

CRINOLINE.

An original Farce

IN ONE ACT.

BY

ROBERT B. BROUGH,

AUTHOR OF

" The Moustache Movement" " Medea," " Lord Bateman,"
" Kensington Gardens," &c.; and (jointly) of " The
Enchanted Isle," " Sphinx" " Mephistophiles"
" Camaralzaman and Badoura" " Last
Edition of Ivanhoe," &c. &c. &c.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
WELLINGTON STREET, STRAND,
LONDON.

CRINOLINE.

*First Performed at the Royal Olympic Theatre,
on Thursday, December 18th, 1856.*

Characters.

MR. COOBIDDY (a *Commercial Gentleman in the
Manchester Trade, aged 29*) MR. F. ROBSON.
CAPTAIN LE BROWN (*of the Blues, aged 26*) MR. G. VINING.
JOHN LIPROT (*also an Officer of the Blues,
aged 30*) MR. H. COOPER.
JACOB GRIMES (a *representative of the Industrial
Interests*) MR. H. DANVERS.
MRS. COOBIDDY (*the Commercial Gent's Wife,
aged 23*) MISS MASKELL,
BELLA (*the Commercial Gent's Niece, aged 19*) } MISS MARSTON.
MISS TITE (*a fashionable Spinster, aged—?*)... } MISS BROMLEY.
NANCY BITTERS (a *Domestic Servant, with an
excellent character from her last place, but not
so well provided for her next, aged 37*) MISS STEPHENS.
MR. J. ROGERS.

SCENE—LONDON, 1856.

Time of representation—48 minutes.

Costumes.

MR. COOBIDDY—Blue frock coat, grey vest, green plaid trousers.

LEBROWN—Very long skirted fashionable grey coat, grey plaid trousers, hat and umbrella.

LIPROT—Policeman's great coat, hat and trousers.

GRIMES—Moleskin jacket and trousers, vest, leather apron and paper cap.

MRS. COOBIDDY—Figured muslin morning dress. *Second Dress:* Blue gauze ball dress.

BELLA—White muslin dress and crimson sash.

NANCY BITTERS—Blue narrow striped cotton dress, black stuff petticoat, white collar, check apron, and white cap. *Second Dress:* Grey three flounced crinoline dress, with skirt to be torn off, shewing hoops, &c.

MISS TITE—Fashionable three-flounced red silk dress, black velvet jacket, and small bonnet.

CRINOLINE.



SCENE—A Sitting Room in Mr. Coobiddy's House, furnished in the style of a comfortable Suburban Villa; door, R. 2 E.; door in flat, R. C.; centre doors; Window, L. 2 E.; Closet, L. 2 E.

MRS. COOBIDDY and MISS TITE discovered seated. The latter in walking costume and dressed up to the height of the prevailing fashion—large hooped skirt, tight waisted jacket, small bonnet, &c. (she is however very old and ugly)

MISS T. Oh, my dear, I assure you you must have one. It is indispensable, my love, *dee rig yewer*—in fact. You cannot possibly show yourself in the street without one, *toot le mond* wears them.

MRS. C. (R. C.) Well, for my own part, do you know I can't say that I greatly admire them.

MISS TITE. And pray, my dear, what can it matter whether you admire them or not? I trust you are not going to set up your individual opinion against the fashion. But you really surprise me by your want of taste. Who can help admiring them? Observe the majestic and graceful sway they give to the figure while walking! (*rises and walks up and down front of stage, wagging her skirt about ridiculously*) And when one has a waist *biang tourney* they give one an opportunity of showing it, with the assistance of these dear delightful little jackets.

MRS. C. My husband says the new fashions in dress make a lady look like a perfect bell.

MISS T. (*simpering*) Oh, indeed! I am glad to find your husband a man of taste for once in his life.

MRS. C. For once, indeed! Well, upon my word! But he doesn't mean the sort of belle you do—he means a bell like the great bell of St. Paul's, or Big Ben.

MISS T. *Quel monstre!*

MRS. C. (*aside*) Oh! I'm not going to have my dear Tom called names. And he says a little wringing—at the neck would do you all good, for making such frights of yourselves.

MISS T. (*angrily*) Your husband is a vulgar wretch. *Et vooz etes un oter, ma'am.*

MRS. C. (*rising*) But he says you look even more like the dome of St. Paul's than the bell, and that the pinching in of your waists carries out the resemblance, for it reddens your nose and makes you show a little cross at the top.

MISS T. Did I come here to be insulted ? *Par deu toot!* Not if I know it.

MRS. C. (*warmly*) Oh, then if you only came to insult me and my husband, as I have no intention to put up with it, the sooner you get outside of my door the better, if you can squeeze yourself through it.

MISS T. (*ironically*) Exquisite breeding, really! You are positively a credit to your amiable and gentlemanly husband, in the Manchester trade, (*going up to C.*, MRS. COOBIDDY *crosses to L.*) I will have the pleasure of leaving you to the enjoyment of his very refined society, (*snappishly*) and wishing him good luck of his precious bargain.

MRS. C. The same to your husband—and I wish you may get one.

MISS T. (*curtseying at C. D.*) *Madame, jee voo soo wait be bong jour*—and many of 'em !

(*as MISS TITE is about to leave the room majestically, she is stuck fast in the doorway, with COOBIDDY, who is about to enter; a struggle ensues, MISS TITE screams*)

COO. Gently, my dear madam—one at a time, and perhaps we may manage it.

(*draws back*—MISS TITE *passes him contemptuously, and Exit C. and L., COOBIDDY stands in doorway, looking after her and calling*)

The next time you feel inclined for a morning call, I should recommend Buckingham Palace—my staircases are rather narrow. (*stands looking after her*)

MRS. C. (*seated, R. C., and glancing nervously towards door, R. flat*) The old tabby! I'm glad I've got rid of her. If I had told her I had ordered one myself, she would have thought I was imitating her.

COO. (*calling off, L. C.*) Take the street to the right, it's the broadest; you might meet a cab in the other, and the consequences would be dreadful. (*comes forward, looking back occasionally*)

MRS. C. (*aside, still looking at door, R. flat*) I wonder if the man would have the sense to escape by the lawn windows ? he must know the importance of secrecy in such cases; and he seemed a very intelligent person—I don't hear any noise. (*turns to her husband, trying to appear unconcerned*) Well, Tom dear, are you obliged to start on your journey this afternoon ?

COO. (*takes chair and sits, C.*) Before I answer that question, Mrs. C, allow me to ask one.

MRS. C. (R. C.) Certainly, Tom. (*aside*) Can he suspect ?

COO. Are you deeply versed in the History of England ?

MRS. C. I'm sure I don't know, Tom, I hope I learnt all that was proper, at Mrs. Backboard's.

COO. I have no doubt but you did, with a great deal that wasn't into the bargain; but I do not allude to the ninepenny Pinnock, or the three-and-sixpenny Goldsmith, of the early scholastic period. I would simply ask you, if you are at all versed in the domestic manners of our ancestors of the Elizabethan and previous epochs ?

MRS. C. Oh ! If you are going to use hard words 

COO. By no means, my love, I wish to complete your defective education, beginning where the respected Mrs. Backboard appears

to have left off. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, my life, and previously—as you may learn from the Annals of Stowe and others; it was customary for the most respectable fathers of families, when their grown-up daughters misbehaved, or made fools of themselves, to give the said grown-up daughters, a thundering good whacking.

MRS. C. How very dreadful!

COO. Ah ! you have no idea *how* dreadful! for the indignant parent was not legally restricted, like the more frequently indignant husband, to a stick no thicker than his thumb; so that the favourite weapon in such cases, was the mopstick. I assure you it did the young ladies a world of good. I never regretted the decay of old English customs more than at the present moment.

MRS. C. Good heavens ! what do you mean ?

COO. Well, it doesn't matter much ! I don't suppose that Miss Tite, who has just left us, at her time of life, can be blessed with a father, young and strong enough to give her the thrashing she requires. But I only know, if I had a wife, daughter or sister, capable of dressing herself in imitation of a summer cabbage, with the stalk uppermost—

MRS. C. (*coaxingly*) Would you beat me with a mopstick, Tom ?

COO. No, I don't say that; six months with hard labour is a consideration in these times; but I would—

MRS. C. (*as before*) Apply for a deed of separation, Tom ?

COO. There would be no occasion for that; we should be already separated three or four yards either way;—if you wore one of those horsehair—I beg your pardon—They are made of horsehair, I believe ?

MRS. C. Of course, Tom. (*aside*) I dare not tell him the iron truth!

COO. No; in that case I should simply claim a legal ratification of the matter. I should say, let my wife enjoy her independent liberty within the territories of her horsehair—what do you call it?—and let me enjoy mine in single blessedness, at a considerable distance outside the frontier.

MRS. C. (*aside*) I dare not tell him !

COO. But then, I have no fear of you; you are a woman of sense or you could never have married me—you are the nearest approach on earth to a perfect being, otherwise, how could I have fallen in love with you? But I am uneasy about Bella.

MRS. C. I am sure, Tom, you ought not to be; she is a dear good girl.

COO. (*rises and crosses to R.*) Very likely; but she is eighteen years of age, and is a fearful responsibility for a young uncle only-going on for his thirty. It was rather a mean proceeding on the part of my big brother Joe, to die at all; he was forty-five, and ought to have known better.

MRS. C. But I am sure, dear, Bella is all that we could wish.

COO. I don't know—I don't know! (*takes MRS. COOBIDDY forward, C.*) She wants your strength of character and purity of taste; I have already detected a baneful tendency on her part to turn her front hair inside out, and gum it back, so as to shew the

roots instead of the portion which nature intended to be visible. On the occasion of giving her a paternal salute, I have found a good deal of her complexion come off on my coat collar, causing me to remind myself of the jovial miller who resided on the banks of (R.) the River Dee. Take my word for it, Maria, unless we look very sharp after that girl, she'll come to Crinoline yet.

MRS. C. (L. ; *aside*) I wish he were not so prejudiced—I should like to tell him the whole truth.

COO. However, I must be off, the train starts at six; I'm due at Manchester in the morning—and to think you will be obliged to go to the party without me.

MRS. C. Well, you may comfort yourself by knowing that I shan't at all enjoy myself, Tom.

COO. There's something in that, to be sure; but it is hard when a fellow has a pretty little wife, and a snug little home to be obliged to leave them for six months in the year.

MRS. C. It is indeed, Tom. That horrid business !

COO. Stop a bit! The business isn't so particularly horrid, after all; it pays the rent of the snug little house, and stocks the wardrobe of the pretty little wife, not to mention such minor considerations as legs of mutton, coals, boots, assessed taxes, and potatoes. On the whole, I rather like the business than otherwise. Besides, Johnson has promised to take my place as travelling partner, after Christmas.

MRS. C. Oh, that will be delightful!

COO. Won't it ? Then we shall begin to enjoy ourselves, if you like. Little trips in the country.

MRS. C. And now and then a box at the Opera.

COO. Now and then ; but as a rule, I prefer Astley's. And lobster suppers!

MRS. C. And pic-nics in the summer!

COO. And you to tie on my shawl every morning, and give me a kiss, and wave your pocket handkerchief to me when I'm top of the 'bus.

MRS. C. And get such nice little dinners ready for you, by the time you come home in the evening.

COO. And then shrimps for tea.

Mrs. C. And muffins!

COO. And cribbage, and you not objecting to smoke, and little drops of something warm after supper. Oh, what a fairy-like existence !

MRS. C. Delicious!

COO. (*looking at watch*) But, unfortunately, it isn't to come off till after Christmas—and it's five and twenty minutes to six; I haven't a minute to lose. Eh! where the deuce is—oh, I know ! in that room ! (*going quickly towards door of room in R. flat*)

MRS. C. (*hastily intercepting him*) What is it you want, dear?

COO. Nothing; only my railway wrapper.

MRS. C. It isn't there, dear?

COO. Oh, yes, it is; I spread it on the sofa when I went to take my nap to save the cover from my boots. (*going*)

MRS. C. (*detaining him*) Let me get it for you, dear!

COO. Pooh ! I might have got it myself twenty times over by this time. (*looking at watch*) It's only three and twenty minutes to six.

MRS. C. (*detaining him*) No, Tom—really—you can't go into that room just now.

COO. Why not?

MRS. C. Well, because you can't. In fact, there's somebody there.

COO. Well, I don't suppose it's anybody I need be very much afraid of. (*going*).

MRS. C. No, indeed, Tom, you really must not. (*aside*) I must tell him a story. Bella is there trying on a new frock-body with the dress maker.

COO. Then why the deuce couldn't you say so before ? I don't want to see Bella trying on her new frock-body with the dress maker. There's my old wrapper in the hall, quite good enough for Manchester. By Jove, it only wants one and twenty minutes now ! Come and help me on with my great coat, and I'll kiss you in the passage. (*going towards C. D.*)

Enter BELLA, R. 2 E.

BELLA. (*at door*) Why, Uncle Tom, you're never going without saying good-bye to me, surely ?

COO. Bella!

MRS. C. (*L. aside*) How very unfortunate !

COO. (*C.*) Isabella Coobiddy, come here ! Why are you not in that room ?

BELLA. In that room, Uncle ?

COO. Yes, trying on a new frock-body with the dressmaker. (*MRS. COOBIDDY makes signs to BELLA*)

BELLA. (*perplexed*) The dressmaker ! Oh ! really—I—she's gone, Uncle, and I've come out.

COO. May I ask how, Isabella Coobiddy ? Up the chimney ? The unsullied purity of your muslin belies the supposition. Out of the lawn windows ? It's raining cats and dogs, Isabella—though I don't see any ; and, as the sporting gentlemen say, you do not appear to have turned a hair—and you haven't come through that door, Isabella, for I've been watching it. So, in short—how about it ?

MRS. C. Well, Tom, if you must have the truth !

COO. Well, if you happen to have such a thing about you, Mrs. C, I should like it.

MRS. C. Well, then—I told you a story—there !

COO. (*sits, C.*) Mrs. Coobiddy, I had anticipated that portion of your narrative by my own unaided intelligence—proceed !

MRS. C. I have a particular reason for not wishing you to go into that room.

COO. Well, let's hear if it's a good one.

MRS. C. You mustn't ask me to tell it, Tom.

COO. Oh ! you've another particular reason for keeping it dark, have you ? Mrs. Coobiddy, I don't like this.

MRS. C. You surely cannot suspect me of anything wrong ?

COO. (*aside*) Well, it wouldn't do to confess it before a third party if I did. I don't say that.

MRS. C. But you mean it, apparently, and I won't put with it! Here is the key of the room, sir; use it or not as you think fit—only if you do, I warn you, I shall consider it an end to all confidence between us. (*aside*) He'll never go in after that, surely !

COO. (*rises, standing undecidedly, and looking wistfully at the key*) Well, I like that—I do like that! As if I was the first to withhold confidence ! You know, Maria, I have no secrets from you. Why, the other night, when I came home a little the worse, I told you who I'd been with, and what I had taken.

MRS. C. Pray, satisfy your doubts.

COO. Stuff and nonsense! I have no doubts. There, take the key; what do I want with it ?

MRS. C. I will only accept it with the assurance that you believe my little secret to be perfectly harmless, as I give you my word it is.

COO. Harmless ? of course it is. (*coaxingly*) But you might tell a fellow. I'm a mighty inquisitive chap, I know; but I take after my mother.

MRS. C. You have the remedy in your own hands. (*aside*) He'll never use it, surely.

COO. (*aside*) I really don't know what to do.

MRS. C. You had better decide, or you will miss the train. (*aside*) He's wavering.

COO. (*gravely*) Maria Coobiddy, I have decided. I believe that a suspicious husband is the most degraded of characters; but as upon serious reflection I remember there is a large hole in my old wrapper, and as it's nearly a quarter to six, I shall just go in and fetch my new one.

Unlocks door, R. F., and goes into room.

MRS. C. (*falling hysterically into chair, C.*) I didn't think he would do it. Bella, I am a ruined woman!

BELLA. (R.) Good gracious, aunt, how shocking!

MRS. C. I know not what I say!—but it was all through you. (*speaks in great agitation*)

BELLA. Through me?

MRS. C. Yes, I was envious of your superior youth and beauty;—in a moment of weakness I consented, from a wish to rival you.

BELLA. Well, I'm sure !—thank you. But I hope Captain Le Brown has more taste—

MRS. C. Do not think too harshly of me, Bella. You wouldn't have given way, I know—but I am justly punished. He comes, and knows the worst.

Re-enter COOBIDDY, R. D. F., he looks very grave and mysterious.

COO. (C.) Mrs. Coobiddy!

MRS. C. (R. C. *trembling*) Yes, Tom.

COO. I have been in that blue chamber of mystery—

MRS. C. I know, Tom.

COO. And it is my duty to tell you that I have there discovered—
MRS. C. Yes, Tom.

COO. (*looking angrily at C. D. which has been agitated*) What's the matter with that door?

MRS. C. (C.) Which door?

COO. That one.

MRS. C. It's the wind, I suppose.

COO. Then I wish the wind would mind it's own business, and not interrupt people at critical moments. I say, that in that room I have discovered—

MRS. C. I am listening, Tom.

COO. Nothing whatever.

MRS. C. (*looking up*) No!

COO. Not even my railway wrapper, which I now remember to have—(*turning angrily towards door, C.*) Will you be quiet, wind?

MRS. C. (*aside to BELLA*) He has escaped by the lawn window, to spare my shame. Devoted creature!—I could hug him for it.

BELLA. (*aside, R.*) Well, I'm sure! A pretty sort of an aunt I've got!—and he to call himself a captain.

MRS. C. (*aside to BELLA*) Oh, Bella, this shall be a warning to me!

BELLA. (*in reply*) I hope so, ma'am; but don't come too near me, if you please.

COO. (*sternly*) Well, madam!

MRS. C. (*aside to BELLA*) Fear nothing, dear, we are quite safe now. (*BELLA bounces away from her indignantly—to COOBIDDY with forced laughter*) Why, you stupid creature, don't you see that—

COO. I can't see anything while that confounded door keeps rattling so. (*the movement of the C. door is suddenly stilled*) Don't I see what?

MRS. C. (*giggling*) That we have been making a fool of you?

BELLA. Don't say "we," if you please, Aunt.

COO. You have been making a fool of me? Do you know, Mrs. Coobiddy, I had some suspicion to that effect, from the beginning? and I feel by no means assured on the subject at present. I advise you not to try it on again in any way—some ways especially. (*looking angrily towards C. D., which is again agitated*) There must be something more in the wind than I know of; that door was all right yesterday. I was about to say that it only wants twelve minutes to six, and as I now remember having put my wrapper in this cupboard—

(*crosses towards cupboard, L. 2 E.—NANCY BITTERS who has been agitating the door C, bursts into the room—runs down to L, and places her back against the cupboard, having previously abstracted the key, which she conceals*)

NANCY. (*hurriedly warding COOBIDDY off from the cupboard*) Quite a mistake, sir!—it ain't here, I took it up stairs myself. You had better all three go up and rummage for it, or you'll miss the train, sir.

MRS. C. (R. C.) IS the woman mad?

BELLA. (R.) If not, she's tipsy.

NANCY. (*up stage, L. C.*) Ho, indeed! there's a chalk for both of you.

COO. Nancy Bitters, will you allow me to come to that cupboard?

NANCY. (*withdrawing*) Certainly, sir, if you wish it; but I warn you, you are wasting time.

COO. I will trouble you for the key.

NANCY. The key, sir? Bless you, sir, the key of that there cupboard has been lost this fortnight.

BELLA. I saw her put it into her pocket not a minute ago.

NANCY. (*aside*) You did, did you?—you'll owe me one more for that. Sir, I can only say this is not the first time I've had to deplore that there young person's habit of speaking the untruth, and I'm sick of shielding her.

MRS. C. (R. C.) You intolerable hussey! how dare you? Mr. Coobiddy, force that cupboard door open; it's my belief that the creature—

NANCY. Don't call me a creetur, Mrs. Coobiddy, or I'll let out upon you.

COO. Woman, what do you mean?

NANCY. Oh, you're agoing to call me names too, Mr. Coobiddy. I shan't open my mouth—though, gracious knows I've kept it shut long enough. (*aside*) I'm safe for the sack, so I may as well make 'em all uncomfortable. No, sir, not a word, if you was to trample me to death with elephants.

MRS. C. She has either got concealed in that closet some of my missing property, which I taxed her with stealing this morning, or else one of her fellows.

NANCY. One of my fellows? Ho, indeed! pray make sure, mim, that it ain't one of *your* fellows, which I have concealed to screen you? (*aside*) That was pretty well thought on, considering the hurry of the moment

COO. Anne Bitters! spinster! explain yourself.

NANCY. Mr. Coobiddy, you're a *pore* creetur, sir, and has my warmest sympathies—that's what you are.

MRS. C. Mr. Coobiddy, will you force open that closet, or do you wish to hear me further insulted?

COO. Mrs. or Miss Bitters, unless you at once shut your mouth and open your cupboard, you'll see what I will send you, which will most probably be in the form of a policeman.

NANCY. A policeman! Ho, indeed!—that's your idea, is it?

MRS. C. Bella, open the front door, and scream for one.

(*BELLA is going up R. towards C. D.*)

NANCY. Stop, mim. (*BELLA stops*) You are determined on a policeman, are you, sir?

Coo. Emphatically.

MRS. C. I should think so.

BELLA. There's generally one at the area railings opposite, at this time of the afternoon.

NANCY. Stop, mim. (*BELLA stops*) If you must have a policeman, and as it is as well to keep scandal from getting beyond the premises—(*opens cupboard, L. 3 E.*) John Liptrot, come out of that!

JOHN LIPROT, *a policeman, comes out, bowing confusedly.*

MRS. C. I knew it!

BELLA. I was sure of it!

MRS. C. Mr. Coobiddy, pay the wretch a month's wages, and send her about her business; but mind she doesn't leave the house till I have examined her boxes.

NANCY. (*aside*) Ho, indeed! you owe me one, and a few more, and I'll have 'em all out of you before I go.

MRS. C. Mr. Coobiddy, you will also please to take that policeman's number, and report him at Scotland Yard. Bella, give me your arm; we must not stay to be further insulted.

BELLA. (*drawing back*) Thank you, aunt;—there are certain matters to be explained between us.

MRS. C. You goose! I can explain everything. Come along.

Exeunt BELLA and MRS. COOBIDDY, R. D 2 E.

COO. Now, really, this is very annoying, I've missed the train, and I'm sure I don't know what to do. Policeman, I suppose it would be a mere matter of form if I were to ask you to take yourself into custody. (*JOHN touches his hat*) But allow me to ask you as a friend, whether you consider that cupboard a portion of your official beat?

NANCY. (*nudges JOHN not to speak—sentimentally*) Surely a tender-hearted, loveable gentleman, like yourself, Mr. Coobiddy, wouldn't prevent *a pore* gal from forming a honest attachment.

COO. A poor girl! stop a bit! Anne Bitters, spinster. (*sits, C.*) Your outward appearance gives me the idea of the ripest imaginable six-and-thirty.

NANCY. Four-and-twenty, I assure you, sir, we a fine grown *fambly* and matures early. Some of us at forty would astonish you.

COO. But what right has that policeman?—

NANCY. (*aside to JOHN*) Say as I say, you fool! Well, sir, the fact is, if you must know, which I am loath to tell it. He was called in.

COO. Called in?

NANCY. Well, after all, it's my duty, and know it you must, sooner or later. I could not abear it no longer, sir. I couldn't stand, to see a handsome, well-grown gentleman, like yourself, with every quality to charm the *hi* and win the heart.

JOHN. (*L. aside*) Dror it mild, Anne!

NANCY. (*C.*) And what's more, sir, I wouldn't. No! I says, I can make every allowance for the flightiness of a young married woman, and Mr. Coobiddy being absent on business, six months in the year is certainly some excuse.

COO. (*R.*) Good heavens! What do you mean?

NANCY. Bless you, sir, I have spoken to her over and over again, like a mother—I mean like a sister a year or two older; but, lor! what could I do again officers in the army and navy, and medical students—

COO. (*aghast*) Officers in the army!

NANCY. And navy, sir; but especially in the medical perfession.

You have no idea of the goings on in your absence! but at last, mortal patience could stand it no longer, and I was determined your property should be protected this time, so I called in John.

JOHN. Yes, sir—she called me in, sure enough.

COO. My property, woman! What do you mean?

NANCY. Lord bless your blindness, sir! haven't you noticed a great falling off in your stock of neat wines, bottled porter, and spirituous liquors?

COO. I have! I have!

NANCY. And an equally astonishing heaping up of butcher's and grocer's bills!

COO. True! true!

NANCY. Bless you, sir, nothing was too good for them—game pies, anchovies, lobster salads, and the choicest Hawannahs.

COO. Oh! this is an infamous calumny! Scorpion!

NANCY. Well, I'm sure!

COO. How dare you accuse an angel of innocence, like Mrs. Coobiddy?

NANCY. Oh dear, no, sir! not for worlds! If I'm to be called out of names—(*going—returns*) A month's wages, if you please, and wishing you a pleasant trip to the North.

COO. (*aside*) This is too horrible! I thought such things only happened in French novels; and yet that mysterious room! Tell me, woman, as you hope to be married, had you any suspicion of anybody being concealed in that apartment?

NANCY. Had I? (*aside*) What's the fool driving at? Bless you, sir, there's always somebody concealed there.

COO. But I have looked in the room.

NANCY. Not under the sofa, sir! That's where they hide, in general—look again, sir!

COOBIDDY *rushes into the room, R. D. in flat.*

I believe I have put a spoke or two in Mrs. C.'s wheel! John Liptrot, go down in the kitchen—you'll find a pidging pie on the dresser, and a humbrellar containing perquisites under it; you'd batter be off with both.

JOHN. Pigeon pies, Anne, is all in the way of business; but loaded umbrellas is larceny. I'll attend to the pie!

Exit, C. D.

COOBIDDY *rushes out of room, R. D. in flat, pale and agitated, with an open letter in his hand.*

COO. Anne Bitters, spinster!

NANCY. Sir!

COO. Can you read?

NANCY. Printing hand, sir.

COO. Ah! this is written hand! I found it lying on the table. You will observe that this letter is addressed to Mrs. Coobiddy; you can make that out?

NANCY. Ah—m—yes, sir, perfectly.

COO. (R. C.) Now listen! (*reads in a tragic voice*) " Seeing as

how the company, K. U. M., company, didn't seem inclined to slope, I hooked it out of the lawn winders, W. I. N. D. E. R. S., winders. I have took *it* with me. It shall be all right. I'll be in time for you to go to the party, never fear; I'll be at the Hairey Gate, H. A. I. R. E. Y., Hairey! at seven o'clock. I'll whistle 'Pop goes the weasel.' Your gal can let me in. Bless you, I am up to these sort of dodges, having had a many such affairs on my hands, and *ope* I know how to manage 'em with proper delicacy. Yours most E. F. efeckshunately, Jacob Grimes." Now, who is Grimes?

NANCY. One of the lot, sir.

COO. The lot?—oh, heavens!—What is Grimes?

NANCY. In the dragoons, sir—a cornet.

COO. A piston?

NANCY. Oh dear no, sir; the real thing.

COO. But you don't mean to say this execrable scrawl, and positively criminal orthography, are the work of an officer in Her Majesty's service?

NANCY. Lor bless you, sir! haven't you read the divulgements in the newspapers, about officers exasperating their H's, and spelling colonel with a K?

COO. True—too true! And this is the end of my dream of domestic life. Farewell to the lobster suppers, the cribbage party in the summer, the pic-nic after tea, and the little drop of something warm on the box seat of Astley's Italian omnibus—Coobiddy's occupation's gone! (*sinks in chair, C. then starts up*) Anne Bitters, spinster!

NANCY. Sir?

COO. What sort of a man is Grimes?

NANCY. Ahem!—what you'd call a military looking sort of a man, sir,

COO. Tall?

NANCY. Well, tallish.

COO. Of gentlemanly but repulsive aspect?

NANCY. That's him, sir.

COO. The individual I allude to has an all-round collar, and a tendency to carrots.

NANCY. That's Grimes, sir.

COO. He has a habit of twiddling his moustache, which I believe to be as false as himself.

NANCY. You've hit him off to a T, sir,

COO. I'll hit him off to Jericho! Why, I've noticed that fellow prowling about the house for the last two days; I thought, perhaps, he lived in the neighbourhood. I trod on his toe as I turned the corner, near the lawn gate, as I came in, and he begged my pardon—I hope I scrunched his favourite corn. Anne Bitters!

NANCY. Sir.

COO. Look at me.

NANCY. I do, sir—and a fine growed gentleman you are of your inches.

COO. It is a question of inches. How much bigger do you suppose the infamous Grimes to be than myself?

NANCY. Very trifling, sir; a foot-and-a-half, there or thereabouts.

COO. But don't you think, armed with a righteous cause, and a

thick stick, I should get the best of him in a fair stand-up fight, if I were to come suddenly upon him behind ?

NANCY. No question on it.

COO. Then I will submit my honour to the terrible ordeal of battle. I have pistols and other fire irons on the premises : Grimes shall meet with a reception he little anticipates. (*looks at his watch*) Five and twenty to seven. In five and twenty minutes the hated melody of "Pop goes the weasel" will be sounded at my area railings—I think he said seven. (*consulting note*) Yes—"at the hairey gate at seven o'clock." Oh, domestic visions !—quiet evenings !—cold beef and pickles !

NANCY. Very natural on your part, sir; but be calm, sir.

COO. By no means, Anne Bitters ! It would never do for me to be calm; I must get myself into a terrible passion, or Grimes will probably have the best of me. I will exasperate myself by reading his detested letter again. (*looks at note*) Heartless villain! " I am up to these sort of dodges. having had many such affairs on my hands !" Don Giovanni! glorying in his villany—boasting of it to his victim!

NANCY. (*aside*) Well, there's one comfort, they'll remember me when I'm gone.

COO. And he signs himself " Yours E. F.—efeckshunately."

NANCY. Well, of course he'd do that.

COO. But I'll have his blood! yes! I've worked myself up to this proper pitch of ferocity—and I'll have his blood, unless he should make very serious opposition. (*looking again at note*) " I hooked it out of the lawn winders—I—" Good heavens ! Anne Bitters!

NANCY. Sir!

COO. Here is a fearful passage unexplained—" I have took *it* with me.—*It* shall be all right!" What does he mean by *it*?

NANCY. Pray don't ask me, sir; I've said quite as much as becomes me.

COO. (*seizing her arm*) Woman ! I will know all!

NANCY. Don't call me woman, Mr. Coobiddy! But remember you are addressing a female.

COO. (*overcome*) And to think at the present moment I might have been enjoying a quiet cup of tepid coffee at the Wolverton Station (*looking at watch*) Nineteen minutes to seven! Anne Bitters, is there a frying-pan in the kitchen ? (*going up to C. D.*)

NANCY. Lor, yes, to be sure, sir; but what do you want with a frying-pan, sir ? (L.,)

COO. To dry some gunpowder!

Exit, C. D.

NANCY. (*solus*) Well, I don't think they'll forget poor Nancy Bitters in a hurry, in this here afflicted establishment; and I think I may as well go and look after my boxes. (*going to C. D.*)

CAPTAIN LE BROWN *puts his head in at R. D. in flat.*

CAPTAIN. (*cautiously*) S—s—tt! Nancy!

NANCY. Who's there ? Be off! There's a policeman within call.

CAPTAIN. (*coming down*) It's only I, Nancy!

NANCY. (L.) Oh, it's you, Captain le Brown! And where did you come from ?

CAPTAIN. (C.) Through the lawn windows; I have been watching for the opportunity for two days. Burglarious as is the proceeding, it is justified by the exigencies of the case—I wished for an opportunity of speaking to you alone.

NANCY. Keep your distance, Captain le Brown! I'm only a *pore* gal, but of reputable parients. (*aside*) He is the supposed Grimes, evidently.

CAPTAIN. Pshaw! Nonsense! You know my devoted attachment to Miss Bella.

NANCY. Well, there's no accounting for tastes.

CAPTAIN. You know I had even gone so far as to defy the objections of my family to an union with a tradesman's daughter, and to-day I had promised to declare myself to Mrs. Coobiddy's family.

NANCY. Well, then, I wouldn't advise you to.

CAPTAIN. Thank you, I have no longer any such intention, unless it is in your power to clear up a terrible suspicion.

NANCY. Then I assure you it isn't; so you may be prepared for the worst. (*aside*) As I'm going away, I ain't going to clear up nothing.

CAPTAIN. You, perhaps, do not understand me; I scarcely know how to express myself—the question is a delicate one.

NANCY. Then pray don't ask it of me; I am only a *pore* gal; but—

CAPTAIN. You said that before, Nancy. I have noticed, within the last two days, an individual coming and going from this house, an individual who—I wish to put it as delicately as I can—though of the male sex, is not what we usually call a gentleman.

NANCY. I should think not! (*aside*) What, in the name of Fate—

CAPTAIN. From unmistakeable signs which that individual has carried about with him, I argue that his visits have been to a lady residing in this house—you understand me.

NANCY. Perfectly. (*aside*) Blessed if I do!

CAPTAIN. Nancy Bitters, assure me that his visits have not been to the idol of my affections, and you will not not only make me a happy man, but I will owe you another sovereign.

NANCY. You don't happen to have one about you, do you?

CAPTAIN. Confound it, I am always forgetting my purse!

NANCY. Then don't flatter yourself—Miss Bella is the party.

CAPTAIN. I knew it. Enough! all is over! I will fly to other climes, and forget her. (*going up towards door, R. F.*) I could have overlooked an uncle in the Manchester trade—even a father who had borne the stigma of wholesale grocery. But John Edward le Brown has too much of the proud blood of his ancestors in his veins to marry a woman capable of—(*trying to open door, R. F.*) What the devil's the matter with this door?

NANCY. (L.) Hadn't you better go out at the front door, Captain?

CAPTAIN. No, I would depart as I came; I would have nobody see me in this establishment—I would be forgotten, or only remembered to be detested and reviled. Confound the latch!—and here's somebody coming!

NANCY runs out, C. D.

Enter BELLA, R. D. 2 E.

BELLA. (*aside*) I really cannot understand Aunt Maria; she seems perfectly innocent, and says she will explain all this evening but—(*seeing* CAPTAIN *at door, R. F., screams*) Ah!

CAPTAIN. (*bowing confusedly*) Madam, you observe—the—handle has come off in my hand, otherwise——

BELLA. You would have escaped without my seeing you, Captain le Brown.

CAPTAIN. (*stiffly*) I confess that I had no wish to incur the pain of an interview with yourself, madam. (*coming down, L. C.*)

BELLA. (R.) No, I dare say not;—I will bring it to a close, sir, by informing you that I'm acquainted with your motive for breaking into my uncle's house like a thief.

CAPTAIN. In that case the necessity of a great deal of explanation is saved. I need not inform you, madam, that all is over between us.

BELLA. I should think so, indeed, after your conduct.

CAPTAIN. My conduct, madam, though perhaps indiscreet, and even illegal, I consider thoroughly justified by the excess of my love.

BELLA. And you dare avow this to me ?

CAPTAIN. I dare avow it to all the world, but that I have no wish to expose you.

BELLA. (*aside*) The wretch ! He alludes to my love letters ! And I believed this man to be the soul of honour ! But are there not others who have still more to dread from an exposure ? Have you no consideration for my poor uncle's feelings ?

CAPTAIN. Not a bit ! He oughtn't to allow such things in his family.

BELLA. (*aside*) I never heard of such a monster ! At least have some pity for my aunt ?

CAPTAIN. I don't care a—snuff for your aunt.

BELLA. Ah !

CAPTAIN. If your aunt was to come here, I'd tell her that she's not fit to have the charge of young people. (*walking up and down stage*)

BELLA. (*aside*) What incredible heartlessness ! Wretch ! And whose fault is it if she isn't ?

CAPTAIN. How do I know ? perhaps she's a fool, and can't help it.

BELLA. I can bear this no longer ! (*sinks in chair, C.*)

Enter COOBIDDY, C. D., armed with a bludgeon and horse pistol.

Oh, uncle ! save me from that wretch ! The destroyer of your happiness and mine !

COO. (*in a low voice*) I am aware of it Bella, (*to Captain*) Grimes, you are before your time !

CAPTAIN. My name is not Grimes, sir ! (*going up to him*) But that is of little consequence. I should advise you to keep a better eye upon the female members of your household than you have done.

COO. (C.) Oh, heavens ! Do you think, Grimes—— ?

CAPTAIN. (L.) My name is not Grimes, sir.

COO. No matter ! I ask is it your opinion, cornet—— ?

CAPTAIN. I was gazetted to a captaincy, last week.

COO. I congratulate you ! I was about to ask you, Captain G., if you think *you* are the proper person to lecture me on the moral state of my family ?

CAPTAIN. Why not, sir ?

COO. What, after you have brought misery and despair into it ?

CAPTAIN. It is the lady's fault, not mine, sir! I have found her to be unworthy of my affections, and I renounce her.

COO. (*aside*) And to think that I dare not even hit him !

BELLA. (R.) This, then, is the poor wretch's reward for sacrificing her duty to her family.

COO. (*aside*) How beautifully she takes my part! Oh, what a miserable coward I am !

CAPTAIN. I am not aware that the lady made any great sacrifice she is perhaps to be pitied for the loss she will experience, that is all.

BELLA. (*falling on COOBIDDY'S neck*) Oh! Uncle! And I have loved this man.

COO. You ? On horror's head horrors—what do you call it ? This is more than I bargained for.

BELLA. Yes, he was to have asked your consent to our marriage to-day, but for this frightful discovery.

COO. (*aside*) His back is turned! Courage, Coobiddy, and at him ! (*moves to attack the Captain*)

CAPTAIN. (*turning round*) Now then, what's the matter?

COO. (*concealing weapons*) N—nothing!

CAPTAIN. What are you doing with those ridiculous weapons ?

COO. I was about to start for Manchester, and I always travel armed. (*aside*) Oh ! Dastard! Pitiful—Miserable Poltroon ! (*beats himself with weapons*) Oh, if I could only exasperate myself to the proper pitch (*crosses to R.*)

BELLA. (C, to CAPTAIN) Enough ! Let me beg of you to be gone! Leave this house whose peace you have destroyed! I trust that years of penitence and atonement may reconcile you with your guilty conscience.

CAPTAIN. (*aside*) By Jove, anybody would think I was the greatest scoundrel alive! I dare say I shall soon get over it, madam. (*bowing to withdraw*)

COO. (*aside*) He shan't escape me ! I'm warming up ! (*goes up R., and gets to C. D.*) Hold. Grimes!

CAPTAIN. (*turning L.*) I have told you, sir, that my name is not Grimes.

COO. No matter! Allow me to tell you that I consider you the most infernally hardened scoundrel on the face of the earth. (*striking at his toes with bludgeon*)

CAPTAIN. Be moderate, sir.

COO. I won't! my blood's up ! If you'd waited for your appointment at seven o'clock, I should have been prepared to meet you; but you took a mean advantage by coming a quarter of an hour too soon, before I had practised my courage.

CAPTAIN. (*astonished, to BELLA, L.*) Is your uncle mad ?

COO. (C., *wildly*) No—yes, sir! Ramping mad! I have worked myself up by degrees, and will have it out, if you please. You come here making love to my big brother's daughter!

CAPTAIN. Well, sir.

COO. You're another, sir! It isn't well ! After having previously supplanted me in the affections of my wife—

CAPTAIN. (*astounded*) Your *what*?

Enter MRS. COOBIDDY, R. D., 2 E., in ball dress, without crinoline.

MRS. C. (R.) What, Tom dear, haven't you gone ? Bella, it is

time you were dressed. (*curtseying distantly to CAPTAIN*) I don't think I know this gentleman.

CAPTAIN. (*bowing politely*) Madam !

COO. (*C, excited*) Oh ! I dare say ! It's too late in the day for that sort of gammon. Woman—I know him, and all about him—He is your paramour, Grimes.

MRS. C. Ah!

CAPTAIN. (*angrily, L.*) I have told you, sir, repeatedly, that my name is not Grimes. I never saw this lady before, in the whole course of my life.

COO. Pickles!

BELLA. (*R. C.*) Uncle, not two minutes ago, he told me all about his extreme love for her, excusing his conduct.

CAPTAIN. (*L.*) Who—I?

BELLA. And not two minutes afterwards you admitted you didn't care a snuff for her.

MRS. C. (*R.*) I vow I never set eyes on the man.

BELLA. Oh, aunt! you know you confessed to me yourself, that in a moment of weakness you had consented to be my rival.

COO. (*C.*) Answer that, ma'am!

MRS. C. Good heavens!—what a fearful misunderstanding! (*crossing to R.C.*) Tom, I can explain all when we are alone. This gentleman is an utter stranger to me.

COO. Oh, I'm not to be humbugged! I've screwed my courage up to the sticking—what's o'name. I'm not going to be at the trouble for nothing. Grimes, choose your weapons. (*presenting cudgel and pistol to CAPTAIN*) I'll keep the pistol.

CAPTAIN. How often am I to tell you, sir, that my name is not Grimes?

COO. I don't care whether you write in your own name, or a false one. I have your letter, sir; I found it in that room, sir—in that room, ma'am. You had taken *it* away with you—*it* would be all right—you would be in time for her to go to the party—her gal was to let you in—you were to be at the area railings, and whistle the melody of "Pop goes the weasel" at—(*a pause—a clock strikes seven—dead silence—the tune of "Pop goes the weasel" is whistled outside, C.—astonished*) That signal! -can it be? (*to CAPTAIN*) You then are not Grimes.

CAPTAIN. You confounded idiot! haven't I told you so all along?

COO. No matter—there is a Grimes, and I'll have his blood.

Rushes out, C.D.

MRS. C. Bella, has your uncle been taking anything?

BELLA. I don't know, aunt; there seems to be some fearful mistake.

COOBIDDY *re-enters C. D., dragging in JACOB GRIMES by the throat, GRIMES carries a lady's iron hooppetticoat in his hand.*

COO. You don't escape me, villain ! You are not half so big as I expected. Your name is Grimes?

GRIMES. In coorse it is—who said it wasn't?

COO. Your plebeian disguise will not serve you! you have come here after a lady?

GRIMES. (R. C.) In course I has! And as I have got three more ladies to go after on the same harrand, you be so good as to let me be.

COO. (C.) Three more ladies! The hardened profligate! (*looking at petticoats*) And what is this fearful instrument—a scaling ladder?

GRIMES. Scaling ladder be blowed! It's that ere lady's iron hoop (*pointing to MRS.C.*)

MRS. C: (*hiding her face*) Spare me!

CAPTAIN. That lady's?

GRIMES. In course.

CAPTAIN. (*pointing to BELLA*) Not this lady's?

GRIMES. No, she wouldn't have one at no price—though I offered her a beauty, a bargain.

CAPTAIN. Isabella Coobiddy, come to my arms, we may be happy yet!

BELLA. (L.) I see it all! Is it possible, John Edward le Brown, that you could have suspected?

CAPTAIN. (L. C.) How could I help it? I had seen the—the article in question going and coming from the house—I naturally assumed that it was for you, and you wouldn't suppose me capable of marrying a girl who would make such a guy of herself?

BELLA. John Edward, say no more! I wouldn't wear one for a thousand a year. (*they embrace and go up, L.*)

COO. (*to GRIMES*) Representative of the industrial interests, come here! Is this your writing? (*showing note*)

GRIMES. In coorse it is.

COO. Why did you address my wife as "yours most"—E F—"eheckshunately?"

GRIMES. Why, it's the regular thing, ain't it?

COO. By no means.

GRIMES. It's the way I always writes to my old mother.

COO. Lord, what a fool I've been, to be sure! To think (*to MRS. C.*) I had a rival concealed in that room, when it was only this ridiculous (*showing petticoat*)

MRS. C. Pray throw it out of the window, Tom, and say no more about it; I am very much ashamed of myself indeed, but as you see, I've given up all idea of wearing it.

COO. (*opening window L. 2 E. and throwing petticoat out*) Hi! boys, here's a lot of hoops for you! Bowl them along the pavement, so as to upset as many women in preposterous petticoats as possible. (*to CAPTAIN*) Grimes, come to my arms and call me Uncle! (*CAPTAIN and COOBIDDY are rushing into each other's arms—the real GRIMES interposes—the three embrace*)

GRIMES. Uncle!

COO. I didn't mean you, Grimes, but it's all the same; I could embrace all the world, I feel so happy—everything is now settled.

The C. door opens—enter NANCY BITTERS in a splendid "Sunday out" costume—a silk shirt highly flounced over a hooped petticoat of the most exaggerated dimensions.

NANCY. (C.) I beg your parding, sir, there is a trifle of twenty shillings, a month's wages, not yet settled, if you please.

MRS. C. (R.) What impudence!

BELLA. (L.) Did you ever see such a figure?

NANCY. (C.) Ho, indeed! perhaps other people may be allowed to wear iron what's-o'-names as well as some people; I suppose I'm my own missus now, and can dress as I like? Mr. Coobiddy, I will thank you to inspect my boxes which is in the lobby.

COO. (R. C. *pointing out* NANCY *to his wife*) My dear, you see what you might have come to, yourself, had it not been for the timely interposition of Providence. Nancy!

NANCY. (*up* C.) Miss Bitters, if you please, sir, being no longer in your service.

Coo, Then, Miss Bitters, I will do myself the pleasure you propose, with a view of hastening your much desired departure.

NANCY. You'll find none of your property there, sir. (*drops silver mug from under her dress*)

COO. (*picking it up*) It strikes me I find some of my property here.

MRS. C. Why this is grandpapa's silver race cup!

NANCY. Ho! indeed! It must have caught in my boot lace! Good evening!

COO. (*rushing to window, L., vociferating*) Police!

JOHN LIPROTOT *appears at C. D., wiping his mouth, and a bone in his hand.*

NANCY. John Liptrot, let me pass!

JOHN. (C.) Uncommon sorry, Anne! but if called in the way of business, I can't do it.

NANCY. (C.) Do you want me to box your ears for you, as I've done many and many's the time? What, you won't, won't you? (*struggling to get past JOHN, who bars her passage; the CAPTAIN has put his foot on one of her flounces, the skirt comes off, and discovers iron hoop petticoat with all sorts of spoil tied to the hoops; joints of meat, parasols, trinkets, bottles, grocery, &c. &c.—general consternation*)

MRS. C. (C.) And this is what comes of the fashion of wearing iron hoop petticoats!

COO. (C.) Off with her! to the lowest dungeons of the watch house!

NANCY. (*overwhelmed with shame*) John Liptrot, are you going to protect me or are you not?

JOHN. Nancy Bitters! hear me! It ain't for the things you've took, a lenient jury might put 'em all down as parkwisites, but if you think I'm going to keep on with a *gal* as is capable of making a bird cage of herself, all I can say is, Nancy—not if I know it (*going, C.*)

COO. Stop! On reflection, we won't punish her, we'll simply make use of her as a public example, (*brings her down*) Not that I want to put a stop to this sort of thing, on the contrary, we all hope, preposterous as it may be, you'll allow our Crinoline to continue the fashion.

JOHN LIPROTOT. GRIMES,

R. MRS C. COOBIDDY. NANCY. CAPT. LE B. BELLA. L.

Curtain.