

THE
IRISH POST

A COMIC DRAMA.

IN TWO ACTS,

BY

J. R. PLANCHÉ,

AUTHOR OF

*Reputation ; Follies of a Night; Grist to the Mill;
Captain of the Watch; Somebody Else ; A Cabinet
Question; Irish Post; The Jacobite ; Spring Gardens ;
The Pride of the Market; Not a Bad Judge ; The Jen-
kinses; Knights of the Round Table, &c, &c.*



THOMAS HAILES LACY,
WELLINGTON STREET,
STRAND,
LONDON.

THE IRISH POST.

*First performed at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, on Saturday
February 28, 1846.*

CHARACTERS.

Mr. Sheriff Capsicomb	Mr. JAMES BLAND.
Mr. Bartholomew Lane (<i>a stock broker</i>) }	Mr. TILBURY
George Lane (<i>his son</i>)	Mr. CABLE.
Terence O'Grady (<i>his nephew</i>)	Mr. HUDSON.
John (<i>a porter</i>)	M. ENNIS.
Richard	Mr. HARCOURT.
Policeman	Mr. W. SANTER.
Grocer's Lad	Master ELLIS.
Boy	Master ENNIS.
Mrs. Capsicomb	Mrs. L. S. BUCKINGHAM.
Mary Capsicomb	Miss WOULD'S.
Mrs. Lump	Mrs. HUMBY.

MODERN COSTUMES.

Characteristic of the station of persons' representations.

THE IRISH POST.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Mr. Bartholomew Lane's Office, near the Royal Exchange. Door in flat, R.*

GEORGE and O'GRADY discovered at their desks.

GEORGE. 109—18—137; carried up, 137—148—152—158—64—no 69, no, stop; that's not right, confound it!

O'G. (*reading what he has just written.*) "Gentlemen, be pleased to pay." That's a mighty odd expression—be pleased to pay! I wonder who the devil would be pleased to pay anything! None of my ancestors, I'm sure—if I take after them.

GEORGE. 148, don't talk, Terence,—152—58-

O'G. Faith, I'd like to see the gentleman who would be pleased to pay! I'd show him for money, and make a fortune of him!

GEORGE. Hold your tongue, will you ?

O'G. Sure, you're not the gentleman who would be pleased to pay, or you'd refund the half-crown I lent you a month ago.

GEORGE. Hang your half-crown ! There, (*flinging one to him.*) take it, do, and stop your eternal chatter. I shall never get these accounts right. How on earth do you manage to write when you're talking to yourself all the time ? You can't be thinking of what you're about.

O'G. I am, and of a thousand things beside—I've a wonderful genius !

GEORGE. For making mistakes.

O'G. Sure, I've a right to make 'em; ain't I an Irishman ? I stand up for my national privileges !

GEORGE. YOU abuse your privileges; no Irishman in the world ever made such blunders as you do. You're eternally getting yourself, or somebody else, into scrapes by them. What did you do yesterday? I hear there was a crowd round you in Cornhill.

O'G. There was, but it was through you!

GEORGE. Through me!

O'G. Through you! every bit of it; I was standing at Birch's eating an oyster patty, when I saw you scuttling along on the other side of the way; I called after you, and you wouldn't hear me, so I made but one hop, step and a jump, over the road, and coining slyly behind you, knocked your hat over your eyes!

GEORGE. What d'ye mean? I was at Islington all day, with the governor.

O'G. So you were, for it wasn't you after all, but a fellow I'd never seen before in all my life! "Boh," says I; "Holloa," says he; "what the devil do you mean by that, sir?" "No offence in the world, sir," says I; "but I thought you were my cousin George, sir," says I, "the handsomest young man you'll see in a summer's day, sir." "The Lord forgive me for lying," says I to myself; but I couldn't say less to the gentleman, after breaking his hat, and the bridge of his nose into the bargain.

GEORGE. I should think not.

O'G. Sure, it was a mighty pretty compliment to pay such a Kangaroo as he was; but that didn't satisfy him. "None of your blarney," says he; "I'll bet you a pound you didn't think any such thing." "Done," says I, "I've lost, and there's the money." Faith, he took that easier than the compliment; so I had the pleasure of wishing him good morning, and seeing him buy a new water-proof best short nap, with my own sovereign.

GEORGE. Serve you right; I wonder he didn't have you up before the Lord Mayor.

O'G. Oh, faith, somebody began calling police in the first instance; but long life to the boys, they're never to be seen when they're wanted.

GEORGE. Why, you knew well enough I had gone with my father to Islington. Were you not left in care of the office, with all sorts of messages?

O'G. I was! but I just popped out for a lunch, and forgot all about it, at the moment. By the bye, I forgot something else, too,—bad manners to me! What did she say to you—you never told me ?

GEORGE. Say to me! who ?

O'G. Who ? why the girl you went to see at Islington, to be sure; Miss Mary Capsicomb. Don't I know you went with the governor on purpose to pop the question to her.

GEORGE. Pshaw! stuff!

O'G. Oh, as much stuff as you please—but you know it's true ; didn't you let me into your confidence ?

GEORGE. Let you in ? no—you broke into it!—opened my letter instead of your own.

O'G. By the merest accident; and I apologised as soon as I'd read it ?

GEORGE. Apologised—yes, before my father, and so let him into the secret.

O'G. And didn't he approve of your attachment ?

GEORGE. By great good luck; but suppose he hadn't ?

O'G. Oh, bother! what's the good of supposing disagreeable things that never happened.

GEORGE. Well, at all events, Master Terence, you're the last person I should choose for a confidant, and so you'll excuse me telling you anything about the matter.

O'G. You're wrong there, depend upon it—and you'll lose a great deal by it; for I'm in love myself, and I'll leave you in blissful ignorance of the whole beautiful story.

GEORGE. With all my heart; but you'll be sure to blunder it out somehow or other.

O'G. Oh, catch me making a blunder in love matters; I'm discreet enough in my indiscretions.

GEORGE. Here's the governor coming, you'd better finish the letters for the post.

Enter Mr. BARTHOLOMEW LANE, D. R. F.

LANE. So you're a pretty fellow, don't you think ?

GEORGE. Me, Sir ?

LANE. No, not you, your cousin there, Master Terence; my plague! But there shall be an end of it. I've looked

over a great deal on my sister's account; but, unless you pay a little more attention, sir, back to Ireland you go, I'n determined.

O'G. What's the row, governor ?

LANE. Don't call me, governor, sir. I've told you forty times I don't choose to be called governor ! It's a familiarity I don't approve of. I'm your uncle, sir, unfortunately. I can't help that. My sister chose to throw herself away upon a handsome Irishman, without a penny, and I have been saddled with you, sir, as the natural consequence. I have tried to make a man of business of you, but it's in vain; I must give it up, or you'll be the ruin of me?

O'G. The ruin of you? Sure, you are joking, my dear sir; what would I be the ruin of you for ?

LANE. Didn't I tell you yesterday, before I went out, to write to Mr. Hardup, and tell him, if he didn't pay me the money he owed me, before twelve o'clock to-day, I should instruct my attorney to commence proceedings ?

O'G. You did, and I did.

LANE. You did no such thing, sir! Didn't I tell you at the same time to write to Alderman Turtle, and acknowledge the receipt of £100 which he left here the day before ?

O'G. You did; and I did, I tell you.

LANE. I did, and you didn't, I tell you. You sent the receipt to Hardup, and the threat of proceedings to the Alderman, who is in such a rage, he will hear neither apology or explanation. Swears I shall never dine in his house again. A man who gives the best dinners in London; and to mend the matter, I've been nearly smothered with blessings by that vagabond Hardup, who is running about telling every body my noble and delicate conduct has saved him and his family from utter ruin.

O'G. And isn't that a proud consolation to you ? Sure, a poor man's blessing is worth an alderman's dinner any day.

LANE. Terence, do you wish me to knock you down, sir?

O'G. That depends upon what's bid for me, sir. I'd be

a mighty great bargain at the price you'd put me up at.

LANE. You impudent rascal! Don't compel me to kick you out of my house.

O'G. I will not, sir; I'll go as soon as you please, without the kick.

LANE. George, what am I to do with this fellow?

GEORGE. Forgive him this time, sir; he'll be more careful in future—won't you, Terence?

O'G. It's impossible to be more careful. I wrote the letters plain enough. It's the confounded covers you've got the fashion of putting 'em in, that makes all the mischief. They'd puzzle the Pope, they would!

LANE. Well, sir, I'll forgive you once more; but mind, it's the last time; the next blunder you make, back you go to Ireland; or, at least, you don't stay here. So now sit down, sir, and write to Sheriff Capsicomb, that the Clapham and Tooting Grand Junction are doing at three and a half, and that he had better sell whilst he can.

O'G. I will, sir.

LANE. When you have written it, post it directly. I promised to let him know this morning. George will give you his address, and see if you can manage not to mistake this time. I must run back and try what's to be done with the alderman. To-morrow's a venison day at Fishmonger's Hall, and he's one of the wardens.

[Exit D. R. F.]

O'G. I believe that my uncle would dine with the devil, provided he knew there'd be venison. What's the address, George, of your father-in-law that is to be, Mr. Sheriff Capsicomb?

GEORGE. High Street, Islington; but he's got a charming place at Norwood—gave £4,000 for it.

O'G. Pickles for ever! But I'm told he's as hot and as sour as his own chilly vinegar.

GEORGE. Rather passionate; they say his first wife spoiled his temper.

O'G. Then I hope his second will mend it. Did you see her, George? They say she's a beauty.

GEORGE. A very charming woman, and not much older than Mary.

O'G. More shame for him; George, you devil, you'll be making love to your mother-in-law!

GEORGE. Write your letters, and don't talk nonsense.
(*takes his hat.*)

O'G. Where are you going?

GEORGE. To the banker's.

O'G. Stop—ask 'em to honour my cheque for £10,000, and I'll pay 'em when I come into my property.

GEORGE. Pooh, you fool! [*Exit D. R. F.*]

O'G. He's a good fellow, cousin Georgy, but a little soft in the upper story! Now, let me see if this is all right:—" Sir, I am desired by Mr. Bartholomew Lane, to inform you—um, um, um, Clapham and Tooting—two-and-a-half—sell while you can. Your obedient servant, Terence O'Grady." That's as clear as mud. Now for one of these devils of covers.—" To Mr. Sheriff Capsicomb, High Street, Islington." There you are my darling, with a queen's head upon you, and no mistake. [*Just as he is going to put the note into the envelope, his attention is arrested by a LADY passing the window.*] Och, murder! (*drops the envelope.*) It can't be! It isn't impossible! (*runs to window.*) I'll give £50, when I get it, if you'll only look this way, ma'am! She does—and it is! By all the cupids that ever Tommy Moore sung about—it's the identical she—my Bristol beauty! The Venus I came over with in the steamer from Cork! What'll I do? Where's my hat? Confusion, I can't find my hat; I'll run without it! I'll follow her to the world's end! Oh, the devil! There's nobody to mind the office; and if the governor comes back and finds me out, I'll be ruined ent rely! No matter, lucks all! Here goes! (*going out to D. R. F., stops.*) Hah! by the powers, she's gone into Mrs. Lump's, the grocer's, at the corner. If she'll only stay there two or three minutes, I know what I'll do! (*calls.*) Here, you chap in the jacket, come here with you!

A BOY *runs in at D. R. F.*

O'G. Are you the boy that wants a sixpence?

BOY. Oh, arn't I, that's all?

O'G. Then just you stand here, and keep an eye on that

grocer's shop, at the corner, whilst I write two lines to a lady, in a white bonnet, that's gone into it. If you see her come out, shout like a devil!

BOY. O, won't I, that's all!

O'G. (*writes hastily.*) "Most beautiful of created beings; if you have not forgotten the delightful hours we passed together on board the Bristol steamer, fly to the arms of your anonymous adorer, who has the honour to subscribe himself eternally yours, Terence O'Grady." (*folds the note.*) Now for the sealing wax. Where's the sealing wax? Burn the sealing wax—that's gone now! (*tossing the things about.*) Oh, here you are, (*puts the note he has written to ME. CAPSICOMB, into an unstamped envelope, seals it and runs to the boy.*) Now run, and give that to the lady in the white bonnet, and say the gentleman waits for an answer. Quick, and I'll give you a shilling.

BOY. Oh, that's plummy! [*Exit running, D. R. F.*]

O'G. Faint heart never won a fair lady! If she don't answer, I can't help it. But the boy shall follow her, and find out where she goes to, and all about her. I'll stick to her skirts, now I have got a sight of her again, she may take her oath of it. Sure, she can't have forgotten the delicate attentions I paid her, when she was so mighty queer with the pitching of the steamer, that she'd almost have considered it a personal favour if any one had thrown her overboard. Didn't I give her my own brandy and water, and carry her down to the ladies' cabin, in these faithful arms, as helpless as a baby? And didn't I miss her in coming ashore, and never gave her an opportunity of expressing her affectionate gratitude! Oh, murder! Here he comes back, the young varmint, ready to break his neck.

Enter BOY, D. R. F., out of breath.

BOY. Sir! sir!

O'G. Well, what's your news?

BOY. The lady's compliments, sir, and she'll come over to you directly.

O'G. The devil she will! Hurrah, Terence!—you've done it, you have, you fascinating villain! Here my young

Mercury—here's half-a-crown for you, and keep the change.

BOY. Oh, thank you, sir! Oh, half-a-crown! Oh, crikey!

(runs out, D. R. F., and runs against GEORGE, who enters, D. R. F.)

GEORGE. Holloa! why don't you mind where you're running to. *(gives the boy a cuff, who runs off.)* A ragamuffin! What was he doing in the office?

O'G. *(putting the note into Capsicomb's envelope and sealing it.)* Never you mind—don't you want to go out again on particular business?

GEORGE. I, no—what dy'e mean?

O'G. My dear fellow, you can't stop here. I'm expecting a lady.

GEORGE. A lady! what lady?

O'G. I don't know; don't ask me any questions, for I'm not in a state to give you a rational answer.

(walks about flourishing note in an excited manner.)

GEORGE. So it seems. Have you written all your letters?

O'G. I have; don't bother me.

GEORGE. Then post them, before you forget it.

O'G. How the devil can I post them till the porter comes in?

GEORGE. Well, here he is then.

Enter JOHN, D. R. F., with a packet.

JOHN. *(gives packet.)* The parties warn't at home, sir, and I had to wait.

GEORGE. Well, make haste, and take Mr. O'Grady's letters to the post. *(opens packet.)*

JOHN. Yes, sir. *(goes to Terence's desk.)* These, sir;

O'G. These, sir; why, to be sure, sir? Be off with you. [*Exit JOHN, D. R. F.*] And you, George, my dear boy, you wouldn't spoil sport?

(crams the note he has in his hand unconsciously into his pocket.)

GEORGE. Oh, this lady, then is—

O'G. To be sure she is. If you'll only just step up stairs for five minutes.

MRS. CAPSICOMB *appears*, at D. R. F.

Here she is!—George! If you wouldn't compel me to do something desperate—

GEORGE. Just let me have one peep.

MRS. CAPSICOMB *advances*.

(*changes his tone.*) Poh—what a fool you are, Terence, it's Mrs. Capsicomb!

O'G. (*thunderstruck.*) Mrs. Capsicomb!

MRS. C. How do you do, George. Is your father at home?

GEORGE. He is not, my dear madam, but I expect him directly.

MRS. C. I'll wait, then, if you please, for I appointed to meet Mr. Capsicomb and Mary here.

GEORGE. Mary! Is Mary coming?

MRS. C. (*smiling.*) Yes, Mary is coming with her father; you have no particular objection to such an arrangement, I suppose?

GEORGE. Oh, my dear Mrs. Capsicomb!

MRS. C. We want your father and you to dine with us, to-day, at Norwood, if you are disengaged.

GEORGE. We shall be too happy.

MRS. C. By the bye, who is Mr. Terence O'Grady?

O'G. (*aside.*) Oh, murther!

GEORGE. Terence? my cousin; he is in the office here. Terence, Mrs. Capsicomb. (*introduces them.*)

O'G. (*bows awkwardly.*) Madam. (*aside.*) what'll she say to me?

MRS. C. (*smiling.*) You sent a note to me, just now, by mistake, I presume.

O'G. Entirely, madam, by mistake. If you'll just have the kindness to— (*making signs to return the letter.*)

MRS. C. To give it to my husband; certainly.

O'G. By no manner of means, madam. Sure, when you see it's a mistake you wouldn't be going to get me into trouble by—

MRS. C. Trouble! Oh, certainly not, if—

GEORGE. What, another blunder, Terence? Oh, then I must also request, my dear Mrs. Capsicomb, to take pity

on him, whatever it is, for he is in sad disgrace with my father already.

MRS. C. Don't say another word, I beg. There is not the slightest necessity for my taking any notice of it. Mr. Capsicomb will be here in a few minutes, himself, and Mr. O'Grady can then speak to him on the subject.

O'G. (*aside.*) Speak to him on the subject! What the devil does she mean by that? Oh, I see; bless the darling. She's doing it to blind Master Georgy.

MRS. C. But, surely, I have had the pleasure of meeting you before, Mr. O'Grady. I've a faint recollection—

O'G. I had the supreme felicity, madam, of crossing the water with you, from Cork to Bristol.

MRS. C. Of course, I remember now, perfectly. I'm indebted to you for some very kind attentions; but really, I was so very unwell the whole of the passage, that I may be excused not immediately recognising—

O'G. (*aside.*) Long life to her; she's doing it beautifully.

MRS. C. I shall be delighted to make you and Mr. Capsicomb acquainted. I have often spoken to him of the civility I had received from a stranger on board the packet, and regretted that in the confusion of landing I had not the opportunity of acknowledging my obligations to him.

O'G. Obligations! 'Pon my honour and conscience, madam, the boot's on the other leg. (*aside.*) Delighted to introduce me to her husband. Poor Capsicomb! I'm sorry for him; Terence, you're a murdering villain, there's no other name for you. But what's to be done if the women will fling themselves at your feet in this manner.

GEORGE. Here's Mr. Capsicomb, with Mary and my father.

Enter MR. LANE, SHERIFF CAPSICOMB, *and* MARY.
D. R. F.

LAKE. Hah! Mrs. Capsicomb; glad to see you. Here's the Sheriff—met him just at the corner of the street. Wanted to see him. Terence, you needn't take that letter now.

O'G. It's gone, sir.

LANE. Well, it don't signify.

MRS. C. No, no, it's all perfectly right. (*to CAPSICOMB.*) My dear, you must let me introduce Mr. O'Grady to you. This is the young gentleman who was so civil to me on board the steamer.

LANE. What, Terence!

CAPS. Hah, indeed. Oh, your most obedient, young man. Any civility shown to this lady, is a favour to me. In Mr. Lane's office, eh?

MRS. C. Mr. O'Grady is Mr. Lane's nephew.

CAPS. Nephew! Oh, your nephew—eh? (*to LANE.*)

LANE. Yes; Terence is the son of my sister Martha; she married a captain of the Irish Dragoons, on half-pay, and—

O'G. And I'm what my uncle calls the natural consequence.

CAPS. Ha, ha! Irish eh?—humph. Sad fellows, Irish. Play the devil with the women. Pretty story this morning about one of your countrymen. Ruined the domestic happiness of one of the first drysalters in the City of London, not a hundred miles from Thames-street! Never mention names.—Be all in the papers to-morrow!—Wife remarkably fine woman!—Only met the fellow at the Polish Ball, at the Mansion-house, last week.

LANE. Alarming rapidity.

O'G. Paddy's a mighty fine boy, and that's the truth of it.

CAPS. Oh, if I was the husband, I'd have some awful vengeance. I don't know what; but something terrific.

O'G. You'd call him out.

CAPS. Call him out! An Irishman! Not a bit of it. He'd be too happy to come. No, no; I wouldn't give him a chance. And as to the wife, I'd—I'd—oh, I'd—

MRS. C. No doubt, and serve him right, I dare say. But you are not the husband, my dear, and so you needn't work yourself up into such a fury.

CAPS. Very true, my love. No, I am not the husband, and I thank my stars, that with such a model of a wife, it is impossible I should be the husband! For I feel I should forget my duty as a magistrate of this great city, and be

guilty of some desperate act, which might bring me to the bar of the Old Bailey.

MRS. C. Lord, my love, don't say such horrid things, I beg.

MARY. Dear papa, you quite make me shudder.

O'G. (*aside.*) Does the monster suspect, and mean that as a hint, I'd like to know ?

LANE. (*crosses to L.*) Come, come, let us change the conversation. I want to speak to you, sheriff, on a matter of business ; just step into my room. Mrs. Capsicomb and miss Mary will, perhaps, walk up into the drawing-room George, show the way. [*Exit with CAPSICOMB, D. 2. E. L.*]

GEORGE. Yes, sir, certainly ! Mrs. Capsicomb, may I have the honour—

MRS. C. Oh, take Mary, pray, I know you'd rather. I'll follow you.

[*Exit GEORGE and MARY, D. 2 E. R. ; as MRS CAPSICOMB is following, TERENCE stops her.*]

O'G. Madam ! Mrs. Capsicomb! one moment!—only say that you forgive and pity poor Terence O'Grady.

MRS. C. Forgive and pity you ! What for ?

O'G. What for ?—and is it with your own beautiful lips you can ask me that question, after reading the note I sent you, and concealing it, like an angel, as you are, from your brute of a husband.

MRS. C. Sir?

O'G. The monster that has torn from me the woman I adore, and sundered two loving hearts that were made for one another.

MRS. C. Mr. O'Grady, to whom can you possibly allude ? My husband tore you from the woman you adore!—had you unfortunately, then, fixed your affections upon Miss Capsicomb ?

O'G. Miss Capsicomb ! Devil a bit! it was upon Mrs. Capsicomb, bad luck to the man that made you so, when you might have been Mrs. Terence O'Grady, and the mother of a race of Irish gentlemen—instead of a shop full of dirty little pickles.

MRS. C. Are you crazy, sir—or to what am I to attribute this extraordinary and offensive declaration ?

O'G. Offensive! When I tell you my intentions were

honourable. That when I sent you that note, full of passionate tenderness, I had no more idea of your being Mrs. Capsicomb, than I had of your being the Pope of Rome.

MRS. C. Passionate tenderness! Mr. O'Grady you must have taken leave of your senses ! What note did you ever send to me, except this one, without an address, but evidently intended for Mr. Capsicomb ?

O'G. Mr. Capsicomb?

MRS.C. (*reads.*) " Sir, I am desired by Mr. Lane, to inform you that Clapham and Tooting are doing at two and a half—"

O'G. Stop! Stop! That's not the note at all.

MRS.C. It is signed Terence O'Grady ; and some little boy brought it to me, at Mrs. Lump's, from a gentleman in this house.

O'G. It's a mistake, it's a mistake.

MRS.C. Well, you told me so before, and at your own request I did not hand it to Mr. Capsicomb.

O'G. It was the other note.

MRS.C. What other note ?

O'G. Why, the—oh! oh, murther! murther!

MRS. C. Mercy upon me, what's the matter ?

Enter ME. LAKE *and* CAPSICOMB, D. 2 E. L. GEORGE *and* MARY, D. 2 E. E.

LANE. What in the world's happened?

GEORGE. }
and MARY. } Somebody called murder!

CAPS. Mrs. Capsicomb, you are agitated! Anything wrong?

O'G. (*aside to her.*) Silence, or you're a lost woman!

MRS. C. (*aside.*) What can he mean? I'm frightened out of my life!

CAPS. (*crosses to her.*) Mrs. Capsicomb, my dear, I ask you, is there anything wrong ?

MRS. C. I don't know, indeed? Ask Mr. O'Grady; I—

CAPS. Mr. O'Grady?

LANE. Terence, you rascal, why don't you speak ? What made you howl out in that manner ? Is the Bank broke, or the Lord Mayor dead, or the house on fire ?

O'G.' Yes, sir ! No, sir! I'll go and enquire, sir!

CAPS. (*perceiving the letter MRS. CAPSICOMB has dropped in her fright.*) A letter: Perhaps this may explain!
(looks suspiciously, first at MRS. CAPSICOMB and then at O'GRADY.

O'G. (*aside.*) The green-eyed monster!

CAPS. (*reads.*) " Sir, I am directed by Mr. Bartholomew Lane, to inform you that Clapham and Tooting—"

LANE. Why that's the letter I told him to write to you, sheriff; and that you told me you'd sent. (*to TERENCE.*)

O'G. And so I had, sir. That is to say, I thought sir—

GEORGE. Oh, my dear father, I find I can explain this mystery; Terence, evidently, was under the impression that he had posted this letter, and finding he had not—

O'G. That's it exactly, sir. (*aside.*) For I've posted the other, directed to her husband, and we're ruined and undone, the both of us.

LANE. Is that all? It's well it's no worse, you blundering booby. I thought Consols had dropped to sixty, at least.

CAPS. Humph—very odd, call murder, because—

GEORGE. Oh, sir, it was only murder in Irish. But no doubt it frightened Mrs. Capsicomb.

LANE. The fact is, Mr. Terence knew that I had promised to send him packing the next blunder he made, and I've a great mind; for although this luckily happens to be a matter of no consequence—

O'G. (*aside.*) No consequence!

LANE. It might have been of great importance—a question of life and death.

O'G. (*aside.*) It is a question of life and death.

LANE. It would have been just the same to that block-head.

CAPS. Well, well, we must be going. Come, my dear, come Mary. You'll dine with us, to-day, Mr. Lane, and you, George—at five precisely; and then we'll fix the wedding-day, eh? (*shakes hands.*)

LANE. Ay, ay, we'll be punctual, sheriff.—Good morning, Mrs. Capsicomb; dear me, you look very pale still. I'm sorry my stupid nephew has frightened you so.

MRS. C. Oh, nonsense, it was only for a moment, I—
(*aside.*) What has that foolish young man done ?

CAPS. (*impatiently.*) Now, my dear! Good morning,
Mr. Terence O'Grady! (*sneeringly.*)

[*Exit* CAPSICOMB, MRS. CAPSICOMB, *and* MARY, D. R. F.

O'G. (*aside.*) The Hyæna! I could strangle him. And
to think that he may revenge himself upon that innocent
darling. What will I do ? What will I do ?

(*throws himself despairingly on the chair.*)

GEORGE. Terence.

LANE. What's the matter now ?

GEORGE. Poor fellow ! he's so sorry for what he's done.

O'G. You may say that. Ha ! I never thought of it.
(*calls.*) John! John! (*rings bell violently and breaks the
handle.*)

LANE. The boy's mad. There, he's broken the bell,
now.

GEORGE. Terence, Terence—are you frantic ?

O'G. I am—John! John!

GEORGE. What d'ye want with John ? He's out; gone
to the post.

O'G. To the post.—Are you sure of it.—Did you see
him go ?

GEORGE. Of course I did; didn't you give him the let-
ters yourself.

O'G. id, I did; and the villain took 'em! If there's
murder, he's an accessory

LANE. Murder again, Terence, what have you done ?

O'G. Done ! I have compromised the honour of an
innocent female, and there may be murder, I tell you.
The old pickle merchant would poison the beautiful crea-
ture as soon as look at her. But he shan't live to do it.
If any body's to be hanged, I'm the man.

LANE. Pickle merchant! Good gracious ! Compromised
the honour—

GEORGE. Are you speaking of Mrs. Capsicomb ?

Enter JOHN, D. R. F.

O'G. (*rushing at him.*) Ha!—the letters, the letters,—
you thief of the world!

JOHN. Lord, sir, what letters, what d'ye mean?

O'G. The letters you took to the post, what did you do with them ?

JOHN. Why put 'em in the post, of course, sir.

O'G. Where? What post, speak. (*shakes him.*)

JOHN. Oh, Lord, sir.—the grocer's, at the corner, Mrs. Lump's, sir.

O'G. Mrs. Lump's—(*flinging him off.*) Where's my hat.

LANE.
& GEORGE. } Terence! Terence!

O'G. Where's my hat? (*sees Mr Lane's, and snatches it up.*)

LANE. That's mine, my best.

O'G. I'll have my letter again if I die for't.

(*cramming the hat on his head, and rushing out D. R. F., knocking over JOHN.*)

LANE. Confound it; my best hat. Terence—John—George! I said it—I know it! that boy will be the death of me. (*sinks in chair.*)

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

ACT II.

SCENE.—A Grocer's Shop. Counting-house door L. 2. E. Door in flat E. Door R. 2. E. Window, and street seen through. Mrs. LUMP discovered at her books, L., a MAN putting parcels into basket.

MRS. L. (*entering the goods.*) Six black, Mrs. Brown.

MAN. Right.

MRS. L. Three green, Mrs. Brown.

MAN. Right.

MRS. L. Three sultanas, Mr. Turk; one loaf, Mr. Shortbread; six moist, Mrs. Sandlove; two Isinglass, Miss Vane.

MAN. Right.

MRS. L. Very well, and you've got the pearl barley, and the arrow root, for No. 46; and the soojie for the new family over the way.

MAN. Yes, missus.

MRS. L. Very well; and the parcel for Mrs. Capsicomb is to go by the train, from London-bridge, remember.

MAN. Yes, missus; it's all right.

MRS. L. Well, then, be off, and get back as soon as you can, for Thomas is out, too, and there's nobody to mind shop but myself.

MAN. Yes, missus. *[Exit with basket, D. R. F.]*

MRS. L. Well, to be sure; only to think that my Bristol acquaintance, Julia Higgs, should become Mrs. Sheriff Capsicomb, and likely next year to be Lady Mayoress, and go to court, and give dinners to all the great people at the west-end. Well, some people are lucky, that's all I say. I'm sure I should as soon have thought of seeing the man in the moon walk into the shop. Why, I declare, here she comes again.

Enter Mrs, CAPSICOMB, D. R. F.

MRS. C. My dear Mrs. Lump, you can do me a great service.

MRS. L. Bless me, my dear Mrs. Capsicomb, you seem quite in a flustration. Anything, I'm sure, I can do—

MRS. C. You're a good creature I know, and the only person in London I could speak to on the subject. The folly of a young man has placed me in a very awkward position.

MRS. L. Dear me! pray go on—this is very interesting.

MRS. C. Just before my marriage, I went with my aunt to Ireland, on a visit to some friends; we had a horrid passage back to Bristol, and a young gentleman, on board the steamer, was exceedingly attentive to me,

MRS. L. Hah, a handsome young fellow, no doubt.

MRS. C. My dear soul, I was too ill to notice a feature of his face. I only know that he lent me his cloak upon deck; forced me to drink some brandy and water, and carried me below when I couldn't sit up any longer. I couldn't speak to thank him, at the time, and I couldn't see him when I landed; Mr. Capsicomb was waiting for me, with a fly, and I never thought to have set eyes upon the man again.

MRS. L. But you have—and he has declared himself.

MRS. C. I dont know what he has done; but from his alarm, and a few hurried words he uttered, I fear he has been guilty of some folly which may seriously embroil me with my husband.

MRS. L. Good gracious ! but can't you explain ?

MRS. C. Explain! oh, my dear friend, you don't know Mr. Capsicomb, with his jealousy and violent temper.

MRS. L. Jealousy! violent temper! dear, dear, just like poor Lump; and I, who was only saying to myself, as you came in, what a lucky girl you were to get such a husband.

MRS. C. Ah, well! it can't be helped now. He's very fond of me, and all that; but I've no time to loose, so let me tell you what I want you to do for me. This young man, is a neighbour of yours, and if you will see him, and ascertain what he has done that—

MRS. L. Somebody's coming. Just step in here for a moment.

MRS. C. Provoking. (*retires into counting-house, L. aside, as he goes in.*) Heavens! 'tis he!

Enter TERENCE O'GRADY, *hastily*, D. R. F.

O'G. Mrs. Lump!

MRS. L. Sir.

O'G. You are Mrs. Lump, arn't you ?

MRS. L. Certainly, sir; what may you please to want ?

O'G. My darling Mrs. Lump, you see an unfortunate young man before you, whose fate is in your hand.

MRS. L. Good gracious ! Lord, sir, what do you mean ?

O'G. I mean, that if you've got the least morsel of heart left in your beautiful bosom, you'll take pity on a young Irish gentleman,

MRS. L. Me ! why I never saw you before in all my life.

O'G. What's that to do with it ? You see me now—in despair ! Are you a woman, and can you deny me ?

MRS. L. Deny you? hang the fellow's impudence, I declare its enough to make Lump come out of his grave.

MRS. C: (*aside, looking out.*) What can he mean? What can he want ?

O'G. It's only to give it me, and say nothing about it.

MRS. L. Give it you! give you what? Stand off, or I'll call a policeman:

O'G. He'll be here presently, and then it's all over with me.

MRS. L. A policeman ! Then you're a thief! oh, and Thomas is not at home.

O'G. Bother the policeman ; I mean the postman.

MRS. L. The postman !

O'G. He'll come for the letters.

MRS. L. Of course he will—at two o'clock.

O'G. Then hand it over, my darling, and I'll bless you for ever.

MRS. L. Hand what over ?

O'G. Don't I tell you—the letter! the letter!

MRS. L. What letter? what are you talking about ?

O'G. The letter I sent to the post by mistake, I keep telling you.

MRS. C. (*aside*) Ha!

MRS. L. You keep telling me ?—you never told me any such thing, and I couldn't help it if you had. If the letter's in the box, it must go.

O'G. Go!—Mrs. Lump! Where do you expect to go, if you behave in this way to a fellow creature in distress ?

MRS. L. Go out of my shop, and don't talk nonsense to me you impudent fellow ? If Mr. Lump was alive—

O'G. If Mr. Lump was alive, he'd melt at the tale I could tell him; and I won't leave the shop without my letter, if I die for it.

MRS. L. Keep on that side the counter, or I'll take the chopper to you, I will. Arn't you ashamed of yourself to threaten a poor lone widow woman ? You, a gentleman!

O'G. I don't threaten you—I beseech you, for the sake of your sex. I've compromised the honour of a beautiful creature ; written a letter entreating her to fly to my arms.

MRS. C. How?

O'G. And directed it to her husband.

MRS. CAPS. [*coming from L. D.*] Hah! then I'm ruined!

O'G. Mrs. Capsicomb!

MRS. L. My goodness, Mrs. C!—then that's the young gentleman.

MRS. C. Yes, yes; and if he really has been so foolish, so mad, so wicked, as to write such a letter—

O'G. Wicked, I wicked ! if there ever was a lamb—

MRS. C. Do give it him back, my dear friend, for my sake, and send him about his business.

MRS. L. But my dear soul, I can't; I musn't! it's agin' the law. I should be ruined if anybody was to know of it.

O'G. But nobody can know of it; Lump's dead, and Thomas is out; I heard you say so. Give me the box.

MRS. L. Go away—here's somebody coming now.

(MR. CAPSICOMB *appears at door* E. F.)

MRS. C. My husband! (*runs back into counting-house.*)

MRS. L. The Sheriff!

O'G. The devil! (*hides with Mrs. CAPSICOMB, D. L. she trying to prevent him.*)

Enter CAPSICOMB, R. D. F.

CAPS. I beg your pardon, ma'am—Mrs. Lump, I believe?

MRS. L. Yes, Sir.

CAPS. I am Sheriff Capsicomb, married an old friend of yours, I understand.

MRS. L. Oh, yes, sir; Mr. Sheriff Capsicomb—to be sure, sir, Miss Julia Higgs.

O'G. (*aside to Mrs. CAPSICOMB,*) Julia—your name's Julia.

MRS. C. (*aside.*) Hush, for mercy's sake.

CAPS. Mrs. Capsicomb is here, I fancy?

MRS. L. Here, sir! She—she has been here, sir!

CAPS. Oh, gone again, is she?

MRS. L. Oh a long time, sir.

O'G. (*half-aside and forgetting himself.*) Bravo, Mrs. Lump. (*Mrs. CAPSICOMB implores him to be silent.*)

CAPS. Can't be a long time, for I left her myself not twenty minutes ago. She was to have gone by the train, to my house, at Norwood, with my daughter. Thought they'd have been there by this time. To my surprise, saw Mary eating a jelly, by herself, in a pastry cook's shop; told me Mrs. Capsicomb had left her there whilst she ran back for something she had forgotten; couldn't have missed her, surely; came straight down the street.

MRS. L. I think she said she'd go a little further.

O'G. Bra—(*MRS. CAPSICOMB stops him.*)

CAPS. Where the deuce is she gone to? So provoking; I've finished my business in town, and we might all go home together. She can't have gone to Mrs. Lane's, eh?

MRS. L. Mr. Lane, the stock-broker, sir It's not impossible.

CAPS. I'll just step there and—

Enter MR. LANE, R. D. F., with Terence's hat on.

Hollo ! here you are!

LANE. Sheriff, you here ?

CAPS. My wife at your house ?

LANE. No ! she went away with you, didn't she ?

CAPS. Yes, but—

LANE. Excuse me a moment, Sheriff. My good neighbour (*to MRS. LUMP.*) one word with you in private. May I step in here ? (*going to door, L*)

MRS. L. (*hastily,*) No, no, if you please, not there!

(*preventing him.*)

LANE. Hah! (*seeing MRS. CAPSICOMB and TERENCE.*)

CAPS. (*turning suddenly.*) What's the matter ?

LANE. Nothing ! something in my eye, that's all!

MRS. L. A fly, no doubt; let me see, sir. The nasty things, they're the plague of my life, sir.

CAPS. Of course! a grocer's; is it out ?

LANE. Oh yes, it's out. (*aside.*) I'm horror-struck !

MRS. L. Anything so sudden, sir, makes one jump so—doesn't it, sir ?

CAPS. Jump! faith you made me jump; you're sure Mrs. Capsicomb's not at your house ?

LANE. Positive!

CAPS. Then I'll go to the pastrycook's; she must come there for Mary. Good morning, Mrs. Lump ; don't forget five o'clock, Lane. [*Exit, D. R. F.*]

O'G. (*coming forward.*) He's gone!

LANE. Oh, Mrs. Lump !

MRS. L. Mr. Lane, upon my word, sir—

MRS. CAPS. (*advancing.*) What will become of me ?

LANE. Oh, Mrs. Capsicomb !

MRS. C. Mr. Lane, notwithstanding appearances—

O'G. Yes, sir, notwithstanding appearances—

LANE. How dare you speak to me, you young villain.

O'G. I won't speak to you. Mrs. Lump, the letter—before it's too late. (*draws out the letter box.*)

MRS. L. Oh, my goodness, you can't—I musn't—

Mrs. C. Yes, yes, for my sake; Mr. Lane will hold the shop door.

LANE. I!—what for ?—no such thing.

(TERENCE empties box on counter.)

MRS. C. Yes, my dear sir, I'm sure you will, only for a moment.

O'G. There it is—I see it!

MRS. L. You shan't.

O'G. But I will; sure it's my own letter, and I've a right—(*snatches one.*)

MRS. L. You've no right.

LANE. No, you've no right.

O'G. Hold the door, governor. (*reading the address.*) "Miss Honeycomb, Milliner." Miss! it's a Miss!

MRS. L. There, I told you so! Give it me back, directly.

O'G. Honeycomb; I'd have sworn it was Capsicomb; did anybody ever see such an H as that (*gives back the letter.*) There—there it is! (*matching at another.*)

Mrs L. No, no. (*struggles with him.*)

O'G. It is, I tell you—"High Street, Islington." I read it as plain as life; in my own beautiful handwriting, and no mistake.

MRS. C. Thank heaven!

O'G. Hurrah! here madam, (*to MRS. CAPSICOMB.*) now you shall see. (*opens letter hastily.*) Oh, murder—what's this. "Sir, I enclose you a crossed cheque for £50, being the price of the mustard." It's not my handwriting after all.

MRS. C. And the name's Lipscomb.

LAKE. Opened a letter with money in it. That's felony.

MRS. L. I'm a ruined woman! Oh! oh!

MRS. C. Oh, my dear sir—felony!

LANE. It's transportation; it was hanging; we're all accomplices.

O'G. £50 worth of mustard! only to think—It's enough to blister the whole parish!

MRS. L. What shall I do—what shall I do!

O'G. What'll you do? Why, seal it up again, and say nothing about it. I don't want the man's money.

LANE. No, no, point it out to the postman, and let it go as it is; it will pass for an accident.

O'G. Bravo, governor!—You're right, governor!—He's a cute boy, the governor.

LANE. You impudent rascal; oh, if I hadn't held the door, I'd have informed against you myself.

O'G. Bless your stars that you have been spared the painful necessity. But where's *my* letter all the while?

MRS. C. It isn't here. It can't have been posted here.

O'G. That villain, John—I'll strangle him.

MRS. L. Or it might have gone by the twelve o'clock.

O'G. Twelve o'clock! Was it before twelve, governor?

LAKE. How should I know, sir? How dare you ask me?

O'G. Wait 'till I find John. (*rushing towards D. R. F.*)

LANE. Give me my hat; you've got my hat; here's yours.

Enter GEORGE, R. D. F. TERENCE runs against him.

GEORGE. Oh, confound you.

O'G. Don't mention it; I'm not hurt; never mind me.
[*Exit R. D. F.*]

GEORGE. Mrs. Capsicomb! you are here, then?

LANE. Yes, she is here—and a pretty—

(*flings TERENCE'S hat into the counting-house in a passion.*)

MRS. C. (*crosses to c.*) My dear sir, hear me, at least, before you condemn; I can assure you I am as indignant as you can be, at Mr. O'Grady's conduct, and innocent of any clandestine correspondence with him.

GEORGE. I am sure of it, madam; but, unfortunately, your husband—

Mrs. C. My husband! oh, sir, speak.

GEORGE. I have just left Mr. Capsicomb in a state of excitement—

MRS. C. Ah! then he suspects, or perhaps has been (told—

GEORGE. I was coming here after my father, who feared some imprudence of Terence.

LANE. Imprudence! oh, if you only knew.

GEORGE. When I was hailed by Mr. Capsicomb, who was standing at the pastry-cook's door, with Mary, he was in a dreadful rage at being kept waiting. Mary insisted you were here, and he swore you were not, that Mrs. Lump told him you'd been gone sometime; and at last he seemed to be struck by the notion that Mrs. Lump had deceived him, and that you were hidden here.

MRS. C. Ah, there, I feared so, and nothing will convince—

MRS. L. Oh, dear,—oh, dear! that a woman of my respectability should be placed in such a predicament.

GEORGE. I told him it was impossible, and volunteered to hunt for you one way, whilst he went another.

MRS. C. Oh, let me run then, at once, and do you, dear Mr. Lane, prevent that mad young man molesting me any further.

MRS. L. (*looking out at the door.*) There he is again!

LANE. Terence.

MRS. L. No, the sheriff, looking into all the shops on the other side of the way.

MRS. C. Oh, mercy,—if he sees me coming out of this one now.

MRS. L. Follow me; and I'll let out out at the private door, round the corner.

MRS. C. Quick—quick!

[*Exeunt* MRS. LUMP *and* MRS. CAPSICOMB, R

GEORGE. Just in time, he's crossing over, and coming here.

LANE. I'll tell him the whole truth, that rascal Terence is alone to blame, and—

GEORGE. Pray, don't, sir; he'll mix us up in the business somehow, and there'll be an end of my union with Mary.

LANE. That's true, that's true; he might object to the connection, if he suspected; and he will suspect—he's so confoundedly suspicious.

GEORGE. Hush, here he is.

Enter CAPSICOMB, R. D. F., *looks about the shop, coolly but suspiciously.*

Have you found Mrs. Capsicomb, sir?

CAPS. No, have you?

GEORGE. No, sir; I was just waiting to ask Mrs. Lump, sir, if—

LANE. Yes, we were just waiting to ask Mrs. Lump.

CAPS. You? Why you were here when I asked Mrs. Lump.

LANE. So I was; you're quite right, I was, and—

CAPS. And there was something in your eye, you remember.

LANE. To be sure there was; you're quite right, a fly, plague take it!

CAPS. You're certain it was a fly?

LANE. Oh, certain, Mrs. Lump took it out.

CAPS. Mrs. Lump, oh, she's a kind person, that Mrs. Lump? I may say a useful person—a very useful person.

LANE. A very respectable person, too, I can assure you, Sheriff.—known her a long time; knew her husband; managed all their money matters. Poor Lump! left her very well off.

CAPS. I beg your pardon, but I think this is the way you were looking when the fly flew in your eye. (*crosses and looks into D. R.*) A hat, eh?

(*taking up the one LANE has flung into the counting-house.*)

LANE. That's mine.

CAPS. Yours! (*looking at the inside.*) Is your name Terence O'Grady?

LANE. (*aside.*) Confound it; that is, when I say mine, it's the one I came in; Terence took mine, and I came after him with—

CAPS. After him: oh, then Mr. O'Grady has been here, too?

GEORGE. Yes, sir, my cousin has been here; but he's been gone some time.

CAPS. Oh, he's been gone some time, and Mrs. Capsicomb has been gone some time—perhaps they went together!

GEORGE. My dear sir, what an idea!

CAPS. Where is Mrs. Lump?

LANE. Just stepped up stairs; she'll be down in a minute.

Enter TERENCE O'GRADY R. D. F.

O'G. (*not seeing CAPSICOMB.*) It was before twelve and the letter's at Islington by this time; but I'll go and—(*GEORGE motions to him, and at last succeeds in making him aware of CAPSICOMB'S presence.*) Oh, oh, it's there you are, Mr. Sheriff!

CAPS. Yes, here I am, Mr. O'Grady. Is there anything particularly remarkable in my being here?

O'G. Nothing in life, sir; only I thought you were at Norwood, sir; but as you're not a bird, its a reason as we say.

CAPS. What letter, pray, is at Islington by this time ? One for me ?

O'G. For you, sir! It's a mighty likely thing I should send a letter to Islington, for you, when I thought you were at Norwood.

CAPS. But before twelve, you couldn't know I was going there.

O'G. (*aside.*) The Rhinoceros! (*aloud.*) Are you the only inhabitant of that suburban locality, called Islington, Mr. Sheriff, I'd like to know ?

LANE. Terence, don't you be impertinent, sir.

O'G. I'm not impertinent! It's a statistical question of considerable interest to the public in general, and to myself in particular.

CAPS. Well, sir, if the letter was not to me, or does not concern me, of course I've no more to say on that subject. I shall, however, return to my house, at Islington, before I go to Norwood, and ascertain if there are *any* letters for me, or for *any persons* residing under my roof?

O'G. (*aside.*) The Hippopotamus ? If I don't get before him—

CAPS. Good morning, Mr. Lane !

LANE. But didn't you want to see Mrs. Lump ?

O'G. To be sure you wanted to see Mrs. Lump. Mrs. Lump, here's the Sheriff wants to speak with you.

LANE. She's not there—she's—

O'G. I say she is.

GEORGE. No ; she's in the house.

CAPS. Ah ! then who is here—(*runs into counting-house.*)

O'G. (*locking him in.*) *You are*, my darling, and I'll trouble you to stay there !

LANE. } Terence ?
GEORGE. }

CAPS. (*within.*) Hollo ! hollo!

O'G. There's something in the keyhole, be easy while I go for the locksmith ! (*runs out R. D. F.*)

LANE. My hat.

Enter Mrs. LUMP, D. R. 2 E.

CAPS. (*within*) Let me out, Mrs. Lump!

Mrs. L. The Sheriff locked in! Where's the key?

GEORGE. Terence has got it?

LANE, And my hat!

CAPS. (*bursts open door of country house.*) It's a conspiracy! You're all in it. I'll indict you all!

GEORGE. There's an end of my marriage.

Enter Mrs. CAPSICOMB and MARY, R. D. F.

CAPS. Mrs. Capsicomb.

Mrs. C. My dear, I'm afraid I've given you a great deal of trouble.

CAPS. May I ask, madam, where you have been all this while?

Mrs. C. For this last quarter of an hour with Mary, waiting for you.

CAPS. But before, madam—before?

Mrs. C. First here, as Mary told you, and then to half a dozen other shops for something I couldn't find after all.

CAPS. For what, madam—for what?

MRS. C. Mr. Capsicomb, I'm surprised at you; these questions—this tone! Pray, sir, what portion of my conduct justifies this extraordinary outbreak, in the presence of Mrs. Lump, and these gentlemen.

CAPS. Mrs. Lump! oh, I—I'm aware that your *friend* Mrs. Lump—

MRS. L. What are you aware of sir? Nothing to my disadvantage, sir;—I'm a respectable tradeswoman, sir; though I say it that should not say it, sir; and pay rates and taxes, sir; and my rent every quarter-day, sir; and have my name in the Bank book, as Mr. Lane here can witness for me; and I don't care if you were the Lord Mayor, as well as the Sheriff, and the City Marshal, and the whole corporation into the bargain!

LANE. My good neighbour; my dear Mrs. Lump—I'm sure the Sheriff didn't mean—

(*great noise without, cry of*" POLICE ! POLICE ! "*)*
What on earth's the matter now?

Enter TERENCE O'GRADY D. E. F., *in custody of a* POLICEMAN ; *his dress disordered; his hat crushed and muddy, followed by* JOHN *and* RICHARD. *A CROWD is seen round the door and window—great uproar.*

CAPS. Hollo, hollo, Richard, what brought you here?

JOHN. I brought him, sir; he came after you, sir, to our house, with some letters—

MRS. C. }

LANE. }

GEORGE. }

MRS. L. }

Letters!

CAPS. Where are they ?

POLICE. I've got them, sir.

(gives them to CAPSICOMB dirty.

RICHARD. That young man, sir knocked 'em out of my hand, all in the mud, sir ; see.

O'G. I did no such a thing, sir; I merely offered politely to be the bearer of them.

RICHARD. No you didn't!

O'G. There, he owns I didn't.

CAPS. Hold your tongue, sir. Let me hear what the man has to say; go on Richard.

RICHARD. Yes, sir ; if you please, sir; as me and John sir, were going along, sir, we met this young man, sir, and John says to him, says he—no, he says, to John, sir.

O'G. There! he's contradicting himself!

CAPS. Silence.

RICHARD. He says to John, sir; no; it was John, said to him.

O'G. No prevarication, sir.

CAPS. Silence ! John do you speak—

JOHN. Yes, sir—you see I was coming along with your servant, sir, and I sees Mr. Terence a running like mad; and I says to this here young man, says I, here comes Mr. Terence; he's been ready to kill me almost for posting a letter to your master.

CAPS. So—

O'G. It's no such a thing ; John, if you dare—

CAPS. Silence! How dare you try to intimidate the witness, sir!

RICHARD. Yes, sir; that was it, sir; and then, sir, John says to that gentleman, " Here's the Sheriff's servant has come from Islington with some letters"—upon which he makes a grab at 'em, sir; and as I held 'em fast, we had a scuffle, sir, and down they goes in the mud, and we a scrambling after 'em, sir; and as he was stronger than me, sir, I called " Police," and—

CAPS. An assault upon my servant, in order to possess himself of my letters. What can this mean? (*aside.*) Mrs. Capsicomb, Mr. Lane, Mrs. Lump, all seem conscious and agitated. Bless my soul! There is certainly some horrible mystery. (*aloud.*) Policeman, you know me.

POLICEMAN. Yes, your worship.

CAPS. Send away those gaping people outside! I know this person, and will settle the business myself; but stay at the door in case I should want you.

POLICEMAN. Yes, your worship. (*goes to the door in F.*) Come, move on there! (*is seen outside dispersing the mob.*)

CAPS. Now, then, three letters and a newspaper; these all came since I left home.

RICHARD. Yes, sir; as you have said I was to forward—

CAPS. Quite right! now let me examine—

MRS. L. I'll have nothing examined in my house, sir; nothing, sir—you've got no charge against me, and you've no right to bring a mob about my doors, and interrupt my business in this way; I wouldn't put up with it if you were Gog and Magog!

CAPS. Very well, ma'am, very well; by all means—I can read my letters elsewhere; but depend upon it I will sift his matter to the bottom, madam. Richard, come with me, I may want to ask you a few questions; and then, Mrs. Capsicomb, I may have to ask you a few questions.

[*Exit with* RICHARD, D. R. F.]

O'G. It's all over with me! he's got it; I saw it in his hand.

Mrs. C. He must be told the whole truth, and Mr. O'Grady must take the consequences.

LANE. I said so; I said so at first.

GEORGE. } But if he won't believe—
MARY. }

LANE. It can't be helped.

Mrs. L. (*looking off at D. R. F.*) There, I see him at the coffee-house window over the way; he's opened one letter.

ALL. Ah!

Mrs. L. There's nothing in that, I can see by his manner!

O'G. John, you villain, you will have to answer for this? (*shakes him.*)

JOHN. Me, sir? lord, sir? how, sir? I, sir? why, sir?

Mrs. L. There's the second!

GEORGE. That can't be it, he has torn it up and thrown it away.

O'G. The third! the last! the fatal one! Fly dearest of women, while you are safe; I'll follow you to the world's end!

MRS. C. Mr. O'Grady!

MRS. L. Oh, lord!—that must be it; why look at him now; what a state he's in; jumping about like mad!

O'G. Fly, I conjure you! John, run for a cab! I'll meet the tiger, and endure his wrath! George, take all I've got in the world, and be a father to your mother-in-law. (*as he pulls out his pocket-book, a letter drops on the stage.*) What's this? eh! Oh, oh! Hurrah, hurrah! there's life in a muscle. (*dances about and flourishes letter.*)

GEORGE. Terence!

MRS. C. Mr. O'Grady!

LANE. He's out of his wits!

O'G. I am—I am, governor. Here's the letter! here it is my darling, Mrs. Capsicomb; look—look!

GEORGE. Never posted!

LANE. In his own pocket all the while.

MRS. C. And he's almost killed me with fright!

MRS. L. And turned me and my letters topsy turvy!

JOHN. And shaken me nearly to pieces.

GEORGE. }
& MARY. } And might have stopped our marriage!

Mrs. L. Write a letter and carry it himself—the Irish Post!

LANE. Oh, you stupid, blundering—

O'G. Say what you please; I forgive you, governor; I forgive you all!

Mrs. L. Forgive! Here's the Sheriff!

O'G. Let him come; who cares. Ha, ha! Hurrah!

Enter CAPSICOMB, hastily, with a letter in his hand, D. R. F.

CAPS. Ha, ha! I know all about it! I've found you all out! Ha, ha! Hurrah!

Mrs. C. Mr. Capsicomb!
GEORGE. Father!
MARY.

LANE. He's gone mad, now ?

O'G. (*unthinkingly, flourishes his own letter before the eyes of CAPSICOMB, who is, however, too much occupied with the one in his hand.*)

CAPS. You all knew of this letter—Mrs. Lump and all. It was posted here, this morning. You wanted to get it first to give me an agreeable surprise.

MRS. C. I'm sure I'm delighted, if—

CAPS. Oh, ay, pretend you know nothing about it; and you, too, my old friend, confess you are the principal culprit!

LANE. I!

O'G. To be sure he is! The governor knew all about it! Didn't you, governor! (*aside.*) Say yes, like a man. (*pokes him in the ribs.*)

LANE. How dare you!

CAPS. There—there, you hear your nephew acknowledge it. Mr. O'Grady, give me your hand; I've done you an injustice. I see you have only been guilty of a pardonable mistake, in posting this letter instead of leaving your uncle to hand it to me to-day after dinner, by way of a *bonne bouche!*

O'G. Exactly—that's it; you're a witch, Sheriff; (*aside.*) What's it about, I wonder ?

CAPS. To think of old Peter Potter making a fortune in India, and paying twenty shillings in the pound, after all!

LANE. Why you don't say so! Why he owed you three or four thousand pounds ?

CAPS. £3,675 14s. 3d.; and you knew he was going to pay me, with fifteen years interest on the money. The letter came under cover to you; he says so.

LANE. There was an India letter, certainly, with an enclosure for you.

CAPS. Oh, there was ; and not a word, of course, to give you a hint; come, come, it won't do,

O'G. No, no, it won't do; the murder's all out the Sheriff knows all about it. It's spoilt the fun a little, but no matter, Sheriff, I wish you joy; Mrs. Capsicomb I wish you joy. (*shakes hands.*)

CAPS. To be sure, to be sure; and wish George and Mary joy, for they shall come in for their share of the windfall.

(O'GRADY *shakes hands with them.* JOHN *offers his hand, which O'GRADY knocks away.*)

Mrs. Lump, I hope you'll forget my being a little hasty. As an old friend of my wife's, I shall be happy to see you at Prospect Lodge.

MRS. L. Oh, Mr. Sheriff—I'm sure—

CAPS. Mr. O'Grady, you'll dine with us to day ?

O'G. With the greatest—

LANE. No, no, he can't, he's going a long journey on particular business!

O'G. The devil I am! Where to ?

LANE. To Cork, *via* Bristol!

O'G. To Cork ?

LANE. (*aside.*) This very afternoon. So make haste—pack up, and pack off, or I'll tell the Sheriff everything.

O'G. Oh, governor! Uncle, darling; sure—

LANE. Not a word; I've done with you; I'll pay your expenses back, and that's all; so come along !

O'G. I beg your pardon, that's my hat, here's yours. (*gives him the crushed hat.*) I'd change with you, but I've further to go than you have—if you won't take pity on poor Terence O'Grady and let him stop—

LANE. No !

O'G. Ladies and gentlemen—speak a good word for me to the governor; mine has been the pursuit of letters, under difficulties; encourage me in it, and allow me to correspond with you, every evening, by means of—THE IRISH POST.

CURTAIN.