

HOTEL CHARGES;

OR,

HOW TO COOK A BIFFIN!

An Original farcical Sketch.

IN ONE CT.

BY

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MEMBER OF THE DRAMATIC AUTHORS' SOCIETY.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
WELLINGTON STREET, STRAND,
LONDON.

*First Performed at the Theatre Royal, Adelphi,
Thursday, October 13th, 1853.*

Characters.

CAPTAIN FITZCHIZZLE (<i>an experimental Traveller</i>).....	MR. CHARLES SELBY.	
MR. GUBBINS (<i>an irritable Traveller</i>).....	MR. GARDEN.	
SMINKER (<i>a Head Waiter, suffering from the pressure of the Times</i>).....	MR. JAMES ROGERS.	
ROBERT (<i>a Boots in gaiters</i>).....	MR. C. J. SMITH.	
JAMES	} (Waiters in pumps and "white chokers")	MR. R. ROMER.
THOMAS ...		MR. RIDGWAY.
FREDERICK		MR. CONRAN.
EDWARD ...		MR. BOLOGNA.
WILLIAM ...		MR. COX.
RICHARD ...		MR. STEIGEL.
ALPHONSE (<i>a page in buttons</i>)	MR. SANDERS.	
MISS STANDUP (<i>an old maid, an experienced Traveller</i>)	MRS. GARDEN.	
MARY (<i>a chambermaid in love</i>).....	MISS F. MASKELL.	

Time of Representation, Forty Minutes.

SCENE.—*Brighton.*

TIME.—*Present.*

Costumes.

CAPTAIN FITZCHIZZLE.—Brown travelling suit, Scotch plaid, large whiskers and moustachios, travelling cap.

SMINKER.—Black dress suit, large white neckcloth; white stockings and pumps, black hair with Brutus, pale face, white cotton gloves.

JAMES & WAITERS.—Black suits, white cravats, white cotton gloves.

ROBERT.—Drab breeches and gaiters, striped waistcoat, with black sleeves, small cap.

PAGE.—Page's suit, with buttons.

MR. GUBBINS.—Old man's suit of present time.

MISS STANDUP.—Black satin gown, large shawl, old-fashioned bonnet, with blue shade.

MARY.—Handsome chintz gown, white apron, and smart cap.

SCALE FOR PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATION :

First Class, 7s.; Second Class, 5s.; Third Class, 3s.

HOTEL CHARGES;

OH,

HOW TO COOK A BIFFIN ?



SCENE.—*A Private Sitting Boom in an Hotel, gaudily furnished—Entrance, C.—a sofa, L., fire-place, R., sideboards, R. and L., at top—ROBERT and JAMES discovered arranging Tables.*

JAMES.(R.) Well, Bob, what luck shall we have to-day?

ROBERT. Oh, same as yesterday of course, only the commercials, and a stray old lady or two for a bed and a glass of toast-and-water. *(sits on sofa, L.)*

JAMES. Ah, that dreadful *Times* has ruined us ! now the public has got its eyes opened, it wont wink at our pickings and stealings any more. *(sits, L. in arm chair)*

ROBERT. No, we're all gone goslings, knocked off our perches like skittles, and stewed down to pickled cabbage.

SMIN. *(without, C. R., in a tremulous voice)* James, Robert, Frederick!

JAMES. Here, sir, here—poor Sminker, his voice is getting feebler every day, that unfeeling cut yesterday at head waiters and their perquisites has nearly settled him, he's going melancholy mad.

ROBERT. Poor fellow ! just as he's going to be married. Ah, it's a true truth, misfortunes never come single.

SMIN. *(without)* No, no, Mary, I'll read it, if it be my death !

Enter SMINKER, C, with the Times newspaper, struggling with MARY, who is trying to take it from him.

SMIN. *(wildly)* I must, I must! *(looking at paper)* Three columns—three! three! *(laughing hysterically, and sinking into a chair, which MARY places, C.)* Three four-and-twenty pounders, crammed to the muzzle with grape and canister, to destroy us. *(looking at paper)* The old story—"Fathers of Families"—"Ex-M.P's."—"Done Browns"—"Travellers who would be so in England, but for the extortion of Hotel Keepers, and—*(faintly)* the rapacity of their Servants." *(groaning)* Oh, what is the penalty for manslaughter?—what is the punishment for killing a head waiter ?

ROBERT. I don't know, but it's three months for killing a boots.

SMIN. I shall never see another birthday.

MARY. Oh, don't take on so, Augustus! all will be right in a day or two—that Mr. Times is just for all the world like a warming pan, plaguy hot and scorching, while the live coals are in him, but put him in the chimney corner for a little while, he'll gradually cool down, and nothing will remain of him but a slight smell of sulphur.

SMIN. Look, look—here's another letter from the " Biffin !"

JAMES. }

ROBERT. } (*greatly agitated*) The Biffin!

MARY. }

SMIN. The assassin who first set upon us—he's at it again worse than ever—boots, waiters, chambermaids—all of us.

MARY. Oh, the wretch!

JAMES. The shab!

ROBERT. The inxsnificant 'umbug! ☹️

SMIN. It's all over with us—we're going as fast as tea and sugar in a lodging house. If somebody doesn't do something to that *Times* soon, we shan't have a leg to stand on—wax-lights are already extinguished, private sitting-rooms are shaking—the most courageous are afraid to venture upon three-and-sixpence for half-a-pint of sherry, and as for *us*, there's a great move to rub us out altogether.

MARY. (*energetically*) Then we'll strike—that will bring them to their senses—the world may go on without cabs or omnibuses, but it can't stir a step without chambermaids—beds must be made, and shaving water and warming pans can never be dispensed with, as long as men grow beards—sheets are damp, and commercial gents are chilly; which I am happy to say they are *all*—to a man.

ROBERT. Very true, very true; they must have their boots cleaned, and their breakfasts and dinners won't put themselves on the table.

JAMES. No, no more will their portmanteaus walk into their rooms, or the fire and candles light themselves.

SMIN. Oh, my dear friends ! you deceive yourselves, our knell is rung. (*rises*) Listen to the " Biffin"—(*reading*) " Giving fees to servants at hotels is encouraging bare-faced robbery."

SERVANTS. Oh, oh !—Shame, shame !

SMIN. " I might as well be asked to pay the shopman a shilling who serves me to a yard of calico, as eighteen-pence to a waiter for bringing me a glass of ale."

ROBERT. } Oh, shameful, shameful!

JAMES. }

MARY. Oh, shouldn't I like to warm his bed!

SMIN. Here's another shabby fellow who complains of being skinned in the Isle of Wight—thinks three-and-sixpence too much for a bed at the top of the house.

OMNES. Oh, oh!

SMIN. And five shillings exorbitant for a coffee-room dinner of launch of mutton and currant jelly!

MARY. Oh, oh ! The miserable wretch, where could he have lived to grumble at three-and-sixpence for a sea view, or expect to

indulge in currant jelly without paying for it? There ought to be an Act of Parliament to oblige such skinflints to keep at home.

SMIN.

JAMES.

ROBERT.

} To be sure—to be sure!

MARY. People who can't afford, or who are too mean to pay genteel prices, have no business to travel; they only set a bad example and make real gentlefolks inquisitive.

SMIN.

JAMES.

ROBERT.

} Certainly—certainly !

ROBERT. There was a case in pint only yesterday:—I puts the portmanteau of one of them shabs on the bus, and of course touches my hat as usual. What do you think he guved me?—you'll never guess—a fourpenny piece !

OMNES. Oh, oh!

ROBERT. Hactually! 

SMIN.

JAMES.

MARY.

} Dreadful—dreadful!

ROBERT. But that arnt the wust: another gent who was witness to the swindle, one of our respectable customers, takes the hint and what do you think *he* guved me?—you'll be flabbygasted with horror!—threepennorth o' halfpence ! 

OMNES. Oh!

ROBERT. It's a hactual fact—hactually!

JAMES.

MARY.

} Oh, oh! frightful—frightful!

SMIN. The world's coming to an untimely end. What is to be done, friends?—if we don't take some strong measures to stop this terrible epidemic we shall soon come to wages like common servants, and our masters will be obliged to bring down their prices to the level of the pastry-cook who sets up to oppose us next door—and breakfasts, dines, and teas people at a shilling a head.

OMNES. Oh, oh, oh!

SMIN. Oh, as Mr. Brooke says, in Hamlet, " Our nose is out of joint, *Hotello's* occupation's gone! " (*sinks into a chair*; MARY, JAMES, and ROBERT *seat themselves in imitation*; *a large gate bell rings without*; *all start up*) There's somebody by the express, quick, quick, to your posts, though I dare say it's only a sandwich and a glass of ale.

Exeunt ROBERT and JAMES, C. R.

MARY. Never mind, Augustus dear, we shall soon be married and be gentlefolks, and not care for anything; we're not the first who have been ruined by the pressure of the times. Shake yourself up, like my feather beds, and do as the Emperor of Russia will do when he is forced to swallow the Turkey rhubarb, resign the Principalities with a good grace, and take a slice off something else to make up for them.

Exit, C.

SMIN. Ah, I'm afraid there is no chance, the public are determined now to *do* as they have been *done by*, and the retribution will be terrible.

Enter JAMES, ROBERT, EDWARD, WILLIAM, FREDERICK, THOMAS, *and* ALPHONSE, *bowing on* CAPTAIN FITZCHIZZLE, R. C.

JAMES. This way, sir, if you please. Candles, Thomas.

ROBERT. Take your luggage, sir?

ROBERT *takes his carpet bag*, JAMES *his hat box*, FREDERICK *his umbrella*, THOMAS *his plaid*, *and* ALPHONSE *his cap till at the same moment, and go off with great ceremony*, C.

FITZ. (*looking at them, laughing*) That's a charming division of labour, they'll be doing it by machinery next. (*sits at table*, R.)

SMIN. (*advancing, and leaning over table*) Dine, sar? ☺

FITZ. Of course; dining is a good old-fashioned custom that I have great pleasure in keeping up, (*aside*) though it is often under difficulties. What have you got? Pass over your chops and steaks and veal cutlets, and come to something respectable.

SMIN. (*aside*) A gentleman at last. You can have a bit of fish, sar.

FITZ. Ah, yes, of course. (*aside*) A good bit I hope. What kind?

SMIN. Salmon cutlets, fried soles, stewed eels, whiting, gudgeons—

FITZ. Gudgeons?

SMIN. Very fine, sar.

FITZ. Where do you catch them—here?

SMIN. Yes, sir, fresh every day.

FITZ. Very well, I'll take them on your recommendation. No white bait?

SMIN. No sar, not in season, we had some beautiful last summer.

FITZ. Ah, so we had fine weather. Well, what next?

SMIN. You'd like a little soup.

FITZ. Yes, yes, what have you in that way?

SMIN. Mulligatawny—mock turtle—giblet—ox-tail.

FITZ. No a-la-Reine—or Bisque?

SMIN. No, sir, but we've some capital "bully."

FITZ. Bully?

SMIN. Yes, sir, our house is famous for it.

FITZ. So I've heard—no, I'd rather eschew your bully, and fall back on your ox-tail—go on.

SMIN. Boiled chicken.

FITZ. Au champignons—go on.

SMIN. Haunch of mutton.

FITZ. Currant jelly—go on.

SMIN. (*smiling, aside*) He must be a lord by the selection of his dinner. (*smiling and bowing*) A woodcock, my lord—or a wild duck?

FITZ. Yes, yes, or a hare, or a pheasant, or a brace of partridges.

SMIN. Oh, he's a duke at the very least. What wine, your grace?

FITZ. Well, Moselle—pretty good?

SMIN. Excellent, your grace—all our wines are from the first cellars. (*aside*) Water Lane and Cheapside.

FITZ. Ah, well then, a little Moselle. How's your claret?

SMIN. Perfect, your grace—there's none to match it in France.

FITZ. (*aside*) I should think not. Ah, very well then, ice a bottle or two, and I'll try it. A little fruit, a cup of coffee, and a glass of curacoa will about do me till supper. (*crosses to L.*)

SMIN. (*aside*) I should think it would.

FITZ. Let's have them directly, (*throws himself on a sofa*)

SMIN. Instantly, your grace. (*aside*) What a difference to the Biffin shabs, who order a mutton chop and a potato, and think themselves robbed if we charge them half-a-crown. This is evidently a nobleman, who lives "regardless of expense," and votes the *Times* a humbug. *Exit, c.*

FITZ. (*laughing*) Another victim to the great extortion question that is agitating the hotel interest and laying the foundation of a reform bill. Dining on small means is now the easiest of arts, for such is the terror of a show-up in the *Times*, that the slightest hint that you will draw the "Thunderer's" attention to your "little bill" is sufficient to curtail it of its unfair proportions, and bring it within the compass of the shallowest pocket. Thanks to this popular commotion, I have lived like a prince for the last three months at the best hotels for less money than I could vegetate on steamed mutton and warmed-up potatoes at a cook-shop.

Enter SMINKER with one pair of wax lights—ROBERT with another—and ALPHONSE with another, then other WAITERS with dinner service; during the following they lay the cloth, &c.

There they go—three pairs of wax lights, ha, ha, ha! when you resolve on a *do*, there's nothing like doing it in style, ha, ha, ha! How astonished they'll be presently! it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, so I've taken advantage of the panic to give mine hosts a slight return for past favours. The illustrious Soyer says, "Tell me what you eat and I'll tell you what you are." Ha, ha, ha! I think my little spread would puzzle him,—I'm afraid he'd give me credit for more respectability than I deserve; although good dinners, like good coats, have a great influence on the world's respect, and three courses and claret are often easier to come at than a mutton chop and a pint of porter:—Don't be an age with that dinner, I'm getting ravenous.

JAMES. Yes, my lord; directly, my lord.

FITZ. Oh, give me my carpet bag, I want something.

JAMES. Robert, his lordship's carpet bag.

ROBERT. Yes, my lord; directly, my lord, (*calling*) Carpet bag!
ALPHONSE *throws it at him*)

FITZ. What's the name of this house?

JAMES. The Golden Fleece, my lord.

FITZ. Ah! (*ROBERT advances with bag*) Oh, the bag; give it me here. (*opens bag, a letter falls from it which ROBERT picks up, while FITZCHIZZLE searches for and takes out a memorandum book*)

ROBERT. A letter, my lord, you dropped. (*looks at letter—starts, and catches convulsively at JAMES*) Eh! oh! oh!

FITZ. Eh! (*taking letter*) what is the matter?

ROBERT. (*stares at him aghast*) No—nothing—nothing! (*aside to JAMES*) It's the very identical horse and chay—Biffin himself—we're dished—let us go and tell Sminker.

Exeunt WAITERS, in great agitation.

FITZ. Ha, ha, ha! my first shot has hit its mark, the gudgeons bite freely, (*the large and several small bells ring violently, L. C.—looking off*) Oh, they've raised the house—the whole establishment's turning out to inspect me. (*sits on sofa and writes in book*)

SMINKER, JAMES, ROBERT, FREDERICK, EDWARD, WILLIAM, THOMAS, MARY, *a* CHAMBERMAID, *a* MAN COOK, *a* WOMAN COOK, and ALPHONSE *appear peeping, C, and come down in line, R.*

SMIN. (*trembling*) Are you sure, Robert ?

ROBERT. Quite, sir. I saw it with my own eyes; the letter was addressed "A. Biffin, Esquire.

SMIN. Dreadful—he's come to report us; see, see, he's booking us already.

FITZ. (*writing*) The Golden Fleece, what a suggestive name! I think this will be a very strong case.

SMIN. (*aside*) Oh, we're settled.

FITZ. Those servants appear more than ordinarily rapacious.

SMIN. Do you hear, do you hear—shan't we catch it.

FITZ. Especially the head waiter.

SMIN. (*groaning faintly*) Oh, dear.

FITZ. I'm afraid I shall be obliged to make an example of him.

SMIN. Send for the undertaker, and write my epitaph—a head waiter, cut off in his prime—murdered by a Biffin.

FITZ. However, I'll give them a chance; if the charges are anything within reason, I'll do them justice.

SMIN. (*aside, and seizing MARY'S arm*) Oh, I've a brilliant thought—I'll bake the biffin—and turn his visit to our advantage—we'll charge the dinner less than it costs, and throw in the wax and attendance gratis, that will be sure to make him speak well of us, and the *Times* will be our best friend.

MARY. Capital. Still I'd advise him not to have his bed warmed.

FITZ. Waiter!

MARY *and all the SERVANTS go off in great confusion, C. L., with the exception of SMINKER.*

SKIN. Yes, my lord.

FITZ. Hollo, hollo—what's that? (*pointing to SERVANTS going off*)

SKIN. That, my lord—oh, a train coming in.

FITZ. It's a good deal more like a train going out—I should like to wash my hands before I dine; call the chambermaid.

SMIN. Yes, my lord, (*calling*) James—Chambermaid.

JAMES. (*at door, calling*) Chambermaid !

FITZ. You'll take care that the dinner is properly served, and the wine carefully iced.

SMIN. Yes, my lord. (*aside*) I shall die of spontaneous combustion.

Enter MARY, with a jug of water on a salver.

SMIN. The chambermaid, my lord.

FITZ. Ah, very pretty girl! (*chucking her under the chin*) How are you, Mary ?

SMIN. (*aside, uneasy*) Mary ! does he know her?

FITZ. Where are you going to roost me, my dear? Not in the back garret I hope?

SMIN. (*quickly*) Oh, dear no, my lord. (*to MARY, pointedly*) In the blue damask, (*to FITZCHIZZLE*) on the first floor, with bow windows facing the sea.

FITZ. Ah, that's your sort, I hate garrets— (*aside*) too much of them at home. Show the way, my dear. (*chucking her under the chin*) You are a deuced pretty girl, Mary; there's no mistake about that.

MARY. (*smiling and giggling coquettishly*) Oh, sir, you noblemen talk such nonsense! (*aside*) He's very polite, however, and by no means ill-looking; he needn't be afraid, I have changed my mind about the warming pan.—this way, sir. (*going up*)

FITZ. (*making love to her*) I shall stay a month here, 'pon my life I shall—you're the prettiest girl I ever saw; you are, you rogue, you are! (*tries to put his arm round her waist and kiss her, she giggles and beats down his hands*)

MARY. Ha'done, ha'done, ha'done! I never! be quiet, you great fool, do!

They go off, struggling, C. R.

SMIN. (*who has been in an agony of jealousy*) That's pleasant for me—the future Mrs. Sminker. (*piteously*) And she likes it. Oh, I shall commit suicide with a bottle of our pale sherry; robbed of my perquisites, and made jealous of my wife. (*furiously*) Oh, I could—

Enter MARY, C.

MARY. What, Augustus, dear, (*laughing*) quarrel with Mr. Biffin!

SMIN. (*furiously*) Yes, yes, kill him—eat him—(*crying*) Oh, Mary, Mary, how could you behave so cruelly?

MARY. (*laughing*) I thought I was remarkably kind.

SMIN. To me—to me—not him. You should have stopped him, given him in charge to the police; but no, no! (*crying*) you liked it—you liked it!

MARY. (*coaxing him*) No, no, Augustus, dear! It was my regard for you that prevented me from making a disturbance; it was only to get you a good report in the *Times* that I let him kiss me.

SMIN. Oh, oh! (*crying*) this is worse than the French reign of terror. Then people were only afraid of losing their heads, but now—don't put yours in the way of danger again—the *Times* reporters are as merciless as Robespierre—there's no stopping the liberty of the press.

Enter FITZCHIZZLE.

FITZ. Now then, waiter, dinner ready? (*kissing his hand to MARY*) Don't go away, Mary. Stay and wait on me.

SMIN. (*with terrible grin, suppressing his rage*) No, don't go away, Mary; stay and wait on the gentleman. (*looking savagely at MARY*) Tell the waiters to serve. (*aside, seeing MARY smile at FITZCHIZZLE*) Oh, she likes it—she likes it! I shall be victimized for another favourable report.

Enter JAMES, ROBERT, FREDERICK, THOMAS, ALPHONSE, &C., with soup, wine, plates, &c.

SMIN. Dinner, my lord.

FITZ. Ah! that's your sort. (*aside*) What a regiment! If I had to pay for them. Oh! now, then, fire away. (FITZCHIZZLE *at table*; SMINKER *stands in front, R., and waves his hand*; JAMES *takes off the cover*; MARY *gives plate*; FITZCHIZZLE *helps himself, finds, though the tureen is very large, there is very little soup in it*; SMINKER *observes this, and waves his hand to JAMES*)

SMIN. Tilt it, James. (JAMES *tilts the tureen and FITZCHIZZLE helps himself from the the corner*; the PAGE *presents some toasted bread*)

FITZ. I say, my friend, your ox-tail is rather short!

SMIN. Yes, sir, it has been pulled a great deal to-day. (SMINKER *waves his hand*; JAMES *takes away the tureen and passes it to THOMAS, who passes it to FREDERICK and PAGE, who passes it to ROBERT, who takes it off*)

FITZ. (L., *looking after the tureen*) Damme, that's sharp practice! (MARY *presents bread and THOMAS the cruet stand*; SMINKER *waves his hand*; JAMES *brings wine and hands bottle to MARY, who fills a glass and gives it to FITZCHIZZLE*)

N. B.—*The whole of this business must be managed with great precision and rapidity, the idea being to show the division of labour practised in hotels.*

FITZ. (*nodding to MARY*) My love to you, my dear.

SMIN. (*stamping with rage*) Oh, you hippopotamus!

FITZ. Eh! (*looking at him*) What?

SMIN. (*recovering himself with a ghastly smile, screwing up his napkin*) Nothing; nothing, my lord! (*strikes PAGE with napkin*) Attend to your business, you little rascal!

FITZ. Oh! I thought you addressed me.

SMIN. Oh, dear no! You are not a little rascal. I merely— (*wipes his face with the napkin and waves his hand for MARY to go*; JAMES *mistakes the signal and takes away the wine*)

FITZ. (*seizing the bottle*) No, no, my friend, not quite so fast. (MARY *pours out wine and FITZCHIZZLE drinks, nodding as before*; SMINKER *waves his hand*; JAMES *takes away soup plate*; FREDERICK *gives another*; FITZCHIZZLE, *not being aware of the change, puts his spoon in an empty plate*)

FITZ. Eh! hallo! Sharp's the word here. I've only had three spoonsful.

SMIN. (*going to MARY and speaking aside in a rage*) You've no business here—go away, (*the fish is placed on the table and taken away with the same ceremony*)

MARY. I shan't—it's all for your good. He likes to have me to wait upon him, it keeps him in good humour. Look pleasant, he's looking at you.

SMIN. (*making a convulsive effort to smile*) Oh, what a victim I am to conservative politics!

FITZ. Beautiful gudgeons—so exquisitely browned!

SMIN. He little thinks how he's being browned! (*aside to MARY*) Won't you go?

MARY. No, no ! I'm very comfortable—don't bother. Another class of Moselle, sir? (*pours out wine—FITZCHIZZLE squeezes her hand; SMINKER sees him, and in a great rage exclaims, "hollo! hollo!"*)

FITZ. Eh! What's the matter?

SMIN. (*putting his napkin to his cheek and stamping*) Oh !—a tooth! a tooth ! Agony ! agony ! (*screws his napkin, looks out for the PAGE, who guesses his intention and runs away—aside*) If he goes any further, I shall take the pale sherry.

A WAITER brings on a covered dish, supposed to be the boiled fowl, and another the partridges, two others bring covered vegetable dishes, which they place on the table; then ROBERT brings on haunch of mutton, which is passed from one waiter to the other and placed on the table; SMINKER takes from sideboard a large carving knife and steel, and sharpens knife, R., looking ferociously at FITZCHIZZLE, who is coquetting with MARY.

SMIN. (*flourishing knife*) Oh, shouldn't I like to have a cut at him! (*advancing*) Mutton, sar! (*he takes hold of the shank of the mutton, cuts with savage flourishes two very small slices and puts them with some gravy, which he takes from dish with a large spoon on a plate, which JAMES holds; at this moment SMINKER sees FITZCHIZZLE offering MARY a glass of wine, and in his rage strikes the plate so violently with the spoon that it breaks; JAMES gives another plate and takes up the slice of mutton and places it before FITZCHIZZLE; the PAGE brings currant jelly from sideboard, taking by the way a sly spoonful, and gives it to MARY, who helps FITZCHIZZLE and returns it to PAGE, who eats the whole of it; SMINKER stamps and waves his hand; JAMES takes away the mutton and passes it to the other WAITERS, who pass it off; the PAGE takes away the fowl, and JAMES the partridges, and as they are running off with them meet, and the PAGE falls—a scramble and a bustle; SMINKER beats the PAGE, who goes off bellowing, pushed about by the WAITERS; FITZCHIZZLE takes advantage of the bustle to put his arm round MARY'S waist; SMINKER turns and sees him, and takes MARY up in his arms and carries her off, C.—WAITERS enter and clear table*)

FITZ. Capital dinner, excellently served! Now put the claret on the table, and bring the bill.

(JAMES puts claret and dessert on side table by sofa)

SMIN. The bill, my lord? I thought—

FITZ. So did I, but I've changed my mind and shall go to town.

SMIN. Nothing here, my lord, to drive you away I hope—

FITZ. Oh, dear no, on the contrary (*smiling*) I should like nothing better than a long sojourn here (*aside*) on the same easy terms the dinners are excellent; the apartments superb; the attendance unrivalled; and (*poking him in the ribs*) the chambermaid's a divinity! (*saunters up to sofa, L., when his back is turned, SMINKER squares at him with great rage*)

SMIN. (*endeavouring to laugh*) Yes, yes, my lord! (*aside*) Oh, the vampire, ain't I glad he's going; delighted you're satisfied, my lord! I was afraid there was something wrong—the bill directly, my lord!

(*aside*) Oh, if I could charge him for kissing Mary—wouldn't I pepper him. *Exit, C.*

FITZ. (*sitting on sofa*) Capital claret and if I mistake not, remarkably cheap, ha, ha, ha ! What a consoling reflection it is for men of brains that the world does not gain wisdom with age, and that the supply of geese is always equal to the supply of foxes—(*laughing*) my bill will be a curiosity, so free from asperities, so mild and pleasant—so deferential to the *Times*.

Enter SMINKER.

Oh, here's my friend, pale lemon, with the important document—what a charming specimen he is of the genus, Waiter! He must have been born in a white choker and pumps !

SMIN. (*aside, looking at bill*) Now I think I have done him particularly brown, there's salt enough here to tickle the tail of the wildest bird. Ahem ! (*bowing, presenting bill on salver*) The bill, my lord!

FITZ. Ah, let me see. (*taking bill carelessly*) I suppose it's a woodcock. (*looking at bill, starts up astonished*) Eh ! what ? no, no, this must be a mistake—it's impossible.

SMIN. All correct, my lord, I believe—our usual charges. Ahem ! (*aside*) I hope there's no punishment for professional bounces; if there is—I'm bespoke.

FITZ. I'm thunderstruck! (*reading bill*) Dinner, one and sixpence, what ? For soup, fish, chicken, haunch of mutton, currant jelly, partridges, tart and dessert.

SMIN. Yes, my lord, quite correct. (*aside*) Ahem, I feel the top of my tongue begining to blister.

FITZ. Pint of moselle—no, no, impossible ! Two shillings !

SMIN. Quite right, my lord we buy our wines in the wood, Hum ! (*aside*) Logwood.

FITZ. Claret—St. Julian, bottle—two and sixpence ; wonderful! Do you buy that in the wood, too ?

SMIN. No, my lord, we make it—Ahem! I mean we take it in large quantities: so we can afford to throw it in at a low figure. Ahem ! (*aside*) I very nearly let the cat out of the bag.

FITZ. Total, six shillings ! Six shillings! No apartments—no wax lights—no attendance.

SMIN. No, my lord, (*dolefully*) in obedience to the wishes of the public, we have reduced our charges to the lowest remunerative scale, and we consider any demand for apartments or lights to be inconsistent with honesty ; and fees to servants downright robbery; Ahem ! (*aside*) *Vide Times*, Where shall I go to for this ?

FITZ. I'm perfectly astounded !

SMIN. (*aside*) I intended you to be so.

FITZ. I expected to have been charged five-and-twenty shillings, at the very least.

SMIN. (*aside*) If you'd got off for double, you'd have been lucky.

FITZ. Well, as you say it's correct, there's the money. (*giving half-a-sovereign, which SMINKER receives on the salver, on which he has presented the bill*) The charges are perfectly fabulous !

SMIN. (*aside*) They are. Ahem! (*presenting four shillings on salver*) The change, my lord.

FITZ. No, no; oblige me by accepting it for your civility and attention.

SMIN. Excuse me, my lord, our rules strictly prohibit me from receiving the smallest gratuity, the honour of waiting on your lordship is sufficient. (*aside*) If I hadn't the *Times* before my eyes, wouldn't I oblige him.

FITZ. Then—for the chambermaid.

SMIN. She is included in the bill. (*aside, pathetically*) Kisses and all.

FITZ. Indeed! Oh, well, I shall come here again.

SMIN. (*aside, doubling his fist*) I wouldn't advise you.

FITZ. You shall hear of this in the *Times*, both sides of the question should be heard. I find, there are hotels where they have a conscience.

SMIN. (*aside*) It's not at the "Golden Fleece"—ahem! Oh, my lord, you are too kind! (*aside, joyfully*) He's caught and cured as brown as kippered salmon!

FITZ. Now, have the kindness to send the Boots with my luggage.

SMIN. It's all ready, my lord—Robert, his lordship's luggage!

Enter ROBERT and WAITERS—MARY and PAGE with the carpet bag, hat box, cap, umbrella, and shawl.

SMIN. Allow me, my lord. (*helps him on with shawl, and in putting it round his waist, pulls him violently; then as he tucks in the ends in front, punches him*)

FITZ. Oh, don't trouble yourself!

MARY. (*giving hat*) Your cap, sir.

FITZ. Thank you, my dear. (*to SMINKER*) Included in the bill?

SMIN. (*woefully*) Yes, my lord!

FITZ. Then, I'll make up the half-dozen. (*kisses her—SMINKER strikes him—he turns—SMINKER strikes PAGE—the WAITERS go off with carpet bag, & c.*) Good-bye, Mary dear—good-bye, pale lemon—ha, ha, ha! you'll recollect my visit. (*aside*) Ha, ha, ha! I shouldn't like to be the next customer. *Exit, C. R.*

SMIN. Huzza! I've muzzled him, and revenged the whole profession—but you, Mary—how could you aggravate me so? you ought to have set your face against his impertinence.

MARY. (*smiling archly*) So I did, and you saw how he served me. (*laughing*) Never mind, dear, charge it in the next bill.

SMIN. I will, I will—my wounded feelings shall appear in the attendance for the next twelve months. (*great disturbance without*)

MR. GUBBINS. (*without*) I won't pay it—I won't!

JAMES. (*without*) You must, sir—you must!

SMIN. Heyday! what's the matter—James, Robert, what is it?

JAMES. (*entering*) Oh, an old gentleman in No. 9 objecting to his bill, he says it's a swindle and he'll expose us.

SMIN. (*mapping his fingers*) Pooh, pooh! stupid old fogy—the *Times* will be with us, let him do his worst.

MR. G. (*without in a great rage*) Humbug, sir, humbug! there never was such an infamous imposition.

Enter MR. GUBBINS, frantic with rage, flourishing a thick stick and reading a bill.

I'll write to the *Times*—I'll—I'll expose the robbery to the world—I'll—damme, was there ever such a bill? (*reading bill and flourishing stick between each item*) Luncheon ; a ham sandwich, two shillings; ale—a glass of very bad draught Bass—one shilling; wax lights—they would light them—two and sixpence; apartments, for ten minutes, three and sixpence ; attendance—four grinning vagabonds in white neckcloths and perspiration—one and sixpence. Ten and sixpence for a sandwich and a glass of ale! monstrous, monstrous!—I won't pay it! I won't pay it!

SMIN. (*calmly*) I beg pardon, sir, but you must, it's our regular charge; ours is a genteel hotel; we do the thing genteely, and we don't want any but genteel customers. Robert, look that this person's luggage don't leave the house.

MR.G. What, what! (*struggling with WAITERS for his carpet bag and great coat, which he at last recovers*) Would you dare, you scoundrels? I'll, I'll—(*another disturbance without, and the voice of MISS STANDUP is heard in great anger, screaming*)

MISS S (*without*) Go along, you wretches, go along. Stop me at your peril.

Enter MISS STANDUP, C, in great excitement followed by WAITERS who are trying to take from her a large straw basket.

MISS S. You shan't have it, you shan't have it. (*gets the basket away from ROBERT and beats PAGE and WAITERS with her umbrella*) I've paid your swindling bill, touch me again at your peril.

SMIN. What is all this ?

MR. G. (*coming down, L.*) Give it them, ma'am: I'll back you.

MISS S Impertinent villains! (*to MR.G.*) I ordered a slight refreshment ; they brought me a consumptive chicken, and a Vauxhall slice of ham; I didn't eat three mouthfuls—they charged me, dinner, five shillings ; apartments, three and sixpence ; wax lights, half-a-crown; and attendance two shillings! Did you ever hear of anything so monstrous ?

MR. G. Yes, ma'am, I've been diddled in exactly the same way, but I'll—(*flourishing stick, WAITERS avoid him in alarm*)

MISS S. Knowing the uselessness of disputing the imposition, I paid the shameful demand, but, though I am a young woman, I am an old traveller, and determined to be even with the wretches. (*taking fowl and ham from her basket*) Here is the chicken and the ham, and (*showing them*) here are the wax lights ! I've paid exorbitantly for them: they are mine, and (*flourishing umbrella*) I'll die before they shall be taken from me. (*crosses to L.*)

MR. G. Bravo, mum, bravo! I admire your spirit. (*giving his arm to MISS S.*) Tuck yourself under my arm, mum, and let's fight our way to the street: out of the way, you swindling vagabonds, out of the way! (*going up with MISS S., flourishes stick and umbrella*)

MISS S. Stop them, stop them, send for the police! (*in the midst of the confusion* FITZCHIZZLE *appears at C. door.* TABLEAU)

SMIN. Mr. Biffin, oh! (*fainting on MARY'S shoulder*) We're bowled out.

MISS S. Mr. Biffin, no, no, this is my nephew, Captain Fitzchizzle.

SMIN. (*paralyzed with horror*) Fitzchizzle ! not Mr. Biffin! not the writer of the letters in the *Times!* Oh, my ox-tail, gudgeons, chickens, haunch of mutton, currant jelly, partridges, Moselle, and claret! I'm caught in my own trap.

FITZ. (*laughing*) You are, old fellow, caught and cured as brown as kippered salmon. I took advantage of your insane hope of propitiating the leading journal with a fabulous bill, and have to thank you for a splendid dinner on remarkably reasonable terms.

SMIN. Oh, I must commit suicide ! Mary, fetch me a bottle of our pale sherry.

MARY. No, no, Augustus, dear! you forget we're going to be married.

FITZ. What, you marry young—(*laughing aside*) Oh, this accounts for the toothache ; is it possible that a pretty girl like you can be so rash.

MARY. (*crossing to FITZCHIZZLE and curtseying*) Yes, if you please, sir. I must go with the times—husbands and provisions are getting scarcer every day.

FITZ. (*aside, looking at SMINKER*) Poor little devil—he'd better have taken the pale sherry. I wish you joy, my dear! permit me to—

SMIN. (*taking her away, R.*) No, no, I beg your pardon! you've settled your bill, and gratuities to servants are strictly prohibited.

FITZ. Very well—then good-bye. Stay! (*pointing to MR. GUBBINS and MISS STANDUP*) haven't you a little error to correct here ?

MR. G. Aye—are you going to make me pay ten shillings for a mouthful of stale bread and ham ? (*returns L.*)

MISS S. (*crossing to SMINKER*) And am I to be robbed—(*taking fowl from her basket*)—of my dear little chicken ? (*returns, L.*)

SMIN. No, no, I'll take off fifty ! a hundred per cent.! anything to get rid of you—but how am I to carry on business in future; if I go on in this way I shall be ruined.

FITZ. No, no, let experience make you wise. Base your charges on commercial integrity, and you needn't fear the *Times*: to correct abuses—not to fetter honest industry, is the object of the public's appeal. Abolish gaudy furniture, unwished-for plate, and useless extravagance, and you'll find John Bull will not fly to the continent to take "his ease at his inn," but cheerfully pay for the comforts you provide him at home. (*to Audience*)

We've tried to show how *good* hotels will fill,
Would you cram *ours*, endorse our little bill.

MR. GUBBINS. MISS STANDUP. FITZCHIZZLE. SMINKER. MARY.

Curtain.