

THE  
CLOCK ON THE STAIRS:

*A Domestic Drama.*

IN ONE ACT.

BY  
COLIN H. HAZLEWOOD,

AUTHOR OF  
THE MARBLE BRIDE, RETURN OF THE WANDERER, JENNY FOSTER,  
HARVEST STORM, BONNET BUILDERS TEA PARTY, MOTHER'S  
DYING CHILD, ETC., ETC.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,  
THEATRICAL PUBLISHER,  
LONDON.

*First performed at the Royal Britannia Theatre, Feb. 1862.*

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**Characters,**

WALTER BLANCHEVILLE (*alias Robert Clifton*) ..... Mr. G. Blythe  
HORACE (*his step-son, heir to the property*) ..... J. Holloway  
RICHARD ERFURT (*Father to Jane, a drunkard and an outcast*) ..... T. G. Drummond  
MR. LEACH (*a lawyer and money-lender*) E. Elton  
JOHN THOMAS (*a fashionable footman*) G. Harding  
MRS. BLANCHEVILLE (*wife to Blancheville*)..... Mrs. Atkinson  
JANE ERFURT (*a poor governess and ladies companion*) ..... Mrs. E. Yarnold

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COSTUMES, MODERN. TIME—PRESENT DAY.

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*Time of representation, forty-five minutes.*

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**Programme,**

Interior of a Country Mansion—Trials and Temptations of a Poor Governess—The Unhappy Second Marriage and the Disappointed Fortune Hunter—Reflections of a Poisoner—The Outcast Father—Deeds of Darkness—The Robbery and Assassination—Scheme of the Guilty to Destroy the Innocent—Alarm of the Household—Unexpected Evidence—The Watch—The Purse and the Arrest—The Proof Discovered and Triumph of Innocence.

(Mr. Lacy's List.)

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SCENE I.—*The Hall of a Gentleman's Country House—a large ancient staircase to face audience c, with a landing on first flight, on which stands an old-fashioned clock in a mahogany case, with a door to open facing audience, by the side of the clock a bed-room door supposed to lead to a room within—the stairs are continued towards top of scene R. u. E., as if they led to the second floor—two hall chairs, one on each side of staircase—table, R. c.—doors, H. and L. at second entrances.*

Enter HORACE, R. 1. E., followed by JOHN THOMAS in a showy livery, his hair powdered.

HORACE. Now John, is the horse ready ?

JOHN. Yes sir, the groom have him ready sir at the door. I really don't know how that horse and I stand the dulness of the country; accustomed as we both are to London, and its fashionable life, it really makes me monotonous and misanthropical to exist here.

HORACE. Why you've nearly all your time to yourself.

JOHN. That's just it sir, I've *too* much time to myself, there's no society for a fellow, no *had*miration for *he*legance, my calves is quite thrown away here ; even hair powder has no effect on 'em, my head *hex*cites no more notice than if it was a whitewashed wall. *Do* get back to London sir, as soon as possible, sir ; for really I shall *hex*pire with *hon-wee* if you don't.

HORACE. Silence, sir, you know I am down here to visit my mother and recruit my exchequer from her good nature. I detest the dulness of this place as much as you. but in a week or two I hope to leave it.

JOHN. A week or two ! and must I waste my sweetness on the desert lair as long as that? Oh Regent-street! how shall I *hex*ist.

HORACE. Silence I say, I'm as dull here as you, perhaps more so.

JOHN. And no wonder, sir; there's not even one of the fair sex to break the *monopoly* of the long nights, and short days. Oh how I miss the Countesses, and the lovely and *george us* Marchionesses—who seemed to say to me as I opened the carriage doors—oh John !—why does your want of fortune prevent me joining my *alleybaster* hand to thine at Hymen's *haltar*.

HORACE. Here is my mother—not a word to her, mind, that I am discontented.

JOHN, (*bowing.*) My honour sir—one gentleman's word to another is I trust sufficient.

*Enter* MRS. BLANCHEVILLE, D. R. 2. E.

MRS. BLANCH. Are you going out so late Horace ?

HORACE. I must have exercise before I go to bed or I shall not sleep, I never closed my eyes all last night.

JOHN. Nor I mum, I dream't I was a shipwrecked *wessell* tossing about—and couldn't get anybody to run for the life boat.

HORACE. Silence sir, you can leave us.

JOHN. I will sir, and go and talk to Carry Codlins the housemaid, that's all the society I get here.

Fly swift *hold* Time and bear me back to London,  
For here my *hearly* life is *uippedand hundone*.

*(Exits. R. I. E.)*

HORACE. You are looking pale to-night, mother ; I suppose you and your husband have been quarrelling again. What a life to lead.

MRS. BLANCH. You know his violent temper.

HORACE. And I also know how foolish you were to marry again. See how he treats you.

MRS. BLANCH. It is partly my own fault for deceiving him as to my worldly means when I married.

HORACE. Ah, you never told him you had an only son by your first husband, who is heir to these lands. It seems, my precious father-in-law married you for the money he thought you had, and now he finds I am in the way, to baulk him of half his prize. I tell you what mother, if he don't behave better to you, you shall leave him and come to London with me.

MRS. BLANCH. I shall be more cheerful now. Miss Erfurt, my new companion, will make the time seem pleasanter to me.

HORACE. She indeed! why she seems as melancholy as an owl.

MRS. BLANCH. We cannot always be in such good spirits as you, Horace.

HORACE. She *never* seems in spirits!

MRS. BLANCH. It's her way, some early sorrow has perhaps cast a shadow over her life.

HORACE. And I suppose that's why you like her, because you can both cry in company. Ha! ha! ha! (*laughing bitterly*) What a taste you must have.

MRS. BLANCH. Silence Horace, although you have not yet felt sorrow, you *may* do so. Enjoyment now is your only thought, and that your happiness may never know a cloud is your mother's earnest wish.

HORACE. Thank you mother. I hope it never may. Well, adieu for the present, I'm going to ride over to Sir Harry Beechwood's, I shall not be late.

MRS. BLANCH. I wish you wouldn't keep that man's company so much Horace, he's a gambler and a libertine—besides—

HORACE. Evil communications corrupt good manners you think? Don't fear for me. I'm no pigeon to be plucked by an old hawk like Sir Harry.

*Enter JANE, plainly dressed, R. 1. E.*

JANE. I beg pardon, madam! I thought you were alone.  
*(Going R.)*

HORACE *(crosses to her, boldly)*. Here, stay! You needn't go away on my account. Why don't you brighten up a bit, you melancholy-looking being?

JANE *(aside)*. The vulgar fellow! I was not aware he was here.

HORACE. You're a curious sort of girl, you've always such a scared look with you. Were any of your family ever mad?

MRS. BLANCH. Horace, for shame. Don't mind him, Miss Erfurt!

JANE. I am of a nervous temperament, sir, nothing more.

HORACE. Oh, nothing more, eh? I know the people with whom you lived last, and they say your mother died mad, and it's hereditary in your family.

MRS. BLANCH. Is this true? *(to Jane)*

JANE. No, madam, indeed it is not. The trials of a stormy life, the clouds of misfortune, and the misconduct of a reckless, drunken husband, turned my poor mother's brain. But do not, in pity to the character I bear, and the living I have to get, circulate a report that will be my ruin.

HORACE *(aside to her)*. That depends upon how you treat me. *(aloud, crossing to L. D.)* Well, I must see about going.

*Re-enter JOHN R. 1. E.*

JOHN *(to Mrs. Blancheville)*. Master wishes to speak with you, ma'am—he's in the library.

HORACE. He seems to read a number of books lately!

JOHN. *Henormous*, sir ! I heard him say yesterday, he'd read " Ten Thousand a-Year."

MRS. BLANCH. Say I will come directly.

JOHN (*aside*). I hope they won't want me again, for I am tasting a bottle of sherry to see if I can recommend it to my friends when they call. (*Exit R. 1. E.*)

MRS. BLANCH, (*shaking hands with Horace*). Good-bye, Horace, perhaps I shall be gone to bed before you return. Don't be late ! Good-night.

HORACE. Good-night, mother.

MRS. BLANCH. (*to Jane*). Wait for me in the dining-room, Miss Erfurt. (*Exit D. R. 2. E.*)

JANE. Yes, madam, (*going R. 1. E.*)

HORACE. Here, don't be in a hurry, I want to talk to you.

JANE. But I do not want to talk to you, sir !

HORACE (*siezes her by the waist*). Stay, or I'll break your proud heart for you.

JANE. My *heart* you *may*, but my *spirit* never, (*throws his hand off.*)

HORACE. We shall see. Take care what you are about, or you shall leave here without a character, then what will become of you ?

JANE. What indeed, for I have a little brother and sister to keep as well as myself.

HORACE (*aside*). I shall conquer her yet, I'll alter my tone, (*aloud*) Come, come my dear, let us be friends and understand each other. You know I'm partial to you, and therefore—(*puts his arm round her waist*).

JANE (*throwing his arm off*). Away, wretch, I hold you viler than the dust beneath my feet.

HORACE. Insolent menial!

JANE. Cowardly villain! The oak of the forest is easier bent to your will than I am, do your worst to injure me. I can but suffer what I have before—poverty, hunger, and all the agony a sister feels, when she sees those near and dear to her want bread, and though knowing this, I will not let you set your foot upon me. but rather try to conquer your wickedness, your craft, and inhumanity.

HORACE. Ah, this proves the truth of what folks say, you *are* mad indeed.

JANE (*pointing at him*). And if I am, beware of me—fear me—avoid me—molest me at your peril, and you shall die ! (*Exit R. 1. E.*)

BLANCHEVILLE *at D. R. overhearing her.*

BLANCH. (*aside*). And the sooner he does the better for me.

THE CLOCK ON THE STAIRS. 7.

HORACE. Devil take the girl, who would have thought she had such a spirit.

BLANCH, (*coming down R. C.*) You and Jane have been at hard words, it seems ?

HORACE. Yes, that prude of a governess was telling me a bit of her mind.

BLANCH. I heard her. She threatened you too—said you should die. Those are dangerous words.

HORACE. Oh, I heed them not, nor her either. But I shall be late, good evening. (*Exit HORACE L. D.*)

BLANCH, (*repeating Jane's words*). "You shall die! you shall die!" Humph! I wish she could tell me *when* he's to die. The sooner the better for me, for I'm on my last legs. I married this woman in the hope of retrieving myself, and then found her property was nearly all willed to her son Horace. She deceived me, and my revenge has been that she has never known a moment's peace since, and she never shall. I'll wring her heart, day by day and drop by drop. I married for money—not to be encumbered with a weak, silly woman. This son is young, not above half my age—little chance of *his* dying, except I were to—No—no, I must dismiss this thought that seems to haunt me—growing stronger and stronger every day, it is too hazardous, and yet it would rid me of all my embarrassments and make me a rich man—it would be leaping to fortune's height by a single bound: and yet if I missed the leap and fell into the dark abyss of death and—and infamy! Let me pause before I decide.

*The gate bell is heard to ring. Enter JOHN R. 1. E. crossing to L. D. to answer it.*

JOHN (*aside*.) Cuss the bell, why can't it let a gentleman take his wine comfortably!

BLANCH. If it's anybody for me I'm not at home.

JOHN. I understand, sir. (*aside*) Some vulgar tradesman I suppose, with a bill as long as my *harm*. (*Exit, L. D.*)

BLANCH. That's a creditor, I know the ring well, it carries a threatening sound with it, and seems to say money or mischief. But I'll see no one to-night, of that I'm determined.

JOHN (*without L. D.*) But I say he's *hout*.

LEACH (*without L. D.*) And I say he's *in*.

JOHN (*without*.) You're no gentleman, sir!

LEACH (*without*.) You're another. Stand out of the way.

BLANCH. It's Leach—Leach by name, and leech by nature. (*Enter LEACH L. D. followed by JOHN*) You couldn't take an answer, then?

LEACH. Oh yes, I *could*, but I *wouldn't*.

BLANCH. Leave us, John.

JOHN (*going R.*) They look as spiteful at each other as two torn cats on a wall. (*Aside and exit R. 1. E.*)

LEACH. Well Blancheville!

BLANCH. Well Leach!

LEACH. Didn't want to see me, eh? But here I am, and somebody else will be here to-morrow unless I'm paid—the bailiffs, Mr. Blancheville, the bailiffs. Swindler (*going up to Blancheville*).

BLANCH, (*seizes him*). Villain! extortioner! bloodsucker!

LEACH. Go on, go on. I'll put it all down in the bill.

BLANCH. (*throws him off.*) I am a fool, this will do me no good.

LEACH. No, nor me either. Now I'll ruin you, I'll crush you, I'll skin you, so look out.

BLANCH. Wait three months ?

LEACH. I won't!

BLANCH. Two?

LEACH. I can't!

BLANCH. One?

LEACH. I shan't! If the money is not at my office by twelve to-morrow, you'll have an execution in here before one. You'll throttle a lawyer will you ? Mind I've given you warning and that's all I do mean to give you, as sure as my name's Leach. (*Exit in a rage L. D.*)

BLANCH. Matters are coming to a climax, desperate circumstances require desperate remedies. " By twelve to-morrow ! " Humph! 'twill soon be here. One life stands between me and happiness, a barrier is before my prospects—shall I remove it, or let it crush me ! (*takes vial from, his vest and looks at it*) Colourless—tasteless—and producing a calm death, resembling sleep. My wife's son is a young man—lucky—and rich ; but what said that woman? "You shall die, you shall die." Strange now *if he should*—very strange, very, very. (*Exit R. D.—pause.*)

RICHARD ERFURT (*father to Jane,*) *dressed in a rough farmer kind of dress, looks on L. door 2. u. and advances cautiously.*

RICHARD. The hall door was open—what does that mean ? —I saw a lawyer coming out—next to gamekeepers and excisemen, I consider them very troublesome characters, I'm playing at hide and seek with those kind of people, they've missed me to-night though, and if I could hide here for an hour or two I should throw 'em off the scent. But I may be on dangerous ground here. No matter—I'll risk

it, for the hunted fox is not very very particular as to the kind of hole he pops his nose in. (*goes towards door R, s. E.*) I wonder what's in here ?

*JANE enters R. I. E., and starts on seeing him.*

JANE. My father !

RICHARD. What, Jane !

JANE. In Heaven's name, what do you seek here ?

RICHARD. Concealment from the officers of the law.

JANE. Impossible, you are in the house of a man who is a terror to all poachers for miles round.

RICHARD. The devil I am ! What are *you* doing here ?

JANE. I live here. Oh, for mercy's sake leave this place, you have ever been your family's ruin. Would you further disgrace your child ? I am here in a new situation, striving to keep my brother and sister that you abandoned, but if you are seen here—if you are taken beneath this roof and they learn who you are, it will destroy us all.

RICHARD. What would you have me do ? Is a father to be taken when his own child can save him ?

JANE. How can I do so ?

RICHARD. By hiding me, and giving me food.

JANE. I have nowhere to conceal you—you will be seen by the servants.

RICHARD. Where's *your* room ?

JANE. At the top of the stairs.

RICHARD. Well then, that's the very place for me, no one will think of coming there. Bring me something to eat—and something to drink mind, for I'm dead beat I can tell you.

JANE. I will—I will—anything if you'll promise to leave here in the morning at daybreak.

RICHARD. Of course I will, (*aside*) That depends on circumstances though, (*going upstairs.*) The top room you say?

JANE. Yes—yes—quick—quick.

RICHARD. Don't alarm yourself, I'm going. (*Exits upstairs C, passes the landing and goes up the upper staircase R, out of the sight of audience.*)

JANE. Let me go where I will, a fatal influence seems to hover over me, no friend—no counsellor to aid me. Heaven help me, this is a hard world for the unfortunate and friendless to struggle with, and then my father to wander here—and I to remain in terror until he is gone again, other daughters would rejoice to see their parent, but that pleasure is denied to me, for his lawless life has stained his character in the eyes of all. Let me procure him food while I am unobserved (*going R, I, E. meets* 

JOHN *who enters R. 1. E.*

JOHN. Miss Jane, I want to speak with you. Did you see that rascal who was here just now ?

JANE. (*aside.*) Does he mean my father ?

JOHN. I always button up my pockets when I see such people about for they'd take every farthing you had if you had anything to do with 'em.

JANE. (*aside.*) He *has* seen my father, but I must not appear to know it. (*aloud.*) How did he get in the house ?

JOHN. Why I let him in to be sure.

JANE. Did he—did he ask for me ?

JOHN. For you ! What, do you know him ?

JANE. Too well.

JOHN. What ? —has he got you in his clutches ? —you owe him something perhaps ?

JANE. Nothing but affection.

JOHN. What ? —affection for that old vampire ?

JANE. Silence sir. Although he may be what you say—no one shall speak ill of him in my presence.

JOHN. (*aside.*) May I never be a butler, if she don't want to be Mrs. Leach, she that I thought of making a *hoffer* to. (*aloud*) You may be very fond of him, but I think I've as much right to you as he has.

JANE. What do you mean ? would you claim me for your daughter ?

JOHN. Daughter be blowed, no, for my wife to be sure.

JANE. What man then do you mean ?

JOHN. Why old Leach the lawyer.

JANE, (*half aloud*) Thank Heaven, he has not seen him.

JOHN. But I have seen him.

JANE. Yes, yes, I know.

JOHN. (*aside*) Now she says she knows.

JANE. I didn't understand you at first.

JOHN. Starch my cravat, if I understand *you first* or *last*.

JANE. No matter. I will explain all to-morrow.

JOHN. All what ?

JANE, (*recollecting herself.*) Nothing, nothing.

JOHN. All nothing ! Upon my honour I feel quite flattered by the / (unbounded confidence you place in me (*aside, going R.*) I heard that her *sanitary* premises were a little out of repair, (*touching his forehead*) and by all the plate in the pantry I believe it. I see it plainly now, her lunacies is leaving her rapidly. (*Exit R. 1. E.*)

JANE. How foolish of me. I nearly betrayed myself. Now to procure food for my father. Oh what a day of

trial this has been to me, let me trust that to-morrow will prove a calmer one for this poor troubled heart.

(Exit R. 1. E.)

Enter HORACE, *partially intoxicated* 1. D.

HORACE. Steady Horace, steady my boy. Sir Harry's wine can't be good or it would never get over a fellow so quick as this. I believe he drugs it, for I found myself losing at cards, and betting like a madman, (*takes out purse and looking at it*) Twenty pounds gone! The sharper ! but I'll keep my own counsel. (RICHARD ERKURT *is seen coming, partly down the stairs, observing him*) It serves me right for being such a fool. Hang the wine, how it's making my head spin round, (*steadying himself by chair.*)

Enter BLANCHEVILLE, B. r. 2. E.

BLANCH. (*aside.*) My hopeful son-in-law. He little dreams of the fate that is hanging over him.

HORACE. Ah my *dear* second father, you seem out of sorts.

BLANCH. So do you.

HORACE. Yes, I've taken too much wine. What's the matter with you ?

BLANCH. Oh nothing—merely money matters.

HORACE. Sorry to hear it, I am really.

BLANCH. (*aside.*) Is he sincere? If so, I'll spare him, let me try. (*aloud.*) Yes Horace, I am temporally embarrassed for the want of a hundred or two for a short time.

HORACE. IS that all ? only a hundred or two ? Pooh ! a mere trifle, I should have thought it was more than that by your looks.

BLANCH. Well, it *is* more, but the sum I have named will be sufficient for the present.

HORACE. (*aside.*) I know his move, he'll ask me to lend it him in a minute, I'll pretend to condole with him. (*aloud.*) Really my dear father-in-law I'm grieved to hear that you are so awkwardly situated, and if I can serve you in any way I shall be delighted.

BLANCH. (*aside.*) He is not the selfish fellow I thought him after all. (*aloud.*) My dear Horace, I feel your kind offer deeply, and the loan of three hundred pounds for a—

HORACE. Oh, I beg your pardon my dear father-in-law—my offer related to assisting you with *advice*, not *money*. No—no—I've no more of that than I want myself.

BLANCH. (*aside.*) Artful knave! but to-morrow he will be—softly—softly—let me be as crafty as he is.

HORACE. I say my worthy father-in-law, didn't you fancy

you had the money in your hand. Oh dear no, I'm not such a flat. Three hundred pounds ? why it's more than you're worth every way.

BLANCH. Paltry dog!

HORACE. Crafty old fox! I suppose you thought when you married my mother that you'd be lord and master here, you didn't know there was such a person as me in existence, but there *is* you see. You married for money, and got a wife *without* any. Ha ! ha! ha!

BLANCH. Insulting rascal ! (*rushes at him.*)

*Enter* MRS. BLANCHEVILLE, R. D. 2. E., *and stays his uplifted arm.*

MRS. BLANCH. Husband ! Horace—for my sake ?

HORACE. Leave us alone, we can settle this without you.

BLANCH. (*to Horace.*) Thank your mother for coming in sir, or I would have taught you a lesson, you should have remembered to the longest day you lived.

HORACE. What, do you dare to threaten me ?

MRS. BLANCH. Horace—Horace—do not heed him.

HORACE. Well I won't. You are quite right, he's scarcely worth my notice. I'll get to bed, I shall sleep sound enough, I warrant.

BLANCH. (*aside.*) You shall sleep your last.

MRS. BLANCH, (*calling R. 1. E.*) John! (*enter JOHN with lighted candle, R. 1. E.*) Light Mr. Horace to his room.

JOHN. (*to Horace.*) Take my fearn sir. Excuse me, sir, but I think this is a case of soda water.

HORACE. Not it John, I'm right enough, put a tumbler of spring water and a seidlitz powder on my table, and that'll square me up all right in the morning; lead the way John.

JOHN. Oblige me by taking my krm sir, I'm not proud.

HORACE. Nor I, my boy. Good night mother, (*to BLANCH.*) Good night Mr. Three Hundred Pounds. Good night.

BLANCH. (*aside.*) Good night to you indeed, (*music, HORACE shakes hands with Mrs. B., and exits with JOHN upstairs into room on first landing facing audience.*)

RICHARD (*who has been on the watch.*) In there, eh ? (*goes upstairs again, out of sight of the audience, on upper stairs.*)

MRS. BLANCH. I sincerely regret what has happened, husband, and will take means to prevent it occurring again.

BLANCH. So will I.

MRS. BLANCH. How?

BLANCH. How? Oh by talking and reasoning with him.

MRS. BLANCH. Thank you Blancheville, this is more than I could have expected from you.

JOHN. (*coming downstairs from the room of Horace.*) I've got him into bed ma'am, but I never had such a job in my life, he wanted to stand on his head and go to sleep with his feet propping up the ceiling.

MRS. BLANCH. You can leave us, but be sure you listen if you hear his bell.

JOHN. Certainly ma'am, (*aside.*) If he wakes in the night and wants me, he may pull the bell out of joint before I disturb myself. It's supper time, and if I don't take my meals regular my calves begin to fall away directly.

(*Exit, R. 1. E.*)

BLANCH. (*to Mrs. B.*) Give yourself no anxiety on Horace's account, you'll see a wonderful difference in him by the morning.

MRS. BLANCH. I hope so.

BLANCH. I'm sure so. Come let us go in, and calm your peana on your son's account—he'll sleep sound enough I'll warrant.

(*Music, exeunt R. D. 2. E.*)

RICHARD *looks down, watching them off, he comes downstairs to the landing, and looks through the keyhole of Horace's room.*

RICHARD. I wonder if the door's locked, (*tries it, it opens a little way.*) No ; he seems sound asleep, and his watch and purse are on the table, now for it. (*music—cautious, he enters room,, and returns, with watch and purse.*) Now to leave the house, no one knows I have been here but my daughter, and I know she won't fret after me when I'm gone. (*He is about to descend stairs when he sees BLANCHEVILLE entering from R. D. 2. E., cautiously.*) Ha! a man! I shall be seen. If I try to go back to the upper room he'll hear me. What's to be done ? I'll return in here, (*going to Horace's room.*) No, he may awake. The devil! I shall be trapped, (*sees clock.*) Ah! this clockcase! (*he opens clockcase and goes in.*)

BLANCH. (*who has been, looking round the hall to see he is not observed.*) No one seems about, (*takes out vial.*) Come desperate remedy and do thy work, (*music, he ascends stairs and goes into Horace's room.*)

RICHARD. (*looking out from clock.*) He's gone into that room, perhaps he has to pass through it to his own chamber. Hark ! I hear his footstep, he's returning, (*closes clock door.*)

BLANCHEVILLE *re-enters from room—listening on landing.*

BLANCH. 'Tis done! I have poured it in the glass of water that stands by his bedside, and if he drinks during the

night he is a dead man. I'll place this vial in Jane's chamber, she quarrelled with him to-night, and said to him—"Thou shalt die, thou shalt die." These words I can swear to overhearing, and this, if found in her room, (*shows vial*) will be a convincing proof of her guilt, (*looks round.*) Caution, caution ; for now comes the very climax of my fate. (*Music, ascends the second flight of stairs and exits out of sight of audience, RICHARD peeps out of clockcase.*)

RICHARD. All seems still at last, I must get out of the house as soon as possible, in case the things are missed. Hark! some one is coming from above, curses on these interruptions. I shall be discovered after all. (*retires in clock.*) (*Music, BLANCHEVILLE descends to the landing.*)

BLANCH. My plan is complete, (*listens at Horace's door.*) Does he still sleep ? (*looks in room.*) No, he is awake, he stretches his hand towards the drink, he raises it to his lips, he drains the glass, 'tis gone, and he will sleep to wake no more. I have triumphed, (*descends stairs.*) Now I may safely leave the rest to fate. (*Exit, D. R. 2. E.*)

*Enter JANE, E. 1. E.*

JANE. I cannot procure the food for my father, for the servant remains below and would observe me. I'll give him what money I have, and get him to leave the house at once, for I cannot rest while he is beneath the roof ; I know he is desperate and I dread the worst while he remains here. I will go to him and forbid him to see me again until he is a better man. (*music, ascends stairs, when she has reached the landing she turns to see if she is observed, and sees MRS. BLANCHEVILLE entering from R.D.2. E.*) It is my mistress, if she sees me going to my room she will follow and speak with me as she always does, my father will be discovered and I shall be disgraced. I'll hide in Mr. Horace's room, there is no light—so he cannot have returned. (*Exit to the room on landing.*)

MRS. BLANCH. (*who has remained by door in deep thought. now advances.*) Yes, yes, that will be the better way, my son shall have a separate establishment, these constant quarrels between my husband and son embitter my life and make me wretched. I must see him before I go to rest, that I may know he is sleeping off the effects of the wine in safety. (*music, goes upstairs to Horace's room,.*) Why, he has extinguished his light! (*Exits into room.*)

*RICHARD comes out of clock.*

RICHARD. This is my opportunity—now—or never, (*descends stairs to stage.*)

MRS. BLANCH. (*in room*) Help ! help! murder ! help !

RICHARD. What the devil's up now, I shall be trapped after all. (*music, he hides under the stairs on stage L.*)

MRS. BLANCHEVILLE *enters from the room, struggling with,*  
JANE.

MRS. BLANCH. Help ! help ! murder ! help!

*Enter BLANCHEVILLE R. D. 2. E., and JOHN and other servants with lights R. 1. E. and MR. LEACH L. D. 2. E.*

JANE. Let me go, it was not I, indeed it was not.

BLANCH. What is the matter ?

MRS. BLANCH. (*dragging Jane down the stairs*) She has killed my son!

OMNES. Killed your son ?

JANE. No ! no!

MRS. BLANCH. 'Tis true. I found her concealed in his chamber, the moonlight streaming into the room showed me my son cold and lifeless, his watch and purse were gone, and no one there but her, secure her I say. (*Two SERVANTS seize her.*)

BLANCH. Search her room.

JANE. No ! no !

BLANCH. Why not ?

LEACH. That's what I say. I'm a legal authority and I advise it. Come with me some one and show me where it is.

JOHN *with candle precedes LEACH upstairs to the upper room.*

JANE. Why am I suspected ? why accused ? what motive had I for this deed ?

BLANCH. Revenge ! you quarrelled with Mr. Horace this evening, I overheard you say to him " Thou shalt die, thou shalt die." Deny those words if you can.

JANE. I do not deny them, but they were uttered without thought or meaning, I was insulted—maddened—and knew not what I said. I am innocent—indeed I am.

BLANCH. We shall be able to say more about that when your room has been searched. (*JOHN descends stairs followed by LEACH with the vial.*)

JANE. (*half aside.*) They will find *him* there. Oh pity me Heaven!

BLANCH. "Find him there," you hear?—this is some accomplice no doubt, (*to JOHN and LEACH.*) Well, what have you found ?

LEACH. This vial, which no doubt contains poison brought hither by some accomplice.

BLANCH. She spoke of one just now.

LEACH. Search the premises, he may be lurking about.  
(*Two SERVANTS exeunt, L.D. JOHN and LEACH march about hall.*)

JOHN. Ah ! I see a human form under the stairs. (JOHN and LEACH drag forth RICHARD.)

BLANCH. (*aside, starting.*) 'Tis my old accomplice. Richard Erfurt! if he recognizes me I am ruined !

LEACH. Let us search the rascal, (*they do so, and take from him the purse and watch.*)

JOHN. Mr. Horace's watch and purse! Oh, this is proof *consumptive!*

JANE. Oh father, father, what have you done ?

BLANCH. Her father, eh ? you see madam what *respectable* people she is connected with. (*To Mrs. B.*)

MRS. BLANCH. I charge them with the murder of my son, send for the officers.

RICHARD. Murder ? No—I am innocent of that, as I hope for mercy for my daughter's sake.

BLANCH. (*aside.*) I must get rid of him or he may recognize me. (*aloud.*) To jail with them, I'll be responsible for their arrest.

RICHARD. And who are you that are so ready to fix the brand of guilt on us, let me look at you. (*crosses to him.*)

BLANCH. (*averts his face.*) Away with this man.

RICHARD. (*turning him round and gazing in his face.*) Ah! is it you Robert Clifton !

BLANCH. What do you mean, fellow ? my name is Walter Blancheville.

MRS. BLANCH. It is true, he is my husband.

RICHARD. Then you have wedded a villain, for he is married to my sister. He dissipated her little fortune and then abandoned her—the wreck of her happiness has preyed upon my mind and driven me to become the lost man that I am.

BLANCH. (*aside.*) I must be bold and deny all. (*aloud*) It is false, a mere subterfuge to escape from punishment—but no, your crime will doom you to the punishment you merit. for if you did not plan your victim's death, who did ?

HORACE (*suddenly appearing at his chamber door*). You did, villain ! (*descends to stage.*)

OMNES. Alive!

HORACE. Aye, to that villain's confusion and destruction. I saw him enter my room and pour the deadly poison in my glass, but I threw it from me, and to mislead him as he gazed through the half-opened door, I drank from another

