

AURORA FLOYD.

A Drama,

IN TWO ACTS.

Adapted from Miss Braddon's popular Work of the same title.

BY

WILLIAM E. SUTER, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

The Pirates of the Savannah, Idiot of the Mountain, Syren of Paris,
Angel of Midnight, Old House on the Bridge, Outlaw of the
Adriatic, Sarah's Young Man, A Quiet Family, John
Wopps, Rifle Volunteer, Brother Bill and Me,
Lady Audley's Secret, &c. &c.



THOMAS HAILES LACY,
89, STRAND, LONDON.

First Performed at the Queen's Theatre (under the management of Mr. O. J. James), on Saturday, the 4th day of April, 1863.

AURORA FLOYD.

A new Drama of extraordinary interest, founded on Milis BBADDON'S popular Work of the same **title**.

CHARACTERS.

JOHN MELLISH Mr. J. GHEEN.
 TALBOT BULSTRODE Mr. FOKTUNE.
 JAMES CONYERS Mr. THOMAS SENKETT.
 MADDISON Mr. ANDERSON.
 STEPHEN HARGREAVE, or "THE SOFTY" Mr. CHAHLES BERNE-TT.
 ALDOBRAND GRUB Mr. V. H. WHITTON.
 MATTHEW HARRISON Mr. W. SEYMOUR.
 AURORA MELLISH, n& AURORA FLOYD ... (a Banker's Daughter) Miss MARIAN JACKSON.
 LUCY (her Cousin, Talbot's Wife) Miss EMILY SLADB.
 MARY MERRITHOUGHT (a Domestic Servant) Mrs. HABUSOH.
 Servants, Officers, &c.

Program of the Scenery and incidents.

ACT I.

ANTE-CHAMBER IN MELLISH PARK MANSION.

The Great Aldobrand in no hurry—How to manage the English Language—A Strange Visitor—Where the old dogs go to.

AN APARTMENT.

John's Lovo—A fit of Industry—Strange Misgivings—Aldobrand receives a Shock.

MELLISH PARK!

The Cloud begins to gather—A rare Spirit—The new Trainer—More indignity for Aldobrand—Stephen gets a new Master—the Letter—The Trainer's Messenger.

AN APARTMENT.

.Murs confidence still unshaken—Stephen not very Trusty—Dangerous Weapons—The Answer 1 Yes or no.

T H E W O O D !

The Clouds gather thicker and thicker—The Softy on the Watch—The Meeting—Conyers receives the Money—how a Woman can hate.

T H E D E E D D O N E I N T H E W O O D .

ACT II.
THE MANSION.

Aurora Free—Poor Aldobrand always comes at the wrong time—Arrival of Lucy and Talbot.

MELLIH HEARS OF THE MURDER.

Discovery—Fatal Certificate—The Secret—Aurora and the Softy—A Young Girl's History—The Pistol.

ON THE RIGHT SCENT AT LAST.

THE NORTH LODGE BY MOONLIGHT.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING-A STRUGGLE.

DISCOVERY OF THE NOTES!

PEACE AND JOY AT LAST

FOR AURORA FLOYD.

[Mr. Lacy's List.]

AURORA FLOYD.



ACT I.

SCENE FIRST.—*Ante Chamber of the Mellish Park Mansion
(1st grooves). Bell ringing violently.*

Enter MARY MERRITHOUGHT, hastily, R.

MARY. (*calling*) John! John! wherever has he got to ? Missus will break the bell rope presently, and master will break Mr. John's head. (*giggling*) He, he, he ! but if he were to break it open, I don't think he'd find anything in it—except a few *maggots*—(*giggling*) He, he, he! (*stopping and calling*) John! John!

Enter ALDOBRAND GRUB, slowly, L., a newspaper in his hand.

ALDO. Hah ! Hi say—what har hall this 'ere row about ?

MARY. Why didn't you come before?

ALDO. Hi makes it a point never to 'urry myself—my constitution won't bear it; besides, it hain't harristicratic.

MARY. I have used as much breath calling for you as would have set a windmill a-going. (*giggling*) He, he, he!

ALDO. Hi 'eard you a wociferating "John," hin a most hunc-ladylike manner, but as my name 'appens to be Haldobrand-----

MARY. Yes, yes—we know; but that's such a hard name, so sometimes we just call you " Al."

ALDO. Hi hobjects to 'aving the 'ead of my name taken hoft. Hi don't like the *curtailment*.

MARY. Just so! so mostly we call you "John"—couldn't find a better name to describe you, 'cause it's *plain*—(*giggling*) He, he, he !

ALDO. Hi don't want no himproper hobservations, young woman !

MARY. And master and missus-----

ALDO. Hi hobjects to them *tittles*—hi calls 'em my patron and my female patroness.

MARY. Well, *they* call you John!

ALDO. Hi'm hawar' hov it, hand hi considers has hit's like their himperence—and I don't want none hon it.

MARY. No, that you don't, for you have got enough of your own!—(*giggling*) He, he, he!

ALDO. Hif hi'm to be hinsulted hi shall resign !

MARY. Missus has been ringing for you.

ALDO. Hi can't go—hi'm too busy.

MARY. And Mr. Mellish wants that newspaper.

ALDO. 'E can't 'ave it; hi 'aven't done with it yet—though, really, there's nothink bin it—not a word about the Court and the haristirratsy!

MARY. If you don't go they'll *harris* you, I fancy—(*giggling*) He, he, he!

ALDO. (*aside*) This young woman is a female hidiot!

Enter MATTHEW, L.

MATT. Here, I say, my rum uns!

ALDO. (*starting*) Hoh, my heye! (*shrinks across to L.*) What a dirty hobject!

MATT. Why, what are you a-feared on ? I bean't *pison*.

ALDO. Hi don't like the smell of fustian—hit hoffends my nostrils.

MARY. (C.) I should very much like to know, whoever you may be, how you got here, and to what we owe—as missus says, the *honour* of this visit ?—(*giggling*) He, he, he!

MATT. I got here easy enough, for as soon as I said I wanted to see Mrs. Mellish—

MARY. Ah, that's it! anybody gets in here on any pretence—master says, it ain't the fashion in Yorkshire to shut their doors in people's faces, (*looking at MATTHEW*) and sometimes, I think that's a pity—he, he, he!

ALDO. Hi think the 'ouse is too hopen by 'arf!

MATT. It was, I should say, when they let you in, my swell flunkey!

ALDO. Hoh, what a hinsult!

MARY. And pray, what may be your business with Mrs. Mellish?

MATT. I've come to see if she don't want to buy a dawg.

MARY. A dog! there's enough of them already, to my mind, about the place, and (*glancing at ALDOBRAND*) puppies too, for that matter—he, he, he !

MATT. Ah ! but I sold Mrs. Mellish a dawg once before, in Regent Squadrant—leastways, she warn't Mrs. Mellish then, she wur (*chuckling to himself*) Miss Floyd.

ALDO. Miss A-roarer Floyd ? hit don't become such has you to habbreviate her Keristian happellation.

MATT. I s'pose your master thinks himself a lucky chap to get hold of a banker's daughter, with fifty thousand pounds, and a real heirsch ?

ALDO. Hallow me, my fustian friend, whatever may be your name-----

MATT. Matthew Harrison !

ALDO. Ho ! Mathew 'Arrison ! well-----

MATT. That's my name, and my profession, I arn't ashamed on it, is a dawg fancier.

MARY. And very often you take a fancy to other people's dogs, I dare say—he, he, he!

MATT. I has dealings with a good many of the nobs—I buys and sells—and sometimes—hem!—I'm lucky enough to find a dawg or two.

MARY. You generally find them before they are lost, I expect—he! he! he!

MATT. Oh ! I'm pretty well known.

MARY. Yes, in most of the gaols, no doubt—he! he! he!

ALDO. Hi wish, Mary, you wouldn't hinterfere and hinter-rupt when hi ham about to make a hobobservation. Hi was ha going to inform Mr. 'Arrison that it doesn't become him to make remarks about Miss A-roarer Floyd as were, that is, Mrs. Mellish has har.

MATT. Oh! bless you, she and I are old acquaintances—you've only got to let her know that I'm here, and you'll see.

MARY. She's too good natured to vagabonds a great deal.

MATT. Hollo ! I say, young woman.

MARY. Oh, dear ! I declare I didn't mean to be personal, but I've made what master calls a " double intender "—he, he, he!

ALDO. Mary, hi 'ave hoften told you that hi hobjects to giggling gals!

MARY. Well, and I object to conceited, stuck-up footmen—he! he! he!

ALDO. Ho ! really this is too howdacious!

MARY. (to MATTHEW) I was a-going to say that, no doubt Mrs. Mellish will see you, for she is so kind to everybody—everybody that comes near her loves her, and I don't wonder at it—and as for master, why he adores the very ground she walks upon, and if he could, I do believe he'd take it up and put it in his pocket—he! he! he!

MATT. Ah ! he's fond on her, is he ? (*significantly*) I'm glad to hear that.

MARY. Why what difference can it make to you?

MATT. Oh! (*scratching his head*) none; only I like to hear that married people are happy—'taint often as you gets that sort of information about 'em.

ALDO. Hi would advise you though, Mr. 'Arrison, to mind your manners with her, for though she's a hangel in her hamiable moods, hi can tell you she ain't if she 'appens to get jnto a state of hescitement.

MARY. No, indeed ! Didn't she pay on to Softy, with her riding-whip, when she caught him kicking her favourite dog.

MATT. Softy ! what do you mean by " Softy" ?

ALDO. Softy his the nickname for a certing hindiividual with a 'ump-back-----

MARY. And a face always so white, that it looks like a suet dumpling before it's biled—he, he, he !

MATT. And I suppose he's rather soft about the head, eh ?

MARY. So he lets on to be ; but it's my opinion that Steve Hargreave has got more sense in his noddle than some people I am acquainted with—(*looking at ALDOBRAND*) He, he, he !

ALDO. He used to work about the stables, 'elping to look hafter the 'orses and the 'arness, and do hother hodd herrands about the place; but Mr. Mellish turned him hoff after that business, and now, I think, 'e's 'ard hup.

MATT. Well, I don't want to stop magging here all day. I want to see Mrs. Mellish.

ALDO. Give the fustian man something to heat, Mary, and Hi'll go and hannounce 'is harrival.

MARY. (*crossing, R.*) Come along, master. Oh, bless me ! there's something moving in your pocket.

MATT. It's a dawg, mum!

MARY. Well, if ever—he, he, he ! But, I say, do you never have any of your dogs hang on hand till they get so old that nobody will have them ?

MATT. Not often—but sometimes!

MARY. Aad then, I suppose, you drown the poor things ?

MATT. No, no, we don't do that with 'em neither.

MARY. Do you really treat them tenderly ?

MATT. Yes, mum—we sells 'em to the pie shops !

MARY *screams horrified, and runs off, L.*—MATTHEW *follows her, laughing.*

ALDO. Ho ! haint it 'orrerble. But I ain't surprised, for the lower horders heats hanythink, and considers it a relish. *Exit, R.*

SCENE SECOND.—*Apartment, handsomely furnished ; R. U. E., a large French window, open to the ground, and shewing statues, &c., and park beyond; doors, L. 2 E. and R. 2 E.; table and chairs down R.; a table at back, L. C, on which guns and pistols are scattered.*

JOHN MELLISH *discovered at table at back, polishing the barrel of a gun.*

JOHN. I shall give over—I have had enough of this. (*placing gun on table*) One of the men may finish the work. (*laughing as he advances*) When I say finish—considering I have polished one barrel out of about a score! I will go and look for

Aurora; I live only when she is by my side. I had so much trouble to win her, and that is the reason, I suppose, why I now adore her more than ever; but, law bless me, I have loved her from the very first moment I beheld her! I proposed to her once, and was rejected. She told me that she intended to continue Aurora Floyd all her life; but she seemed so sad when she told me that, that I didn't give up hoping; besides, when a girl tells you that she intends to be an old maid, we always understand that she means, if she can't help it. And lovely, charming, fascinating Aurora Floyd would have had but to whistle, and lords and dukes would have crowded round, eager to marry her; and to think that I should win her—such a rough, ugly, uncultivated brute as I am! Suppose, after her first rejection of me—(*sitting, R.*)—suppose, I say, I had bolted off to the Continent, or stayed at home and drowned myself, as I thought of doing for the benefit of my health, where should I have been now? Why, moping about in Paris, or Russia, or the other world, perhaps. So I stayed at home, mustered up a second lot of courage, proposed a second time to Aurora Floyd, and was a second time rejected. And Aurora cried over it, and so did I—only, Aurora cried in a lady-like manner, and I didn't. She just wiped away a tear or two with the corner of her handkerchief, but I regularly broke down and blubbered, like a great Yorkshire lout as I am! Then I went and told her father, and the old gentleman was very sorry for me—for he should have been proud of me for his son-in-law, he said: but, wonderful to relate, two hours afterwards, Aurora comes to me, her face all over smiles, and as bright as a sunshiny day, and, "John Mellish," says she, "I am ready to consent to be your wife, if—" Ah! (*jumping up*) Here she is!

Enter AURORA, door R.

Oh, my darling Aurora!

AURO. (*smiling*) Now, you great lazy Yorkshireman, what are you doing, eh?

JOHN. Well, at present, nothing.

AURO. At present! Then, what have you been doing?

JOHN. Well—nearly the same employment.

AURO. (*laughing*) I was sure of it.

JOHN. I came here with the intention of cleaning those guns and pistols, but somehow-----

AURO. Somehow you didn't—of course not. Your fits of industry arrive but seldom, and then they do not stay long with you.

JOHN. No, about once in three months I feel industriously inclined.

AURO. For how long?

JOHN. Generally for about two minutes.

AURO. John, John, you great wicked boy—I am quite ashamed of you.

JOHN. Rory, if Mr. Pastern does not soon send us the new trainer he promised to find us, we shall not be able to run Buttercup for the Oaks.

AURO. What a shame, for I would lay any odds she would win.

JOHN. So would I, dear ! (AURORA *crosses and sits at table, R.*) Though nothing that I have run has won yet; but I have the consolation to know that they ought to have won.

AURO. That dear Buttercup couldn't lose, I'm quite sure of that.

JOHN. And you are a judge, Rory—you know everything—dogs and horses, none of them come amiss to you. If you had been a man, what a capital prime minister you would have made.

AURO. Ah! (*laughing*) But as I do not happen to be a man—

JOHN. No, thank goodness, or you would never have been my wife, you know.

AURO. (*still laughing*) Well, I suppose not, you great stupid fellow.

JOHN. But I do wish the new trainer would come, for the stables are all going to the dogs.

AURO. (*as before*) Well, John, the dogs would have no objection to that.

JOHN. Well, I suppose not; but poor old Langley is past his work—quite infirm and rheumatic—so we must lay him up in clover for the rest of his life. Softy, now, was handy about the stables—knew a good deal about horses, and if he could have behaved himself----

AURO. (*rising*) Oh ! the horrid wretch! he came suddenly upon me a day or two since as I was riding slowly through the wood, and glared at me with an expression that----- Heaven forgive me the thought, but his face was so horrible, I feared he was about to murder me.

JOHN. Not because you horsewhipped him. (*laughing*) He hasn't sense enough to be revengeful. If ever Softy should commit a murder, it would be to obtain money, for at the sight of a yellow-boy his eyes almost jump out of his head.

AURO. Do you know, John, if his face was always so terribly white ?

JOHN. Well, I have heard that when a boy, he was a ruddy, likely lad enough; but after that fall, which put both his head and his back out of shape, he was brought home as white as a sheet, and his face has ever since retained that ashy hue.

AURO. I should pity him if he had not proved himself so

great a brute; and now—I am almost ashamed to say it—but, I fear him.

JOHN. You have no occasion, Rory— besides, couldn't I protect you against a dozen Softies! What is the use of having a husband if—lor, Rory! to think that such an animal as I am should marry a banker's daughter, a great heiress, and a beautiful creature!

AURO. Yes, John, you fought the sturdy fight of the strong heart, which very rarely fails to win the prize it is set upon— however high or far away that prize may seem to be.

JOHN. Yes, I made a waiting race of it, and at last came in with a rush, the winner of the stakes—and they were yourself, and not the money your old dad is to give you, for I've one of the finest estates in Yorkshire; I'm not worse looking, nor worse educated than the generality of fellows, and I'm sound wind and limb. I never told a lie or committed a mean action; and I love you, Rory, with as true and pure a love as ever man felt for woman.

AURO. (*embracing him*) I know you do, you dear, good, silly old John ! You accepted me, although you knew there was a secret clinging about me—that there was a missing year in my young life, for which I told you I would never account— would never give you any explanation—and spite of that secret, you accepted me for your wife.

JOHN. I trusted you—still trust, shall always trust you—ay, in spite of a hundred secrets. I could not love you as I do, Aurora, if I did not believe you to be all that is best and purest in woman. I cannot believe this one moment and doubt you the next. I gave my life and honour into your hands. I would not have confided them to the woman whom by a single doubt I could insult.

AURO. You are worthy of the love of a better woman than me, dear John ; but, with the help of heaven, I will never give you cause to regret having trusted me.

JOHN. I know that, Rory; and *you* know that you can do as you will with me. It isn't enough to say that I love you, my darling—I idolize you, and lay myself down to be trampled upon, crushed if you will, by your gracious and pretty little feet!

AURO. Yes, poor infatuated John, I know that whatever I do or say is charming, bewitching, and wonderful, to you. If I ridicule and laugh at you, my laughter is the sweetest harmony in creation.

JOHN. Yes, yes—and it delights me that my Yorkshire absurdities can give birth to such music.

AURO. If I lecture you, I arise to the sublimity of a priestess-----

JOHN. Yes, yes.

AURO. And you listen to me, and worship me as the most noble of living creatures-----

JOHN. So you are—so you are !—in fact, every day I feel more and more like a spooney!

AURO. No, John, you are a true man, a devoted husband !

JOHN. Oh, my darling Rory! (*embracing her*)

ALDOBRAND *appears at door, L.*

ALDO. Hoh ! hi never !

(*they turn and see him—AURORA sits at table, R.*)

JOHN. What now ?

ALDO. Hi beg your parding; hi didn't know has you **was** hengaged.

JOHN. (C.) What do you want ?

ALDO. (L.) Hi don't want nothink—that is, nothink hon my hown haccout—but there har ha man has wants Mrs. Mellish.

JOHN. One of your poor pensioners, I suppose, Rory.

ALDO. No, sir, he har not a pensioner, he har a dog fancier, (AURORA rises *hastily*) which hanimals, when they har hold, he disposes hof to hestablishments where hall the pies har made which are heaten by the lower borders.

JOHN. (*laughing*) Rory, have you a notion what this donkey is talking about?

AURO. I think, perhaps----- (*crosses to ALDOBRAND*) Did this man tell you his name ?

ALDO. (L.) Matthew 'Arrison—'e says you har hacquainted with him, that you 'ave bought ha dog hof him, hand-----

JOHN. (R.) Well, your mistress can't see him now.

AURO. (C.) Yes, John, dear—I think I will. (to ALDOBRAND) Send him to me.

JOHN. What, here ? my dear Aurora-----

AURO. Well! what ? Would you dictate to me ?

JOHN. Now, is that likely ?

ALDO. (*aside*) Hi should think hit wasn't. Hi never knew ha man so 'orrerbly 'enpecked—hit's hawful! Hi'm growing hashamed hof him, and hif 'e don't halter, hi shall discharge him! *Exit, door, L.*

AURO. John, dear, there is no occasion that you should be present at my interview with this man.

JOHN. Very well, Rory, just as you like, (*going to table at back*) I'll just put these guns out of the way, and then-----

Enter MATTHEW HARRISON, L.

MATT. Oh, how do, marm—is you glad to see me, or ain't you?

JOHN. (*advancing, C.*) What does the fellow say ?

MATT. (L., *taken aback on seeing JOHN*) Um ! ah! I didn't know that----- I've called to see if the missus would like a

spannel dawg, or a French poodle what'll balance a bit of bread on his nose while you count ten, and then chuck it down his throat like winkin'.

JOHN. Mind what you are about with this fellow's dogs; Rory, for I would lay long odds that he is more of a stealer than a dealer. *Going up and off at window, C. to R.*

AURO. (R. C.) Why did you come here—how dared you—why couldn't you write to me ?

MATT. (L.) Because writin's never so much good as speakin'. I first went to your pa's house to ask after Miss Floyd, for I didn't know as you was married to this Yorkshire chap—I didn't say nothing to the old gent, though I dessay he'd be good for a fi'pun note ; or a tenner if it came to that.

AURO. (*passionately*) If ever you dare to annoy my father, you shall pay dearly for it; not that I fear anything you can say, but I will not have him annoyed; I will not have him tormented. He has borne enough, and suffered enough, heaven knows, without that. I will not have him harassed, and his best and tenderest feelings made a market of by such as you. (*stamping her foot*) I will not!

MATT. You needn't take on so, Miss Floyd— Mrs. Mellish, I mean—all I ask is that you'll act a little liberal to a cove what's down in the world since you see him last.

AURO. If every guinea I have, or ever hope to have, could blot out the business that you trade upon, I'd open my hands and let the money run through them as freely as so much water. I had forgotten you, and was at last happy--Oh ! so happy, and now-----

MATT. Well, but, excuse me—oughtn't you to thank me a little for your 'appiness, for if I hadn't sent you that ere " Bell's Life," you wouldn't have known that your husband-Jem Conyers, I mean, was dead.

AURO. (*looking round fearfully*) Silence ! silence !

MATT. Them few lines in the paper as said that James Conyers, a English jockey, ridin' a steeple chase, in Germany, was thrown off his horse, and smashed and killed, is all I could ever get hold of about the business. (AURORA *produces her portmonnaie*) But I allus said it, and I allus will, if a man rides up'ards of eleven stun—ah ! (*seeing gold and eagerly holding out his hand*)

JOHN MELLISH *appears at window, he suddenly stops.*

AURO. (*pouring several sovereigns into MATTHEW'S hand*) Let me have the address of some place where a letter may always find you—you can put it into an envelope, and direct it to me here ; and from time to time I promise to send you a moderate remittance—sufficient to enable you to lead an honest

life, if you, or any of your set are capable of doing so; but, I repeat, that if I give you this money as a bribe, it is only for my father's sake.

MATT. Well, certainly, the poor chap is dead; but I was a sort of pal of his—travelled with him when-----

JOHN. (*advancing*, C.) Aurora, what is all this ?

AURO. (*starting*) You here, John, and listening ?

JOHN. No, no—but I-----

MATT. (L., *aside*) I shall hook it! I've got the tin, and there's going to be a row. *Slips off, L. door.*

JOHN. (L. C.) Rory, I—I don't know what it means, but I—I don't think that man is the sort of person you ought to assist.

AURO. (R. C.) I daresay not. I have no doubt I assist many persons who ought by rights to die in a workhouse, or drop on the high road; but, you see, if I stopped to question their deserts, they might die of starvation while I was making my inquiries; so perhaps it's better to throw away a few shillings upon some unhappy creature who is wicked enough to be hungry, and not good enough to deserve to have anything given him to eat. (*crosses*, L.)

JOHN. But this man, Rory—he spoke to you in away that-----

AURO. John Mellish, remember your promise. I will not submit to be called to account for my actions—even by you.

JOHN. (*reproachfully*) Aurora!

AURO. You can but be convinced that I know too well the value of your love to imperil it by word or deed. (*going*, R.)

JOHN. Stay, Rory, stay! (*she returns*) Forgive me—do as you will—act as you please—I do not doubt, and I will not question you.

AURO. Ah! now you are again my dear old John! (*embracing him*)

JOHN. And now, Aurora, I want to tell you something—such good news!

AURO. About what ?

JOHN. About the trainer. 

AURO. (*carelessly, shugging her shoulders*) Is that all ?

JOHN. Yes—but ain't you glad we've got the man at last?—the very man to suit us, I think. (*thrusting his hand into his coat pocket*) Where's Mr. Pastern's letter ?

AURO. (*crossing to R., laughing gaily*) I wouldn't mind betting five to one you won't find it. (*sits at table*, R.)

JOHN. (*rummaging his pockets*) Confound it! Curse it! Where has it got to ? I can't have----- Oh—here it is!

AURO. (*laughing*) For a wonder I should have lost my wager.

JOHN. (*opening letter*) You're attending, Aurora?

AURO. (*looking her dress over, adjusting it, &c.*) Yes, dearest and best, yes.

JOHN. Oh, but, now—you can't hear a word while you keep twiddling about like that!

AURO. (*playfully shrugging her shoulders*) I submit to the command of a tyrant. (*sitting bolt upright in her chair*) There! don't beat me, please, and I will be good.

JOHN. (*fondly*) Ah! Rory, you want only a nice little pair of wings to make you a perfect angel! But, about the trainer. (*glancing over letter*) Um, um, ah! here we have it. (*reading*) "I think he will suit you very well, as he is well up in his business, having had plenty of experience as groom, jockey, and trainer. He is only thirty years of age, but met with an accident some time since, which lamed him for life. He was half killed in a steeple chase in Prussia, (*AURORA rises to her feet*) and was for upwards of a year in a hospital at Berlin. His name is James Conyers, and he can have a character from"----- I needn't read any more, because----- (*raising his eyes towards AURORA, he sees her standing petrified, glaring wildly upon him*)

JOHN. (*terrified*) Good heavens, Aurora! what is it? Oh! what is it?

AURO. (*gasping and hoarsely*) It's wrong—it's wrong! you've read the name wrong. It can't be that!

JOHN. What name?

AUKO. (*fiercely*) What name? that name! It can't be, I tell you, it *can't* be! Give me the letter! (*she snatches the letter from JOHN'S hand, crossing to L., JOHN'S eyes continue fixed upon her face—she looks at the letter for a moment, then reeling back a step or two, falls heavily to the ground—JOHN, remains rooted to the spot on which he has been standing*)

SCENE THIRD.—*Mellish Park (1st grooves).*

Enter JAMES CONYERS, R., smoking a cigar (he limps slightly with one leg)—STEPHEN HARGREAVE follows, a portmanteau on his shoulder.

STEPH. There! (*placing portmanteau on the ground*) You'll have to find some one else to carry it th' rest 't' road. (*holding out his hand to be paid*)

JAMES. What the devil do you mean? I have hired you to carry my portmanteau as far as I pleased—and I am going up to the house; and I'm sure the portmanteau has ridden very comfortably on top of your hump; so, what the devil do you mean?

STEPH. I mean that I mayn't go no further—I mean that I've been toorned oot of yon place that I've lived in, man and boy, for forty-year—toorned oot like a dog, neck and crop!

JAMES. What do you mean, man ? What are you talking about ?

STEPH. Why, Mrs. Mellish horsewhipped me for kicking her favourite dog, and master toorned me oot of his service. You wouldn't like to be toorned oot of a please as you'd lived in forty year, would you ? But Mrs. Mellish has a rare spirit, bless her pretty feace !

JAMES. (*taking his cigar from his mouth*) Your blessing, my friend, has a very ominous sound—(*taking hold of STEPHEN'S collar and pulling him round*) Let's have a good stare at you, man!—red eyes in a white face! I've seen a more agreeable countenance! (*laughing and pushing STEPHEN away*) You're a character, my friend, it strikes me; and not too safe a character, either. I'm dashed if I should like to offend you!

Enter ALDOBRAND, R., he crosses to L.

JAMES. (C.) Holloa! who is this covey that walks as if he hadn't got strength left to move his carcass along !

STEPH. (R.) Oh ! only one of the servants from the house.

ALDO. (L.) Honly !—Hi haint a going to put up with none of your hinsolence, Mr. Softy; hand considering has 'ow you 'ave been turned hoff, you ain't got no sort hof business habout hour hestate!

JAMES. You are a spicy sort of chap, you are !

ALDO. Yes, I har; and you, hi himagine, har the person has har hexpected hin the stables to hattend to the 'orses !

JAMES. The new trainer—precisely.

ALDO. Hah! then hi was requested by Mr. Mellish to hinform you, sir, that the north lodge 'as been fitted hup for you hin a most comfortable, in fact, hin quite a hexquisite manner.

JAMES. Very good—then do you walk on ahead and lead the way to it.

ALDO. Well, hi was requested by Mr. Mellish to hobey you in heverythink, and to place myself at your horders.

JAMES. Very good and very proper.

ALDO. (*crossing to R.*) Foller harter me, hif you please—this 'ere har the way.

JAMES. All right, (*crossing to C.*) and I say, just carry my portmanteau, will you.

ALDO. Ho, hi say, you har hunder a herror; hi hain't a porter, hi'm ha hupper servant!

JAMES. Well, take this up then.

ALDO. Hi can't really—hi hain't got strength, and hi didn't hengage to do no 'ard work.

JAMES. Come, on to your shoulder with it.

ALDO. Hi can't—my shoulders har too tender.

JAMES. Then we'll try your head, that's thick enough to bear it. (*clapping the portmanteau on ALDOBRAND'S head, and smashing his hat flat*)

ALDO. Hah ! 'ere's a go—my new 'at har ruined for hever!

JAMES. That will do, go along ! (*bundles ALDOBRAND off, L.*) Now you—what's your name ? it ain't Apollo, I should think ?

STEPH. (*L.*) My name be Stephen Hargreave—but I'm mostly called the " Softy."

JAMES. Oh! a deficiency about your *nut*, eh ? Well, you have got more than your fair allowance of back, at any rate.

STEPH. Ye—yes!

JAMES. Now look here—in this North Lodge it isn't likely I can do for myself.

STEPH. Well, if you'll hire me, I'll do for you.

JAMES. Curse me, if you don't look like the sort of fellow that would do for anybody ! But I don't mind you, and I'll have you, because my Lady Highropes has turned you away ; so I'll give you five shillings a week and your peck, and you must clean my boots, cook my dinner, and make my bed, and such like.

STEPH. I marn't—I've been toorned out, and I darn't—no, I darn't.

JAMES. Ugh, you cur ! you're afraid of setting foot upon the estate, are you? Never mind, Steve, *I* give you leave to come, and I should like to see the man or woman in that house who'll interfere with any whim of mine. *I* give you leave. You understand.

STEPH. (*touching his cap*) Yes, I—no, I don't—I-----

JAMES. Tell me, Softy, is Mr. Mellish fond of his wife ?

STEPH. Fond? Yes, uncommon—but *I* bean't though—*I* bean't!

JAMES. I hear that her father gave her fifty thousand pounds down on her wedding day.

STEPH. Mr. Mellish has got heaps of money of his own.

JAMES. Ah, to be sure, that's always the way of it. Do you think now, Steve, that if Aurora Floyd had married a poor devil, her father would have given her fifty sixpences ?

STEPH. I—I don't know !

JAMES. Oh ! well I do ! (*producing a letter*) Here, I say, do you see this ?

STEPH. It's a letter.

JAMES. Yes, and you must take it up to the house.

STEPH. For Mr. Mellish ?

JAMES. No, for Mrs. Mellish.

STEPH. I daren't go nigh the house ; least of all to speak to her.

JAMES. Ugh! you cur! But I tell you, I'll bear you harm-

less—you have nothing to fear, and you must. I've no such wonderful love for Mrs. Mellish myself, and if she will only — Here, take the letter! (*thrusting it into STEPHEN'S hand*) There's no need of any address—you know who it's for, and you won't give it to anybody else. Watch about till you see her and then beckon her to you.

STEPH. Yes, but-----

JAMES. There, get along with you. (*putting him over to R.*) She'll say nothing to *you*, man, when she sees who the letter comes from. You needn't wait for a written answer. "Yes," or "No," will be quite enough, you may tell Mrs. Mellish.

STEPH. I s'pose I must go, but I don't like it. I don't forget the day she horse-whipped me. You think I'm a coward, don't'ee now ?

JAMES. Well, I don't think you are over valiant, to be afraid of a woman, though she was the veriest devil that ever played fast and loose with a man.

STEPH. (*in a half whisper, and pressing close to CONYERS*) Shall I tell you what it is I be afraid of? It ain't Mrs. Mellish—it's myself—it's *this*. (*partly drawing a large clasp knife from his trousers pocket*) It's *this*! I be afraid to trust myself a-nigh her, for fear I should spring upon her, and cut her thro-at from ear to ear—I've seen her in my dreams sometimes, with her beautiful white thro-at laid open, and streaming oceans of blood; but for all that she's always had the broken whip in her hand, and she's always laughed at me. I've had many a dream about her; but I've never seen her dead or quiet, and I've never seen her without the whip—never without the whip—never without the whip! *Exit., R.*

JAMES. That's a queer fish—an uncommon queer fish ; but it's rather hard if I can't manage *him*. I've twisted his betters round my little finger before to-day—ha ! ha ! and shall again—shall again. *Exit, R.*

SCENE FOURTH.—*Same as Scene Second.*

AURORA *discovered seated, R.*—JOHN MELLISH *standing near her, holding her hand.*

JOHN. Aurora, dearest, nothing shall shake my confidence ; nothing can. But have pity on me—this man, this Conyers—what is he, and who is he ?

AURO. You know that as well as I do. A groom once—afterwards a jockey—and now a trainer.

JOHN. But you know him.

AURO. I have seen him.

JOHN. When?

AURO. Some years ago, when he was in my father's service.

JOHN. (*thoughtfully*) James Conyers was in your father's service. But why should the mention of his name have caused you such emotion ?

AURO. I cannot tell you.

JOHN. Ah—I see—I understand, Aurora! This man—this groom, while a servant of your father's, discovered something of—the secret that-----

AURO. Yes.

JOHN. (*aside, walking over to L.*) What, in the name of Heaven, can this secret be, which is in the keeping of a servant, and yet cannot be told to me? But I have sworn to trust in her blindly to the end, and I will—I will! (*he turns again towards AURORA, who rises*) Aurora, I will tell this man he will not suit us, and-----

AURO. (*laying her hand on his arm*) Tell him nothing of the kind, John; the man will suit you very well, I dare say. I had rather he should remain.

JOHN. But he will annoy you; he will try to extort money from you.

AURO. He would do that in any case, since he is alive—I thought that he was dead. John, suppose something were to happen which would separate us for ever—something which would compel me to leave this place, never to return to it—what then ?

JOHN. What then, Rory! I would rather see your coffin laid in the empty niche beside my mother's in the vault of our parish church, than I would part with you thus. I couldn't part with you—I couldn't! I would rather take you in my arms, and plunge with you into the pond in the wood. I would rather send a bullet to your heart, and see you lying murdered at my feet.

AURO. (*joyfully*) John, John, my own true John, we will never part, dear! Why should we? There is very little upon this wide earth that money cannot buy; and it shall help to buy our happiness. We will never part, darling—never. (*he gazes anxiously on her—she breaks into a joyous laugh*) Don't look so amazed and frightened, you poor, fond, silly old John !

(*he throws his arm round her waist, and they exeunt, R. door—a pause, and STEPHEN looks in at the window, then enters nervously from L.*)

STEPH. I be here, but I don't like it, I don't like it. I bean't so much afeard though as I were, 'cause (*chuckling*) I knows summut ! The letter as that swaggering new trainer guv I, were in a envelop wi'out no address ; so I took the letter out, and then I put it back into another envelop—not afore I had read it, though ; it were a deal o' trouble, for I bean't much of a scholar—but I made it out enough to know that this here

Mr. Conyers wants Mrs. Mellish to meet him to night, and to bring two thousand pound with her. What a huge sight of money! and why should she give him two thousand pound? that's what I can't make out—but I will, for it's queer—uncommon queer! Oh! let me but get a good hold on my lady, and I'll make her remember the horse-whip as well as I do.

MARY MERRITHOUGHT, *appearing at window, from L.*

MARY. (*aside*) It is the Softy ! well, plague take his assurance ! and he must be soft to come here after the hard knocks missus gave him—(*giggling*) He, he, he!

STEPH. (*who has gone to table at back*) What a sight of guns and pistols—I wish they were all mine. (*levelling a gun*) This is the chap to bring down a pheasant!

MARY. (*aside*) And if master should see you here, he's the chap that would bring you down—he, he, he!

STEPH. (*taking up a small pocket pistol, levelling towards L., and snapping the trigger*) To think that such a little thing as this could kill a big man like—like him at the north lodge, yonder.

MARY. (*aside*) I know that pistol isn't loaded, but I shouldn't wonder if he tried to make it go off in his pocket—he, he, he !

STEPH. (*levelling pistol*) This little thing would spoil my proud lady for using the horsewhip any more. Ah ! if this were mine-----

MARY. (*advancing, R.*) If you don't put it down, you'll be taken up—he, he, he!

STEPH. (*turning hastily and levelling pistol at her*) What do you want—what do you want? (MARY *screams, throws her apron over her face and scampers off at window*) Cuss that girl, she'll frighten all the pleace. (*he throws the pistol on to table as R. door is dashed open, and AURORA enters*)

AURO. (*as she enters*) What cry was that ? (*seeing STEPHEN, she stops suddenly and shuddering—STEPHEN in confusion takes off his furry cap, and twiddles it about*) You here! I thought Mr. Mellish had dismissed you, and that you had been forbidden the estate.

STEPH. (L.) Yes, ma'am, Muster Mellish did turn me out of the house I'd lived in, man and boy, nigh upon forty year; but I've got a new pleace now, and my new master sent me to you with a letter. (*fixing his eyes on her*)

AURO. (*quivering*) What new master?

STEPH. The new trainer, ma'am—Muster James Conyers.

AURO. (*looking at him keenly*) What does he want with you?

STEPH. I'm to keep his pleace in order for him, ma'am, and run errands for him; and I've brought a letter.

AURO. A letter ? Ah, yes, give it me. (STEPHEN *extends the*

letter slowly, her eyes fixed penetratingly on his face, she takes it from his hand—then her own hand, holding the letter drops listlessly to her side) You can go.

STEPH. I was to wait for an answer.

AURO. (*eagerly thrusting the letter into the bosom of her dress*) There is no answer, and there shall be none till I choose; tell your master that.

STEPH. It wasn't to be a written answer, it was to be Yes or No, that's all; but I was to be sure and wait for it. (AURORA *stamps with rage, plucks the letter from her breast, tears open the envelope and reads—aside*) She hates me bad enough, but she hates t'other chap worse.

AURO. (*crushing the letter in her hand*) Yes—tell your master that. (*dashes off L. door*)

STEPH. An' I shall be there too, I wool! (*he snatches up the little pistol he has left on R. table, and hurries off at window, to L. —Music*)

SCENE FIFTH.—*Same as Scene First.*

Enter MARY, L.

MARY. Well, I haven't had such a fright as that Softy gave me for some time; goodness knows, he's fright enough, and when he's joined to another fright!—He, he, he!

Enter ALDOBRAND, R.

ALDO. Hah, Mary, you're halways a giggling! hi suppose it's to show your teeth?

MARY. That observation don't show your sense—he, he, he! John.

ALDO. Haldobrand!

MARY. Oh, bother! Have you seen the new trainer?

ALDO. (*looking indignant*) Hi 'ave.

MARY. Isn't he a duck? The most handsome man, I think, I ever clapped my eyes on—he's beautiful enough to win the heart of a duchess.

ALDO. Hit harn't so much being 'andsome, as 'aving a haristicatic hair, and Mr. Conyers 'as the manners of a coal-'eaver—'e 'as lowered my himportance hin my own heyes, and flattened my 'at.

MARY. He couldn't make you a lower fellow than you are already—He, he, he!

ALDO. Hit seems as hi'm to be hinsulted by heverybody—hi shall, certingly, very soon send him my resignation—hi don't like to be treated has hif hi was a hignorant hass!

MARY. Then you shouldn't let people see that you are one—He, he, he!

ALDO. Hoh! honly 'ark hat 'er !

MARY. (*going, R.*) But I can't enjoy your agreeable society any longer; missus will be wanting me.

ALDO. Not yet, she won't, for Mrs. Mellish 'as just gone hout.

MARY. (*returning*) Gone out, at this late hour!

ALDO. That's just what I said when I saw her going—" Going hout hat this late *hour*," I says-----

MARY. To missus ?

ALDO. No—to myself.

MARY. Oh, if you had said it to her, you would have gone out before her, though you are a footman, and usually walk behind her! He, he, he !

ALDO. Hi can't hallow going hout so late—hi require to go to bed hearly, and hif hi'm to be kept hup to hall *hours*-----

MARY. But didn't master go with her ?

ALDO. No—Mr. Mellish his ha sitting hin the library, fast asleep hin his heasy chair ; 'e went there to write some letters, and then 'e-----

MARY. To go out so late and alone, and I do believe it's going to rain.

ALDO. And perhaps Mr. Mellish will have the hinferral humpudence to send me hafter 'er with a humberella.

MARY. But where did she go to ?

ALDO. Hi don't know—perhaps to the bottom of the garding—for she hof ten goes there hof ha hevening to look at the 'unnysuckle and hother horticultural hexcresences.

MARY. I think there's something wrong going on, and if so, it is only right I should know—he! he! he! Master and missus, both seemed to me, this evening, as if they was turned topsy-turvey.

Exit, R.

ALDO. Then hi really must resign, for hi can't stay hin ha 'ouse where the people don't conduct themselves hin ha hupright manner.

Exit, L.

SCENE SIXTH.—*At back, the Commencement of a Wood.*

R. C., a pool of stagnant water, the dim outlines of which are continued and lost amongst the trees— tangled brushwood grows in front of and about the pond—straight across in front of the pond, a bench fixed as a resting-place; the entrance to and portion of a summer-house, L. 2 E.; a mass of shrubs, &c., at the side, and about the summer-house next to the Audience. Very bright moonlight. Music.

The shrubs L. are parted, and STEPHEN HARGREAVE appears.

STEPH. (*looking out*) I bees the first here. I al'us wur a pounctual man when there wur work to do. (*struggles from the*

shrubs and comes forward) How I hate that 'oman! I've got the stripes upon my shoulder where she cut me with the whip to this day. I look at 'em sometimes and they help to keep me  ind. She's a fine madam, ees, she be, and a great lady o'  she comes to meet her husband's sarvant on the sly after dark, for all that. Maybe, the day isn't far off when *she'll* be turned from the gates, and warned off the ground, and the merciful heaven send that I live to see it. Hush ! (*he listens*) No, nought yet! Will she bring that two thousand pound wi' her? and if she do—I ha' gotten this little pop-gun (*bringing from his pocket the small pistol taken in Scene Fourth*) and I ha' gotten a bit o' powder. (*takes from his waistcoat pocket a twisted piece of paper, and pours its contents into the pistol*) Wi' two thousand pound poor Softy would be a rich man for life, and I ha' al'us wanted to be rich—al'us had a craving arter money—it be everything. If I'd ha' been a rich man my lady wouldn't ha' dared to mark my shoulders wi' her horsewhip. But I bean't got no bullet, and wi'out that—I know!—I know ! (*he pulls a button from his waistcoat*) Brass will do as well as lead, and flat as well as round, I think ! Eh ! (*listening*) One on 'em be coming noo—one on 'em—one on 'em ! (*Music—he fights his way back amongst the shrubs and disappears*)

Enter JAMES CONYERS, whistling, R.

JAMES. It's full the time—she ought to have been here, (*going up*) for I am rather late. Oh! (*sitting on bench before pond*) my game leg gives me some awkward twitches to-night—going to have a change of weather, I reckon. Ah, that was a narrow squeak for me ; (*laughing*) how the doctors contrived to put my pieces together again, I don't know. If I had hopped the twig then, what a jolly time of it I should have lost. Come, I say Mrs. Mellish, you *are* late; but I don't think she will be long now—no, no, I don't think she will be long.

Enter AURORA, behind summer house, L.

Oh, very good. (*rising*) Glad to see you once more—how are you, my dear Mrs. Mellish? have you brought the two thousand pounds ? It's very little, I ought to have said twenty, but I've always stood in my own light.

AURO. Wretch!

JAMES. (*carelessly*) Ah, yes, I dare say! Perhaps you won't have any objection if I light a cigar? (*producing case and match, lights a cigar*) We can go on with our business. I have offered—these cigars are not first-rate—I have offered, for two thousand pounds, to leave this place-----

AURO. Yes.

JAMES. For ever—never, in any way, to trouble you more.

AURO. Yes.

JAMES. Ah! but what if I have altered my mind? (AURORA fixes her eyes on him) what if I should now refuse?

AURO. In that case, look to yourself!—that's all, look to yourself!

JAMES. What, you'd kill me, I suppose?

AURO. No, but I'd tell all, and get the release which I ought to have sought for two years ago.

JAMES. Oh, ah, to be sure! a pleasant thing for Mr. Mellish, and our poor papa, and a nice bit of gossip for the newspapers! I've a good mind to put you to the test, and see if you've pluck enough to do it, my lady. (she takes one threatening step towards him, then checks herself) You'd like to stab me, or shoot me, or strangle me, as I stand here;—(mockingly) wouldn't you, now?

AURO. (disdainfully) Yes, I would!

JAMES. Ah! I know of old that you are a regular she-devil; and you know that I am, and always have been, a bit afraid of you—so come, let's settle this business. I promise all you wish, and will keep my word, so hand me over the two thousand pounds, and make an end.

AURO. There! (she extends a roll of notes—as JAMES takes them from her hand, there is a rustling amongst the shrubs, L., he starts)

JAMES. There's some one listening to us! (Music—he hurries over to L., puts aside some of the shrubs, and looks)

AURO. (R., contemptuously) It was my dog which has followed me here.

JAMES. (L.) No, no, it was a man—I am sure of that—that fellow Hargreave, perhaps. I fancy he's a sneak.

AURO. Remember, that in this life, we must not meet again.

JAMES. I understand! but why shouldn't we part friends?

AURO. Friends! I hate you! hate and abhor you! I look upon you as the primary cause of every sorrow I have ever known, of every tear I have ever shed, of every humiliation I have endured; every sleepless night, every weary day, every despairing hour I have ever passed. More than this—yes, a thousand, thousand times more: I look upon you as the first cause of my father's wretchedness. Yes, even before my own mad folly in believing in you. Go, go—your presence poisons my home, your abhorred shadow haunts my sleep—no, not my sleep, for how should I ever sleep knowing that you are near! Hate? oh, curse you! curse you! (crosses, L.)

JAMES. Ah! (going to and sitting down on bench at back) You'll excuse my resting myself till you calm down a bit—my leg is dreadfully painful to-night!

AURO. I will waste no more time in talking to you. My worst words can inflict no wound upon such a nature as yours. My scorn is no more painful to you than it would be to any of the loathsome creatures that creep about the margin of yonder pool. *Glances at him contemptuously and walks off, L. 1 E.—Music.*

JAMES. *(drawing his legs up to the bench, and reclining along it, his head towards R.)* Oh, how it pains me! Ah, *(reclining)* that's better! *(looking at the notes and smoking his cigar)* A tidy lump of money this—only bits of paper; but how nice and crisp! I know there was somebody listening. If that soft-headed fool is playing the spy upon me, *(savagely)* he'd better not let me catch him, for I'll make him remember it, if I do. I may as well count these notes—there might be a fifty-pounder, or so, short; and if there should be, my lady—*(chuckling—Music, piano, agitato—reclining, and smoking his cigar, he lazily turns over the notes—STEPHEN, the pistol in his hand, comes crawling from behind the summer-house—keeping behind JAMES'S range of view, he proceeds on his hands and knees till he is near the bench, then slowly and steadily levelling at JAMES'S back, he fires—JAMES rolls from the bench to the ground, dead, the side nearest the pond—STEPHEN, on both knees, bends forward, staring at the body—Drop comes down slowly.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE FIRST.—*Apartment—same as Scene II., Act I.*

AURORA enters, door R.

AURO. Now, do I feel that I am free, and that I belong alone to John—dear John, whom I love with all a woman's fervent devotion. Ah! how different to that mad infatuation of my girlhood. Never must he know of that; he would despise me! But I have seen the last of that wretch; he will never dare again to trouble me; will not dare to break the word that he has pledged to me.

Enter JOHN MELLISH, door L.

JOHN. Aurora!

AURO. *(hastening to him)* Ah! you good dear John!

JOHN. Why, Rory, you are positively radiant this morning.

AURO. That is, you fond foolish fellow, because I am positively happy.

JOHN. Are you, really and truly?

AURO. Yes, and so must you be?

C

JOHN. How can I ever be otherwise, Rory, while I possess your love ?

AURO. Oh, John, that could never leave you. But I am happy because I have no longer any dread of—of the new trainer ; the thought of him no longer troubles me.

JOHN. Indeed, Rory, how is that ?

AURO. (*playfully*) Ask no questions, and I'll tell you no fibs. Be satisfied that the fact is as I have told you, and seek to know no more.

JOHN. Well, I won't. So long as you can honestly tell me you are happy, I shall never ask for further information.

AURO. (*throwing her arms round him*) You dear blessed old John!

Enter ALDOBRAND, door L.

ALDO. (*aside*) Hah, hain't hit hod, when hever hi comes hin, they're alway ha' cuddlin' one hanother.

JOHN. (*seeing him*) Well, Master Dandy, what may you please to want ?

ALDO. Hi 'ave taken the liberty to henter to hannounce the harrival hof-----

JOHN. (*to AURORA*) Isn't this fellow a character ? (*AURORA smiles*)

ALDO. What did you please to hobserve about my character ? When hi come here, you did me the honour to say hit was hunhobjectional.

JOHN. Enough! What do you want ?

ALDO. (*aside*) Hi daren't tell him hi want a hincrase of salary. (*aloud*) Hi come to hannounce the harrival hof Mr. and Mrs. Talbot Bulstrode.

LUCY. (*running on, door L.*) Yes, dear cousin, and here we are !

(*hurrying to AURORA—they embrace—ALDOBRAND turning to go out at door, L., comes bump against TALBOT, who is entering*)

TALBOT. Clumsy blockhead ! (*crossing to JOHN, and shaking hands with him*)

ALDO. Hi'm sure hi beg your parding ! (*aside*) Hi think 'e might have looked where 'e was a going to—hi do believe 'e's done ha hinjury to the pit of my stomach ! *Exit, door L.*

JOHN. (*to TALBOT*) So you have thought proper at last to drop down upon us; but I shan't tell you how glad I am to see you, till I have heard what you can say for yourself for having stayed away so long.

TALBOT. Why, you see, my dear fellow-----

(*they go up, conversing—AURORA and LUCY come forward*)

LUCY (L. C.) Yes, dear cousin, you wrote that you had urgent need for my consoling presence, and so I would not

allow Talbot a moment's rest, but made him bring me hither with all the speed afforded by an express train.

AURO. (R. C.) Thank you, dear Lucy—I know that, come what trouble might, you would never fail me.

LUCY. Trouble!—what then is the matter?

AURO. (*smiling*) Do not look so scared, dear! Nothing, now!

LUCY. Now! Something then has happened?

AURO. Yes; something I am endeavouring to forget, so pray do not you seek to remind me: let it suffice you, that you find me happy—quite happy!

LUCY. Yes, but-----

AURO. Hush, dear! Come this way.

Exeunt AURORA and LUCY, door R.—JOHN and TALBOT advance

JOHN. (R. C.) Yes, Talbot, yes—I am the happiest fellow alive. Aurora is an angel, and I worship her—and so I ought, for what right has such a stupid Yorkshire booby, as I am, to the possession of a being who would be rightly mated only with an emperor.

TALBOT. Nothing disagreeable then has occurred? I am glad of it, for I feared-----

JOHN. Well; a small cloud did for a brief while darken our horizon, but it has cleared away, and now again all is bright sunshine with us—and no tempest lowering in the future.

ALDO. (*without*) Ho, 'orrerble—hawful! hawful! (*he staggers on door, L., pale and terrified, his hair standing on end, down, C.*) Ho, hawful! 'orrerble!

JOHN. (R.) What is the matter?

TALBOT. (L.) What has happened?

ALDO. Ho, hawful! (*to JOHN*) Hif you would 'ave the goodness to give me a chair. (*to TALBOT*) And hif you would ave the kindness to fetch me a glass of water, for hi do believe has hi'm a-going to faint away!

JOHN. But what is it? speak.

ALDO. Ha hawful! murder! hoh!

JOHN and TALBOT. Murder!

ALDO. A man! found—ha! lying close to the hedge-----

JOHN. What man? what hedge?

ALDO. The hedge hof the pond—shot through the 'art, hin the back; hand the bullet—no, not ha bullet, for they say has hit was a button has sewed him up.

JOHN. A man shot dead in the wood! what man?

ALDO. Ho! hit har—ho!—the new trainer—ho!

JOHN. Conyers! (*starting*) Conyers! (*aghast and in a hoarse whisper*) Who—who should shoot him?

TALBOT. (*crosses to JOHN*) Had he any enemies in the neighbourhood?

JOHN. Impossible! he had but just arrived.

TALBOT. Any quarrel with any of the servants ?

JOHN. I scarcely think that he had been seen by any of them. (*remembering*) Yes—that man, [*pointing to ALDOBRAND*] he had.

ALDO. (*aside, horror stricken*) Hoh! good gracious ! 'es ha-going to say has hi did it!

MARY *enters, door L.*

Ho, Mary, they suspects has hi killed the trainer!

MARY. Then you'll be hanged—he, he, he !

ALDO. Hoh, 'orrerble ! and what ha awful disgrace to hall my relations ! *Staggers off, door L.*

MARY. If you please, sir, Mr. Maddison, the magistrate —

JOHN. (*crossing to her*) Ah! well?

MARY. He has sent to say, sir, that in searching the clothes of the murdered man, they found sewn up in the lining of his waistcoat a paper which concerns you to know.

JOHN. A paper ?

MARY. Yes, sir; he says he is deeply sorry for the dreadful blow it must give to you ; but his duty-----

JOHN. (*agitated*) Where is that paper ?

MARY. In this, I believe, sir! (*giving an envelope to JOHN—aside*) Poor master! (*going*) But the idea of Al—killing a man—why he turns as white as a sheet if he sees a black beetle—He, he, he! *Exit, L.*

JOHN. (*the envelope trembling in his hands*) Oh, I cannot! I cannot! (*extends the envelope to TALBOT, who opens it, and takes from it a slip of paper*)

TALBOT. (*having glanced at it*) Heavens! my poor friend !

JOHN. What is it ? why do you look at me with that grave, pitying face ? Oh, powers of mercy ! what is this misery that is coming upon me ? what is this hideous avalanche of trouble, which is slowly descending to crush me ?

TALBOT. Courage! you will need all your firmness; (MELLISH *is trembling with agitation, reading*) " This is the certificate of a marriage solemnized at the parish church of Dover, upon the 2nd of July, 1856, between James Conyers, bachelor, rough rider, of London, and Aurora Floyd, spinster—MELLISH *utters a despairing cry*) daughter of Archibald Floyd, banker, of Felden Woods, Kent!"

JOHN. Oh, misery! shame and misery—this then was the secret—this the missing year of her young life! Oh, I never thought of this ! I never could have imagined this! (*crossing despairingly to R.*)

TALBOT. (*taking his hand*) John! John !

JOHN. (*shaking him off*) Let me alone ! let me alone ! what would you with me? can't you see that I am nearly mad?
 (*dashing his hand to his head, and rushing off, L. door;*
 TALBOT *follows him*)

Enter STEPHEN HARGREAVE stealthily, at window.

STEPH. I know all about it—I know what they've found ! (*chuckling and rubbing his hands*) Where be the line madam; oh, but it'll be nuts for me to tell her !

Enter AURORA, door, R.

AURO. John not here! why where has he---- (*seeing STEPHEN HARGREAVE. who is L.*) You!

STEPH. How do'ee do, Mrs. Mellish?

AURO. (*coldly and haughtily*) What do you want with me ? your master is dead, and you have no longer an excuse for coming here; you have been forbidden the house, and the grounds—if you forget this another time, I shall request Mr. Mellish to remind you! (*going up towards window and pointing*) Go!

STEPH. (L.) Don't be in such a hoory, I want to speak to you; I coom out o' friendliness, though you did pay into me with th' horsewhip.

AURO. (*at back, R. C.*) I have told you that your presence is disagreeable—away with you !

STEPH. (*going up to her and grasping her wrist*) I tell you I've got summat partickler to say to you.

AURO. (*shaking him off and advancing, R.*) Let me go ! you shall suffer for this insolence when Mr. Mellish-----

STEPH. (*coming forward, L., grinning*) No I shan't, for he knows summat—summat about you.

AURO. (*alarmed*) What do you mean?

STEPH. I mean that it's all found out. Muster Mellish knows what you was to him that's dead.

AURO. Ah! (*sinks with a low wailing cry into chair, R., STEPHEN chuckles and rubs his hands*)

STEPH. They've found th' certificate ; he'd carried it about with him, sewed up in's waistcoat.

AURO. (*aside, starting to her feet*) The certificate ! Oh, heaven have pity on me ! I never thought of that!—I never thought of that! (*crossing to L.*)

STEPH. (*aside*) I've paid her out, I've paid her out pretty tidy. It's almost better than money—(*chuckling*) it's almost better than money to pay off them kind of debts. I don't feel the horsewhip so hard on my shoulders now.

Goes off at window, C. to L., chuckling and rubbing his hands.

AURO. What will he think of me ? Oh! I have brought

disgrace and misery upon all who have loved me—on my father and my husband. If I had been less cowardly—if I had told the truth-----

LUCY. (*entering, door R.*) Aurora, is this fair ? now that I have come to you, to run away and hide yourself from my sight?

AURO. Oh, Lucy, Lucy!

LUCY. Good heavens! how pale you are—how agitated! what is it ?

Enter TALBOT, L. door, turning and closing door behind him.

AURO. Talbot, do you know? have you heard? (*he droops his head, AURORA sinks on her knee, C.*) Yes, I was the wife of that dead, murdered groom !

LUCY. (*starting*) Oh, heaven ! impossible !

AURO. Yes, my father's groom ! I was a young, vain, giddy school-girl, and he, with his handsome face and treacherously winning manner, was ever by my side. He told me he was a gentleman's son, that reverses had brought him to his present fallen state. Compared with the rustic gentlemen I knew, he seemed to me a prince. I was a silly, romantic girl, and I believed his story ; I was infatuated—I could never account to myself for my madness ; I can only look back to that horrible time and wonder why I was mad!

LUCY. My poor Aurora !

AURO. He was playing for a high stake, and he played so desperately that he won—I ran away from school, and I—I married him. (*covering her face with her hands—LUCY approaches AURORA, about to raise her—TALBOT signs to LUCY, and she draws back again.*)

AURO. (*after a pause*) Heaven have pity upon my wretched ignorance ! I soon discovered that I was the victim of a mercenary wretch. I discovered that I had been wronged, deceived, and outraged by a villain who laughed at my ignorant confidence in him—it was not long ere I learned to hate him. I told him that so long as he left me unmolested, and kept my secret, I would remit him money from time to time. It was for money that he had entrapped me, and so he readily consented—at length, I saw in a newspaper the report of his death—it was a false report, for, as you know----- On, Talbot! —John! poor John! Teach me how to do what is best for my dear love—(*rising*) Don't think of me or my happiness, Talbot; think only of him. I will make any sacrifice ; I will submit to anything.—I want to atone to my poor dear for all the misery I have brought upon him.

JOHN. (*dashing on, door L., with extended arms*) Aurora! my poor darling—Aurora!

AURO. (L.C.) You were there ?

JOHN. (*near door, R.*) Yes; I have heard all.

AURO. And you forgive me?

JOHN. Yes, and love you still—with my whole heart, my entire soul! (*with a joyful cry AURORA flies into his arms*)

JOHN. My poor darling!—poor innocent victim of a treacherous villain, did you think so lightly of my love as to believe that it could fail you now ; now, when most you need it ?

AURO. (L. C.) Oh, John, you are too good, too noble ; never can I be worthy of such devotion.

JOHN. (C.) You know, Rory, that if I could save you from the shadow of sorrow or disgrace, I would start to-morrow on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem! What is there that I would not do for you ? What sacrifice would seem too great ? What burden too heavy to bear ? (*again embracing her*)

TALBOT. (R.) I congratulate you, John ; you have acted well. Let the past die with the man who last night perished.

LUCY. (L.) And the future, dear Aurora, given to John Mellish, your noble husband. (*AURORA embraces LUCY—JOHN gives his hand to TALBOT*)

TALBOT. (*aside to JOHN*) John, I would give a thousand pounds, if I could find out the murderer of this man.

JOHN. You !

TALBOT. Yes, my poor friend, do not you see, that when it shall become known, as surely it will, that Aurora was-----

JOHN. Ah! you do not mean that she will be suspected of the deed ?—you cannot think that!

TALBOT. It is a suspicious world, you know.

JOHN. Oh ! but that—who would dare-----

AURO. (*turning hastily towards him*) John, what is it ?

JOHN. (*placing his arm round her waist*) Nothing, dearest Rory, nothing.

TALBOT. Aurora, come hither. (*she crosses to him*) Have you any idea who it was that shot this Conyers.

AURO. (C.) No, not the least idea.

JOHN. (L. C) Rory, you left the house last night. Exists there now any reason why you should not tell me whither you went ?

AURO. (*after a moment's hesitation*) I went into the wood. (*JOHN slightly starts*) I was there to meet the dead man.

TALBOT. For what purpose ?

AURO. To meet him for the last time upon this earth. He had written to me, that he would emigrate to Australia, upon the payment of a certain sum of money.

TALBOT. And you gave him that money—how much ?

AURO. Two thousand pounds, in notes, which, awhile since, I had received from my father.

TALBOT. Know you the number of those notes ?

AURO. No ! but no doubt my father does; he is, you know, a banker, and so methodical that-----

TALBOT. We will telegraph to Mr. Floyd. Was this man, this Conyers, civil to you ?

AURO. No, he was insolent, and angry words passed between us; but it ended by-----

ALDOBRAND. (*staggering on, L.*) Hoh, hoh ! hit's hawfuller than hever! (*advances L. of AURORA*)

JOHN. What now, fool?

ALDO. Jim, one hof the stable boys, 'as been hinto the wood to look hat the place where—hoh ! hawful!—hand hamong the weeds hand the hother rushes 'e—'e found this 'ere little pistol—hoh! (*unrolling the tail of his coat in which the pistol is wrapped*) Hi couldn't 'ave touched it for hall the gold hand silver hin the Heast Hindies !

JOHN. (*crossing to ALDOBRAND, and snatching pistol from him*) Oh, heaven! this pistol is mine !

OMNES. Yours?

ALDO. (*aside*) Hah ! hi'm ha lost footman !—'e'll say hi took it to kill the man, but goodness knows hi'm innocent, for hi wouldn't shoot a hinsect ! (*staggers off, door L.*)

JOHN. (L. C.) Mine—mine! Oh, Aurora, Aurora!

AURO. (R. C.) What mean you, John ? Why do you gaze thus on me ?

JOHN. It was in this room you learned that James Conyers was not dead, as you had thought—the guns and pistols lying yonder-----

AURO. Oh, heaven!

TALBOT. (R., *reproachfully*) John!

LUCY. (L.) Oh, for shame, for shame!

AURO. John, you believe that I murdered-----

JOHN. No, no. I do not think you coolly slew him, but the threatened disgrace—you were driven to despair—and then, no doubt, he goaded, menaced you. Who could wonder if you wished him dead—he was a stranger to all beside. Who but you had cause to wish him in his grave ? Oh, Aurora! to whom else can suspicion point—what can I think—what dare to hope, except that I may soon go mad and die.

Rushes off, door L.

AURO. (*calling after him*) John! John!—he suspects me—*he!* Oh, this is more horrible than all. (*throwing herself into LUCY'S arms*)

Enter at the window MADDISON ; two OFFICERS, who remain at back; and STEPHEN HARGREAVE, who advances, R.

MADDIS. (C.) Mrs. Mellish, my duty, as a magistrate, is at this moment very painful to me.

LUCY. (L.) Good heaven ! sir, what mean you ?

AURO. (L. C.) Hush, Lucy; little matters to me now whate'er befall.

MADDIS. It is with great sorrow that I-----

STEPH. (R.) Yes, you are sorry because she is a great lady—a fine madam; but I say you maun take her. She wer with the trainer, her hoosband, mind, last night: he told me he wer to meet her by the pond, i'the wood—he told me so, he told me so!

TALBOT. (R. C.) Told you!

STEPH. Ees, I! I war his sarvent, hired to do his odd jobs, and he sent me wi' a letter to his wife ; that's she a standin' there. And he told me she wur to meet him i' th' wood, and gi'e him two thousand pound. And I should like to know, who wur near him last night, but my fine lady, there.

TALBOT. (*looking at him keenly*) My man, you hate this lady.

STEPH. No, no, not ! She did horsewhip me once, sartinly, but bless you, I have forgot all about that.

TALBOT. Then, why are you so eager to-----

STEPH. Why ? Why, Justice, you see ; and the trainer's death ha'e lost me a' good place, ha'e throwed me out o' bread ; besides, I liked him, and he had taken a great fancy to me, too.

AURO. That is false, wretch !

STEPH. Bean't it clear ? To be rid on him, and save her two thousand pounds as well, she shot him ! Ask all about the pleace, if she wasn't always a tartar when her blood wur up.

AURO. I did give him notes for two thousand pounds. Were not they found upon the body, when-----

MADDIS. No money, except, indeed, a few shillings.

AURO. Oh, Lucy, Lucy!

LUCY. Courage, dear cousin! I will never believe-----

(STEPHEN *is quietly chuckling, and rubbing his hands*)

TALBOT. Only a few shillings. (*considering*) Um !

STEPH. No, no! twarn't likely the notes would be there—no, no !

TALBOT. Silence, scoundrel! (STEPHEN *quails*)

MADDIS. The pistol, with which the man was no doubt slain, has been found near the spot of the murder, and servants of this house, have said that it was the property of Mr. Mellish.

AURO. And so it is.

STEPH. And who could get at that pistol so easy as my lady there ? It were she as done it—I be quite sure of that; yes, yes, it were she as done it.

TALBOT. If Mrs. Mellish had taken that pistol from amongst her husband's weapons, for the committal of the crime of which you suspect her, would she not also have furnished herself with a

bullet ? Now, as I understand, the man's death was caused by a button— (STEPHEN *slightly starts*) a button from some waistcoat. (STEPHEN *glances fearfully at the others, and with seeming carelessness places his cap over his waistcoat*)

MADDIS. It is my earnest hope, my belief indeed, that this lady will be able to clear away all the suspicious circumstances which now surround her; in the meantime, I am compelled to say that she must accompany me to-----

LUCY. Oh, shameful! horrible! I will not leave you—I will go with you, dear Aurora. (MADDISON *goes up, speaks to OFFICERS, and remains at the window*)

TALBOT. (*aside to AURORA*) Do not despair, Aurora; I have, as I believe, a clue to the murderer of that man.

Exit hastily, door L

AURO. I have deserved this punishment—if, at the proper time, I had possessed the courage to tell all the truth, this had not happened. I could bear that all the world should think me guilty, if only John had faith in me ; but that he—that he should----- (*weeping and covering her face with her hands—LUCY places her arm around her*)

STEPH. (*who has crept to AURORA'S side—in a half-whisper*) The marks of your horsewhip are still on my shoulder, Mrs. Conyers!

AURO. (*withdrawing her hands from her face, and looking at him scornfully*) Miserable wretch! (STEPHEN *chuckles and rubs his hands—Music— Tableau, closed in by*)

SCENE SECOND.—*Hall of Mellish Mansion. (1st grooves)*

ALDOBRAND *totters on, L.*

ALDO. Hi didn't kill the man—'e hinjured me—hexcruciated my 'at; but hi never 'arboured ha thought to—hoh! Hi was halways a virtuous young fellow, hand so was my father hand mother before me—hi was born respectable—hin a court hin Drury Lane—hand now hi'm haccused hof murder. Master says hi did hit—hi shan't be the first hinnercent youth has 'as been 'anged—but when the judge hasks me hif hi'm guilty hor not guilty, hi shall say-----

Enter MATTHEW HARRISON, L.

MATTHEW Well, how do you bring it in by this time ?

ALDO. (*starting and trembling*) Not guilty, my lord !

MATT. Here, I say, I want you.

ALDO. Hi didn't do it—hi'm hinnercent. Don't take me hinto custody, there's ha good policeman ?

MATT. Per-liceman! me?

Enter MARY, R.

Here, I say—is this footman of your'n drunk ?

ALDO. (*turning and recognizing him*) Hah! Well, hi declare: hit's the rat-catcher!

MATT. (*indignant*) The what!

ALDO. The dog-fancier, hi mean ; but hi'm hunder such ha charge that my hintellects-----

MARY. (*crosses, C.*) Hold your tongue, you haven't got any of them—(*giggling*) He, he, he !

ALDO. (*L., aside*) That gall 'll giggle when she reads the haccount of my hexecution !

MARY. (*R., to MATTHEW*) And what do you want again ?

MATT. (*C.*) I be come to see if Mrs. Mellish will buy a dawg.

MARY. No use coming here with dogs, there's a cat-astrophe in the house—he, he, he! Oh, dear ! it's a shame to laugh, but I can't help saying funny things.

MATT. And I wanted to hear some of the particulars about Jem Conyers' death.

MARY. O, the wretch !

ALDO. Hi didn't kill him—hi've been told has hi did, but hi did'nt, hupon my soul hand body, hi didn't; hand when the judge hasks me hif hi'm guilty hor-----

MARY. Hold your tongue you fool! (*to MATTHEW*) Does he look as if he was able to kill anybody ? He, he, he!

MATT. No, no, I know—he's drunk! I seed that directly I come in.

ALDO. Hoh! now hi'm haccused hof hanother hawful crime—heverybody wants to 'ang me !

MATT. Ah ! I knowed Jem Conyers well!

MARY. No doubt; you look like a man as has been in the habit of keeping bad company—he, he, he!

MATT. Until I kept yours, my dear!

MARY. Mine, indeed! no, thank'ee, you don't keep company with me—he, he, he ! But, do you know that Mrs. Mellish is taken up on suspicion of having killed that fellow Conyers ?

ALDO. Heh ?

MATT. What!

ALDO. His she haccused hof 'aving 'elped me to do it ? hof being haxcessary before the fact ?

MATT. Well, I don't know whether she killed him, but I know that Jem, with all his swagger, was al'as afraid on her. I remembers when they was fust married—and if they hang her, I shall be out of pocket, for she was as good to me as a sittivation under government.

MARY. Here's master! go along.

(MATTHEW *runs off*, R., MARY *follows him*—ALDOBRAND *totters over to R.*)

ALDO. Hif the judge hasks me hif hi'm guilty or not guilty, hi shall say-----

MARY. (*without*) Are you coming?

ALDO. Not guilty, my lord! (*totters off*, R.)

Enter JOHN MELLISH, L., followed by TALBOT BULSTRODE.

JOHN. Why do you torment me, Talbot ? have pity upon me—let me alone—go away from me—I-----

TALBOT. John, John—to think that you, who should have learned to know your wife by this time—to think that you should suspect the woman you have loved of a foul and treacherous murder!

JOHN. I do not say that the deed was treacherously done—he must have stung her to the very quick, and in the madness of her passion—having that wretched pistol in her possession-----

Enter MARY, R.

MARY. Oh! master, I have just thought of something—something that-----

JOHN. Silence, girl!

MARY (*aside*). No, I won't, I *will* speak—tish't possible to keep a woman silent when she has made up her mind to talk—he, he, he!

TALBOT. (L.) You will have it that your wife took the pistol; but is it not just possible that some one else might have-----

JOHN. (C.) No—no one else could have entered the room while-----

MARY. But some one did—some one did !

JOHN. (*sternly*) Silence, girl!

MARY. (*shouting*) I shan't! (*sticking her arms a-kimbo*) there then ! the Softy entered the room—came in at the window.

TALBOT. The Softy?

MARY. Yes, you've seen him—an ugly fellow, with a hump-back, and a suetty-dumpling-face.

TALBOT. By heaven, I suspected him!

JOHN. Hush, Talbot, hush !

MARY. I saw him with a little pistol in his hand—he pointed it at me, and-----

TALBOT. Now, John, do you still believe your wife is guilty?

JOHN. Oh! I am ashamed—how shall I ever dare again to meet her ? (*to MARY*) May heaven bless you for this !

MARY. And they have taken poor missis into custody !

JOHN. (*terrified*) What says she ?

TALBOT. The truth—But fear not for her, now; (*crosses to R.*) I will set those on the track shall soon bring home the deed to this assassin. *Exit hastily, R.*

JOHN. Oh, my poor, wronged, suffering darling, what a wretch have I been to you! but heaven is my witness that, even in my worst agony of doubt and horror, my love has never lessened. (*crosses to R.*) It never could ! it never could ! *Exit, R.*

MARY. (*giggling*) He, he, he! I owed that Softy a grudge for frightening me out of my life, and now I have paid him off and he'll be turned off—he, he, he ! There isn't a doubt about it, he'll be hanged!

ALDOBRAND *totters on, R.*

There never was a clearer case, and he'll be hanged !

ALDO. But hi didn't do it, Mary —hi'm has hinnocent has ha hinfant!

MARY. If I had such a baby as you, I'd smother him—He, he, he! *Exit, L.*

ALDO. Ho! my 'onoured parents—ho, 'appy 'ome hof my hearly days !—ho, my native court in Drury Lane!—farewell! hi shall never see you more !—hi'm ha—hi'm ha—not guilty, my lord ! *Totters off, L.*

SCENE THIRD.—*The North Lodge.—Mellish Park—wall across back, and large iron gates, partly open, C.—beyond, trees, horizon, &c.—near to wall, the lodge, R. U. E.—door and window beside it and above it next to audience—the glimmer of a candle is seen through the closed upper window—bright moonlight—Music.*

Enter JOHN MELLISH, hurriedly, L. 1 E.

JOHN. Whither, which-way have they taken her? Talbot promised that he would follow and bring her back to me! Oh, Aurora, my poor love, how I hate myself. Dare I hope that she will e'er forgive me ? (*going up towards gates, he stops suddenly his eyes fixed on the window of the lodge*) A light in yonder room—the room in which the murdered man was to have slept—whom can it be ? Orders were given that the north lodge should be securely fastened. (*he tries the door—the light disappears from the upper room*) The door is fast and padlocked. (*leaving the door*) What can it mean ? (*again looking up to the window*) Ah, darkness!—can I have been seen ! (*the light is seen as if being brought down stairs*) No, no, some one is descending the stairs. (*the light is now in the lower room—JOHN*

goes cautiously to the window and looks through) Stephen Hargreave! What can have brought him here? Ah! (with a suppressed exclamation, he shrinks back and crouches against the wall—in shadow—Music. The window is partly and slowly opened, and STEPHEN HARGREAVE looks out and glances around)

STEPH. All quiet as the grave—the grave that will soon hold the dandy trainer. (chuckling) My fine lady is sorry now, I think, that she ever horsewhipped the Softy. I ha' gotten all I wanted—nobody thought of looking here; and if they had, they wouldn't have found nothing. And they say I'm a softy! (chuckling) I'll make my way to a sea-port, and go abroad—yes, I wool—I wool! (Music—turns round, and blows the light out—then, with a small bundle under his arm, comes through the window, which he closes after him, turns to go out at the gates, when JOHN suddenly rises against the wall and confronts him—STEPHEN staggers back a step or two towards L.—terrified) Ugh! It's his ghost—it's his ghost!

JOHN. (advancing, R. C.) What were you doing there—and why go in at the window?

STEPH. Muster Mellish!

JOHN. What were you doing there? I say.

STEPH. (whining) I warn't a-doing no wrong—anyhow, I didn't come to steal owght; there's nothing there but chairs and tables, and 'tain't loikely I'd come arter them.

JOHN. (indicating the bundle) What have you got there?

STEPH. (looking down his right side—the bundle is under his left arm) Where? I don't see nowght.

JOHN. You know well enough what I mean. There, (pointing) in that bundle under your arm.

STEPH. (hugging the bundle to him with both his arms, and glaring savagely at JOHN) It's nowght to you, nor to anybody else. I suppose a poor chap may fetch his few bits of clothes without being called like this.

JOHN. What clothes? Let me see the clothes.

STEPH. No, I won't! They're nowght to you—they're some things as the trainer chap giv' me afore he died.

JOHN. Let me see them.

STEPH. (firmly clutching the bundle) I won't—I won't!

JOHN. By the Heaven above us, you shall! (Music—JOHN darts on STEPHEN—a tremendous struggle—the bundle falls to the ground; after a-while, JOHN throws STEPHEN down, hurries to the bundle, and, kneeling, commences to untie it—STEPHEN scrambles up, runs to JOHN, and with his fist strikes him a heavy blow on the head—JOHN rolls over on his back, and STEPHEN places his knee on JOHN'S chest, thrusting his hand into his trowsers pocket, and drawing forth a large clasp knife, which he opens)

STEPH. Now—I'll serve you as I served him. 'Taint loikely

I'll let you stand between me and two thousand pound. (*Music—he pulls aside John's necktie—JOHN, still on his back, grasps the hand in which STEPHEN holds the knife*)

Enter TALBOT BULSTRODE, AURORA, LUCY, MADDISON, and Two OFFICERS, hastily through C. gates, from R.—MATTHEW HARRISON, ALDOBRAND, MARY, and SERVANTS, with torches, through gates, from L.—lights up. TALBOT, entering first, rushes forward, grasps STEPHEN by the collar, and dragging him from MELLISH, hurls him towards the Two OFFICERS, who instantly grapple and hold him fast, a little up, L. C.

JOHN. (*rising*) The bundle ! the bundle!

(*MADDISON in an instant opens the bundle, and scattering aside some of the clothes, grasps the roll of bank notes and holds it up—STEPHEN strains and stamps with fury*)

OMNES. The notes! the notes !

MATT. (*L. of STEPHEN*) And here's a button off his waistcoat—and of the very pattern that-----

MARY. (*R.*) Well, he's a " Softy," you know, so couldn't be expected to have *all his buttons—(giggling)* He, he, he!

ALDO. (*R., looking round grandly*) Now 'ere, hi say! his there hanybody 'ere has'll dare to say has hi did hit ?

TALBOT. Now, John!

LUCY. Yes, now what do you think of yourself, you cruel man?

JOHN. (*falling on his knee*) Oh! pardon, Rory, pardon ?

AURO. Pardon ? (*raising him*) Oh, you dear, silly old John! (*throwing herself into his arms*)

SERVANTS.

OFFICER.

STEPHEN. OFFICER.

AURORA. TALBOT.

JOHN.

MARY.

MATTHEW.

ALDOBRAND.

MADDISON.

R.

L.

Curtain.

