

THE
CRICKET ON THE HEARTH

A Fairy Tale Of Home

IN

THREE CHIRPS

ADAPTED FROM

MR. CHARLES DICKENS'S

POPULAR STORY.



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

THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH.

*First performed at the City of London Theatre,
January 7th, 1846.*

CHARACTERS.

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|---|-----------------|
| JOHN PEERYBINGLE..... | Mr. LYON. |
| GRUFF TACKLETON..... | Mr. E. JONES. |
| CALEB PLUMMER..... | Mr. R. HONNER. |
| THE STRANGER | Mr. CRAVEN. |
| CARRIER..... | Mr. ROMER. |
| MARY PEERYBINGLE | Mrs. R. HONNER. |
| TILLY SLOWBOY..... | Miss EGAN. |
| BERTHA, <i>Caleb's Blind Daughter</i> | Miss LACY. |
| MAY FIELDING..... | Miss LEE. |
| MRS. FIELDING..... | Mrs. TURNER. |

TIME IN REPRESENTATION—1 hour and 45 minutes.

COSTUMES.

JOHN PEERYBINGLE.—Velveteen coat, red waistcoat, cord breeches, leggings.
TACKLETON.—Black top toots, mackintosh.
CALEB.—Plain old man's suit, small gaiters, sackcloth, great coat, with
G. T. } upon the back.
Glass }
EDWARD.—Old man's brown suit. *2nd dress.*—Neat sailor's dress.
MARY AND BERTHA.—Neat cottagers' dresses.
MAY FIELDING.—White dress.
TILLY.—Brown dress, check apron, boots, red hair.
Mrs. FIELDING.—Silk dress, high cap.

* * The illustrated edition of the Cricket on the Hearth will be found of great utility for the proper production of this drama.

This Drama is the property of Thomas Hailes Lacy.

THE
CRICKET ON THE HEARTH.



CHIRP FIRST.

SCENE.—*The Interior of John Peerybingle's Cottage. A fire burning, L. 3 E.—tea kettle on fire.*

MARY PEERYBINGLE *discovered, placing refreshments on table,*
TILLY SLOWBOY *nursing CHILD by the fire—cradle, stool, and*
table near R. C. Music—The chirp of the CRICKET is heard.

MARY. Ha, ha! Chirrup away—chirrup away, merry cricket on the hearth—I love to hear its cheerful song—and then there's the kettle singing away merrily enough! It seems to say, "It's a dark night, mistress—there is hoar frost on the linger post, and thaw upon the track. But he is coming—he is coming, and—" Hush! the cricket seems to chime in—and there it goes, chirrup and chirrup. Well, I declare, they are running a race! Hush! I think I hear the tramp of the honest old horse.

Music—MARY runs to door—the cracking of a whip is heard—she opens door, and JOHN PEERYBINGLE enters, R. D., in great coat, and wrapper round his throat, and waggoner's whip in his hand—he is laden with parcels, which he places L.

Oh, goodness, John! What a state you are in with the weather!

JOHN. (*unrolling a shawl from his throat*) Why, you see, Dot, it arn't exactly summer weather, so no wonder.

MARY. (*pouting, and taking off his coat*) I wish you wouldn't call me Dot, I don't like it.

JOHN. Why—ha, ha! what else are you but a Dot, and—(*looking round upon child, which MARY has taken from cradle*) a dot and carry—I was nearly saying it—but I won't. Arn't he beautiful in his sleep?

MARY. Bless its heart—it is beautiful.

JOHN. How it opens its blessed eyes!

MARY. (*taking child to TILLY*) The child is well enough, John—there, there, the tea is ready. There's the ham, the butter, and—(*bringing forward basket*) the basket for the small parcels.

JOHN *exits with basket*, R. D.

There is the crusty loaf, and—John, where are you? Tilly, don't let the child fall into the fire.

Exit, R. D.

TILLY. And did its fathers come home, and not bring it its cakes—and did they talk about its eyes—and so they shall open like a little prince.

JOHN and MARY *enter*, R. D., *with basket filled with parcels—*
he lays up his coat, and sits at table—the Cricket chirps.

JOHN. How merry the cricket is to-night, Dot—it's merrier than ever, I think.

MARY. I am glad of it. I love it for its harmless music, and the many happy thoughts it has brought to me. Sometimes in the twilight I have heard it, when I have felt solitary and down-hearted—I did fear once, John—I was very young, and I feared ours might prove an ill-assorted marriage—I being such a child to you—and that you might not be able to love me. If then I felt sad when you were away, its merry chirp would cheer me up again, and fill me with new trust and confidence—and so I love the cricket for the sake of those harmless thoughts.

JOHN. And so do I, Dot. Learn't to love you? Bless your soul, I learn't that long before I brought you here to be the cricket's little mistress.

(*she lays her hand upon his arm, and looks up in his face with an agitated countenance—then dropping on her knees at the basket, appears to be busy with the parcels*)

MARY. (*taking up a large circular parcel, in white paper*) Why—why, what is this? Heart alive, John, it's a wedding cake!

JOHN. Leave a woman alone for finding that out—a man would never have thought of it.

MARY. Whose is it? Oh, what a weight—where's it going, John?

JOHN. Oh, the direction's on the other side. (*sitting at table, and eating*)

MARY. My goodness! "Gruff Tackleton, the toy-maker."
(*turning over the box—JOHN whispers to MARY.*)

TILLY. And was it Tackleton's, the toy-maker's, then, and did its fathers call at pastry cooks for wedding cakes—and shall it have wedding cakes when it's a man?

MARY. Married, and to May! Why, she and I were school-fellows together. May Fielding and *he* going to be married? He is old and—(*checking herself*) and so these are all the parcels, are they, John?

JOHN. That's all. (*starting up*) Why, no—I—(*placing down his knife and fork, and drawing a long breath*) I be clean forgotten the old gentleman! (*TILLY utters a faint scream*)

MARY. The old gentleman?

JOHN. In the cart—asleep in the straw. I remembered him when I came in, but he went clean out of my head again. Hallo, ya, hip there—rouse up, there's a hearty. *Exit, R. D.*

TILLY. And did it talk about old gentlemen, and frighten its precious self—all by the fires then.

Enter JOHN followed by the STRANGER—he is dressed in a quaint brown suit, and carries a brown walking stick, and striking it upon the floor it becomes a chair, in which, after gravely saluting MARY, he seats himself R.

JOHN. (L. C.) There, that's the way I found him, sitting by the roadside, like a mile stone, and almost as deaf.

MARY. (L.) Sitting in the open air?

JOHN. "Carriage paid," said he, giving me the eighteen-pence. Then he got in—then he got out—and there he is. Now he's going to speak.

STRANGER. I was to be left till called for. Don't mind me. (*taking spectacles from one pocket, and a book from the other, and reading*)

JOHN. I say, Dot, he seems to like the place.

STRANGER. (*turning round*) Your daughter, friend?

JOHN. Wife, if you please.

STRANGER. Oh, niece.

JOHN. (*roaring out*) Wife, I tell thee!

STRANGER. Indeed! Very young! (*reading again*)

MARY. Why, John, he is going to read again!

STRANGER. Baby yours? (*JOHN nods assent*) Girl?

JOHN. (*roaring out*) No!

STRANGER. Boy, then?

JOHN. Ecod, you are right for once!

STRANGER. Dear me ! very young ?

MARY. (*going to him, and bawling*) Two months and three days, sir—vaccinated six weeks ago, and took it wonderful. Strange as it may seem, can feel its legs already. (*TILLY brings forward child*)

STRANGER. I don't want to feel its legs! No, no—nice child—hearty father—young and interesting mother. The girl's name ? (*points to TILLY*)

MARY. Tilly Slowboy.

STRANGER. Silly Snowball. Very well! (*resumes his reading*)

Enter CALEB PLUMMER, R. D.

CALEB. Good evening, John Peerybingle—good evening, mum—good evening, Tilly—good evening, baby—good evening, Unbeknown—(*bows*)

JOHN. Busy, Caleb?

CALEB. Tolerable—there's a run upon Noah's arks, and a slight gallop upon rocking horses. Have you got anything in the parcel line for me, John?

JOHN. (*putting his hand in great coat pocket, which he has hung up, and taking out a small flower pot*) There it is, Caleb. Not a leaf damaged, and full of buds.

CALEB. Ha, ha ! (*kissing it*) Thankye—thankye, John.

JOHN. Very dear, Caleb—very dear!

CALEB. It would be cheap to me at any price. Is there anything else ?

JOHN. A small box—here you are! (*takes one from basket*)

CALEB. Ay, ay—I see. Caleb Plummer, with cash. (*reading*) " Cash—money! " It arn't for me, John !

JOHN. Cash—with care. How do you make out cash ?

CALEB. It might have been cash, if my dear boy in the golden South Americas had lived, eh, John ? You loved him like a son, didn't you? Ah, he's gone, and— Never mind—this is a box of doll's eyes for my poor daughter. I wish it was her own sight. Heigho, what's the damage, John ?

JOHN. I'll damage you if you ask—eh, Dot ?

MARY. We never take anything from you, Caleb.

CALEB. (*sighing*) Ah, it's very kind. Is that all ?

JOHN. Something for the governor! (*gives CALEB box, containing the wedding cake*)

CALEB. Ah, that's what I came for, but my head is running so upon rocking horses and doll's eyes that I clean forgot it. Well, I must go.

Shouldering the box and going to door R., when GRUFF TACKLETON enters.

GRUFF. Oh, you are there, are you ? Wait a bit—I'll take you home. John, my service to you—the same to your pretty wife, for she looks handsomer and younger every day.

MARY. Indeed ! So you are going to be married, Mr. Tackleton ?

GRUFF. Yes, brought my mind to it at last. Can't stand the single life any longer—can't live among toys without joys. In three days time—next Thursday—the last day of the first month—that's my wedding day.

JOHN. (C.) Why, Dot, that's our wedding day.

MARY. So it is, John !

GRUFF. (*rattling money in his pocket*) Ha, ha ! singular—odd ! just such another couple—just.

MARY. The man's mad !

GRUFF. (*to JOHN*) I say—a word with you. You'll come to the wedding ? we row in the same boat—

JOHN. Row in the same boat! (*the Cricket's chirp is heard*)

GRUFF. Ah well—a little difference. Come and spend an evening beforehand.

JOHN. Why ?

GRUFF. Why ? why, to be sociable.

JOHN. I thought you never were sociable.

GRUFF. Pshaw ! you'll say you'll come ?

JOHN. No, I won't—we keep our wedding-day at home. You see, that home—

GRUFF. Bah! what's home ? four walls and ceiling. Why don't you kill that cricket ? I always do—I hate them !

JOHN. You kill our cricket ?

GRUFF. Scrunch them, sir! you'll say you'll come ? make the women acquainted—there's emulation amongst them, sir. My wife says to your wife, " I'm the happiest woman in the world !" Your wife says the same to mine until she half believes it.

JOHN. You don't mean to say she don't, then ?

GRUFF. Don't—don't what ?

JOHN. That—that she don't believe it.

GRUFF. Why, you're joking!

JOHN. No I'm not!

GRUFF. Listen to me—plain, like the nose on your face, I have the humour—I say, I have the humour to marry a young wife, and a pretty wife—it's my whim— but now—look there!

(*pointing over his shoulder to MARY, who is seated thoughtfully by the fire, her chin resting on her hand.*)

JOHN.—(*looks at MARY, then at GRUFF*) What of it ?

GRUFF. What of it! she honours and obeys you, no doubt. Well, that would be quite enough for me. But do you think there is anything more in it?

JOHN. Think—think ! I think I should chuck any man out of the window who said there was not.

GRUFF. Eh ? oh, ah—exactly so—to be sure—doubtless you would. I'm certain of it. I'm off! good night—pleasant dreams. (*JOHN looks irresolutely from her to him—compassionately*) There, there—we're exactly alike, in reality. I see, you won't see us to-morrow ? Well, you'll be at Caleb's the day after. (*at the commencement of this speech the STRANGER gradually approaches the fire*) I'll meet you there, and bring my wife that is to be with  It will do her good.

(*the STRANGER whispers to MARY—she, starting from her seat, utters a piercing scream, and stands transfixed with terror and surprise.*)

JOHN. (*rushing to her on her R.*) Mary—Dot—darling ! What—what is the matter ? are you ill? what is it! (*MARY falls on her knees, bursts into a loud fit of laughter—covers her face with apron to hide her tears—JOHN raises her*) What is it, Mary!

MARY. I—I—I am better—am quite well now—I am, indeed. (*glancing at STRANGER, L. at fire.*)

JOHN. (*perceiving it*) Is her brain wandering? Mary!

MARY. It was only fancy—a kind of shock that came before my eyes—but it is quite gone—quite gone.

GRUFF. (*expressively*) I'm glad it's gone—quite gone. I wonder where it's gone, and what it was! Humph! Caleb! (*he comes down*) Come here! who is that with the grey hair?

CALEB. Never seed him afore. Nice figger for a nut cracker! with a screw jaw opening down his waistcoat, he'd be lovely!

GRUFF. Not ugly enough.

CALEB. Or a fire-box. What a model! unscrew his head—put the matches in—turn him heels up'ards for the fire, and then—

GRUFF. Come along. All right now, I hope ?

MARY. Quite—quite—all gone. Good night!

Hurrying him away.

GRUFF. Good night. Good night, John Peerybingle. (*aside*) I wonder what it was! Mind the box, Caleb. Let it fall, and I'll murder you! (*opening R. D.*) Dark as pitch—weather worse than ever! good night—good night!

(*looks sharply round and exit, followed by CALEB, with box on shoulder.*)

JOHN. Art better, lass ? Cheer thee up. It couldn't be cricket that frightened thee so ?

MARY. No, no!

JOHN. (*seeing STRANGER*) No ! Why, he don't belong to them. I'll give him the hint to go!

STRANGER. (*rising and coming forward*) I beg your pardon, friend—I fear there is some mistake here. My attendant, who waits upon me in consequence of my calamity, has not arrived—I hardly know what to do. Say, will you suffer me to rent a bed here ?

JOHN. Why—

MARY. Yes, yes, certainly.

JOHN. (*surprised*) Oh, I don't object, but I am not quite sure that—

MARY. Hush, dear John—

JOHN. Hush, Dot ? why, he's stone deaf.

MARY. I know he is, but—yes, sir—certainly, I'll make up a bed directly. Oh, certainly—certainly, John.

Hurries off through L. D.—JOHN looks off amazed.

TILLY. And did its mothers make up beds, then—and did its hair look brown and curly when its cap was off, and frighten it, a precious pets, all by the fires ?

JOHN. (*pacing to and fro*) What did that Tackleton mean? I know I am older than her—I know it, and yet—and yet—what frightened her, I wonder? Why, John, what a fool thee be'st—a bigger fool than that Tackleton. Ha, ha! (*pausing*) It may be folly—it may be nonsense—but for all that, I cannot get it out of my head.

MARY *returns from L. D.—the STRANGER takes light from MARY, which she fetches from cupboard.*

STRANGER. Good night! I thank both of you for your kindness—good night!

MARY. (*eagerly*) Good night!

JOHN. Oh, good night!

Music.—Exit L. D.—JOHN seats himself at table—MARY standing looking thoughtful.

TILLY. (*starting up with child*) And shall it go to its own precious beds—and have its own precious sleeps with its own precious Tillys ? it shall, and wake in the mornings like its own little self. It's a precious one !

Exit L.—The chirp of the Cricket is heard.

JOHN. Dot! (*MARY starts*) Mary, what ails thee?

MARY. Nothing, dear—dear John! Come, come, I assure you there is not. There's your pipe—and, hark—there's the merry cricket again—the good genius of our blessed hearth and home—ha, ha, ha!

JOHN. Bless thee—I love thy laugh.

MARY. And I thine. Chirrup away—chirrup away—it always brought us joy with its merry song—and while 'tis heard let us hope, dear, dear husband, no desolating shadow will ever fall upon this hearth!

(Music.—Kisses JOHN—fills his pipe, then lights it—sits upon stool at his feet, looking up into his face—the merry chirp of the Cricket is heard, and the Drop slowly descends.

END OF CHIRP THE FIRST.

CHIRP SECOND.

SCENE.—*Interior of Caleb Plummer's Toy House. Table, C., and seven chairs. Table, R., with cribbage boards and cards upon it, and flower—a large deep window with long curtains before it, L. of C.—fireplace, R. 2 E.—door, R. C.*

A toy box, L., upon which CALEB is discovered sitting R. of C., with a Jack in the box in his hand—on long table at back a toy house and toys on table of various descriptions—toys on hamper, R.—BERTHA sitting on stool near R. C. stringing dolls' eyes—a clothes line, L. U. E., upon which is hanging Caleb's great coat.—Music.

BERTHA. You were out in the rain last night, in your beautiful new great coat, father.

CALEB. In my beautiful new great coat! *(looks up at it)* Oh, dear!

BERTHA. How glad I am you bought it, father !

CALEB. Ah, it's too fashionable and too good for me.

BERTHA. *(resting)* Too good ! what can be too good for you, dear father ?

CALEB. I'm half ashamed to wear it in the street. When the boys see it, they cry out, " There's a swell!" and I hardly know which way to look.

BERTHA. Ha, ha ! I can see you quite plain—in a blue coat—bright blue—the colour I remember in the blessed sky—a bright blue coat—

CALEB. And rather loose to the figure—oh dear!

BERTHA. Ha, ha! and you in it, dear father—with your merry eye—your smiling face—your free step—looking so young and handsome, with your dark hair.

CALEB. (*suppressing a groan*) Oh!

BERTHA. I know you, father—I've found you out—ha, ha! I've found you out!

CALEB. (*aside*) Oh, the misery of deceit! For years my very footfall has been counterfeited. I have pictured to her everything bright and brilliant—young and fair to her senses.

BERTHA. You are speaking quite softly. You are not tired, father?

CALEB. Tired? ha, ha, not I! Tired? ha, ha! (*attempting to sing*) "And we'll drown it in the bo—bo—bowl!" Ha, ha! can't I sing! Oh, dear!

The door, R. C. opens, and GRUFF TACKLETON looks in, L.

GRUFF. What, you are singing, are you? Go it—I can't sing. (*enters*) I can't afford to sing—I'm glad you can. I hope you can afford to work, too—hardly time for both, I think! (*advances, L.*)

CALEB. (*aside to BERTHA*) The pleasantest man in the world—if you could only see him winking his eye at me. Such a man to joke—ha, ha!

BERTHA. Always merry and light-hearted with us.

GRUFF. Oh, you are there, are you? Well, and being there, how are you?

BERTHA. Oh, so happy—as happy as you would make the whole world, if you could.

GRUFF. Poor thing—no reason—dear me—shocking! (*BERTHA rises, and taking his hand, kisses it, laying her cheek tenderly against it*) What is the matter now?

BERTHA. Can I be sufficiently grateful to you for such kindness? When the beautiful sun rises, I turn the little tree towards it, and bless Heaven for making things so precious, and you for sending them.

GRUFF. Bedlam broke loose—strait waistcoat and mufflers soon. We're getting on. (*CALEB looks on despairingly*) Come, no more of this. This is the day of the picnic. Peerybingle and his wife are coming—I should like to join the party.

BERTHA. (*joyfully*) Father, father—do you hear that?

CALEB. Yes, yes, I hear it, but I don't believe it. I'm walking in my sleep.

GRUFF. You see I want to bring May Fielding more into company. I am going to be married to May.

BERTHA. (*starting*) Ma—ma—married!

GRUFF. Married! yes—don't you understand? church and parson—coach and bells—breakfast and bride cake—marrow-bones and cleavers—curse 'em! I'll bring May and her mother—I'll send something cheering and comfortable—a cold

boiled leg of mutton, or something of that sort. Caleb, take care she don't forget—(*crosses R.*)

CALEB. She never forgets.

GRUFF. (*going to door, R.*) Every man fancies his own geese swans; poor devil! *Exit shrugging his shoulders, R. C.*

BERTHA. (*slowly walks to her stool, L.*) Father! tell me about May—is she very fair? Is her hair dark—darker than mine—her voice sweet and musical—her eyes—

CALEB. Hem—hem! " And we'll drown it in the bowl—bo—bo—bowl—"

BERTHA. And then our benefactor—

CALEB. Ha, ha!

BERTHA. And our home—

CALEB. So snug, and so comfortable—the gay coloured walls, the bright flowers on the plates and dishes—the shining panels—the—the—oh, dear! ah, it's very pretty—oh, dear!

BERTHA. And all through his goodness—

CALEB. Ye—ye—yes.

BERTHA. But he is older than May.

CALEB. A little. That don't signify.

BERTHA. Oh, yes, father. She will be his companion in infirmity, and old age—his constant friend in suffering and in sorrow—she will watch him and tend him—sit beside his sick bed—talk to him awake—pray for him asleep—his guide, consoler, and comforter.

CALEB. She will—she will!

BERTHA. Then I love her, with all my soul.

(throwing her arms round his neck.

JOHN. (*without*) Woa, there—woa, there!

(smacking of a whip heard.

CALEB. (*going to R. C.*) Here they are—here they are—John Peerybingle—Mary Peerybingle, Tiny Peerybingle, and Tilly Slowboy. Ha, ha! here's a happy day!

Music.—Enter MRS. PEERYBINGLE, carrying many parcels, then JOHN the same—lastly TILLY carrying the baby, R. C.

How are you, John—how are you all? I'll soon be back.

Exit, R. C.

JOHN. Why, Caleb, what is the matter with you, man? Bertha, my lass—bless you!

(TILLY comes to L. with baby and sits.

MARY. (L.) Oh, what a happy little body I am. Why, John, where is the veal and ham pie, and the bottles of beer, and the—

JOHN. (R.) All safe, Dot—all safe.

BERTHA. Thank you. Oh, how kind and good!

JOHN. It's only our duty, Bertha—only our duty. I say, Dot, that old gentleman—

MARY. (*embarrassed*) What of him ?

JOHN. Why, (*looking at her*) he's an odd fish. I can't make him out—but I don't think there is any harm in him.

MARY. (*eagerly*) I am sure there is none, John.

JOHN. I am glad of that. It is curious he should ask to lodge with us. Things do come about strangely.

MARY. Very strangely.

JOHN. Why, Dot, what are you thinking of?

MARY. Thinking of? I was listening to you. I—I—was—

JOHN. Oh, that's all right. I was afraid you were thinking of something else.

MARY. Something else, John ?

JOHN. Yes, but it's of no consequence.

CALEB *runs in from door with pie and bottles of beer, in hamper.*

CALEB. Here they are! Mrs. Fielding—May Fielding-Gruff Tackleton—oh, what a day !

Music.—Enter from R. C. D. MRS. FIELDING, MAY, and GRUFF TACKLETON—CALEB runs off, L. D., and returns with table-cloth, which he lays on table—goes off—re-enters with plates, knives and forks, spoons, pepper and salt—the others assist, and sit.

CALEB. Now I'll bring you a nice dish of hot potatoes !

Goes off, R. 1 E., and returns with them—and gives a hot potato to TILLY.

TILLY. (*eats eagerly, and burns her mouth*) Oh, if you please ! (*CALEB gives her a glass of beer*)

MARY. Ah, May, my dear old friend, how glad I am to see you. Dear, dear, what changes! They make us quite old.

MRS. F.

CALEB.

TACK.

BERTHA.

MAT.

JOHN.

MARY.

TILLY on stool—the
Baby on her lap—
her plate on the
Baby.

GRUFF. Why, you arn't particularly old at any time, are you?

MARY. Old! Ha, ha! Look at my sober, plodding husband—he adds twenty years to my age, at least—don't you, John?

JOHN. Oh, yes—ha, ha, ha!

MARY. And then, May, when at school we used to talk about our husbands, and how young and handsome they were to be. (MAY *droops her head*) If I had said, May, you will marry Gruff Tackleton, how you would have laughed.

GRUFF. (*pretending to laugh*) Ha, ha! you couldn't help yourselves—you couldn't help yourselves. Here we are! where are your gay young bridegrooms now?

MARY. Some of them are dead—others forgotten—and if they could stand among us at this moment, they would not think we could forget them so.

JOHN. Why, wife—Dot! (MARY *stops, evincing some agitation—GRUFF eyeing her*)

MRS. F. She's quite right—quite right. Young people are thoughtless—girls will be girls.

TILLY. Oh, if you please! (*some food has stuck in her throat—they beat her back, &c.*)

JOHN. Well, well—I've got some few parcels to deliver, close at hand—I shan't be long before I return. (*rises*) Good bye, young shaver.

(*to the child.*)

TILLY. And did its father call it young shavers, then?
(MARY *rises*) CALEB *clears cloth, and exits with things, L. D.*

JOHN. Silence, Slowboy! The time will come, I suppose, when you will turn out in the cold, and leave your old father to sit in the chimney corner, and enjoy his pipe and his rheumatics, eh? Where's Dot?

MARY. (*who has been standing by table in deep reflection, starts*) I am here, John.

JOHN. Why, Dot, where's the pipe?

MARY. Dear, dear—I had quite forgotten it. (*takes pipe out of his coat pocket, and begins filling it*)

JOHN. Ha, ha! why, what a clumsy little Dot thou art! (*taking it from her*) There, there! I shan't be long—I shan't be long.
Exit, R. C.

MRS. F. (*rising*) Now, Tackleton—while Mr. Peerybingle goes his round, I must see the last collection of toys sent down from town.

GRUFF. Sent down! I beg your pardon—made by myself. Hem! assisted by Caleb. Jacks in the box—vampire kites—giants with swivel eyes and rolling heads! Come, my dear

madam—I'll show you and May the wonders of Tackleton's shop—I mean warehouse. *Exeunt, arm in arm, with MAY, R. C.*
 (MAY is seated, R. C., apparently in deep reflection—CALEB, who has been regarding BERTHA in a sort of dreamy stupor, brings her down slowly)

CALEB. My child, Bertha, what has happened?

BERTHA. Oh, father, my hard, hard fate! till now I have never felt my affliction in its fulness. I have sometimes wished I could see you if only for one short minute—I have wept in my prayers at night, for such a blessing, but this is not the sorrow that weighs me down now. Where is May ? bring her to me.

MAY looks in at R. D.

I would see her. (MAY comes down, L. C., and places her hand in hers)

MAY. Dearest Bertha, I am here !

BERTHA. Bless you, May—bless you. When children together, you watched the steps of the poor blind girl, and saved her many times from peril—every blessing rest upon your head for it—not the less that I know this day you become his wife, and because it has wrung my heart with bitterness.

CALEB. (*aside*) Great power! have I deceived her from her cradle, to break her heart at last!

BERTHA. Father, May, hear me, when I call heaven to witness I could not wish him married to a wife more worthy of his goodness.

(*clasping her hands together—she sinks gradually down, burying her face in the folds of May's garment—MARY, looking up, rises, comes down, and raises BERTHA*)

MARY. Bertha, what is all this?

BERTHA. It is nought—I am better—resigned—why should I not be?

MARY. You are so, Bertha—what has thus disturbed you ?

The R. C. D. opens, and the STRANGER enters.

BERTHA. What step is that ?

MARY. What step? (*turns round, and seeing the STRANGER, suppresses a shriek*)

GRUFF TACKLETON looks suspiciously in at door.

CALEB. Well, I declare, the stranger that lodges at your house, Mrs. Peerybingle. Sit down, sir—sit down—glad to see you here.

GRUFF. (*rushing in*) Of course. Caleb makes him welcome

—I make him welcome—Mrs. Peerybingle makes him welcome—don't you, eh ?

MARY. I—I—of course—but it is not my house.

GRUFF. No matter—make yourself at home, of course. You knew we were all here, didn't he, Mrs. Peerybingle, eh ?

MARY. I know not, sir.

GRUFF. Of course not. (*aside*) Who ever thought she'd say yes?

STRANGER. I should be sorry to cause any inconvenience, but having extended my walk somewhat beyond my strength—I hope I may ask a few moment's rest?

CALEB. Certainly—be seated, sir. (STRANGER *sits L.*) A glass of beer, and a hearty welcome to a poor man's dwelling.

GRUFF. Oh, yes, certainly—a glass of beer to wish him welcome. Mrs. Peerybingle, wish him welcome. (*aside*) I should like to see it. (CALEB *gives glass of beer to the STRANGER*)

MARY. I do wish him welcome, with all my heart.

GRUFF. (*aside*) I've made up my mind—I can see quite as much with one eye shut as some persons can with both theirs open. Hark, what was that ?

MARY. (*going to door*) It is John returned.

GRUFF. Ha, ha! that's well done.

Music—Enter JOHN and MRS. FIELDING, R. D.

JOHN. I managed very well, Dot! you see—Eh ? why—(*turns*) Our deaf friend come ?

CALEB. Yes, and I gave him a hearty welcome.

JOHN. You did ? then I'll give him another. (*goes to STRANGER*) A hearty welcome, sir.

STRANGER. Not a drop more, thankye.

JOHN. Ha, ha! how deaf he is !

GRUFF. (*aside*) None so deaf as those who don't hear.

JOHN. I say, Welcome to old Caleb's house.

STRANGER. Oh, yes—nice house—funny toys. Ah, it's many years since I was a boy.

GRUFF. I should think so.

JOHN. Now, then, let us be merry. Come, Dot—

MRS. F. No, no, John Peerybingle—you and I must have a quiet game at cribbage—I insist upon it. (*seizing his arm*)

JOHN. (*looking at MARY*) Why, why—

MRS. F. Oh, never mind your wife—she'll excuse you. For shame of you—an old man like you wanting to dance! (*drags him to small table, R.*)

JOHN. Ha, ha! an old man like me—eh, Dot? (*they sit, and commence their game*)

STRANGER. Follow me to the wareroom if you can.

MARY. (*in a suppressed voice*) Yea.

STRANGER *exits*, R. C.—MARY *looking round for a moment, hastily follows him*.

GRUFF. (*turns*) Hilloa, what's that, eh ? Gone ! (CALEB, BERTHA, and MAY *have gone up to table, looking over the toys—GRUFF goes out at door R.C., sily, then returns, going very mysteriously to JOHN*) Peerybingle—John—I want to speak with you.

JOHN. Not now, man—I am  going to deal. (MRS. FIELDING *nods her head, as if asleep*) It's a sort of crisis—

GRUFF. It is. Come here, man.

JOHN. (*rising*) Why, what's the matter, man ?

GRUFF. Hush! I am sorry for this—I am, indeed—but I suspected this at first.

JOHN. (*alarmed*) Suspected—what?

GRUFF. Hush, for one moment. Go to yonder window, it commands a view of the warehouse. One moment—have you the courage to look in ?

JOHN. (*trembling*) The courage ! why not ?

GRUFF. A moment more—don't commit any violence—you are a strong man, and might do murder before you knew it.

JOHN. Murder! what mean you ? (*Music.—Rushes up to window, draws the curtain—the inner room is lighted—MARY and the STRANGER are seen as he describes—looks in, starts back again, and staggers down—ALL rise*) What do I see ? A young man, bearing in his hand the false white hairs that won his way to my hearth—his arm around the waist of my Mary—her head reclining on his shoulder! You said I might commit murder ! Yes, I'll have revenge ! revenge !

(*Music—Rushes up to window, but overcome by his feelings, staggers back and falls senseless—ALL gaze in consternation. Picture—Drop descends rapidly*)

END OF CHIRP THE SECOND.

CHIRP THIRD.

SCENE.—*The interior of the Cottage—the same as Act I*

JOHN *discovered—gun hanging up—after a pause, he looks up.*

Music.

JOHN. It was so—it is no dream! I feel in my heart it was no dream. And could I have thought it—that she could have proved false to me, and rendered that heart desolate in which she had enshrined herself so gently and so closely! And he—he is now beneath this roof—the roof he has polluted! (*starting up*) Three steps will take me to his door—one blow beat it in—then—murder? No, no! Can she be guilty? a short time since she came and sat at my feet—I felt her hand upon my arm—knew her face was looking upon mine. Then there was nothing but her clasped hands upon her brow—her sunken head, and piteous tears—and all this caused by he to whom I gave the shelter of my roof—the warmth of my hearth, too—he hath made it desolate, and torn the great bond of love and life asunder! My child, too—oh, agony! (*sees the gun, rushes to it, takes it down, and moves to the door*) It is loaded! He has taken my life—I will be even with him—I'll shoot him like a wild beast! (*he is about bursting open the door with the stock of the gun, when a glow of light appears in the fireplace, and the chirp of the Cricket is heard—he pauses, and slowly drops the gun*) What was that? The chirp of the cricket! It was she that talked to me of it—her pleasant voice thrilling through me like soft and heavenly music. (*recoiling from the door—placing the gun down, clasping his hands before his face, and sinking in his seat*)

The glow becomes more intense, and the Cricket, in shape of a FAIRY CHILD, comes out upon the hearth.

FAIRY. I love it for its harmless music, and the many happy thoughts it has brought to me.

JOHN. (*without raising his head*) She said so!

FAIRY. This has been a happy home.

JOHN. It *has* been. She made it happy till now.

FAIRY. Upon the hearth she has so often blessed and brightened, hear me—hear everything that speaks the language of hearth and home—

JOHN. And pleads for her.

FAIRY. All things that speak the truth must plead for her.

The hearth, which but for her were only a few stones and bricks, and rusty bars—the altar of your home and happiness.

Music—The back of the Scene removes, and discovers MARY seated at work—her Child upon TILLY'S knee—the figures are children.

Is this the light wife you are mourning for ?

A CHILD as the Carrier enters, R.—she tenderly embraces him.

Is that the wife that has forsaken you, or who has betrayed your confidence? No, no—believe it not!

A light, supposed to be the morning light, shines in at the window—the vision and the FAIRY gradually disappear.

JOHN. (*starting up*) Gone ! and the day broke forth ? Oh, what a night of fearful agony have I passed. (*knock at R. D.*) Come in!

Enter GRUFF TACKLETON, R. C.

GRUFF. What, John Peerybingle! How are you, my good fellow ?

JOHN. But poorly, Master Tackleton. I am glad you have come.

Enter TILLY, R. D.—goes to L. D.

TILLY. (*knocking*) Oh, if you please, I have been a rapping and rapping, and I can't make not nobody hear; I hope nobody arn't gone and died, if you please. *Exit, R. D.*

GRUFF. Hilloa, what's this ? I'll go the curious. (*he peeps in, and comes forward*) I say, John Peerybingle, I hope you arn't done nothing rash in the night ?

JOHN. (*sharply*) What mean you?

GRUFF. Because he's gone—the window is open. (*peeps*) I don't see any marks—any scuffle—eh ?

JOHN. Make yourself easy. He went into that room last night without harm in word or deed from me—no one has entered it since. He has gone—I have done with him. Listen to me—you showed me last night my wife—the wife that I love tenderly—conniving at that man's disguise, and meeting him alone ?

GRUFF. I did—my suspicions were—

JOHN. I know—but you did show it me—and you saw her, the wife that I love, at a disadvantage—it is right you should see her with my eyes, and know my mind upon the subject.

GRUFF. Happy at all times to—

JOHN. I am a plain rough man, but I loved my little wife because I had seen her grow up from a child in her father's

house. She had been my life for many years, I was much older, but in the end I thought we might be married, and we were married.

GRUFF. Ah, pity—women fond of admiration—giddy—steadiness left out of sight, hah!

JOHN. (*sternly*) You had best not interrupt me—at least till you understand me. If yesterday I would have struck that man down with a blow, who dared to breathe a word against her, to-day I'd set my foot upon him, though he were my brother. I never thought how little suited I was to her, heaven bless her ! For the cheerful constancy she has always shown, I can witness. When I am here alone—

GRUFF. Here alone ?

JOHN. She shall be as free as I can render her.

GRUFF. Why you don't mean to—

JOHN. (*seizing him*) Listen to me! do I speak plainly?

GRUFF. Very plainly.

JOHN. As if I meant it ?

GRUFF. Very much as if you meant it.

JOHN. I sat by this hearth all night. I called up her whole life, day by day, every passage of those bright hours stood before me, and on my soul she is innocent, if there is one to judge of the innocent and guilty.

GRUFF. If that is your opinion—

MARY appears, L., she listens.

JOHN. So let her go—go with my blessing upon her, for the many happy hours she has given me, and my forgiveness for any pangs she has caused. When I die she will find I remembered her, and loved her to the—and now it is over.

MARY. (*advancing*) No John, not over. I've stood by and overheard your noble words, and could I love you more, it would be yours. Do not say that all is over, until the clock strikes.

JOHN. No hand can make the clock which will strike again for me. The hours that are gone—but let it be, as you please, my dear. I could do a harder task than that to please you.

GRUFF. Well I must be off! when the clock strikes, I am supposed to be at the church. It's near the time. Sorry for this, shall miss you at dinner, John.

JOHN and GRUFF go out, R. D.—MARY throws herself in chair and weeps.

TILLY runs on, R. 1 E.

TILLY. Oh, if you please, don't. It's enough to dead and bury the baby—so it is if you please.

MARY. You will bring him here, when I am gone to my old home.

TILLY. Oh, if you please don't. Oh, what has everybody gone and been and done with everybody, making everybody else so wretched. And did naughty peoples come and tease—

Music.—Exit, R. 1 E.

Enter CALEB ana BERTHA, R. D.

MARY. Bertha!

BERTHA. Mary here ? not at the marriage !

MARY. No, Bertha, no—

CALEB. (C.) Bertha would come to you ! I've been a thinking of what I've done, the distress of mind I've caused my own child, and now, if you'll stay with me, I'll tell her the whole truth. Bertha your poor old father has wandered from the truth, in kindness, and has been cruel to you.

BERTHA. (L. C.) Cruel? cruel to me? (*with surprise*)

CALEB. Yes, not meaning it, my child—but I have been. Forgive me, my dear, dear child—

BERTHA. Forgive you ?

CALEB. Your road in life was rough. I meant to smooth it for you. I put deceptions upon you, and—oh, Heavens, surrounded you with fancies.

BERTHA. (*breathlessly*) Living people are not fancies—you change them ?

CALEB. I have done so! there is one person—

BERTHA. Ha!-

CALEB. He with whom the marriage takes place to-day. He is a griping, sordid man, a hard master to you and me, cold and callous in his nature, unlike what I have painted him to you in everything, my child.

BERTHA. (*in agony*) Oh why did you ever do this? why did you tear the objects of love from my heart ? (*CALEB goes up and sinks in chair, L. C.*) Mary, look across the room where my father is, and tell me what you see!

MARY. I see an old man sitting in sorrow and anguish, as if he wanted comfort from his child.

BERTHA. Yes, yes, go on !

MARY. He is an old man, worn with care and hard work; I see him despondent and wretched, but I have seen him happy in striving for one great sacred object—his child's happiness, and I honour his grey hairs, and bless him.

BERTHA. (*in choking accents*) Lead me—lead me to him. The greyer, the more worn, the dearer, that father is. There is not a furrow in your face—there's not a hair upon your head that shall be forgotten in my prayers to Heaven. I

thank that power, I am not blind any longer.

The clock strikes ten.

MARY. Ha! Bertha, you have a quick ear—(*leading her to the door*) dost hear the sound of wheels ?

BERTHA. Yes, yes—they are coming very fast.

MARY. (*agitated*) They come — (BERTHA *joins* CALEB) and now they stop at the gate—and now—ha, ha—there is a step—and now—(*runs and places her hands before CALEB'S eyes.*)

EDWARD, *smartly dressed as a sailor, enters with* MAY FIELDING *and* MRS. FIELDING, R. D.—*Music.*

MARY. (*hurriedly*) Is it over !

EDWARD. It is, Heaven be praised !

MARY. Do you hear that voice, old Caleb ? do you recollect it ? did you ever hear the like before ?

CALEB. (*trembling*) If my boy in the golden South Americas was alive—

MARY. (*shrieking and removing her hands*) He is alive! Look at him—standing before you—your own dear son—your dear loving Bertha's brother! (*they embrace*)

Enter JOHN, R. D.

CALEB. Ha, ha, ha! Look, John Peerybingle, look—my true boy from the golden South Americas—my own son—he that you fitted out, and was always a friend to.

JOHN. (*rushes to him, but recoils*) Heavens—is it possible ? That face—the deaf old man—the—

EDWARD. I was that person, John.

JOHN. Why steal disguised into my house? Thee was a frank boy once, who would never have done that.

EDWARD. And there was a generous friend of mine—once more a father than a friend—who never would have judged me or any other man unheard.

JOHN. Right. I will hear you now.

EDWARD. When I left here, a boy, I was in love, and that love was deeply returned. Through all my difficulties I remained true and constant to her. Returning full of hope—after many hardships and perils—I learnt, twenty miles away from this spot, that she was about to bestow her hand upon another and a richer man. I disguised myself—you brought me here—you suspected me not—nor did Mary, until I whispered my name, and that nearly betrayed me.

MARY. But when she knew that Edward was alive, and had come back, she advised him to keep his secret close. He con-

fided it to me—I kept it—he knew John Peerybingle, in the fulness of his heart, could not have kept it for him—and when she—that's me, John—told him all—how his sweetheart was not dead, and she was to marry an old man—and when she—that's me again, John—told him they were not married, he went nearly mad with joy to hear it, and—ha, ha! I—that's me again—got them married an hour ago, and there is his bride. Tackleton may die a bachelor, and heaven bless you all! I am a happy little woman. (JOHN *approaches her*) No, no, John—hear every word from me. I *was* wrong to have any secret from you—and when I sat down at your side last night, and knew how pained that heart was, I—I felt I had acted wrong. (JOHN *approaches*) Don't love me yet, John—not for a minute or two. When I heard your noble words this morning, I knew what a heart was mine. And now, my dear husband, take me to your arms again. This—this is my home—you'll never think of sending me to any other—

JOHN. (*embracing her*) Never—never! My own dear little darling Dot!

GRUFF TACKLETON *rushes in*, R. D.

GRUFF. Holloa, John Peerybingle—here's some mistake. Where is Mrs. Tackleton that is to be ? I must have passed them on the road. Eh—oh—ah! (*approaches MAY and EDWARD*) I—ha, ha—I beg pardon, but this young lady has rather a particular engagement with me this morning.

EDWARD. Indeed ! I am sorry for it. I can't spare her—I couldn't think of such a thing.

GRUFF. Why, what do you mean, you vagabond?

EDWARD. I mean that I am as deaf to harsh discourse this morning as I was to all discourse last night. (GRUFF *starts*) I am sorry, sir—(*holding out MAY'S wedding finger*) the young lady, you perceive, has been to church once this morning—that's enough, in all conscience.

GRUFF. I see. Your name's Edward Plummer, I suppose?

EDWARD. You suppose right.

GRUFF. Indeed! Tilly Slowboy, throw that ring in the fire.

TILLY. (*taking it*) And would it throw rings in the fires ? (*pretends to throw it into the fire—aside*) No—it may be useful to other persons.

(*puts it in her pocket, and goes up*—GRUFF *rushes out*.)

JOHN. Ha, ha! I am a happy man again. Now, then, for happiness. Oh, that I should ever have doubted Dot!

Enter MAN with cake, R. D.

MAN. Mr. Tackleton's compliments, but having no occasion for the cake himself, he says perhaps you'll eat it. (CALEB takes it) He's sent a few toys for the baby—they an't ugly.

Exit R. D.

JOHN. Oh, oh—ha, ha—poor Gruff! Now, then, you'll all dine here to-day—there's plenty in the house. Oh, Dot-Heaven bless you for this happiness!

MARY. You'll not send me away to-night, dear John ?

JOHN. No, but I was very near it, though.

TACKLETON comes in slowly, R. D.

GRUFF. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Peerybingle—I beg all your pardons. What a great fool I have been! a penny whistle for others to blow upon. I am not naturally of a sour disposition. You all seem happy—let me make one of you. My house is very lonely—I haven't even a Cricket on the Hearth.

MARY. Then make this one happy by your presence. (CRICKET heard) There is the cricket chirping away, for the hearth is a happy one. And oh, if around any fireside gloom and despondency sit, may sad eyes be lighted up with joy— heavy hearts start to life with happy, happy throbbings, when hear the merry chirp of the Cricket on the Hearth.

EDWARD. Now let's have a dance !

(*Music—Sir Roger de Coverley.*—GRUFF and MRS. FIELDING—MAY and EDWARD lead off country dance—JOHN dashing down pipe, and seizing MARY, joins in—at length CALEB brings down TILLY—general dance, and curtain falls.

R.

CURTAIN.

L.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means *Right of the Stage, facing the Audience* ; L. *Left*; C. *Centre*; R.C. *Right of Centre*; L. C. *Left of Centre*; D.F. *Door in the Flat, or Scene running across the back of the Stage*; C. D. F. *Centre Door in the Flat*; D. R. C. *Right Door in the Flat*; L. C. F. *Left Door in the Flat*; R. D. *Right Door*; L.D. *Left Door*; 2E. *Second Entrance* ; U. E. *Upper Entrance*.