

A

TICKET-OF-LEAVE.

A Farce,

IN ONE ACT.

BY

WATTS PHILLIPS, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

 Heart, Poor Strollers, Camilla's Husband, &c., &c.



THOMAS HAILES LACY,
89, STRAND, LONDON.

A TICKET OF LEAVE.

*First performed at the Royal Adelphi Theatre,
Under the management of Mr. Benjamin Webster,
On 1st December, 1862.*

Characters.

MR. ASPEN QUIVER (*with nerves as
shaky at his name*) Mr. TOOLE.
MR. THOMAS NUGGETTS (*of Sidney*) Mr. C. H. STEPHENSON.
BOTTLES (*alias "Shiny Samuel," also
from the Colonies*)..... **Mr. P. BEDFORD.**
JOE(*a page of prose*)..... Miss STOKER.
MRS. ASPEN QUIVER Mrs. BILLINGTON.

Servants and Policemen.

Scene.—ASPEN LODGE, CLAPHAM.

TIME.—UNFORTUNATELY THE **PRESENT.**

COSTUMES OF THE DAY.

A TICKET-OF-LEAVE.



SCENE.—*A Sitting Room in the House of Mr. Aspen Quiver; doors R. and L. ; window, L. C.; door centre; genteel furniture, &c.; sideboard with decanters and glasses and silver spoons and forks ; a silver tankard ; a decanter of water.*

BOTTLES. (*arranging plate at sideboard, balancing salver on finger*) My heyes! this must be worth a goodish bit. Silver, I 'ope—electro, I fear. (*turns it over and examines it*) Hasn't got the 'all mark—I thought as much. Well, if there's anythink I can't abear, it's dishonesty o' this kind, it's so werry mean. Now 'ere's a gimcrack. (*takes up a tankard, looks at it with contempt*) All Wenuses and wipers, grape wines and sprawling babbies. (*puts it down with a shrug*) Blest if I'd have at a gift. (*sighs heavily*) Ah ! spoons and forks is the swag, it's a pleasure to melt 'em.

Enter MRS. ASPEN QUIVER, L.

MRS. Q. What are you doing there, Bottles ?

BOTTLES. A dustin' the furnitur', mum. (*dusts energetically*)

MRS. Q. You can go.

BOTTLES. Yes, mum; but I likes to see everythink ship-shape and kiddy like.

MRS. Q. (*aside*) Ship-shape and kiddy like! what does he mean ? I really wonder at Mr. Aspen Quiver engaging such a man. (*aloud*) Bottles.

BOTTLES. Mum.

MRS. Q. I told you to go.

BOTTLES. (*in methodistical tone*) I were agoing, mum ; but tidyness is my failin'—cleanliness, I al'ays ses, is anigh to-----

MRS. Q. (*sharply and going to table*) You may go.

BOTTLES. Thankee, mum. (*as he is going he drops picklock keys, hastily picks them up, holds them up*) My skillingtons!

MRS. Q. (*half turning*) What was it that fell ?

BOTTLES. (*putting keys in pocket*) Only a little book o' tracts, mum. Doctor Poundtext's advice to a repennytant sinner.

MRS. Q. But, what made the clatter ?

BOTTLES. Oh! that were the spoons, mum!

MRS. Q. Very good.

BOTTLES. Yes, mum. (*aside, holding up spoons, and putting finger to nose*) 'All marked, an' werry good, indeed. *Exit, C.*

MRS. Q. I don't like that fellow, he's too pious by half; and really we live in such times that it behoves everybody to be on their guard ; even a lady can't take a walk without having an arm thrown round her neck, and her watch dragged from her pocket. A way of passing the time by no means pleasant on a winter's evening. I'm convinced that if they issue many more tickets-of-leave, half London will take leave of its senses. As for poor Aspen Quiver he's gone clean out of his, from reading the horrid accounts in the papers ; and as Bottles was highly recommended from his last place in the country—as just the man for an unsafe neighbourhood, he is always congratulating himself upon having him in the house, and yet, he suspects everybody out of it. (*dog howls*) Oh! there's that dreadful dog again; Aspen Quiver brought him down to Clapham last night, and insisted upon tying him up to the banisters. Good gracious! what's that? (*cries of distress and barking of dog repeated*)

Enter MR. ASPEN QUIVER, hurriedly, R. ; he is carrying a dog collar with enormous spikes in it, rubbing his leg and making frightful grimaces.

QUIVER. (*limping about and rubbing his leg*) Oh, oh! oh, dear ! oh, dear! oh, oh, oh, oh !

MRS. Q. (R.) What *is* the matter?

QUIVER. (L.) Oh, dear! oh, dear!

MRS. Q. It's that horrid dog!

QUIVER. (*limping about*) It's a capital dog! capital dog ! sharp as a razor—he has bitten me again ! he inserts teeth better than a dentist. No, Mrs. Q., I am not deceived in that dog ; I am proud to say he has bitten me again!

MRS. Q. He shan't stop in the house !

QUIVER. Shan't? but he shall! there's no protection like a dog's—he's the guardian of man, Mrs. Q., the guardian of man! (*rubs his leg*) I just patted him on the head, and said " seize him," to see what he would do, and, would you believe it, he fixed his teeth in the calf of my leg directly; faithful creature !!!

MRS. Q. The brute!

QUIVER. Mistook me for a burglar, no doubt.

MRS. Q. (*laughs*) Mistook you for a burglar, *you!* then the dog must be mad.

QUIVER. (*suddenly looks up, and in alarm stops rubbing his leg*) What's that you say ? Don't repeat that again, Mrs. Aspen Quiver. Mad ? bless my soul! I never thought of that! What

was that we read in the paper last week about hydrophobia ? Little boy bitten—first suspected to be mad because he would turn round three times in his bed before he'd lie down; curious behaviour too at a Christmas dinner—tried to wag his tail when he saw the pudding. Oh, dear ! Oh, dear ! where's the water ? (*goes to sideboard, L. pours out tumbler of water, and drinks it slowly, and with a grimace of disgust*) Ugh ! I mean beautiful! glorious! Don't stand staring at me like that, Mrs. Q. I tell you I like it very much. Stay. I've a thought. (*goes to door C. and calls*) Joe! Joe !

JOE. (*without, R. C.*) I years yer.

QUIVER. Years yer ! What an ungrammatical boy that is! (*calls*) Take a bucket of water to the dog; take him one every five minutes till I tell you to stop. (*shuts door, turns to MRS. Q.*) And that won't be 'till the evening; if that dog stops drinking once, I'm a lost man, Mrs. Q.

MRS. Q. If that dog don't go, Mary Ann says she'll give warning.

QUIVER. Let her. Servants are the the vipers we warm in our bosoms. Now Mary Ann-----

MRS. Q. What do you mean, sir. Mary Ann warm in your bosom indeed !

QUIVER. Mrs. Aspen Quiver! indignant virtue frowns upon you;—but I shan't part with the dog. Servants have no fear, why should they have any, when most of 'em keep their own policeman on the premises; but somehow we are unfortunate in our servants, Mrs. Q.

MRS. Q. Humph !

QUIVER. Why do you knit your brows, and cry umph ? like a female Iago—you're a female Iago, Mrs. Q.

MRS. Q. (*solemnly looking round*) I've my suspicions!

QUIVER. (*very quickly*) Then keep'em to yourself, or just hint 'em in another tone of voice; it creeps all over me like a caterpillar. Don't whisper to me in that fashion, you know I'm nervous; I hate a person who whispers. (*loud postman's knock—starts convulsively then grasps the arm of MRS. QUIVER*) What's that ? who's there ? Oh, dear, oh, dear! What's that?

MRS. Q. Why it's the postman, don't he call three times a day?

QUIVER. Then you'll tell him not to come any more, it's a most objectionable knock; like hammering a couple of nails into one's coffin. Besides letters are only a penny now, that's the old twopenny knock. I don't want his letters—let him keep 'em and read 'em, himself.

MRS. Q. Oh my dear, I shall faint!

QUIVER. Then my dear, do it on the carpet!

MRS. Q. (*springs up indignant*) Oh ! Mr. Quiver !

Enter JOE, C., banging open doors, sharply, and suddenly.

JOE. (*holding up letter*) Letter!

QUIVER. Well, I see it is. (*takes it*) But that's no reason you should burst into the room, head and heels together, as if you were jumping through a hoop at a circus. *Exit* JOE, R. C. I'm all in a tremble, (*turns letter over*) yes, it is a letter, and, bless me! a black seal! no, it's the postman's thumbmark. (*gives it to her*) There, read it, my dear; I don't like the hand-writing, it's too legal, stiff as a regiment of soldiers. Those letters generally cost you six and eightpence. (*crosses to table R. sits in chair and leans back*) Let me compose my nerves. (*puts on dog-collar*)

MRS. Q. (*reads*) Beware !

QUIVER. (*springing from chair*) What do you mean, Mrs. Q.? you know I'm nervous and don't like sensations; had enough of 'em in this house, I'm sure. One thing I hate more than another it's a person who shouts at me.

MRS. Q. But it's in the letter. (*she reads*) " Aspen Quiver, beware ! There are traitors in your house ! You have a Guy Fawkes in your cellar! The powder is ready, the train prepared ! Suspect everybody and everything, especially those who would introduce themselves beneath your roof under false pretences. Precaution is the mother of safety ; hesitate and you are lost!—Yours—A Friend !"

(*here QUIVER, who during the reading of letter has been exhibiting the most ludicrous extremes of astonishment and terror, leaps from his chair and is about to rush from room, falls down*)

MRS. Q. (*seizing him by the arm*) Speak, Aspen Quiver, what would you do ? My husband, speak !

QUIVER. (*struggling with her*) Ring the alarm bell! discharge the servants! hang those who talk of fear! barricade the premises—communicate with the world through the medium of the coal hole—hang out our banner on the outward wall—Not at home to anybody ! Confidence is at an end—tranquillity is no more! I can't if you look at me in that way (*stops abruptly, then turns solemnly to MRS. QUIVER*) I suspect Mary Ann. (*going R. and L. to doors*)

MRS. Q. (*tragic attitude*) And I Bottles-----(*loud knocking at door—ASPEN QUIVER starts, scream and fall into each other's arms as before—runs to back, opens door and calls loudly*)

QUIVER. I'm not at home.

JOE. (*without, R. C.*) Can't yer 'ear; master ses he's not at home.

QUIVER. (*shuts door and comes down*) That boy's an ass.

Enter JOE, C.

JOE. (*announcing*) A gen'le'man.

QUIVER. I don't know any—I'm not at home.

JOE. Oh! he don't want you, he wants missus.

QUIVER. A gentleman wants your missus! Oh, you bad boy!

JOE. E'es n' another letter. (*QUIVER goes to take it*) An' that's for missus too. (*gives her the letter*)

QUIVER. Where did you leave him, Joe?

JOE. In the 'all, so I'll go an' look after the coats. *Exit, R. C.*

QUIVER. Sharp boy, that Joe—got him from the parish—a bargain; only give him his livery and sixpence a month, which he spends in luxuries—sharp boy, Joe.

MRS. Q. (*joyfully ; having read letter*) What do you think? Cousin Nuggett's coming home.

QUIVER. What, from Australia?

MRS. Q. Yes, here's his letter, brought by a friend. Only listen. (*reads*) "My dear Vinny," that's very affectionate of Cousin Nuggetts.

QUIVER. Very; but I don't know whether I quite like your being cozened in that manner.

MRS. Q. Fiddlestick! (*reads*) "The bearer of this, Mr. Smith, is my intimate friend. He will arrive in England some weeks before myself, and has kindly undertaken to furnish you with all the news you may desire to know. Every kindness shown to him I will repay, as thank heaven, it is in my power to do. Fortune has blessed my exertions, and I hope before long to embrace my dear Lavinia and her husband, and to breathe once more the delightful atmosphere of England." There.

QUIVER. Delightful atmosphere (*coughing*). He must be a very eccentric man, your cousin.

MRS. Q. He must be very rich.

QUIVER. Bless him! And only think, we've left his friend standing in the hall. I'll discharge that Joe. (*going C. pauses*) But are you sure it's genuine?

MRS. Q. What?

QUIVER. That letter "gain admission under false pretences." Remember the other letter, Mrs. Q.

MRS. Q. Nonsense.

QUIVER. Well, I shall watch him narrowly. I shall keep my eye on him—on him, my dear—both eyes, in fact, my dear—and my eye glass. (*starts back from door—noise of JOE and NUGGETTS*) He's coming up; I hear him abusing Joe on the stairs. (*box falls at back as if JOE falling*) Now he's kicked Joe down 'em—serve Joe right—I'll send him back to the parish, to-morrow.

MRS. Q. Coming up stairs? Cousin Thomas's friend? I mustn't be seen in this plight. (*going to door, L.*)

QUIVER. And I'll just go and brush my hair; it will always stand on end—and, no wonder, in these dreadful times. (*he goes to door R., then as door C. opens they both disappear*)

Enter JOE, C. from R., followed by NUGGETTS.

JOE. (*announcing*) Mr. Smith. (*looks round*) Why, they've hooked it.

NUGGETTS. (*looking round*) You said Mrs. Aspen Quiver was here.

JOE. And so she were, and t'other one too, but they hee'rd you a coming up. I told yer they didn't want to see yer.

NUGGETTS. (*aside*) Strange reception! (*aloud*) As I am here I shall remain.

JOE. (*aside*) Well, I shan't, 'cos I'm engaged elsewhere. Bottles has promised to teach me the double shuffle in the pantry. *Exit, C. of R.*

NUGGETTS. (*surveys room*) This is a pretty reception from my only surviving relative, after an absence of twelve years. Well, there's nothing like a disguise if you want to find out people's feelings towards you. Under the assumed name of Smith I can learn what I should never know as Thomas Nuggetts. (*sits L. of table*) I wonder whether Lavinia's grown; when I left England she was a little girl, so high. (*indicates height about three feet from the ground*) I suppose her husband is ignorant why I left England, sentenced for seven years, yet as free from crime as an unborn babe, and afterwards proved innocent but not free from disgrace, such is the law. No wonder I resolved when my time was up never to return to the scene of my dishonor; but I became rich, had no one to care for in Australia, heard that little cousin Vinny was married, and my heart yearned to see her, her husband, and her children, in short to make somebody happy before I die; and so here I am. (*rises and walks about*) Twelve years! time enough for even your enemies to forget you, your friends generally do it in half the time. There is only one thing I fear, if any of the scoundrels with whom I suffered martyrdom for seven years should be at large and recognize me, what a disgrace before my new relative—I tremble at the thought. (*BOTTLES sings without under window*)

Oh, it's off to Australy I'm going,
To the diggin's, as you may believe,
Where nuggets like nutmegs is growing,
Without askin' for tickets-o'-leave.

NUGGETTS. Surely I've heard that song before! yes, 'tis the

melody I heard in former years ; and the voice, too ! but it's not possible, it can't be. (*goes to window, L., and looks out*) A man washing some bottles in the garden—ah! he sings again.

BOTTLES. (*sings*)

Better stay where you are, my swell covey,
Your absence might make your pals grieve.
There's plenty of gold in these diggins,
And you're shure of a ticket-o'-leave.

NUGGETTS. If I could only see his face. No, he has gone in. It can't be—it's impossible! That man was the most incorrigible scoundrel in the whole gang. *He* couldn't have got a ticket-of-leave.

(*as he says this, ASPEN QUIVER enters R., unperceived by NUGGETTS, who continues to look out of window, which he has opened*)

QUIVER. Goodness gracious ! Can I believe my ears ? I distinctly heard him say that he'd got his ticket-of-leave. "Aspen Quiver, beware!" The warning came in time. Ah ! he is reconnoitring the premises. Now, what a thing courage is. If I could only slip behind him, and throw him out. I will! for once, I will act the hero. He'll never know it. Yes, I will! (*he advances upon NUGGETTS, who is still leaning from the window, and stretches out his hand to push him, when NUGGETTS turns and exhibits great surprise—ASPEN QUIVER seizes his hand and shakes it violently*)

QUIVER. How do you do? Delighted to see you, Mr. Smith. No one could be more welcome, than a friend of my wife's cousin, Mr.—Mr.-----

NUGGETTS. Nuggetts—Mr. Thomas Nuggetts.

QUIVER. (*aside*)The scoundrel! how pat he's got the name. (*aloud*) You'll take some refreshment. (*he rings bell and bustles about in a most nervous manner—aside*) I may be very wrong after all. Oh dear, oh dear! these are times. (*aloud*) Take a chair, Mr. Smith— pray take a chair (*aside, as he carries chair across to him*) Suppose, I knock him down with it.

Enter JOE, he bangs the door open as usual—QUIVER starts wildly, and drops the chair upon the toes of NUGGETTS—good bit of business here.

QUIVER. (*to JOE*) What do you come in like that for?

JOE. (R.) You wouldn't 'ave me walk in on my 'ed, would you?

QUIVER. (C.) Be off with you, and tell Bottles to bring up the trap—I mean the tray. Go ! *Exit JOE.*
That boy will be the ruin of my nerves; he's a perfect hurricane—and no wonder, for I'm always blowing him up.

MRS QUIVER *enters, L., and goes up to NUGGETTS, who is writhing on a chair—rubbing first one foot and then the other—*
 QUIVER *makes signs of warning, striving unsuccessfully to attract her attention.*

MRS. Q. *(to NUGGETTS)* Welcome to Clapham, Mr. Smith. Any friend of my dear cousin's will be welcome here. Any little attention that Mr. Aspen Quiver can show—

NUGGETTS. *(rubbing his foot)* I desire as little of his attention as possible; I have had enough of it already. You'll excuse my not rising to receive you ; but I've corns, and—ugh!

MRS. Q. *(aside)* What a curious man. He seems in pain. It's his poor feet. *(aloud)* Of course, you'll accept a bed beneath our roof for a few nights. *(QUIVER in the most comic state of nervous terror gesticulates wildly)* We shall really be offended if you don't.

NUGGETTS. Well, well, Vinny, I will. *(aside)* She has grown.

MRS. Q. Vinny! short for Lavinia; rather familiar that. *(here she suddenly becomes aware of the frantic behaviour of QUIVER)* Bless me! Why what's the matter, Mr. Aspen Quiver? *(QUIVER upset by this question endeavours most unsuccessfully to assume a composure, while NUGGETTS, who has risen, and MRS. QUIVER regard him anxiously)*

QUIVER. Matter ? nothing, I was arranging my hair, scratching my nose—mayn't a gentleman scratch his nose under his own roof? What are you staring at me for, Mrs. Q? get along with you; there's nothing the matter with me. *(aside)* I'll go and put on the dog collar.

MRS. Q. *(aside)* How his eyes roll. *(she clasps her hands)* I see it all! the dog! the dreadful dog! he's mad! ! *(she rushes to table, seizes tumbler of water and carries it to ASPEN QUIVER, who has thrown himself angrily into a chair—aloud)* Drink ! and remove my doubts !

QUIVER. What do you mean ?

MRS. Q. *(persisting)* To ease my mind.

QUIVER. You haven't got one, you're out of the article.

MRS. Q. *(struggling with him)* It's water !

QUIVER. *(dashing glass down, and rising in a passion)* Damn the water! *(goes to bell and rings it violently)* Why don't Bottles bring the wine ?

MRS. Q. *(aside as in despair)* He refused water, a certain sign ! Oh, that horrid dog!

(JOE enters with refreshments, which he places upon table; NUGGETTS, MRS. Q. and QUIVER, take their seats, QUIVER watching each movement of NUGGETTS, most suspiciously, starting every time he takes up knife, or makes any

movement. MRS. Q. doing the same with himself; putting down each nervous gesture, as an indication of hydrophobic madness)

QUIVER. Where's Bottles ? why don't he wait at table ?

JOE. He's putting wine into the decanters. *(aside)* And an't he a drinking of it too, never seed such a lushington as Bottles.

Exit JOE—they eat.

QUIVER. *(suddenly)* Were you ever garotted in Australia, Mr. Smith ?

NUGGETTS. *(placing down knife and fork, and leaning back in chair)* Bless me!—never !

QUIVER. *(with great solemnity)* May I ask you, for your candid opinion on the subject of tickets-of-leave ?

NUGGETTS. Well, I don't know. *(aside)* What does he mean ? can he know my secret ?

QUIVER. Think of turning a lot of convicts loose upon society.

NUGGETTS. *(aside)* He has discovered me, and knows of that unfortunate affair.

QUIVER. Don't hurry yourself to answer, sir, I can wait till you've emptied your mouth.

NUGGETTS. Well really, you've quite taken me by surprise.

MRS. Q. *(gives a jump and slight scream)* What are you kicking me for under the table, Mr. Aspen Quiver ?

QUIVER. I ?

MRS. Q. *(anxiously)* Do you feel anything ?

QUIVER. *(viciously)* Do you ?

MRS. Q. *(aside)* There he's kicking me again, they're his paroxysms.

NUGGETTS. *(coughs)* Ahem, in answer to your question, I think nothing is so bad as indiscriminate severity.

QUIVER. *(eagerly)* Except indiscriminate humanity. You can't reform an old rogue, Mr. Smith. *(aside)* Had him there.

NUGGETTS. Well but those who try-----

QUIVER. Know nothing about it—nothing about it ? Blind men stroke pigs and admire the beauty of their fleece. *(looks fixedly at NUGGETTS)* Now, I've a rogue in my eye !

Enter BOTTLES with wine at back, places it on table C.

MRS. Q. *(aside)* He means Bottles.

NUGGETTS. *(aside)* He means me ! what impertinence !

QUIVER. Take some wine, Mr. Smith. *(aside)* If I could only make him drunk-----

MRS. Q. *(aside)* If he'd only take wine and water-----

(BOTTLES looks at NUGGETTS, starts, and draws back, then aside ; while this is going on the parties at table have been eating, passing wine, &c.; business of mutual suspicion still continuing)

BOTTLES. (*aside*) S'help me, if it isn't Tommy Nuggetts, who worked in our gang nigh upon eight years ago. But what's his little game ? same dodge as mine of course—won't do for dog to bite dog. Bill cracks the crib to-night, so we'd better all go pardners. My n'eyes, here's fortin'. (*motioning towards ASPEN QUIVER*) Tommy's doi'n it capital—nothin' like the respectable dodge arter all. How he's lushin' old Punky's wine—Tommy's of the right sort—wait a minit, I'll just try the whistle.

QUIVER. (*to NUGGETTS*) Wine with you, Mr. Smith.

NUGGETTS. With pleasure. (*raises glass, thieves' whistle heard—they all start*)

QUIVER. Bless me, what's that ? (*NUGGETTS puts down glass*)

BOTTLES. (*aside*) Real grit—he'll do. (*to ASPEN QUIVER who turns round*) Somebody's a whistling in the street.

NUGGETTS. (*aside*) My suspicions were correct, it is Shiny Samuel.

QUIVER. (*trying several times to fill NUGGETTS'S glass*) How my hand shakes! The reign of terror is inaugurated, and garotted or guillotined, what does it matter ? Dear me, how my hand does shake, to be sure !

MRS. Q. (*who has been anxiously watching her husband*) Won't you take a little wine and (*this with emphasis*) water, dear ?

QUIVER. No, certainly not, I don't like water.

MRS. Q. (*aside*) It is as I feared.

QUIVER. Mrs. Q., you had better go and give directions about Mr. Smith's room, (*aside*) which I would rather have than his company.

(*here QUIVER turns suddenly round and catches BOTTLES winking and otherwise endeavouring to attract the attention of NUGGETTS, who is beginning to show some signs of sleepiness in his chair—the effect of this discovery upon the nerves of QUIVER must be most ludicrous; the filling up of this outline being, of course, left to the imagination of the actor*)

QUIVER. Good heavens ! they understand each other—here's a dreadful situation ! (*aloud*) Bottles, you may go !

Exit BOTTLES, C.

MRS. Q. (*who has been watching each change in QUIVER'S countenance*) Won't you like a little water now, dear ?

QUIVER. Do you want to drive me mad ?

MRS. Q. (*aside*) There's no hope for him—he'll bark presently!

(*NUGGETTS, who has been eating and drinking continually, has now dozed off in his chair, as elderly gentlemen will do after dinner*)

QUIVER. (*rising slowly from his chair and addressing MRS. Q.*) Hush! he's asleep—don't wake him. (*solemnly*) Leave us !

MRS. Q. What for !

QUIVER. See to his room—go !

MRS. Q. (*aside*) I'm sure he wants to bite him!

QUIVER. Go!

MRS. Q. I'm going! (*coaxingly*) Won't you try a glass of water, dear ? (*QUIVER makes a dart towards her, and she exits hurriedly*)

QUIVER. (*L., solemnly*) That woman's mad!—fright has turned her brain ! (*he goes to table, and attentively examines the face of NUGGETTS*) What a face—there's a crime in every wrinkle, and it's full of 'em! Ah! we ought to be thankful for good books. (*NUGGETTS snores, and QUIVER starts, of course*) There's an evil conscience for you! (*he snores again*) I should like to garrotte him—self preservation's the first law of nature; it's only putting your arm round his neck; and if he wakes he'll take it for affection—I've a good mind!

(*while he speaks he makes his approaches with much nervousness and comic trepidation, but starts away at a noise outside, at back*)

QUIVER. What noise was that ? somebody's opening the door—his accomplice, no doubt. Let me escape, and—it's too late—oh, dear, oh, dear!

(*he hastily conceals himself behind the curtain of window as BOTTLES, alias Shiney Samuel, appears at door, against one side of which he leans, looking at NUGGETTS in the chair*)

BOTTLES. They've gone, and Tommy's playing 'possum. My heyes, what a downy card that is! I'll tip him the reg'lar, it'll freshen him up. (*he gives the thieves' whistle, NUGGETTS starts, rubs his eyes, jumps up, and looks around—BOTTLES laughs and comes down*) All right, sharp's the word! don't look skeared, Tommy—knows yer little game— enough for three and over. Old Funky's well tiled in, an' there's plenty for all.

QUIVER. (*aside, and putting head from curtains*) Old Funky! what a libellous blackguard—Oh, dear, oh, dear !

NUGGETTS. (*indignantly*) Tommy! what do you mean, fellow?

BOTTLES. That dodge's all werry well, but it won't do ; I've come the 'spectable caper myself, and found it the ticket. Get out, Tommy—knows yer of old. (*winks and puts finger to nose*) We've met in furring parts.

NUGGETTS. (*hastily*) Hush, my good man ! I know, you're Shiny Samuel.

BOTTLES. In course—h'onest Sam, once. (*he laughs*) 'Ow times is changed.

QUIVER. (*who is making repeated and ludicrous attempts to escape, but each time has to return to his place of concealment—aside*) Here's a horrible position—pitched about like a shuttlecock, with two ticket-of-leave men for the battledores. Oh ! will nobody untie the dog ?

NUGGETTS. (*aside*) I must humour this scoundrel. Catch him in his own trap. I'll try. (*aloud*) You've got a situation here?

BOTTLES. Heasy as a glove. You know Tinker Tom?

NUGGETTS. Certainly not.

BOTTLES. Ah! he wasn't out in Australy in your time. Well, he's a bit of a scholar, and cooked me up a character from my last place, as right as ninepence.

NUGGETTS. You've been in service before ?

BOTTLES. Why yer don't call oakum picking a pleasure I suppose—but old Funky's a born fool, as big a fool as the chap as got me my ticket, an' he was a soft 'un.

QUIVER. (*aside*) I'll call police from the window; some one of them may hear me, for it's just over the kitchen.

BOTTLES. We crack this crib to-night. I'm 'ere to open the door, to Bill Soames.

NUGGETTS. And the ladies ?

BOTTLES. Lock 'em in.

NUGGETTS. And Mr. Aspen Quiver ?

BOTTLES. Garotte him!

QUIVER. (*who has been trying softly to raise the window, sinks back behind the curtain—aside*) Oh lor! oh lor! it's all over with me.

BOTTLES. Is it a bargain, Tommy ?

NUGGETTS. (*aside*) A thought strikes me. (*aloud*) It's a bargain. (*they shake hands*)

BOTTLES. Now, just you slip out an' find the office to Bill, you'll find him at the Cat and Bagpiper's and the corner. I'll tell old Funky that his wine has disagreed with yer, you can be back in a jiffy. Tell Bill midnight's the time ; servants sleep like tops, and the bull dog's Bill's own—ha, ha, ha ! Blest if he didn't sell it to old Shaky, yesterday evening! (*while he has been speaking, QUIVER has dropped upon his hands and knees and is slowly crawling towards the door*)

BOTTLES. (*to NUGGETTS*) Hook it, Tommy, sharp's the word ! (*goes to window, L.*)

NUGGETTS. You may depend I won't stay long. (*aside, at table at back, R., for hat*) You precious scoundrel! (*he makes quickly for the door, so quickly as to intercept QUIVER'S retreat, and that gentleman retires precipitately under the table, where he remains unperceived by them, though partially visible to the AUDIENCE*)

BOTTLES. (*calling after NUGGETTS*) Cat and Bagpipes; don't be long.

NUGGETTS. (*as he exits*) Certainly not.

BOTTLES. On'y think of tumbling over Tommy, an' doin' 'spectable dodge too. (*he laughs, takes bottle from pocket, and uncorks it*) Arter all, old Funky keeps a good cellar ; this is O de wee, marked werry curious. (*he drinks*) I al'ays had a taste for cooriosities.

QUIVER. (*aside and under table*) My best brandy ! Where can Mrs. Quiver be ? Here's a situation for the father of a family, and master of the house!

BOTTLES. I'll just take a snack myself, drinkin' makes a fellow peckish. (*he goes to table, and pushes it more to C. of stage—ludicrous position of QUIVER, who of course has to move with the table*)

BOTTLES. (*seats himself and eats*) This is wot I calls in'jyment. My heyes! if old Poundtext could only see me now. " My man," ses he to me, " you're a brand snatched from the burnin', a converted sinner." " I am," ses I. " You've got you're ticket," ses he. " I 'ave," ses I. " When you leave this 'ere prison strive to live well." " I will," ses I. An' I'm blest if I 'aven't lived well since then, and no mistake. (*he laughs and eats*)

QUIVER. (*aside*) Curse his legs! how long they are. While he's eating, I'll crawl to the door. (*he begins to crawl slowly from under the table, at the same moment BOTTLES, who has been drinking drops the cork upon the ground on the opposite side*)

BOTTLES. (*who is getting slightly drunk*) Hilloh! mustn't lose the cork. Never put a bottle in your pocket without it's corked. (*he goes down on his knees as looking for the cork, and begins to crawl round the table*) My heyes ! if old Funky on'y saw me now, wot a shine there would be, wot a precious thick head he must have. (*as he says this he crawls round the table on one side, as QUIVER crawls round it on the other, and their heads come together in violent contact—both start back, but without rising, and QUIVER retreats backwards under the table*)

QUIVER. (*under the table*) Murder!

BOTTLES. (*still on his hands and knees*) Whew ! here's a go. An't you ashamed o' yourself, you mean old beggar, to go a hidin' yerself under tables, an' in yer own house too! I am ashamed on yer, I am !

QUIVER. Police !

BOTTLES. (*rising*) Oh, if that's your game. (*takes garotting attitude*)

QUIVER. Keep off! (*he rises also, but of course lifts the table with him, and a terrible crash is the result*) Keep off !

Enter at doors R. and L., MRS. ASPEN QUIVER, JOE, and the MAIDSERVANT ; JOE carries a broom, and the MAIDSERVANT a mop—general tableau of terror.

ALL. *(speaking at once)* What's the matter ?

QUIVER. *(retreating behind MRS. QUIVER)* Keep him off! Police !

BOTTLES. *(retreating to door at back)* Gammon! I am off! *(the door opens, and he is confronted by MR. NUGGETTS, who enters with two POLICEMEN)*

NUGGETTS. No, you're not, Mr. Shiny Samuel! Bill Soames couldn't come, having a previous engagement at the station house, so I've brought you a couple of substitutes.

BOTTLES. Sold! *(he glances hurriedly round for a means of escape, then puts his hand into his pockets and begins to whistle)*

MRS. Q. Bottles ! just as I suspected.

QUIVER. *(to NUGGETTS)* And you, sir ?

MRS. Q. Mr. Smith.

NUGGETTS. No, my dear, not Mr. Smith, but your cousin Thomas Nuggetts, who before he declared himself in his real name, wished to anticipate his reception in another.

QUIVER. You Thomas Nuggetts! Why, I heard you own to being----

NUGGETTS. Transported; but I was innocent. *(QUIVER draws back)* I am now rich and—*(QUIVER folds him in his arms)*

QUIVER. Say no more—I forgive you.

NUGGETTS. It is true, when clerk at Mr. Brads, I was accused.

BOTTLES. My heyes, here's a go. Were you old Brad's clerk ? the one who went across the herrin' pond for priggig the cash box.

NUGGETTS. I was innocent.

BOTTLES. *(contemptuously)* In course you was; why, you an't near the downy card I took yer to be.—Look 'ere, just keep them peelers back, and I've a word to say to you and old Funky. *(to QUIVER)* Send away the slaveys. *(crosses to L. to QUIVER)*

QUIVER. Well, of all the impertinent—be off, Joe—and you, Mary Ann, go as well.

JOE. All right, I'll wait outside—don't be afraid, master—I'm here to perfect you.

Exit with SERVANTS.

QUIVER. Make a tiger of that boy—why, he's a lion. *(to BOTTLES, as they come down—POLICEMEN remaining at back)* You'll please to remember the police are in the room.

BOTTLES. Business is business, you keep this little matter dark, and I'll make a full confession—sign'd and seal'd—that

is, I'll make my mark, 'cos chaps like us don't get readin' an' writin' by instinct, you know—only let me go free, and tip me enuff to get to Ameriky.

NUGGETTS. Free confession of what?

BOTTLES. Look'ee; is it honor ?

BOTH. Yes!

BOTTLES. That'll do, between gen'lm'n. Well, I priggid old Brad's cash box twelve years ago; and, ha! ha! ha ! on'y think, you were the covey who got lagged for it.

NUGGETTS. You stole it!

BOTTLES. (*with conscious pride*) O'course, I did; you write out the whole concern, and I'll stick my mark to it—on'y mind, mum's the word, an' a free passage. Shall we square it, Tommy ? What do you say, old Funky ?

QUIVER. Get along with you; I'll give you in charge, if you call me that again.

NUGGETTS. I agree — only let me hope, Samuel, you'll promise to reform.

BOTTLES. O'course I will. (*aside*) The farce wouldn't be complete without it. (*he changes his manner entirely, and shuffles down to the foot-lights*) There's nothing like the penitential dodge after all. (*looking up hypocritically at boxes and gallery, and speaking in a voice of canting humility*) Dear brethren! I 'opes as 'ow you'll forgive me my many transgressions (*again he changes manner, and speaks to pit with finger to his nose*) and I'll promise to meet yer every night; not only 'ere, but at your own 'ouses, if you gives me a ticket-o'leave.

QUIVER. (*coming hastily down stage*) But I've a word to say ! (*beckons POLICEMEN, who range themselves one on each side of him*) Under the protection of these gentlemen—for you really require a pair of them now-a-days to make a public appearance in safety. Our *Mayne* supports, I call 'em. (*confidentially*) Now; what is to be done? Stop! don't all speak at once. Suppose we adjourn the question ? and, if you'll only lend me your hands to *Clap* 'em to-night, I'll go over the matter with you again to-morrow. (*imploringly*) Now then for your " TICKET-OF-LEAVE."

Curtain.