a table with cloth, cups and saucers, & c, laid for breakfast; a side table between the doors on L.. Cox is heard in R. chamber, calling loudly, " Mrs. Bouncer! Mrs. Bouncer !"

Enter Cox, 3 E. L.—he is without his coat, and is partly shaved; he has a looking-glass in one hand, and razor in the other.

COX. No bell in the room, and nobody to answer my energetic vociferations! (*calls*) Mrs. Bouncer!—(*sees a bell on table*) Hah ! here's a bell, (*rings, and calls loudly*) Mrs. Bouncer ! (*till MRS. BOUNCER enters, 3 E. L.*)

MRS. BOUN. Bless me, Mr. Cox, what *is* the matter ?

COX. Matter, Mrs. Bouncer! Look here, ma'am, and tell me how you expect me to perform the delicate operation of shaving in a glass, whose reflective powers are distorted to such a degree, that I can't be certain whether I'm scraping my chin or cutting off my nose.

MRS. BOUN. Dear me! I'm really very sorry—I'll see if I can find you a better one, sir.

Takes glass and exit hastily, 3 E. L.

COX. Do so, Mrs. Bouncer—(*retiring towards room, R.*)—by the bye, Mrs. B.—(*perceives that she is gone—rings the bell violently, and calls*) Mrs. Bouncer, Mrs. Bouncer!

MRS. BOUN. (*re-entering*) What is it, sir?

COX. I merely wished to ask you if the cabman has brought back my umbrella that I forgot in his cab last night—a brown gingham umbrella—with brass spike, and two broken ribs ?

MRS. BOUN. No, sir, I have heard nothing about it.

Exit, L. 3 E.

COX. Well, that is rather extraordinary. Ah! By-the-bye, here's a glass here that I can finish my shaving by. (*goes to chimney glass, and is shaving when Box enters at door, 2 E. L.—he appears as if risen hastily from bed, and wears a dressing gown, slippers, and night cap.*)

BOX. (L.) What ringing and hollowing is this? Do you know, sir, that you have disturbed me out of my first sleep? (*Cox starts and appears as if he had cut himself with razor*)

COX. If it was your last sleep, sir, I should have done just the same—It's nine o'clock, and I've been out of bed these four hours.

BOX. Sir, I believe you capable of any absurdity.

COX. I can't, from habit, sleep in the morning, sir.

BOX. Nor I, from custom, can't sleep at night, sir.

COX. Then, sir, it's my unbiassed opinion——(turns *and recognises* BOX) Good gracious, Box !

BOX. Heavenly powers! Cox!

COX. My valued friend! }

BOX. My worthy chum ! } (*together*)

COX. Don't it strike you, Box, as rather remarkable that we should meet here accidentally, as I may say, in our old lodgings after two years' Reparation.

BOX. Well, so it does. Are you still implicated in the hat manufacture, Cox ?

COX. Without meaning any disrespect to you, Box—I say, advisedly—damn the hat manufacture. I've retired from business.

BOX. Indeed; how very odd that I should also have seceded from the printing profession.

COX. Listen, Box. When, by a concatenation of small debts, duly recorded in the archives of the Islington County Court, I was compelled to emigrate surreptitiously from Mrs. Bouncer's apartments to the Old Kent Road, you can't imagine my distress.

BOX. (L. C.) Yes, I can, by my own.

COX. (R. C.) I tried to forget everything in the world.

BOX. Especially your share of the rent, which I had to pay Mrs. Bouncer.

COX. Generous Box! don't mention it. (*shakes Box's hand*) Well soon after, I was surprised, and I may add delighted, by the death of an old uncle, who left me a comfortable annuity.

BOX. How singular that my aunt of venerable memory should have died about the same time, and left me a pretty little property.

COX. I congratulate you my dear fellow.}

BOX. I wish you joy of your luck. } (*together*)

COX. Well my next step was to get married;_____

BOX. Ha! ha! ha! ha! Do you know I've been guilty of the same indiscretion myself ?

COX. I was connubialised this day, twelve months.

BOX. The very day that witnessed the loss of my liberty.

COX. But that's not all,—could you believe it, I have a child ?

BOX. Give me your hand, Cox. (*he grasps Cox's hand*) I also am a man and a father!

COX. How strangely things come about! Well, I've just returned to town from Margate, where I served my first year—we arrived last night by the steamer; _____

BOX. And I've come by train from Southampton.

COX. And finding that Mrs. Bouncer had apartments unoccupied, we popped into them.

BOX. Precisely as *we* did.

COX. Then your wife is here ?

BOX. Yes,—she's in there—(*points to door, L.*) And yours ?

COX. (*points to door, R.*) In there.

BOX. (*solemnly*) Cox,—the wonderful sympathy that exists between us, convinces me that nature intended us for Siamese twins.

COX. Or Corsican brothers at least. _____ (*embrace*)

BOX. A thought strikes me, Cox, we should consecrate this day to friendship—by breakfasting together.

COX. With the ladies?

BOX. With the ladies, of course. _____

COX. Agreed. (*rings table bell and calls*) Mrs. Bouncer—Mrs Bounce-e-e-e-r.—Bouncer don't exhibit her usual alacrity this morning.

Enter MRS. BOUNCER, 3 E. L., *Carrying a tray with tea, Coffee, & c.*

Ah! Mrs. Bouncer,—breakfast--for four!

MRS. BOUN. There it is sir,—I thought as old friends you'd have it together. (*lays tray on side table, c.*) There it is. Tea, coffee, shrimps, muffins, eggs, fried bacon, mutton-chops, and watercresses, (*puts articles on table c. as she names them*)

BOX. That will do for the present, we'll ring when we require more.

Exit MRS. BOUNCER, 3 E. L.

MRS. C. (*calling from room, R.*) Cox! Cox!

COX. There's my wife calling me,—she wants me to hook her. Ah, Box, that's a woman any man might be proud to hook!

Exit Cox, R. 2 E.

BOX. I've no doubt of it.

MRS. BOX *comes from* 2 E. L., *singing an opera air.*

MRS. B. La, la, ra, la, la, &c. Dear me, I'm frightfully out of voice this morning: Is breakfast ready, Box?

BOX. Yes, my dear, we only wait for my old friend, Cox, whom I met accidentally here this moment—you've often heard me speak of him. We once lived together, and now we are going to breakfast together. I'll just go and finish dressing, and be back presently.

Exit, 2 E. L.

MRS. B. Dear me, I wonder how I look. I only dressed for Box, and here's Cox coming. (*looks at herself in chimney glass*)

Enter MRS. COX, 2 E. R.

MRS. C. (*crosses to L. as she enters*) I'm curious to see this friend of Cox's, (*perceives* MRS. BOX) Why surely it never can be—

MRS. B. (*turning*) Hey—bless me—Miss Hawes !

MRS. C. Sophy Dawes!

MRS. B. Excuse me, Fanny, but I've changed my name. I've taken Dawes out of the corner of my pocket handkerchief, and put Box in.

MRS. C. I really beg pardon, ma'am: I wasn't aware of the circumstance, as I've been abroad at Margate since *my* marriage.

MRS. B. (R. C.) What, are you gone and got married too?

MRS. C. Well, I hope I'm not infringing the rules of female propriety by saying, I've made Cox the happiest of his sex.

MRS. B. What a lark, to think we should have both got off the shelf at last!

MRS. C. Off the shelf, mem—ha, ha, ha!

MRS. B. Ha, ha, ha! (*both laugh, and continue to laugh until Cox and Box re-enter dressed for breakfast*)

BOX. (*to Cox*) There's no need of introducing our wives, Cox—you see, they've affected an amalgamation already.

MRS. B. Oh, we're old friends _____

MRS. C. Fondly attached companions! (*apart to Cox*) A forward little chorus singer at the theatres, who, to my knowledge, has been laying traps for every man she met, for the last fifteen years.

MRS. B. (*apart to Box, L. C.*) A paltry straw bonnet maker, who was on her last legs when she inveigled this poor stupid Cox.

COX. Well, I vote we go to breakfast.

MRS. C. Oh, bravo! I've got such an appetite. (*she is going towards the head of the table, when MRS. BOX rushes before her*)

MRS. B. Beg pardon, mem, but if there be anything I sticks up for, it's my rank—the printer's lady before the hatter's wife, (*sits* at head of table, L. Box sits L. C, COX sits R. C.*)

MRS. C. Oh, mem, don't flurry yourself—I always give way to age. (*sits at opposite end of table, R.*)

MRS. B. Age! why, my dear, when you was a grown young person at the bonnet trade, I was playing with my doll.

MRS. C. I remember the doll perfectly, Sophy; a remarkably large sized one it was, with red whiskers, and a strong Irish brogue _____

COX. (*rising*) Ladies, ladies! Although an advocate in general for freedom of discussion, I'm afraid we're now touching on delicate ground.

BOX. Bravo! bravo!

COX. I therefore move the previous question, and request my friend Box to pass the muffins this way. (*MRS. BOX and MRS. COX tap their tea spoons on the table, and cry "Bravo! bravo!" Box hands the plate of muffins to Cox*)

BOX. Where are the eggs? oh! (*takes an egg from a plate*) Well now, I dare say Mrs. Bouncer calls that an egg! I call it a humbug—a contemptible humbug! and I maintain that the principles of Free Trade are not carried out unless we are to have a large egg with our big loaf. I dare say that egg has been laid to order by some distressed hen, at twenty to the dozen.

COX. And here's a mutton chop (*holding a chop on his fork*) that has been curiously adapted to a stomach of the meanest capacity.

MRS. B. Where's the porter?

BOX. (*rings bell and runs to door*) Porter—porter! Mrs. Bouncer.

MRS. C. Do you indulge in porter, Mrs. Box?

MRS. B. Yes, mem—I—hem!—hem!—I take it for my organ: the organ requires nourishment. Malibran took porter, mem, for her organ—didn't she, Box?

* For situation of Characters here see last Page.

BOX. (*reseating himself*) Extensively, my dear, in the pewter.

Enter MRS. BOUNCER *with a pot of porter, 3 E. L.*

MRS. BOUN. The porter, Mr. Box. (*puts it down and is going off*)

BOX. By-the-bye, Mrs. Bouncer, has that cabman brought home my umbrella yet,—a brown gingham umbrella, with brass spike and two broken ribs?

MRS. BOUN. No, sir; I've heard nothing about it. (*goes off L. 3. E.*)

COX. Very extraordinary, indeed !

MRS. B. Can't we have a few hiseters, Box?

MRS. C. Hiseters ?

MRS. B. I hope hiseters don't offend?

MRS. C. You mean *oysters*, my dear—*vide* Walker.

MRS. B. If he's of your acquaintance, Fanny, I mean to *avide* him.

BOX. *Tempora mutantur*—let's have no temper on the matter. Allow me to propose an egg, Mrs. Cox.

MRS. C. You're very kind. (*Box hands her an egg*)

BOX. Salt, Mrs. Cox! (*hands her the salt*) And allow me to recommend you some of these watercresses. (*puts water cresses on her plate*)

MRS. C. Oh, thank you.

BOX. What is the next article, Mrs. Cox?

MRS. C. Nothing more at present.

COX. Well, this is downright jolly—just the thing I like—a comfortable little family party, where we can enjoy the society of our partners, without—without _____

BOX. Mustard ! (*reaches for it*)

COX. I didn't say without mustard, Box—far from it.

BOX. (*eating*) How deuced hot it is !

COX. But this I will say—that when we reflect upon our happiness as husbands _____

BOX. It draws tears from my eyes.

MRS. B. Box!

BOX. The mustard, my love—nothing but the mustard.

MRS. B. I should hope not, Box.

COX. I have one observation to make: it is that we should devote this day to harmless conviviality, and as we have breakfasted, we should dine together.

LADIES. (*tapping the table*) Hear, hear ! Bravo! *Encore !*

BOX. I know a first-rate establishment in the Old Kent Road, where we can have a splendid dinner—all the delicacies of the season—beer included—for eighteen-pence a-head.

MRS. B. No:—Greenwich is my weakness—shrimps and tea a shilling.

MRS. C. I objects to Greenwich in *totum*; my feeling is for Rosherville.

MRS. B. I hate Rosherville.

MRS. C. And I abominate Greenwich ; so I shall stop at home.

MRS. B. Your absence shall not spoil our appetite, I promise you. (*rises*)

MRS. C. But it may *your* temper. (*rises*)

MRS. B. (L.) My temper?—Ha, ha, ha! insignificant creature.

MRS. C. (R.) You're angry, dear.

MRS. B. No, mem, I'm not!

MRS. C. Yes, you are, love.

MRS. B. I tell you I ain't!

MRS. C. Yes, darling, you are. (*Box and Cox rise and come down*)

MRS. B. Box! pack up our trunks this moment and call a cab! I'll not remain another moment under this roof. (*taking Box by the arm*)

COX. (*interposing*) Ladies, ladies, don't get warm. Come here! (*Cox comes forward to c, the two LADIES come on either side of him*) You (*to MRS. BOX*) stand for Greenwich, there—and you, my dear, (*to MRS. Cox*) for Rosherville, there. Now, as we can't dine conveniently at both places, I propose an intermediate banquet at Blackwall, here, (*touching his breast*)

MRS. B. Oh! I don't presume to dictate—anywhere but Rosherville.

MRS. C. I've no voice in the matter—I only object to Greenwich.

BOX. (L. C.) Well, that matter's settled. How shall we go down?

MRS. B. (L.) What does Mrs. Cox say?

MRS. C. (R. C.) I say nothing—I leave it to you, Sophy—you always oppose everybody.

MRS. B. I deny that! It is *you*, Fanny, that will never give up a *point*. But you can't help it, dear—you never could; and I've often said if ever there was ever a dear aggravating creature in the world, it was Fanny Hawes. (*MRS. COX laughs contemptuously; both LADIES go up stage*)

BOX. (*aside and agitated*) Fanny Hawes!—good gracious!—that name! If it should be—(*aside to Cox*) Cox! was your wife's name Hawes?

COX. (*aside to him*) Of course it was, till we were married, and Cox obliterated Hawes. Come, ladies, let us finish our breakfast. (*sits at table*) Another cup of coffee, Mrs. B.? (*the two LADIES retreat themselves at table*)

BOX. (*apart L.*) Fanny Hawes? Hah! (*takes a white kid glove out of his pocket-book*) It must be the mysterious owner of this little kid glove, that I purloined from an interesting fellow-passenger whom I travelled with in an excursion train from Brighton one evening about eighteen months ago. Hah! what delicious recollections it suggests of a small waist and a very large carpet bag! She evidently don't recollect me—but that's not surprising, as in the dim twilight, and the obscurity of a second-class carriage, neither of us could distinguish the other's features.

MRS. B. Box! you havn't breakfasted.

BOX. Oh, yes, I have—don't mind me. (*apart*) She can't however, forget the attentive stranger, who carried her little dog on his knees during our journey—she can't forget the white kid glove that I've preserved ever since. Here's her name inside: "Fanny Hawes"—and here's a slight memorandum of my feelings written at the time. I wish I could speak a few words to her; I've some

mournful intelligence to communicate to her, that I'd rather Mrs. BOX. shouldn't be aware of—but how to reveal myself ?

COX. Muffins all gone?

BOX. (*Apart*) Muffins ! happy idea—I'll place her glove under a muffin, and give it to her with a mysterious wink. (*he goes to side table, takes the last muffin on a plate, which he bring down. L.*) This is certainly a most ingenious plan. (*he places the glove under the muffin*) There, she can't miss it.

MRS. B. Box, dear, will you fetch me my shawl from the next room?

BOX. Certainly my love. (*aside*) Confound the shawl ! (*puts down plate with muffin on side table, and goes hastily into room, 2 R. L.*)

COX. Are there no more muffins? (*rises and sees the muffins Box has left on table, L.*) Oh, here's one left. (*takes the muffin and returns to breakfast table.*) I've a theory about muffins, that they're a curious combination of sponge and wash leather; (*endeavouring to cut the muffin*) and I've strong suspicion that the leather predominates in this particular specimen—there's no cutting through it. Eh! eh! what's this? (*rises and holds up the glove on his fork*) Well really now—Mrs. Bouncer—this is too bad—though I am partial to muffins,—I can't swallow gloves !

Box appears at door, 2 E. L.

MRS. C. } Gloves (*they rise and come, forward*)

MRS. B. }

COX. Yes,—a lady's kid as I live,—and what is here -somethings written inside. (*reads*) " Fanny Hawes."

MRS. C. *My name?*

COX. And here on a slip of paper.—" April the 1st 1851,—the happiest day of my life! oh, Fanny Hawes when shall we meet again?—Signed, "JOHN BOX, Printer'- Hah! (*BOX rushes down, both ladies scream, Mrs. Box falling in a swoon into the arms of Cox, R., and Mrs. Cox into the arms of Box, L.*)

COX. Hah!—Box you're a villain.

BOX. Cox,—you're another.

COX. Drop my wife this instant, sir ?

BOX. I shan't, till you relinquish my better half.

COX. Miserable subterfuge! As the husband of that lady, I demand your card, sir?

BOX. You'll find it in my left-hand trowsors' pocket-come and take it ?

COX. I regret that the affair I have on hand prevents my availing myself of your polite offer.

BOX. Nothing but the pressing nature of my present engagement could make me think of putting you to so much trouble.

COX. Don't mention it,—will you allow me to make one observation ?

BOX. Certainly, Cox, with pleasure.

COX. Well then; I had no idea that Mrs. Box was so ponderous.

BOX. And I assure you, I am quite overpowered by the solidarity

of Mrs. Cox. (*a child is heard crying in room, R., another in room, L.*)
What's that? an infantine cry.

MRS. C. (*starting to her feet*) The blessed child!

MRS. B. (*starting to her feet*) The dear baby ! (*the LADIES rush into room, R. and L.*)

COX. Hem! The ladies having retired for the performance of their maternal duties, I presume we are alone.

BOX. I believe I may venture to say we are.

COX. Well, then, we must come to an understanding, sir. That glove (*shows the glove*) requires an explanation.

BOX. (*taking the glove*) This glove—oh, yes! certainly, (*puts the glove into his pocket*) Ha ! of course, my dear fellow, sit down.

COX. I'd rather not.

BOX. Sit down, I insist—(*pushes him into a chair, R. C.*)—now, we can talk the matter over calmly and dispassionately, (*places chair for himself, L. C. and sits*)

COX. Proceed, Mr. Box.

BOX. It was a lovely evening towards the close of the fourteenth century—

COX. What the devil have I to do with the fourteenth century, air?

BOX. (*rises*) If the honourable gentleman on the opposite side requires an explanation, I shall give it in my own way. I repeat, then, it was a lovely evening towards the close of the fourteenth century, when two horsemen, enveloped in ample cloaks, might be seen slowly ascending the winding path that leads to the castle. " By my Holidayam !" exclaimed the older swarthy stranger—Do you follow me ?

COX. (*rising*) I'll be d—d if I do.

MRS. C. (*calls in room, R.*) Cox! Cox!

BOX. (*rises*) Hah! there's your wife calling you.

COX. Never mind my wife—the explanation, sir!

BOX. There's your child, Box—your only child—the image of its father—do you hear? Now it screams—inhuman parent, why don't you fly ? (*pushing him*)

MRS. C. (*in room, R.*) Cox ! Cox ! I want you.

COX. But the explanation—the glove—the—the—

BOX. There—your wife—your sweet babe—calls you—you can't resist that appeal. (*pushes him into room, R.*) Whew ! I thought I should never have got him away—what's to be done, now—shall I confess all ?—why shouldn't I ? I'll relate the whole story—how Fanny Hawes and I travelled in the same railway carriage—how I purloined her glove—how we got separated by the crowd at the station—how I was left with her lapdog in my arms—how the poor creature got choked the following week—how Fanny Hawes and I never met until this hour. (MRS. COX *enters from room, R.*) Hah ! Mysterious being—Fanny, dear—dear Fanny—I beg pardon, Mrs. Cox—forgive the emotion—the confusion—that this unexpected discovery makes in my intellect. (*in a confidential tone*) Where's Cox?

MRS. C. I left him singing the child to sleep.

BOX. Happy Cox ! (*places a chair, R. C.*) Sit down, my dear Mrs. C.

I have something particular to say to you. (*sits L. C. beside her—Cox appears at door, R., and MRS. BOX at door, L., listening*) You remember the circumstances under which we parted.

MRS. C. Perfectly. And I have often thought since of the dear little creature that I left in your arms when we were rudely separated.

BOX. (*aside*) Her lapdog!—she hasn't forgotten him then. A—you allude to——

MRS. C. My little Charley!

COX. (*apart, at door*) Her little Charley!

BOX. Yes, I wish to speak to you privately about him; you were greatly attached to the poor fellow?

MRS. C. I doted on him: he was such a beauty with his silken hair, like his mother, and his charming long ears——

COX. (*apart*) Like his father I suppose.

MRS. C. Then he was *so* playful

BOX. Wonderfully! The very day I took him home, he tore up Mrs. Bouncer's best cap, for which I had to pay.

MRS. C. I can't tell you how I grieved for him—until I got another——

BOX. Then you have got another?

MRS. C. Oh, dear, yes. Cox has been very kind—such a little love—you can't think; but I never loved him as I did my pet Charley.

MRS. B. (*apart at door*) Oh! her pet Charley!

COX. (*apart at door*) Hoh!

BOX. Of course, first affection is always the strongest. Poor Charley! It quite affects me when I reflect upon his untimely end.

MRS. C. What—is he dead?

BOX. That was what I wanted to tell you,—poor dear little Charley is no more.

MRS. C. Oh! Mr. Box, you do shock me!

BOX. I knew you would be deeply effected; but I've done all I could to keep his dear remains for you.

MRS. C. His remains?—how?

BOX. I've had him beautifully preserved—he looks just as if he was alive. I thought it might be a melancholy consolation to you to drop a tear or so upon the dear departed. (*MRS. Box and MR. COX rush down suddenly on each side. It commences raining*)

COX. (R.) Hah! so we've discovered you. (*MR. Box and Mrs. Cox start up in surprise*)

MRS. B. (L.) Oh! we've heard all——

COX. About the dear little creature.

MRS. B. (to Box) Your darling Charley!

COX. (to Mas. Cox) The playful little fellow, with his mother's silken hair!

MRS. B. (to BOX) And his father's long ears! (*Box and MRS. Cox laughing immoderately, throw themselves into chairs, R. and L.*)

COX. Oh! mighty fine, madam!

MRS. B. It's just like you, Mr. Box!

COX. My feelings as a husband have been trampled upon! I'll

join the Broken-hearted Club directly—I'll leave you for ever—I'll take the first omnibus to Australia, and bury my sorrows in the Diggings! (*puts on his hat, Box and MRS. Cox continue to laugh*)

MRS. C. Oh, go by all means—we can spare you!

BOX. Don't stay a moment on our account!

COX. But it rains tremendously! (*calls at door, 3 E. L.*) Mrs. Bouncer, has that cabman brought my umbrella yet?

MRS. BOUN. (*outside*) No—not yet, sir.

COX. Not yet—how very extraordinary, (*goes to window, L., a CHILD cries in room R.; then another CHILD in room L.*)

MRS. C. The blessed child.

MRS. B. My poppet! (*they run into rooms, R. and L.*)

COX. (*at window*) Hah! why surely that's my umbrella a coming down the street,—brown gingham—brass spike—two broken ribs: I can't be mistaken. (*thrown up window and calls*) Holloa, sir—hey! I beg your pardon, but that umbrella is mine. I say, sir, that umbrella you are carrying is my property.

MAN. (*in street*) No it isn't, I gave a shilling for it this morning on Holborn Hill.

COX. It's quite immaterial what you gave for it, sir, the umbrella is mine—and I expect you'll instantly give it up!

MAN. (*in street*) Do you? then you'd better come and take it.

COX. Oh, very well, only wait there till I come down, and see if I won't have it. (*quitting the window*) An impudent rascal, to refuse to give me up my umbrella, that I've had for twelve years.

Exit, 3 E. L.

BOX. Holloa! I shouldn't wonder if there was to be a row. Honour calls me to aid my friend, but prudence whispers that I never learnt the noble art of self defence—so I shall look on and see fair play. (*goes to window and looks out*)

COX. (*in the street*) Now, sir, give up my umbrella!

MAN. (*in the street*) I won't!

COX. (*in the street*) You won't?—but I'll have it!

MAN. (*in the street*) Holloa! what do you mean? Police! robbery! murder!

BOX. Oh! there's Cox pitching into the stranger, and the stranger digging away at Cox! (*while they are fighting, BOYS are heard cheering at intervals; scuffling and voices in the street, some cry, "A ring!" "Make a ring!" "Stand Back!" "Hurray!" "Go it little 'un!"*)

COX. (*outside*) Take that!—hah! (*cheer outside*)

BOX. Bravo! Cox has given him a topper; hah! there again, oh lord he's got Cox's head in Chancery and is hammering at it with persevering diligence, hah!—there they go, both down together,—Cox uppermost—give it him, Cox,—give it him, my boy,—two to one on Cox.—Now they're at it again—steady Cox. Hold up your head and fight low. Oh lord, there's a smasher on his nose—never mind it, Cox—go in and win, my boy.—Holloa, foul blow,—(*comes down*)—foul blow, I say,—stop the fight!—help!—murder!—police! (*vehement cheers outside*) (Mrs. Cox and Mrs. Box rush out of their rooms, each carrying a baby)

MRS. C. What's the matter, Mr. Box?} (together)

MRS. B. For heaven's sake, what has happened? }

BOX. Oh—oh, poor Cox. He's engaged in a fearful pugilistic combat in the street.

MRS. C. Oh! heavens—he'll be murdered—oh pray hold my baby. (*she places the baby in Box's arms*)

MRS. B. Oh! we must protect him—here, Box, take the child—(*she places her baby in his arms—both ladies rush out 3 E. L., crying "Police." Box stands at C. of stage, holding a baby on each arm*)

BOX. Holloa!—here—gracious goodness! here's a picture! I should like to ask any unprejudiced lady what I am to do with this double responsibility, which has been imposed upon me, I don't feel at all competent to the duty, and it strikes me forcibly that if I had been the happy father of twins, I could not have been placed in a more embarrassing situation, (*a cheer heard in the street*) Hah! that cheer proclaims that a decisive blow has been struck—somebody has had enough of it. (*voices, and steps of persons approaching door, L.*) Hah! here they come!

Enter Cox, 3 E. L., followed by MRS. COX, and MRS. Box—he has a bloody nose—his clothes are torn and covered with mud; his hat crushed over his eyes—he brandishes a broken umbrella—the ladies take the children off, R. and L., and re-enter immediately.

COX. (R. L.) Victory! Hurray! that last round settled the rascal—and I've recovered my umbrella, though we have both been slightly damaged in the conflict—here it is. I could have sworn to it at any distance—even though "J. C." for James Cox, had not been engraved on the handle, (*examines the handle of the umbrella*) Eh! bless me! these are not my initials—and now that I examine it closely, it's not a bit like my umbrella.

MRS. B. (L) Not like yours?

COX. Quite an inferior article, Mrs. Box—but, good gracious, what have I done?—committed highway robbery, with violence, upon the unoffending proprietor of the umbrella—lord! I shall be taken up, and very likely transported for the crime. Dear me, how could I have made such a mistake? Why, instead of the letters "J. C.," here are the initials "J. B." on the handle.

BOX. (C) "J. B.!" allow me to inspect them—(*Cox holds the umbrella to his nose*)—let me see.—(*looks at the handle of the umbrella*) Cox, my dear boy, let your mind recover its wonted tranquillity—it's all serene—the umbrella is mine. I lost it twelve months ago in a penny omnibus.

COX. Hah! then I've not committed a highway robbery. Embrace me, my preserver—yet—no—stand off—there's still a deadly feud between us.

BOX. About "Little Charley"—eh? I'll explain all that directly. (*MRS. BOX speaks apart, to MR. Cox—Box goes to door, 3 E. L., and calls*) Mrs. Bouncer, have the goodness to bring up little Charley's remains.

COX. I must tell you, that after what I have heard I'm not to be satisfied with less than a full explanation.

BOX. Don't make yourself ridiculous.

Enter MRS. BOUNCER 3 E. L., carrying a stuffed dog fixed to a board, a cloth thrown over it. (MRS. Box and MRS. Cox come down on either side)

BOX. There are the remains of " Little Charley."

COX. A stuffed dog !

MRS. C. My darling Charley; how beautiful he looks. (*takes the dog and kisses him*)

MRS. BOUN. A nasty brute that I've had it on my shelf in the kitchen ever so long.

COX. Hem! ha! I begin to doubt my own extraordinary sagacity—but how was it that you and my wife appeared not to know each other when you met ?

MRS. B. Oh, my dear Cox, I know how that happened. Fanny has explained all to me, and I'm satisfied.

COX. Oh, very well, if you're satisfied. I suppose its my duty to be content, so give me your hand, Box.

BOX. Take it, Cox. (*grasp each others hands, warmly*) Hold ! I've an idea of something looming in the future.

COX. Speak, what is it ?

BOX. Your child is a girl ?

COX. Yes, of the female sex.

BOX. Mine is a male boy—what if we should unite the houses of Box and Cox by a future marriage between our infant heirs ?

COX. Hah! a family compact—good.

BOX. A *contrat sociale* !

MRS. B. How delightful !

MRS. C. How charming !

COX. Box, my dear fellow, we'll drink the health of the young couple to day, in a glass of champagne.

BOX. So we will, my boy, and let us hope that the popularity which Box and Cox enjoyed in their bachelor state

COX. May not be withdrawn from them when they are _____

MRS. C. }

MRS. B. }

BOX. }

COX. }

MARRIED AND SETTLED.

MR. COX. MRS. COX. MR. BOX. MRS. BOX.
RIGHT. LEFT.

Curtain.

* Reference from page 6.

COX, R. C. BOX, L. C.

R., MRS. C. TABLE. MRS. B., L.