

IF THE CAP FITS

A COMEDIETTA

IN

ONE ACT

BY

MESSRS.

N. H. HARRINGTON

AND

EDMUND YATES

[MEMBERS OF THE DRAMATIC AUTHORS' SOCIETY.]

AUTHORS OF

*A Night at Nott^③Hill—My Friend from Leatherhead—Double
Dummy—Your Likeness One Shilling, &c., &c.,*



THOMAS HAILES LACY,
89, STRAND,
(Opposite Southampton Street, Covent Garden Market.)
LONDON.

IF THE CAP FITS—

*First produced at the Royal Princess's Theatre,
June 13, 1859.*

CHARACTERS.

CAPTAIN LYNCH	} <i>of</i> <i>H. M. Light</i> } <i>Dragoons</i>	Mr. W. LACY.
LIEUT. DALRYMPLE		Mr. G. EVERETT.
DOCTOR FLAPPERTON		Mr. F. MATTHEWS.
JACOB, <i>Coachman</i>		Mr. DALY.
TOM, <i>Tiger</i>		Miss ELLEN TERRY .
MRS. ELLERTON . . .		Miss MURRAY.
MERTON, <i>her Maid</i>		Miss BUFTON.
SALLY		Miss J. LOVELL.

SCENE.—Windsor. TIME—Present.

COSTUMES.

GENTLEMEN.—Officer's undress uniform.

JACOB.—Coachman's dress, white wig, &c.

TOM.—Blue frock, striped waistcoat, breeches, top boots, white cravat.

Mrs. ELLERTON.—Green silk dress, hat.

MERTON.—Usual dress.

SALLY.—Cotton dress.

IF THE CAP FITS-



SCENE.— *Windsor. The Drawing Room of a richly furnished Villa. Large C. window—flower garden—walks—landscape—doors, R. 2 E., and L.—a ladies' work table, L.—table with writing materials, R. F.—a handsome velvet smoking cap on work table, L.*

MERTON *discovered arranging worsted, L.*—SALLY *dusting*

Enter TOM, C., from L.

TOM. (C.) Merton! Merton, dear!

MERTON. (L.—*starts, turns to him*) Oh, Tom! how you startled me!

TOM. I hope my presence aint disagreeable.

MERTON. Oh, no, no, I don't mean that, but you came too suddenly for my nerves. What are you waiting for?

TOM. Waiting for? why, Mrs. Ellerton, to be sure. Don't you know that missus ordered the pony phaeton punctually at two? (*looking at his watch*) And now it's gone the three quarters past, and no signs of her appearance as yet. If she has no feeling for human nature, she ought to remember that horses is flesh and blood. Merton, my love, ask her how long she intends keeping us waiting. (*walks down*)

MERTON. No, Master Tom, excuse me—if you are very anxious on that point, you had better ask Mrs. Ellerton herself.

TOM. Ask *her*—yes, that's likely—likely that I should get an answer, when not one of the swells can get her to give her 'firmative!

MERTON. What do you mean?

TOM. Officers, is my meaning—clinking swords, sly looks, bustin' sighs, that's my meaning. (*crosses, L.*)

MERTON. Officers, Tom! Oh, it's them you're alludin' to!

TOM. Of course I am ! You know that fast enough! (*crosses, c.*) Why, our pony carriage never turns into the long walk at Windsor Park, without a whole troop of dragoons a charging after us. Such a trampin' of hoofs, and a clankin' of steel, that all missus's henergy is required to keep the horses from bolting away among the helms.

MERTON. Ha, ha! what a pleasant excitement!

TOM. Pleasant, eh ? Oh ! I'm glad you think so, but if you was me, sitting behind a lady, with very soft hands, holding two horses with very hard mouths, you would soon change your opinion. As soon as ever we turn out, the moment our carriage is visible, up rides either that long Captain Lynch, that little dandified Dalrymple, or that talkative old Doctor, on his chesnut cob, and they stick to us the entire time we're out.

MERTON. Ha, ha ! And do you think she cares for any of them. Why, Tom, it's not more than two years since her bereavement!

TOM. Bereavement! Oh! what's that ?

MERTON. Ah, Tom! if ever you are a married man you may live to feel the same affliction.

TOM. You don't mean that—what is it ?

MERTON. Why, lose your husband, as Mrs. Ellerton did two years ago.

SALLY. Well, but old Mr. Ellerton's death weren't much of a loss to my thinking, for a more cross-grained, stingy, snarling, bullying old man—

MERTON. Hush ! she may hear you.

SALLY. And now she's free, with three thousand a year.

TOM. And as pretty as an angel. (*pulling up his collar*)

SALLY. I'm sure I wish our missus would marry some of these officers at once.

TOM. So do I, upon my honour! She'll never go well in single harness—besides, I don't like a lady for my master—and she has her choice of the whole garrison—why don't she marry some of them, and drive on steadily for the future.

SALLY. Hold your tongue, you little forward wretch!

MERTON. No—no! depend upon it it's for none of these milling'ary that Mrs. Ellerton is pausing.

SALLY. Then what is it she requires ? Not the curate of the parish, with the white choker and cloth boots, as comes here sometimes ?

MERTON. Him! no, I should think not, indeed! Haven't you noticed how she's always on the look out for foreign letters ?

SALLY. Ah, to be sure I have!

TOM. Jacob took the bay filly to the Windsor post-office this morning, in search of 'em.

MERTON. And don't you notice how pleased she is when there comes a thin scrimpy packet, with lots to pay for it ?

SALLY. Of course I have, and wondered what it was all about.

MERTON. And how she breaks it open at once, and turns red and white by turns, as she runs through it.

TOM. Yes—and blushes like an apple tree.

MERTON. And then have you noticed—(*runs to table, and brings down velvet cap*) No—no, perhaps you haven't, but I have—how hard she's been at work upon this smoking cap.

SALLY. Who is it for?

MERTON. Ah ! that's what I'm dying to find out—and I will find out too! MRS. ELLERTON *opens door, L. 1 E.*) Hush here she comes! (*SALLY goes to back, L.*)

Enter MRS. ELLERTON, dressed for going out, hat, parasol, &c.

MRS. E. Ah, Merton! is the carriage at the door?

MERTON. Yes, ma'am—and here's Tom waiting for orders.

MRS. E. Oh, Tom ! is Daisy's leg quite well?

TOM. Yes, ma'am—Jacob, the coachman, says that Daisy's legs are as right as an opera dancer's.

MRS. E. And has Brown Bess been properly clipped ?

TOM. Smooth as a billiard ball.

MRS. E. Then we are quite ready to start.

TOM. Quite, ma'am, and waiting.

MRS. E. Ah! well then, Merton—(*MRS. ELLERTON takes off hat, &c., hands them to MERTON*) Put up the ponies—I shall not go out to day.

TOM. (*with surprise*) Not go out, ma'am?

MRS. E. (*in a nonchalant manner*) No, I've changed my mind.

TOM.  up the ponies ? (*stands amazed*)

MRS. E. *S!* Yes—yes—don't you hear ? I shall remain at home. (*goes to table, R.*)

MERTON. (*crosses to TOM*) Don't you hear, Tom! Missus has changed her mind.

TOM. (*going towards c. door—aside, to MERTON*) Well, I never—no, I never did—she shifts round like the tin fox on the top of the stables. (*going*) If it wasn't that she gives good wages, I'm blessed if I wouldn't cut. *Exit, C. to L.*

MRS. E. (*sighing*) Heigho! No letters this morning, Merton ?

MERTON. Jacob has ridden down to Windsor, ma'am, to the post office, to see about them.

MRS. E. (*looking at her watch*) How slow he is—nearly three o'clock! What shall I do to pass away the time until he returns ?

MERTON. Have you quite finished your cap, ma'am ? nothing more to do to it ?

MRS. E. (*taking it from her hand, and looking at it*) No, Merton, it's quite finished.

MERTON. Oh, ma'am! if the gentleman for whom you've worked that, knew all the pains you've taken with it, he might well be proud.

MRS. E. (*smiling*) Well, he shall know it some day, Merton !

MERTON. (*going up, inquisitively*) Shall he, ma'am—oh, ma'am, I always thought it was for a gentleman.

MRS. E. Why, you didn't expect I'd made it for myself?

MERTON. No, ma'am, of course not, ma'am. And it is for a gentleman?

MRS. E. Yes—the kindest, the best, the truest—

MERTON. Lor', ma'am! how nice—and he is—

MRS. E. Yes, Merton, he is as you say, at—Well, never mind, you'll know all in due time! Now run to the end of the avenue, and come to me directly you see Jacob in the distance.

MERTON. (*aside*) How provoking! just as she was on the point of letting out who it was. *Exit, C. to L.*

MRS. E. How desolate I always feel when I expect a letter from him. Oh, Harry, Harry ! I wonder if your thoughts are as often with me as mine are with you—I never hear the wind come sighing through the old trees of the park, or whistling over the long walk, without fearing for your safety ! Poor dear Harry ! out among the Chinese, exposed to the dangers of war and all sorts of barbarities, and yet how cheerfully he writes—says he must pursue his profession to make money ; my first marriage was a long, weary slavery, but my second shall be—

Enter MERTON, hurriedly, c., from L.

MERTON. Here's Jacob, ma'am, with the post bag.

MRS. E. What a time he has been.

Enter JACOB, dressed in a coachman's livery, white curled wig, &c., C. from L.—MRS. ELLERTON meets him, and takes the bag from him.

What can have made you so long, Jacob ?

JACOB. (*touching his hat*) Beg pardon, ma'am, but the bay filly cast a shoe, and—

MRS. E. Now, to see if there's a letter from him. *Exit, R.*

JACOB. What a hurry she's in ! I say, Miss Merton !

MERTON. Well, Jacob!

JACOB. Who's that letter from? Somebody she's keeping company with?

MERTON. Keeping company with—go along with you—know your place !

JACOB. I should like my place to be always near you.

Enter CAPTAIN LYNCH, *suddenly*, C. from L.—MERTON *screams*
—JACOB *runs off*, C. to L.

LYNCH. (*aside*) By Jove ! I'm just in the luck of it! Good morning, Mrs. Merton ! What was that smart young man saying to you, Mrs. Merton ?

MERTON. Oh, sir—he—he was only asking for some information.

LYNCH. On a very interesting subject, no doubt ! Ah! When you've really made up your mind for matrimony, let me know—I'll make you a wedding present.

MERTON. Oh, thank you, sir, you are very generous.

LYNCH. No, Merton, not generous—a faithful servant should be always rewarded. (*goes up C.*)

MERTON. (*aside, as she exits*) The Captain is a real gentleman, and I shouldn't object to have him for my master.

Exit L. D.

LYNCH. Nothing could be more fortunate! (*takes chair*) Dalrymple and the Doctor are watching for her carriage in the park, while here am I, snug in her boudoir, with a splendid opportunity for an undisturbed interview. (*looks about the room*) And here is some of her magic work—a smoking cap—who the deuce can it be for? (*looks round to see if he is observed*) I wonder if she intends it for me—let's try ! (*puts on cap*) No, by Jove ! too small for me—the fellow hasn't so much brains as I have! (*throws cap down on table*) I am determined not to lose her—half the fellows that pursue her now, make love to her, as if she were a girl just loose from school—but I know how a widow should be wooed, and if at this interview she gives me the slightest encouragement, by my honour I'll perpetuate the family failing of the Lynch's, and this very night make a case of abduction for the fashionable morning papers. (*rises*) I must try to see her at once, or perhaps my chance of a private conversation may be lost!

Enter LIEUTENANT DALRYMPLE, C. from L.—*he comes on while*
CAPTAIN LYNCH *is speaking the latter part of his speech—as he*
sees LYNCH, he hesitates to come forward, and is about to try
to retire, when LYNCH turns and sees him.

Oh! Dalrymple, is that you—come in—don't be modest—you are quite welcome ! (*aside*) Confound the stupid dog! What brings him here now ?

—
DALRYM. Lynch, my dear fellow, you here—"quite welcome!"
What the deuce do you mean?

LYNCH. (L.) Never mind what I mean—make yourself at home—Mrs. Ellerton will be here immediately!

DALRYM. Will she? You have seen her then—you have spoken to her!

LYNCH. Spoken to her? I should think I have, indeed, and intend to say a great deal more—but if you wish for a *private* interview, I will leave you now, and return when she is disengaged. (*going*)

DALRYM. Oh, no—not at all—pray don't go—I can write—in fact I infinitely prefer writing!

LYNCH. Ah ! you sly dog—I know your game—everyone observes how you follow Mrs. Ellerton, and now I suppose you have made up your mind to pop the question ?

DALRYM. Why, yes, no, that is, of course—not—not exactly to propose, I don't think I could do that—I shall write to her. The truth is, my dear Lynch, I could never dare look her full in the face and pronounce that awful phrase, " I love you!"

LYNCH. (*aside*) Poor idiot—*he* hasn't much chance.

DALRYM. I have seriously reflected upon the dangers of a declaration face-to-face, and I feel convinced that of every ten men who put themselves into this position, nine at least make fools of themselves.

LYNCH. (*aside*) Yes, when you begin, the tenth will not be far off.

DALRYM. But a letter is easily written—saves one the trouble of looking silly, or of being caught by the servant in a ridiculous position, on one's knees in the middle of the room !

LYNCH. Ha, Dal! you are a devilish clever fellow—and—

Enter MERTON, L. 1 E.,—*she is crossing to C. D.—she looks surprised at seeing* LYNCH and DALRYM—*hesitates, then goes on to C. D., when* LYNCH *sees her, he runs to her.*

Ah, Mrs. Merton! a word with  Where's your mistress ? Will she be visible this morning?

DALRYM. (R.) Or are we doomed to disappointment ?

MERTON. (C.) Mrs. Ellerton will not be very long, gentlemen—I am going to ask the gardener to gather a bouquet for her, and on my return I will tell her you are here.

LYNCH. Thank you, Merton! (*aside, to her*) I'll not say one word about Jacob.

MERTON. Oh, Captain Lynch, how can you? (*runs off, C. to L.*)

DALRYM. Ah, Lynch ! whispering to Mrs. Ellerton's maid!

LYNCH. Suspicious old boy! (*slaps him on the back*) No conspiracy, 'pon my honour!

MERTON. (*without*) Walk in, Doctor Flapperton—walk in, doctor! Mrs. Ellerton will be in the drawing-room very shortly.

Enter DOCTOR FLAPPERTON, C. from L.

LYNCH. Ha, ha! By Jove! here comes the Doctor, too!

FLAP. (C.) What! Lynch and Dalrymple, too—all met together like a compound mixture—'pon my word, this is a strange coincidence!

LYNCH. Strange? Not at all—nothing in the world more likely than that we should all meet here.

DALRYM. (R.) Indeed!

FLAP. How so? For what purpose, Lynch?

LYNCH. Poh! Poh! What's the use of humbug—the matter is plain enough! Come, sit down, let us discuss it! (*they take chairs, LYNCH in the C.*) Now, then, my dear friends and brother officers, I may as well make a clean breast of it—

At this moment MERTON enters, C. from L., she stops to listen.

I love Mrs. Ellerton!

FLAP. (*energetically*) So do I!

DALRYM. So do I! (*MERTON slips behind window curtains*)

LYNCH. Exactly so—we shall soon understand each other—I am determined to marry her!

FLAP. (*loudly*) So am I! (*starts up from chair*)

DALRYM. And so am I! (*rises languidly from chair*)

LYNCH. Sit down, sit down—keep your temper, my good friends—don't let us eat each other up! (*they resume seats*) Remember this—the days of duelling are all over—besides, I am so certain of success, that—

FLAP. Success?

DALRYM. Certain, did you say?

LYNCH. Yes, so certain to succeed, that I have not the least objection to tell you how I intend to proceed—that is, if you will be equally candid with me!

FLAP. Well, that appears quite fair, I agree.

DALRYM. Yes, quite fair—I also agree.

LYNCH. Well, then, listen—you, Dalrymple, have acknowledged the fact that you wish to throw yourself at the feet of Mrs. Ellerton!

DALRYM. Excuse me—throw myself at her feet?

LYNCH. I mean, to marry her!

DALRYM. Oh! aw—

LYNCH. And you, Flapperton, man of the world as you are, think to carry off the prize!

FLAP. Ah! you may well call her a prize! Sound constitution, splendid anatomical development, a glorious combination of Hygeia and Venus!

LYNCH. Bravo, Doctor—an honest admission—now for our plans. In my opinion there are only three roads to a woman's heart—the first by letter, in which you can become tender and delicate as you will—the second by open declaration at a fitting moment, when a man may win his position by a well-timed speech—the third by daring, yet chivalrous adventure! Let the woman you love know that you are her slave! then, without warning, carry her off to rule you in captivity.

DALRYM. Aw ! I may as well confess that I am flattered in the belief that Mrs. Ellerton reciprocates my feeling, but somehow I haven't the courage—to—to give her the opportunity of acknowledging her preference for me, so my plan is to write to her, and ask her to be the future Mrs. Harry Dalrymple!

LYNCH. Ha, ha! bravo, Dal! you are a dangerous rival!

FLAP. Pooh, pooh! Dal, my boy, you are very young—haven't got over your amatory measles one might say—you don't know the sex as well as I do! What's the use of writing, when you can say everything you want in ten minutes? Letters turn up to be laughed at long after you and your romantic twaddle are forgotten—no, no writing for me! I intend to choose the day, the hour, the second—lead up my intention by earnest impressive conversation—feel the pulse of her heart, and look at her mental tongue; and when I see the charming patient is in a proper state for the disclosure, I will tell her the secret of the malady, and prescribe marriage as the cure—believe me, my good friends, women like to see a man in earnest in whatever he undertakes, so my plan is to speak to Mrs. Ellerton ; and I am very much mistaken if mine is not the right plan to gain her permanent affections !

LYNCH. Now then, gentlemen, hear me! Most women, and widows especially, look upon a letter-writing lover as a spooney—and as for earnest, impressive, open declaration, what's the use of it? What's the use of talking things that your eyes have said for you fifty times? For my part, I like incident—adventure—to my mind a love affair needs a little romance to lend it piquancy! If obstacles were wanting, I would create them!

DALRYM. But your plan, Lynch? Your plan ?

FLAP. Yes, tell us this redoubtable plan?

LYNCH. You shall hear it, gentlemen, you shall hear it! For me the traditional midnight hour—the silken ladder—the open window—the bribed post boy—the chaise rapid as lightning !

DALRYM. An elopement! (*rising*)

FLAP. Scandal! (*rising*)

LYNCH.  I'm for no letters, and few words, and this blessed night,  my star is propitious, Mrs. Ellerton will be Mrs. Captain Lynch as soon as a carriage and four horses can bring us to a parson !

DALRYM. Lynch, you are mad—run away with Mrs. Ellerton without a previous arrangement, without a single letter!

FLAP. Without telling her of the time she may be absent from her waiting woman—without a proper collection of her combs, brushes, and nightcaps? Lynch, you *must* be a lunatic!

LYNCH. A lunatic, eh? Very good—but you'll find there's a method in my madness—and now, as Mrs. Ellerton may appear every moment, let us decide who is to have the first interview—we'll draw lots for the first chance, and the others shall withdraw while the winner tries his plan.

DALRYM. Agreed!

FLAP. Agreed.

LYNCH. (*runs to table, on which writing materials are placed—sits*) Here is pen, ink, and paper—I will tear this paper into three pieces, and number them, one, two, three—there, for our lottery. (*tears up paper, and is about to write—stops suddenly*) Stop—egad, a thought strikes me! (*rises, and runs forward, takes DALRYMPLE by the arm on one side, and FLAPPERTON on the other*) My good friends, we have forgotten all this time that in acknowledging our plans for winning the gentle widow, we are all rivals, and may try to cheat each other.

DALRYM. Oh, aw, true—but honour! (*bowing*)

FLAP. Oh, Lynch—honour! (*bowing*)

LYNCH. Oh, my good fellows—of course—honour! (*bows*) All is fair in love and war, and where a lovely woman's in the case—but come, I'll settle it—we will still have our lottery. (*runs back to table—sits, takes up pen, places the three pieces of paper before him*) Now for it! (*writes on the first piece of paper and as he does so, pronounces the words "I'll write to her."—on the second, "I'll speak to her."—and on the third, "I'll run away with her."*) There—I'll place these papers in a hat, shuffle them up, then we can decide by lot, who shall speak, who shall write, and who abduct—this will give piquancy to our plans. And as we all have equal chances of success, remember we are bound in honour to abide by the fate the gods decree us. My dear Dal, this is the only fair arrangement we can come to.

FLAP. Well, it certainly is fair play, but—

LYNCH. Fair play—of course it is. Now for a hat—stay, here's the very thing we want. (*goes to table, and brings forward the velvet cap*) Mrs. Ellerton's smoking cap!

(*holds it up—DALRYMPLE takes it, and examines it.*)

DALRYM. What, a smoking cap! (*aside*) I understand—she knows my weakness for tobacco. (*aloud*) Lynch, I really think this must be for me; shall I try?

LYNCH. Oh, you conceited Hog!

(*DALRYMPLE is about to try it on.*)

LYNCH. Come, give me the cap! We shall be discovered before our lottery is drawn.

(FLAPPERTON *looks at the cap for a moment, then hands it to*

LYNCH, *who places the papers in cap*)

FLAP. (*aside*) I know that cap would fit me, but I dare not try it on, my wig's so loose.

LYNCH. (C.) Now, then, draw. (*they each take a paper—LYNCH throws cap back on table*) Don't open—don't open before we see the fate that love, in its blindness, awards us. We must swear to abide the issue of his decree. So, gentlemen, listen—do as I do.

(*throws himself into an attitude—holding the left hand on high—his right hand on his breast*)

DALRYM. (*does the same*) How ridiculous!

FLAP. (*does the same*) Infernal nonsense!

LYNCH. We swear, oh, Cupid! (FLAPPERTON and DALRYMPLE *repeat after him*) Thou undressed little tyrant! to use no other means to win the lovely Harriet Ellerton, than these named on this thy decree.

(*after FLAPPERTON and DALRYMPLE have repeated these words—*

DALRYM. }

LYNCH. } (*repeat together*) We swear! (ALL *laugh*)

FLAP.

LYNCH. Capital! now for mine. (*looks at paper*) By all that's lucky! Mine is number one—the first chance—delightful!

DALRYM. Open—open!

FLAP. Come, read—read!

LYNCH. (*opens paper—reads*) "I'll speak to her." Confound—

(FLAPPERTON and DALRYMPLE *laugh loudly, point at LYNCH, who looks disappointed*)

DALRYM. Ha, ha! where's your elopement?

FLAP. Ha, ha! where's the scandal?

LYNCH. Oh, d—n it! I can't waste my time talking—I want to act—

FLAP. Now for mine. (*reads*) "I'll write to her."

(*walks—crosses, C.*

DALRYM. (*reads*) "I'll run away with her." No, no, deuce take it, I can't do that!

FLAP. No, no, nor I—I can't write—I hate writing!

LYNCH. (*laughing at both*) Gentlemen, remember your oath!

DALRYM. (*going towards C. D.*) Well, if I must, I must—but deuce take me if I know how! *Exit, C. to L.*

FLAP. Write to her ! Above all things in the world, I hate writing—my letters always look like prescriptions. *Exit, C. to L.*

LYNCH. Talk to her ! I have said everything I could think of, and was just prepared to elope. I'll take a few turns in the garden to collect my thoughts, and if I meet her maid, she may give me a useful lesson. *Exit, C. to R.*

MERTON *comes from behind curtain, runs to C. D.—looks out.*

MERTON. Oh, the dreadful wretches ! oh, the conspirators ! But my mistress shall know all your plans !

Enter MRS. ELLERTON, L. 1 E.

MRS. E. Why, Merton, what a time you have been ! Where are my flowers ?

MERTON. Oh, ma'am, I'm so nervous ! I've picked the bouquet all to pieces behind the curtain.

MRS. E. Nervous—picked the bouquet all to pieces ! What do you mean ?

MERTON. I mean a conspiracy, ma'am—a plot, high treason—and in this very room, too !

MRS. E. How tiresome you are ! What is the matter ?

MERTON. Oh, I'll explain, ma'am, and very quickly, or they'll be all back before I put you on your guard.

MRS. E. Put me on my guard ?

MERTON. Captain Lynch, Lieutenant Dalrymple, and Doctor Flapperton, have been waiting here for the last hour, expecting to see you.

MRS. E. Well ?

MERTON. I told them you would see them very shortly. They thought I had left the room ; I overheard them swear, such a dreadful oath, with one hand upon their hearts, and the other in the air, thus, (*imitates the action used*) they all made a solemn vow to marry you this very night.

MRS. E. What all swore to marry me ?

MERTON. That is they all swore to try, and then they drew lots.

MRS. E. The wretches ! make me the subject of their lotteries ! Go on.

MERTON. Captain Lynch wrote these bits of paper, and put them into that cap.

MRS. E. Mercy ! did they see that cap ?

MERTON. Of course they did, ma'am, and, what's more, they tried it on—but it wouldn't fit—then captain Lynch drew his paper and read out the words, "I'll speak to her !" Oh, wasn't he angry.

MRS. E. Angry, why so ?

MERTON. Oh, awful, ma'am, because he said there was no use in much talk, and that he liked elopement and a little scandal, and he had fully made up his mind to carry you off, whether you would or no, this very night.

MRS. E. So, so, my devoted slave, Captain Lynch!

MERTON. Yes, ma'am, and Mr. Dalrymple, who is too nervous even to write to you, has sworn to elope with you, no matter what the consequences.

MRS. E. Ha, ha! 'pon my honour.

MERTON. And the doctor, ma'am—the doctor, he vowed that if he could speak to you—you could not resist his winning tongue—but the lottery said no, and he could only write to you.

MRS. E. Impudent coxcombs ! but I'll be a match for them.

MERTON. They will be here almost immediately.

MRS. E. Be within call, Merton, I may want your assistance.

MERTON. Oh, yes, ma'am. (*aside*) I'll not be far from the key hole. *Exit, L. 1 E.*

MRS. E. (*sitting, R.*) Really, what Merton tells me is perfectly frightful—three of my devoted admirers, most constant slaves, who are never tired, day after day, in proclaiming me their liege sovereign, now in open rebellion.

CAPTAIN LYNCH *appears, C. from R.*—MRS. ELLERTON *pretends not to see him.*

Heigho ! (*crossing to table, L., and sits*) How lonely I feel this morning. (*she takes up the velvet cap and examines it*) Oh, how I wish he would return !

LYNCH. (*aside*) Just in time! (*advances*) My dear Mrs. Ellerton, good morning!

MRS. E. (*starts*) Oh, Captain Lynch, how you frightened me. (*she sits in chair as if agitated*—LYNCH *sits close beside her*)

LYNCH. (*aside*) Now, then, here's for it—I'm certainly going in for the prettiest woman in England. (*to her*) I have been waiting to see you for the last half hour. I've sought this interview for an important purpose.

MRS. E. (*suddenly looks him full in the face*) Indeed! an important purpose !

LYNCH. (*aside*) Confound it, she's knocked all the words out of my head. (*to her*) Why should I torment you with a long speech? you must have seen every day for the last three months, how completely I'm your slave, how devoted I am to you. Am I presumptuous in thinking that my love is not hopeless? that—

MRS. E. Now, pray, Captain Lynch, don't be tiresome—I really cannot listen to nonsense.

LYNCH. (*draws his chair close to her, aside*) My time is short—I must make the most of it. (*to her*) I feel my inability to tell you how ardently I love you—how long I have hoped for this moment. You are not without feeling, and would not trifle with an honest heart.

MRS. E. (*aside*) The wretch has sworn to try his skill in talking. (*to him*) Captain Lynch, what am I to understand ?

LYNCH. That I love you, and would marry you.

MRS. E. (*turns away*) Oh, shocking! positively shocking ! was there ever such a matter-of-fact speech—Captain Lynch, I hate facts.

LYNCH. You would have me honest.

MRS. E. Why, yes, honest; but I confess I like sentiment—I am fond of romance.

LYNCH. (*aside*) Didn't I know it, and if I had only followed my own course— (*rises*) The thought of you follows me everywhere—absorbs me ! When I see you, I feel a blow here as though you were knocking at my heart, and my heart answered you and said, " Come in." If I meet you in your carriage, my hand trembles as I raise my hat. I am jealous of the passers by, for to see you once is to love you. Madam, have pity on me. (*kneels*)

MRS. E. Captain Lynch, pray be calm.

LYNCH. One single word—do you love me ? yes or no.

MRS. E. (*coquettishly*) Not—not—no—

LYNCH. What have you said ? Can I believe in such happiness?

MRS. E. You have spoken frankly to me ! candour for candour. In return I am going to make you an avowal. You have been pathetic—thrilling—charming. (*a pause*) You have not produced the slightest effect. (*comes down, L.*)

LYNCH. (*jumps up*) The devil! (R.)

MRS. E. You will think, perhaps, that I am heartless—no, nothing of the kind, but quite weary of such lovers. My dream is a dream of romance, of adventure, of boldness, shrinking from nothing, but to which danger is a temptation—which does not speak or write, but which acts. Ah, my dear Captain Lynch, if you had only bribed my servants, crept up to my window with a rope ladder, and whilst I protested against your barbarity, carried me off in a chaise and four—

Enter TOM, C. from L., with a letter.

TOM. Doctor Flapperton is in the garden, madam, and has desired me to give you this. *She takes letter—TOM goes off, C.*

LYNCH. Was there ever such an unlucky wretch !

(goes up to back, throws himself on arm chair, L. of R. table, and covers his face with a pillow.)

MRS. E. A letter for me! I really can't be bored to read it. Here's a horrid letter from Doctor Flapperton—what can he want? Captain Lynch, come here!

LYNCH. *(aside)* She relents.

MRS. E. Now do be useful—read this for me, and then we can take up our romance again.

LYNCH. Oh, cruel to the last. *(opens letter, reads, sits again)* "Madam, for three months since first I loved you—"

MRS. E. Three months! ha, ha! Well, this is quarter day, and his time has expired.

LYNCH. *(reads)* "I have suffered so much that I can no longer bear the uncertainty. You cannot have mistaken my unremitting attention to you. My lips long to declare the secret of my heart, but—"

MRS. E. Enough, captain, enough! you have said all that to me yourself just now.

LYNCH. What will you do with this letter ?

Enter FLAPPERTON, C. from L.

Burn it, of course!

MRS. E. Burn dear Doctor Flapperton's letter! oh, no, not for the world. *(FLAPPERTON stands at back listening)* I am going to answer it, and since you have been so kind as to read it, gratify my idleness to the end by answering it at my dictation.

LYNCH. I am entirely in your hands! do with me what you like. *(sits at table)*

MRS. E. Are you ready?

LYNCH. Quite!

FLAP. *(aside)* 'Pon my honour, this is pleasant, Lynch reading and answering my letter; but I'll hear further.

MRS. E. *(aside)* Oh, ye wise men! the clever doctor there, *(pointing over her shoulder)* imagines I did not observe his entrance. Now, Captain Lynch, begin. "My dear Doctor Flapperton—*(FLAPPERTON rubs his hands and looks pleased)*

LYNCH. "Dear Doctor Flapperton!" that's too affectionate.

MRS. E. Pray don't interrupt me—go on. *(he writes and repeats the words)* "My dear Doctor Flapperton—" Your writing is so illegible that I cannot possibly decipher it.

LYNCH. *(writing)* "Your writing is so infernally bad that no one can read it." *(FLAPPERTON looks angry and impatient)*

MRS. E. If you have anything interesting to communicate—

LYNCH. (*writing*) " If you have anything to communicate—"

MRS. E. I shall be happy to hear what you have to say. Come and speak—I hate letters.

(LYNCH *writes this repeating the words*—FLAPPERTON *comes forward*, R., LYNCH *sees him, and jumps up*.)

LYNCH. Flapperton, you here!

FLAP. My dear madam, pray excuse my abrupt entrance—the truth is, I wrote you a very hurried note, which did not convey half I was anxious to communicate to you—so my impatience became so great that I followed my letter to tell you personally—

LYNCH. Flapperton, beware! remember your oath.

 (*uses the same action as when they drew lots*.)

MRS. C. An oath ! what oath ? positively you both alarm me! (FLAPPERTON *and* LYNCH *retire up the stage in angry discussion*) Ha, ha! number one and two are evidently at cross purposes—this excitement is quite charming—I hope they won't shoot each other. (*crosses*, R.)

MERTON *rushes on in great agitation*, L.

MERTON. Oh, madam, poor dear Jacob—there's Mr. Dalrymple chasing him round the garden with a horsewhip.

DAL. (*without*) You infernal rascal, &c.

JACOB. (*crying out*) Oh, oh !

JACOB *runs on at C. D. from L., without hat, coat, or wig, he runs to MERTON*—DALRYMPLE *comes on C., he wears Jacob's coat, hat, and wig, and a large muffler hanging loosely round his neck—as he enters he says*,

DALRYM. You shan't escape punishment—you deceitful—

LYNCH. } (*run to him on either side*) Why, Dal, what's the
FLAP. } matter ?

FLAP. Hush! don't you see Mrs. Ellerton ?

MRS. C. Really, gentlemen, this is extraordinary conduct in a lady's drawing-room—my servant obliged to screen himself from insult, my privacy invaded—I shall be obliged to seek protection.

LYNCH. (L. C.) Protection ! Mrs. Ellerton, oh, give me the right to protect you, and—

FLAP. (*rushing to her*) Command me to free you from all annoyances, and—

DALRYM. (*rushing down to L. C.— throws off Jacob's coat, hat, and whip, and then falls on his knees in front of MRS.*

ELLERTON—*he still wears Jacob's wig*) Lovely Mrs. Ellerton, you have long known of my attachment—you will not now refuse—(MRS. ELLERTON *stoops down and raises Jacob's wig from his head*—DALRYMPLE *rises*)

MRS. E. Mr. Dalrymple, what's the meaning of this? (*holds up wig, bursts into loud laughter, in which LYNCH and FLAPPERTON join*)

JACOB. (*advances*) I beg pardon, madam, but that's my wig! Mr. Dalrymple gave me a large sum for the loan of it.

DALRYM. Hush, hush—I'll explain!

JACOB. With respect, sir, I must have my say. Your carriage was at the door, madam—this gentleman felt a great desire to be your coachman—he paid me well, and as I knew that you had not the least intention of going out—

MRS. E. You gave up your clothes, and your place to him.

JACOB. Precisely, madam; with instructions to drive on as soon as I told him that you were safe inside.

MRS. E. Ah, I see it all, (*giving MERTON the wig, who goes up L.*) a noble conspiracy against an unprotected female. Three officers of Her Majesty's Light Dragoons, in open mutiny against a lady they have vowed to serve and obey. Oh, gentlemen, gentlemen, for shame! your conduct is in direct violation of the articles of peace—You should be tried by court martial. Shall I be president and pronounce sentence?

DALRYM. Take into consideration—

FLAP. Our youth and inexperience.

LYNCH. Any sentence, save banishment from you!

MRS. E. Then bring me the black cap. (MERTON *brings her the velvet cap*) Mutineers stand forward! (*they stand in a row*—MERTON *and JACOB back laughing*) Silence, in the court! Captain Lynch, stand forth! Lieutenant Dalrymple, Doctor Flapperton, fall in! (*they draw up in military attitude in front of her*) You all profess yourselves devoted to my service. (*to LYNCH*) You have done me the honour to offer me your hand.

LYNCH. My heart and fortune!

MRS. E. (*to FLAPPERTON*) You also are willing to bestow upon me—

FLAP. (*interrupting*) My devoted affection and a capital practice!

MRS. E. (*to DALRYMPLE*) And you would make me—

DALRYM. The owner of the best dressed man in London!

MRS. E. Thanks, gentlemen! the difficulty I have in making a selection from three such eligible offers obliges me to reject all—(*they all start*) for the best reason in the world—I have

for some time been engaged, and by the next mail, from China, expect the arrival of my future husband !

FLAP. Future husband!

DALRYM. From China!

LYNCH. The devil!

MRS. E. No, no! no such dreadful personage, but like each of you, an officer in Her Majesty's Service. Come, gentlemen, admit you find now, as you did when first you arrived, that the cap (*takes it up*) fits neither of you. (*they all hang their heads and exclaim "Neither !"*)

The world throughout you anxiously may scan
To find that perfect myth a perfect man.

LYNCH. Prompt should he be of action, broad of chest,
Fiery in spirit.

DALRYM. Easy and well dressed.
Tempering with middle age, youth's headstrong force,
Possessing knowledge how to—

JACOB. Tame a horse.

MERTON. Or win a lady, Jacob—hem—of course !

MRS. E. Your plans are tried, and now you see the end.

(*to LYNCH*) I've not eloped with any fiery friend.

(*to DALRYM*) No fop has raised a passion in my breast.

(*to FLAPPERTON*) The casket for my heart's no medicine chest.

LYNCH.

DALRYM. } Madam, I—

FLAP.

MRS. E. How, gentlemen ? My comment each one hits,
Let each one wear the cap then (*holding it up*) if it fits.

DALRYM. FLAP. LYNCH. MRS. E. MERTON. JACOB.

R.

L.

CURTAIN.