

NEIGHBOURS.

A New Comedy.

IN TWO ACTS.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

" Twice Killed," " A Day Well Spent," " A Family Failing," " Only a Half-penny," " The Dice of Death," " Reigning Favourite," " Rape of the Lock," " I and my Double," " A Quiet Day," " No Followers," " What have I done ?" " Porter's Knot," " Uncle Zachary," " My Fellow Clerk," " Sam's Arrival," " Beauty or the Beast," " Billing and Cooin," " A Cleft Stick," " Please to Remember the Grotto," &c, &c.

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NEIGHBOURS.

First produced at the Royal Strand Theatre, (under the management of Miss Swanborough,) Nov. 10, 1866.

Characters.

EBENEZER BLOCK	Mr. J. PARSELLE.
BENJAMIN BUNN.....	Mr. H. J. TURNER.
MASTICK	Mr. GASTON MURRAY.
GUSTAVUS GIMP.....	Mr. W. BELFORD.
TIBBITS.....	Mr. L. FREDERICKS.
MARIAN BLOCK	Miss SWANBOROUGH.
ANGELINA BUNN.....	Miss HUGHES.
LETTY.....	Miss JOHNSTONE.

Costumes.

Mr. BLOCK.—Dark coat and trowsers, light vest.

BENJAMIN BUNN.—light trowsers, blue coat with brass buttons, high straw hat.

MASTICK.—Black velvet coat and vest, light trowsers, wide-awake hat.

GUSTAVUS GIMP.—Short tailed plum coloured coat, light vest and trowsers, modern hat, cane.

TIBBITS.—Black trowsers, sleeve vest.—*2nd Act:* dress coat.

MARIAN BLOCK.—White muslin, blue trimmings.

ANGELINA BUNN.—Mauve silk and turban hat,

LETTY.—Neat cotton buff.

NEIGHBOURS.



ACT I.

SCENE.—*A Garden to a Country Villa, with house, L. 2 E., with practicable French window and verandah, backed by apartment and furniture.*

MR. BLOCK *and* MASTICK *discovered.*

MASTICK. Now, my dear Mr. Block, the misfortune is but trifling.

BLOCK. I know it is nothing out of my pocket; in fact from a pecuniary point of view it is rather a gain than a loss, for I should have been obliged every now and then to feast an army of cormorants, whose talent lies in their jaws, and whose heart lies in their stomachs—but I resent the indignity, sir, the indignity.

MASTICK. A mere imaginary grievance, my dear sir.

BLOCK. Now, Mr. Mastick, I recollect you once told me that you were exceedingly annoyed because at some exhibition or other, your picture was not hung upon the sight line I think you called it. You had sold the picture, made all you could by it, and therefore whether it was hung high or low, the number of pence in your pocket was exactly the same, but you did not like the slight—of course you did not.

MASTICK. But we artists, as you are aware, are morbidly sensible where our vanity is concerned.

BLOCK. Very good, friend; everybody is morbidly sensitive where his vanity is concerned; and I have known a couple of petty tradesmen as jealous of each other's shop fronts, as a couple of Royal Academicians of each other's pictures.

MASTICK. No doubt, sir, no doubt—but I wonder you do not find consolation in this fact, that the office you have lost was really not worthy of so good a man. Surely the wealthy, substantial, generally respected Ebenezer Block, head of the old established firm of Block, Block, and Boulder, would rather have let himself down than otherwise by becoming Mayor of Pedlington.

BLOCK. Certainly I should, I perfectly agree with you ; but I ought to have had the choice of letting myself down if I liked it. It's a cursedly trumperty thing to be Mayor of

Pedlington, but I had a right to the refusal of the trumpery. Now just consider the facts of the case. In consequence of an epidemic that played the deuce with our gormandizing corporation, Benjamin Bunn and I became aldermen together; one had no claim of seniority over the other.

MASTICK. That's very clear.

BLOCK. Of course it is. If Benjamin Bunn had been senior alderman I should have bowed to precedent; I should have said, internally, " Benjamin Bunn, I despise you personally, but as an enemy to innovations in general, I respect routine.

MASTICK. Spoken like a sound Conservative.

BLOCK. But now—the question of seniority not being on the cards—the question of weight, substance, respectability arises. And how is that question decided ? By the preference of Benjamin Bunn, the upstart pastry-cook, to Ebenezer Block, head of a firm that has been established at Pedlington for one hundred and fifty years.

MASTICK. It was very bad taste certainly.

BLOCK. Bad taste ! it was an atrocity—a paltry fellow, whom I recollect thirty years ago selling bulls' eyes on a saucepan lid—yes, a saucepan lid, like a vagabond as he was. There he is now, with his big confectioner's shop, and his lion and his unicorn over the door; and he calls himself purveyor—ha! ha ! purveyor to the Royal Family. But my eyes are not dazzled by his gilt gingerbread; they see the saucepan-lid still.

MASTICK. Nay, sir, some are of opinion, that a man who from the humblest beginning raises himself to a condition of opulence, is the more to be respected on that account.

BLOCK. Yes, I know all about that. When the son of a chimney-sweep becomes a banker and a member of Parliament, he ought to be particularly proud of his origin, but somehow he isn't, and if you wish to stand well with him the less you talk to him about soot bags the better.

MASTICK. I believe you are right, sir.

BLOCK. I know I'm right, sir, and I'm not to be put down by clap-trap even when it comes from the lips of such a capital fellow as yourself.

MASTICK. Exactly. I can't make out why you are so tolerant of me—a poor devil of a third-rate painter—with scarcely an expectation of becoming anything better.

BLOCK. Tolerant! Don't talk to me of tolerance, my good fellow—you are one of the very few persons in the world whom I esteem. In the first place, you are a man of *some* genius; in the second place, you talk like a gentleman, and not like the members of this blessed corporation; in the third place, you are related to one of the old county families. There, will that catalogue of merits suffice ?

MASTICK. I ought to have merits of some kind to intrude upon you all this time, (*aside*) Now for the effort—and I think, that now my health is perfectly *restored*-----

BLOCK. You ought to go—not a bit of it—having stopped so long for your own good, stop a little longer for mine ; for I have been so used to your company and conversation that I'll be hanged if I shall know how to get on without you. Then my daughter—my little Marian—what is to become of her landscapes, her cows and cottages? No, no, my boy, stop here as long as you can.

MASTICK. But, sir, professional duties call me to town.

BLOCK. Psha! nonsense, you ean'use your brush as well here as anywhere else. Study nature, as you call it; copy the fields, and the haystacks, and the town pump, and if you want a grand figure for an historical composition take off me.

Enter MARIAN, from house.

Ah, Marian, my love, you're the very person I want. This young friend of ours has grown tired of us, and talks of going.

MARIAN. Going?

BLOCK. Yes, going. Did you ever hear of anything so ridiculous? I tell you what, you must talk the notion out of him, and that you may have a better opportunity for so doing—I'll write a letter or two in my study, (*crosses to house, L.*) Mind you exert your wheedling power to the utmost. *Exit.*

MARIAN. (*after a pause*) Well, sir?

MASTICK. (R. C.) Well, Miss Marian ?

MARIAN. I suppose my father was right, when he said you were tired of us, and intended to— to go.

MASTICK. He was certainly right, when he said I intended to go ; but when he said I was tired of you, he was certainly wrong.

MARIAN. Nay, I rather judge people by their actions than by their words. If you are not tired of us, why do you run away ?

MASTICK. I—I endeavoured to explain to Mr. Block, that my art calls me to town.

MARIAN. Your art! I don't understand, or perhaps my ear caught the sound wrong—and you said your *heart* called you to town.

MASTICK. No, no, no ! I protest I said nothing of the sort; If I followed the dictates of my heart, I should-----

MARIAN. Well, well, proceed.

MASTICK. I should—I should—really I don't like to say what I should do.

MARIAN. It must be something terribly wicked, then.

MASTICK. Perhaps you are not altogether wrong, Miss

Marian. To tell you the truth, my conscience and my heart are at variance.

MARIAN. Indeed, that's very sad ! but stop, your heart is good I know—that is, I believe—is your conscience good too ?

MASTICK. I trust so.

MARIAN. Well then, as both adversaries are so good, there is a fair chance that they will make up their difference. Now, now, Mr. Mastick, what does it all mean ? You perfectly know that you have no professional call to London, and that what you say about your art is a mere pretext. Would you be kind enough to favour me with a little truth, if it is not altogether inconsistent with an artist's calling, (*sits*, L. C.)

MASTICK. Well, Miss Marian, you are so persuasive. (*sits*, R. c.)

MARIAN. Rather say, so imperious.

MASTICK. Persuasion with you is necessarily imperious, being altogether irresistible.

MARIAN. Be a little less complimentary and a little more explanatory, if you please Mr. Mastick.

MASTICK. Well then, to make a clean breast of it, as they say—you know that I am only a poor devil of a painter.

MARIAN. Nay, you need not tell truth in such excessively plain terms; say you are an artist whose circumstances are not altogether affluent.

MASTICK. On the other hand your father is the richest man in the town—nay, renowned for his wealth far beyond the precincts of Pedlington.

MARIAN. So I am told! But if you would have the goodness to tell me something new-----

MASTICK. Nay—I am obliged to recapitulate—pray pardon me. Being in ill health and my medical adviser having recommended change of air—I was forced upon your quiet household by a letter from a friend, whom your father was anxious to oblige.

MARIAN. Very true ! but you need not say " forced "—why talk of yourself in such very unfavourable terms ?

MASTICK. Nay, nay, your father is the very soul of hospitality—but I could easily perceive on my arrival, that I was considered an intruder.

MARIAN. Perhaps your suspicions were not altogether unfounded—but you see, we—that is my father, had yet to learn what a very charming—that is what a very agreeable person you are. I'm sure you cannot say that he seems to consider you an intruder now.

MASTICK. No, no, on the contrary I seem to have won his heart, while (*half aside*) I have lost my own.

MARIAN. What's that ?

MASTICK. Nothing ! nothing ! a word escaped me by mistake.



MARIAN. Yes, but it strikes me that the words that escape you by mistake are more to the purpose than those you utter intentionally.

MASTICK. I see prevarication is useless; Miss Marian, I am the most ungrateful of human beings.

MARIAN. Dear ! dear! dear!

MASTICK. Your father has loaded me with kindness—has made me the confidant of all his troubles—has treated me like a son—and I—I—I—penniless wretch that I am—I have fallen in—in love with his only child, (*rises*)

MARIAN. Oh! well, you have come to the point at last certainly, (*a pause*) Pray, Mr. Mastick, am I to look upon this as a declaration ?

MASTICK. No, regard it as a confession of atrocious wickedness. In you, my dear old friend centres all his hopes—to you he will bequeath his wealth—and I, thankless scoundrel, violently breaking all the laws of hospitality, dare to fall in love with you—don't you find my despair perfectly natural ?

MARIAN. No, I cannot say I do ! people in love only despair when their love is not returned, whereas in your case—whereas in your case-----

MASTICK. Well?

MARIAN. I say, Mr. Mastick, don't you think it's a great pity my papa lost the mayoralty.

MASTICK. A very great pity indeed—but to return to the point, Miss Marian—the avowal, which I am bold enough to think you intended only increases my misfortune.

MARIAN. Then I had better keep my intentions to myself?

MASTICK. Yes, yes! or if you have any kindly feeling towards me, extinguish it at once—strange request to come from the lips of one who loves as I do — regard me with indifference.

MARIAN. Suppose that is beyond my power, Mr. Mastick ?

MASTICK. Then, Marian, I must go. I must take my leave for ever; and thus adopt the only course which will save us both from misfortune, and me from disgrace.

MARIAN. And leave me in mis—you know we shall be so very dull without you, Mr. Mastick, and I shall go back so terribly in my drawing. Of course we were very contented before you came; we were used to our dulness then,—and, of course, when you have been gone for some time, we shall go on in the old way. (*after an effort, she bursts into tears*) No, I can't bear it, you must not go—Frederick, you must not go.

MASTICK. But am I to remain here to betray your father's confidence.

MARIAN. Why can't you trust to me to prevent you from doing anything of the kind ? Now I think of it, there s a great

deal of vanity in your scheme—you seem to imagine, that if you do not run away *from me*, I must necessarily run away from home. Not at all, Master Frederick—not at all, I have too much love for my father, and too much respect for myself to do anything of the kind. Your danger is not half so great as you are pleased to suppose. So you will stop here, Mr. Mastick—you will stop here, Frederick.

Enter LETTY and TIBBITS, from house, earring a large trunk and crying.

MASTICK. This is a pretty duett! Is the trunk too heavy ?

TIBB. No, sir, the trunk is nuffin, it's the weight on the art.

LETTY. Please, sir, it's our feelings, sir.

TIBB. Yes, sir, but we conquered 'em in performance of our duty, sir; the things is packed up all right.

LETTY. Yes, sir, I helped, and though we had a good cry over them, I know my counting was correct.

MARIAN. I begin to understand, (*draws MASTICK aside*) It seems, sir, that your mind was so perfectly made up on the subject of your departure, that you ordered your trunk to be packed and brought down.

MASTICK. It was even so.

MARIAN. Well, then as you have changed your mind, you may with equal promptness order it to be taken back again.

MASTICK. Yes, yes ! if that is your wish. Tibbits, you will carry that trunk back to my room.

TIBB. (*joyfully*) Back to your room, sir?

MASTICK. Yes, I intend to remain here a little longer.

TIBB. Oh, that's first rate, (*to LETTY, who is about to assist him*) No, no ! I don't want no help, it's light as a feather now. (*puts trunk on shoulder and goes into house*)

LETTY. Oh, sir, you have made us so 'appy.

MASTICK. I'm very glad to hear it, but I do not exactly understand how your happiness was concerned.

MARIAN. I don't, I am sure.

LETTY. Why you see, sir, and Miss—Mr. Tibbits, as being your gentleman,—yours, sir, in course I mean—has stopped here quite as long as you have—and Mr. Tibbits is a very agreeable young man. Well now, they do say, though very likely they are mistaken, that I am a very agreeable young woman. Well now, when a very agreeable young man and a very agreeable young woman is kept under the same roof for a good lot of weeks, and there ain't many other objects to distract their attention like—it is but natural that a sort of—a sort of keeping company should grow out of it. Don't you see that, Miss Marian ?

MARIAN. Not in the least, (*meaningly*) Do you, Mr. Mastick?

MASTICK. Certainly not, you are a bad logician, Letty.

LETTY. I don't know what that is, sir, but I trust I do the duties of the station to which it has pleased heaven to call me. Well now, Miss Marian, when parties are placed in the way I have said, it stands to reason that sudden separations are very hurtful to the feelings, I don't mind telling you, sir, and Miss—that I no sooner heard Mr. Tibbits say that you had suddenly given him orders to pack up, than I felt a sort of all-overishness words is unequal to describe. You enter into my sentiments I'm sure.

MARIAN. I'm sure I do nothing of the kind.

MASTICK. To me you only talk riddles, Letty.

LETTY. Well, it mayn't become me in my humble spear to be so bold, but I must say that you do astonish me, miss. You tell me, that you—you of all people in the world can't understand the 'appiness of a young man and 'oman being together and the grief at parting—you, who as a body may say, are precisely in the same situation.

MARIAN. (*indignantly*) Letty, you surprise me! what can you possibly mean?

MASTICK. Letty, ahem, there is a half-a-crown for you. Suppose you go and help your dear friend Tibbits to unpack the trunk.

LETTY. With the greatest pleasure, and thank ye, sir, but before I go I think I'll just drop an 'int for the benefit of you both—don't always suppose that because the lips don't speak, the heye don't see. *Exit.*

MASTICK. There, now you perceive the danger of our position; a secret that was hardly known to ourselves is discovered by a vulgar ignorant girl.

MARIAN. Whose own sympathies have instructed her, and whose own sympathies will prevent her from betraying us.

MASTICK. Very true, very true—you are always in the right, or you speak as if you were, and that's the same thing. (*crosses to R.*)

Re-enter BLOCK from house, L.

BLOCK. (*talking to some one inside*) Good-bye, Mrs. Meddle, good-bye—much obliged to you—good-bye.

MARIAN. That horrid Mrs. Meddle; however she's gone, that's one comfort.

BLOCK. (*aside*) That old lady's words are like certain drugs, disagreeable but wholesome, (*pauses and looks from MARIAN to MASTICK*) Well, young folks, which gets the victory in the debate?

MARIAN. Oh, papa, you'll be so pleased, I have persuaded Mr. Mastick to remain here a little longer.

MASTICK. (*aside*) Humph! he does not look so very delighted after all.

BLOCK. I see your persuasive powers have triumphed ! ha! ha! ha! natural enough, (*with a forced laugh*)

MARIAN. Why, papa dear, you don't look quite so happy as you did when you left us just now; I heard you name Mrs. Meddle, now I'm sure that horrid mischief-making woman did you no good by her call.

BLOCK. There I fear you are wrong. She gave me no particular pleasure, but I suspect she has done me a great deal of good. She's a shrewd woman that, Mr. Mastick, a woman of keen observation.

MARIAN. So very keen, that she occasionally observes things that never take place.

BLOCK. Well, the fault is on the right side; better be too sharp than too stupid. Now some old fools, and perhaps I am one of them, can't see things that take place under their very noses.  *glances from MASTICK to MARIAN*)

MARIAN. (*aside*) Can he suspect ?

MARIAN. (*aside*) I must find out what all this means. Mr. Mastick, just now I persuaded you to stay, let me now entreat you to go away,—nay, nay, don't be alarmed, only for a little while into the house, for I have something to say to papa of a dreadfully private nature.

MASTICK. I'm all obedience, (*crosses to house*) That there is something wrong, I have not the slightest doubt.

Exit into house, L.

BLOCK. Well, Marian?

MARIAN. (*R., embracing him*) Well my, dear, naughty, grumpy papa, this won't do at all; I can afford to see you in a passion, and to hear an angry word now and then, but one thing I can't bear, and that is to perceive you harbouring some disagreeable feeling, that can only express itself in looks, and round-about sentences and inuendoes. Now you are displeased at something, so out with it at once.

BLOCK. (*aside*) Egad, by taking the first move she beats me altogether. Why, of course, I am a little ruffled about that trumpety mayoralty.

MARIAN. Come, come, come, papa, no prevarication. There is another little trifle, of which the mayoralty is altogether innocent. Be frank, be candid.

BLOCK. (*aside*) Faith, one would think I was the suspected party. Well ?

MARIAN. Ye—e--es?

BLOCK. (*aside*) There is a perfect audacity of innocence about her. Well, Mrs. Meddle just called to pay me a friendly visit.

MARIAN. Good—good, Mrs. Meddle is at the bottom of it, so I supposed—go on.

BLOCK. Well, Mrs. Meddle said several things.

MARIAN. Ah! people who pay visits often do.

BLOCK. But they were shrewd things—very shrewd—inferentially shrewd.

MARIAN. Ah ! then she was superior to the generality of visitors. Will you favour me with one of her oracular utterances ? one likes to pick up a little wisdom, when one can do so without trouble.

BLOCK. Well, she remarked very keenly, that our friend, Mastick, has been staying here more than three months.

MARIAN. But you knew that already, didn't you?

BLOCK. Oh, of course, I knew it already ; but then she added this observation, that—that—you were the only young person in the house.

MARIAN. Had you imagined then, that somebody else was hidden in one of the cupboards ?

BLOCK. No, no, of course not—ridiculous! But she strengthened the observation by further remarking that Mr. Mastick was a young man, and that you were a young woman.

MARIAN. Had you any previous doubts on the subject?

BLOCK. To be sure not—ha! ha ! very good, (*aside*) I seem to be talking a lot of confounded nonsense. But now you see her remarks gain some point from the fact that Mr. Mastick stops here by your persuasion.

MARIAN. Nay, in persuading him to stop, I acted under your especial orders. Have you come to the end of Mrs. Meddle's remarks ?

BLOCK. Yes—yes.

MARIAN. Well now, I can't say that her information seems worth much.

BLOCK. Well, no; I can't say that it is, when one looks at it straight in the face as you do ; but you see, though she told things that we knew already, she made me regard them in a new light, and when one sees things in a new light they appear different.

MARIAN. Naturally.

BLOCK. And I must say, that when a gentleman seems in such a hurry to go, and yet is so easily persuaded to stop, it looks odd, especially when the persuasion comes from a young lady's lips; I can't help thinking-----

MARIAN. That is, people like Mrs. Meddle can't help thinking-----

BLOCK. That there must be some powerful attraction in this house.

MARIAN. Certainly there is—the pleasure of your society.

BLOCK. Stuff! I have not a bad opinion of myself, but I know that a little of me goes a very great way. Marian, listen to me attentively—I suspect that young man is in love. Now you know, Marian, that although he is a most agreeable companion—has an unexceptionable character, and withal comes from a good family; you know that he has not that fortune which ought to be expected in your husband; and you also know that if you made an unfitting match it would break my heart.

MARIAN. Break your heart, sir? (*turns aside*)

BLOCK. Ah! you colour—you change countenance! This means something.

MARIAN. (*aside*) Ah, a happy thought! (*aloud*) But do you think, papa dear, that if he married Angelina Bunn it would break *her* father's heart?

BLOCK. Most assuredly not. The old curmudgeon has not got a heart to break. But I say, you don't mean to hint that Angelina Bunn is—(*MARIAN nods*) Oh, it can't be.

MARIAN. Why not; she calls here almost every day.

BLOCK. Yes, she does—that's very true; but then he has generally seen her in your presence, and the idea of any one falling in love with that finikin miss while my little Marian is by.

MARIAN. Tastes differ, papa.

BLOCK. So they do—so they do; and though he is a very clever painter, he may have cursedly bad taste where real flesh and blood is concerned. But if he loves this dressed doll, why the devil don't he tell her father so at once?

MARIAN. I'm surprised you should ask such a question. The wealthy Mr. Bunn may not consider a penniless young man an eligible match.

BLOCK. He! I like that; that's very droll. The ex-proprietor of the saucepan lid turn up his nose at a member of the best county families! Benjamin Bunn is proud, is he—puffed up like his own dough, when he don't make it too heavy. Well, the world will come to something, (*crosses to R.*)

MARIAN. But, papa dear, when you thought I was the object, you regarded the poverty of Mr. Mastick as an insuperable objection.

BLOCK. Now, Marian, if you wish to put me in a passion, use fair means; but don't stamp upon my most susceptible corn. Don't hint, even remotely, that there is, or ever was, or ever can be the slightest resemblance between me and Benjamin Bunn. The corporation seem to think him the best man of the two, but, damme, you are not the corporation—you are a sensible young girl, and the corporation is a body of stupid old women. I tell you what, Marian, Fred Mastick

shall find a true friend in me. He shan't sigh in vain when I clap my shoulder to the wheel. He *shall* marry Angelina !

MARIAN. But, papa-----

BLOCK. Now don't attempt to put the notion out of my head; I've set my heart upon it, and hang me-----

MARIAN. But why should you make it your business ?

BLOCK. Never mind: every man has his humours. Tell Mastick I want to see him at once—at once !

MARIAN. Certainly, papa dear, (*aside*) I'm not in such a hurry as you are,

BLOCK. Are you going ?

MARIAN. Oh, certainly, papa ! (*at house*) There's a vulgar saying about a frying pan and a fire. *Exit into house.*

BLOCK. The darling little creature! how could I suspect for a moment that she would entertain so much as a thought opposed to my inclinations ? As for this unexpected attachment between Mastick and Angelina Bunn, nothing could be more desirable; young Mastick has blood and old Bunn has money—any difficulty that lies in the way of a union so desirable must be surmounted. Though Benjamin Bunn did trick me out of the mayoralty I'll bear no malice ; ha, ha, ha! I won't stand in the way of his daughter's happiness. Benjamin Bunn, I'll be even with you—ha, ha, ha—that is, I'll return good for evil, which is the noblest revenge. Perhaps he mayn't think it good, ha, ha, ha! but what of that ? If he is blind to his own interest, the fault is *his*, not mine.

Enter LETTY from house.

LETTY. I thought Miss Marian was here, sir.

BLOCK. No, no, she's in the house somewhere. What do you want with her ?

LETTY. Miss Angelina Bunn desires to see her.

BLOCK. Ha ! rather an early visit, is it not ?

LETTY. Yes, sir, rather !

BLOCK. I dare say that surprises you, eh, Letty ?

LETTY. Well, sir, it is somewhat remarkable.

BLOCK. Ha, ha, ha! it does not puzzle me a bit. I say, Letty, you have not run against Mr. Mastick, have you ?

LETTY. He went out a few minutes since.

BLOCK. Ah! indeed. You are aware he's not going to leave us for some time yet.

LETTY. I understood something of the kind.

BLOCK. And I know why he stops so long.

LETTY. You are always so clever, sir.

BLOCK. No, no, it's no cleverness on my part, my daughter has told me all.

LETTY. Gemini, all ?

BLOCK. All! (*nudges LETTY in the side, then suddenly check himself—aside*) Ahem, one must not let one's self down. We are forgetting Miss Bunn, Letty ; desire her to come here into the garden, before she sees Miss Marian; I wish particularly to speak with her.

LETTY. Yes, sir. (*aside*) All! told him all! What news for Mr. Tibbits. *Exit into house.*

BLOCK. Ha, ha, ha! I'm so delighted with this accident that I'm forgetting my natural dignity. And why am I delighted ? What the devil is it to me ? Why, of course, I'm pleased that I can do old Benjamin Bunn a good turn, ha, ha, ha!

Enter ANGELINA, from house.

ANGEL. Ah! Mr. Block—I am enchanted to hear that you find my company so desirable.

BLOCK. Of course, I find it so—though my name is Block, it does not follow that I am of marble. Who could find Miss Angelina Bunn's company otherwise than desirable ? Certainly not I—certainly not Mr. Mastick.

ANGEL. (*aside*) Mr. Mastick !

BLOCK. I often say to myself—how happy is my Marian to have such a friend as Angelina Bunn.

ANGEL. If you value friendship according to its sincerity, sir, you are not wrong—I love my Marian with all my heart and soul.

BLOCK. No, you don't—no, you don't—keep within the bounds of veracity, Miss Bunn.

ANGEL. Indeed, Mr. Block; no woman ever loved another as I love my Marian.

BLOCK. (*aside*) My Marian!—cursed affectation—perhaps not—but no woman ever gave to another what she calls her heart, and fancies to be her soul, without reserving some little sly corner for the—the rougher sex.

ANGEL. I do not penetrate your ideas, Mr. Block.

BLOCK, (*aside*) Ideas! But I penetrate your ideas, as you call them. You are in love—(*aside*) There! I think that was brief, delicate, and efficient.

ANGEL. For shame, Mr. Block ; I did not look for this from you. Your allusions are to my cousin, Mr. Gimp—but they are altogether out—I can't abide him.

BLOCK. (*aside*) "Abide him"—"allusions"—"out"—What a taint of vulgarity sticks to that family, to be sure ! My dear Miss Angy, no creature in the world was further from my thoughts than that very excellent, though very insipid young gentleman, Mr. Gimp. Nevertheless, I repeat my assertion—You are in love—I know it. Now, don't begin to make up a sanctified face, or a dignified face, or an angry face, or an

innocent face, or any face that impugns the veracity of that clever little bird who knows all the secrets in the world. Speak to me as if I were your father.

ANGEL. Mr. Block!

BLOCK. No, no; I correct the expression. Your father is the very person you wish to keep in the dark. Consider me, at this juncture, not as a father, but more than a father.

ANGEL. (*aside*) Good gracious—he is not going to propose himself?

BLOCK. As you don't speak, Miss Angy, I'll speak for you; you are in love with my friend Mastick. There, there, I knew I was right—no answer from those lips, but a frank avowal from the blushing cheek and the downcast eyes. Ha! ha ! You can't deny it.

ANGEL. I—I ain't a tryin' to deny it.

BLOCK. No, no; that shews your wisdom. Where failure is certain, the less one tries the better. But, come, though I make you blush, I won't keep you in a state of anxiety. Your love is returned—Mastick adores, idolizes, worships the ground you walk upon. The expression is common-place, but its force has not been exceeded by any new invention.

ANGEL. I fear it is not delicate for me to say you make me so—so happy.

BLOCK. No ; it is not very; but what is much better it brings us to the point, (*aside*) What a difference between her and my Marian.

ANGEL. You see, sir. I have a great excuse, if my feelings do carry me away a little; and as you have begun the subject—you see, sir, you are an old gentleman, whom we may almost treat as an old lady.

BLOCK. Thank you exceedingly.

ANGEL. Though, do you know, I first thought you were going to propose yourself, which would have been so very—very ridiculous.

BLOCK. Oh, very indeed. Though perhaps we might not agree wherein the absurdity consisted.

ANGEL. You understand how I was placed. Living at a spot where so few can appreciate a young person of refined sentiments; and then suddenly meeting with one so different.

BLOCK. Yes, yes, exactly. All right and all reasonable. And I tell you what, Angy ; I'll break the matter to your father. I'll undertake to make a match of it.

ANGEL. Really, sir, this unexpected kindness-----

Enter LETTY from house.

LETTY. Please, sir, Mr. Mastick has returned, if you wish see him.

BLOCK. At once, send him hither. (*Exit LETTY*) Nothing could be more opportune. (*ANGELINA going*) Stop, stop!

ANGEL. No no! indeed, no, Mr. Block. Consider my feelings—consider the suddenness!

Enter GUSTAVUS GIMP, L. 1 E.

GIMP. (*lisp*) Ah, Angy, I thought I should find you here—somewhere that is—ahem—when I didn't find you at home, I concluded that—exactly.

ANGEL. Your arm, cousin. I am going to see Marian.

GIMP. Yes; I know you are always going to—exactly.

Enter MASTICK from house.

MASTICK. You wished to see me, sir.

ANGEL. Tavy, Tavy! do come along! (*aside*) How very embarrassing. Good morning and good-bye, Mr. Mastick—ha, ha, ha! (*takes a sweep round the stage with GIMP, so as to avoid approaching MASTICK*) Perhaps we shall meet again soon—ha, ha, ha!

GIMP. Upon my word this is very—exactly.

Exeunt ANGELINA and GIMP into house.

BLOCK. Could anything be more ridiculous? Even you, Mastick—you, who are bound to see no spots in the sun, you must find this conduct very absurd.

MASTICK. Not at all, sir; the young lady wished to see her friend, and-----

BLOCK. Ah, it's lucky I am sharper than you, or I do not know how we should get on at all. Listen to this, Mastick, old fellow—my daughter has told me everything.

MASTICK. And you regard my unfortunate passion with pity?

BLOCK. Well, perhaps, I think you might have—but that's not for me to say—every one to his fancy. Indeed my feeling towards you is rather angry than otherwise. Considering the intimate terms we have been on, I think you might have made me a confidant.

MASTICK. Right, right—you justly accuse me of base dissimulation--of consummate duplicity—of the worst hypocrisy!

BLOCK. Stop, stop; I did not say half of it, I only thought you might as well have spoken out, and now I ask plainly, why the devil didn't you?

MASTICK. Why, sir? consider my straitened circumstances.

BLOCK. They shan't be any obstacle at all. You are of good family, and are a good fellow, so consider the girl as yours.

MASTICK. For this generosity a thousand thanks! You have raised me to the very summit of felicity!

BLOCK. Not so fast—not so fast. What a fellow you are

for extremes—either quite down in the dumps, or quite up in the clouds. There's a great deal to be done yet.

MASTICK. Of course—of course. There are certain necessary formalities-----

BLOCK. More than that. There are certain essentialities. I have not spoken to the father yet.

MASTICK. The father!

BLOCK. Aye, the father; and old Benjamin Bunn is not exactly the man to give away his daughter without a word.

MASTICK. Is Mr. Benjamin Bunn the father ?

BLOCK. Why of course he is. You don't mean to say you didn't know that? (MASTICK *shakes his head*) Odd; yet perhaps not so odd. Old Bunn has not been here since the contest about the mayoralty began, and the girls only call each other by their Christian names. Still it's odd after all.

MASTICK. (*aside*) A mere mistake. All my happiness an illusion !

BLOCK. Now look here ; I shall go to Benjamin Bunn at once, (*crosses to L.*)

MASTICK. Do nothing of the kind.

BLOCK. Stuff—stuff! I'll exactly state your case.

MASTICK. Desist—desist; I implore you !

BLOCK. Nonsense ; If you don't know what is good for you I do. This is some crotchet about delicacy, I suppose.

MASTICK. Sir, unless you abandon this scheme, I leave the spot.

Enter GIMP, from house.

GIMP. Well, the ladies don't seem to want me, so I have—exactly, (*saunters forward so as to come accidentally between BLOCK and MASTICK*)

BLOCK. (*aside*) I am dumb with rage—don't put me in a passion, sir. (*seeing GIMP*) Oh, bother! (*pushes him aside*)

GIMP. I was going to observe-----

MASTICK. Psha! (*pushes him aside*) My mind is made up, and I go by the next train.

BLOCK. Sir—tut—tut. (*pushes GIMP aside*)

GIMP. Exactly !

BLOCK. Sir, the moment when a man offers a kindness is the moment when a man feels most peppery—if his favours are flung into his face.

MASTICK. Tut—tut. (*pushes GIMP aside*) Mr. Block-----

BLOCK. Don't let me call you ungrateful, Mastick.

Enter MARIAN, from house.

MARIAN. What is all this ? papa ! Mr. Mastick—quarrelling—fie, Mr. Mastick, fie. Whatever be the subject of dispute,

you know as an obedient daughter, I am bound to assume that pa' is in the right and you in the wrong.

BLOCK. I am in the right too. This outrageous Mr. Mastick has no more consistency about him than the corporation of Pedlington. He'd have made a first-rate common council man. Look here, he is, as you are aware, over head and ears in love with Miss Angelina Bunn.

GIMP. (L. C. *between* MARIAN *and* BLOCK) You are aware that the lady in question is my cousin ?

BLOCK. (*pushing him aside*) Pooh ! nonsense. What have cousins to do with it ?

GIMP. Exactly!

BLOCK. Well, he beams with delight when I tell him that there is no serious obstacle to his marriage with the lady in question.

GIMP. (*same business*) But there is—I'm an obstacle.

BLOCK. You are an infernal obstacle in the way of my explanation.

GIMP. Exactly.

BLOCK. Well, I offer to speak to her father, and put in a good word for him, when all of a sudden he pulls a face as long as my arm, and threatens to go to London by the next train.

MARIAN. Threatens to go ? (*crosses to c.*) For shame, Mr. Mastick, thus to trifle with a fond dotting heart.

GIMP. (*between* MASTICK *and* MARIAN) If you mean my cousin Angy's heart, I assure you it's very hard to break.

MARIAN. Now do be quiet, sir. Gimp, you have nothing at all to do with it.

GIMP. Exactly.

MARIAN. You are very cruel, Mr. Mastick.

MASTICK. (R.) You wish me to stop then, and carry out this beautiful arrangement.

MARIAN. (L. C.) Of course I do. Papa, just retire for a few yards, and let me tell him what Angy said to me just now.

(BLOCK *goes up stage*)

GIMP. (*same business*) Then I'm to understand that my cousin-----

MARIAN. I don't want you to understand anything, (*to* GIMP) Do have the goodness to follow papa's example.

GIMP. Oh, exactly, (*goes to* BLOCK, *who turns away from him*)

MARIAN. Mr. Mastick, it's all my doing. To divert suspicion I made pa' believe that you are in love with Angy. Keep up the delusion, and don't go.

MASTICK. Ah ! I perceive-----

MARIAN. He. won't go, pa'—will you ?

MASTICK. No, no; ten thousand times, no.

BLOCK. (L.) What a very strong argument she must have put into a very few words. Strangely unlike her sex.

GIMP. (L.) Exactly. *(between MARIAN and BLOCK)*

BLOCK. Might I know the reason of this new change?

MASTICK. Why simply, it was merely—that is to say-----

GIMP. Exactly.

MARIAN. That will do; nothing can be more satisfactory. Angy is in the drawing room; go to her at once.

MASTICK. *(crosses to door)* For good or ill, my fate is entirely in your hands, *(going to house, MARIAN following)*

BLOCK. (R.) Stop—stop—child. *(MARIAN turns back)* What did you say to him ?

MARIAN. *(speaking very quickly)* Why, I told him that Angy, by her own confession, loved him to distraction—that her peace of mind depended upon his remaining here, and that if he departed I could not answer for the consequences. I added that although she is perfectly aware of his pecuniary condition, and of her father's overwhelming respect for wealth—she trusted that every difficulty might be overcome with a little persuasion—and that's all, papa, *(in running off, GIMP gets into her way—pushing him, aside)* Do get away, Mr. Gimp.

Exeunt into house, L., with MASTICK.

BLOCK. That's all! enough too. Who the devil would have thought she could say all that in such a second ?

GIMP. Then it seems I am to infer-----

BLOCK. Oh, go to Bath!

Exit into house.

GIMP. *(falling into garden seat)* That's where they always tell me to go—no, sometimes they tell me to go to Jericho—exactly.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SAME SCENE.—*Curtain rises after a very short interval.*

GUSTAVUS GIMP *waiting on garden seat, rubs his eyes.*

GIMP. Eh!—exactly; I've been to sleep, dreaming that I was a little boy at school. Very odd !—puts me in mind of the peculiarity of my whole life ; I never had any weight with anybody in the whole course of my existence. No one ever asked me for an opinion on any single subject, and if I gave one without being asked, nobody ever listened. That dream of mine recalled an old incident. Exactly ; a boy at school learned his Virgil very badly, and they caned him; I learned

mine a great deal worse, but they did not cane me—on the contrary, the schoolmaster patted me on the head, and smiled, and said,—“Tavy, that was very well for *you*.” It was not pleasant—I think that I should have preferred the cane. So it has been ever since ; if any discussion arises in the family, and I try to put in a word, I’m sure to be interrupted. I believe I’m in love with my cousin, Angy; but I could not pop a question short enough to get to the end of it. I’m jealous of that artist fellow; but if I expressed my feelings he would not so much as hear me. What a devil of a thing it is not to have any weight—I wonder how one gets weight.

Enter ANGELINA from home.

ANGEL. (L. C.) Well, now the first excitement is over, I really feel a little puzzled. I say, Tavy, I can talk to you confidentially ; for if you betray my secrets nobody will listen.

GIMP. (R. C.) Exactly ; that’s the very observation I was making to myself.

ANGEL. You have often seen me in the company of Mr. Mastick!

GIMP. Exactly—very often—too often.

ANGEL. Have you observed that he has paid any particular attention to me ?

GIMP. Not at all; but I have observed that *you* have paid very particular attention to *him*. Exactly—more than I liked—exactly.

ANGEL. (*half aside*) Well, somehow those were my ideas. You don’t think Mr. Mastick. looked as if he felt any particular regard for me.

GIMP. He did not look—as if he felt as I feel.

ANGEL. And how is that, Tavy.

GIMP. I can’t tell you—but I know—

ANGEL. Why, you silly goose, you don’t mean to say that you are in love.

GIMP. I did not mean to say anything; but you are not very far out.

ANGEL. But you are not in love with me ?

GIMP. I don’t exactly see who else I should be in love with ; I hardly meet any other woman, and if I did, there are very few so pretty as you are!

ANGEL. Upon my word—Well done, Tavy ! (*aside*) He’s by no means bad looking, when he is well dressed—and that easy temper might not be objectionable in a husband. Why did you never say anything of this kind before—eh, Tavy ?

GIMP. Nobody ever asked me any questions.

ANGEL. No—no—but there are certain occasions, when

young gentlemen are expected to speak without being questioned.

GIMP. But, if I had spoken, nobody would have listened. *You* never listened to me before now !

ANGEL. You should have contrived to find a voice, somehow ! If you had managed to utter a word—I might not now have been half engaged in this absurd manner to that very delightful Mr. Mastick—for he is a charming man, is he not—Tavy?

GIMP. I dare say he is, to those who like him !

ANGEL. But as it is, there is something that makes me feel unsettled and uncomfortable.

GIMP. There is something that makes me feel dreadfully uncomfortable.

ANGEL. There is a kind of awful mystery, I can't clearly make out.

GIMP. There is a devil of a fog, I cannot get through at all.

ANGEL. Oh Tavy ! dear Tavy ! why did not you speak before. You are so ridiculously bashful!

GIMP. I ain't bashful, any more than a brass knocker—but I feel that I have no weight! Don't you see! No weight, exactly.

ANGEL. But Tavy! I'm in a position that needs a friend—a doubtful position.

GIMP. You don't mean a position that renders it desirable to have two strings to one's bow—eh, cousin?

ANGEL. (*aside*) Ahem! Tavy is not just such a fool as he looks. Oh no ! of course, I did not mean anything of that kind.

GIMP. Oh! exactly.

Enter from house, MARIAN and MASTICK.

MARIAN. (*to MASTICK*) NOW, come along! come along! it must be kept up, you know.

MASTICK. (*to MARIAN*) But really, this is the most absurd predicament—how will it all end?

MARIAN. Ah! Angy, dear! I was afraid you were gone.

ANGEL. No darling ! but I was just going.

GIMP. Just going ! exactly.

MARIAN. No—no—no ; indeed, you must do nothing of the kind.

ANGEL. But I have promised to spend the day with my aunt, haven't I, Tavy ?

GIMP. Oh, yes! exactly.

MARIAN. Mr. Mastick has a thousand things to say to you. MASTICK. Nay, if the young lady is particularly pressed for time—all I have to say can be uttered in a very few words.

MARIAN. But those few words should be at any rate spoken without witnesses. You two young folks have not had a *tete-a-tete*, since-----

ANGEL. Since what ?

MASTICK. Since what ?

GIMP. Ah! since what ?

MARIAN. Really, (*aside*) it's difficult to say. Since your hearts were known to each other. Mr. Gimp, you and I will not be intrusive.

MASTICK. You are not intrusive in the least, Miss Marian, and what is more singular, Mr. Gimp, you are not intrusive either, (*whispers to MARIAN*) Spare me the horrors of a *tete-a-tete*.

ANGEL. Give me your arm, Tavy ; my aunt will be uneasy—angry—she is anxious that I should assist her with some embroidery; I told her I would give the whole day to her, and it's late now.

MARIAN. Tut! tut! what's an old lady's petticoat to a young lady's heart?

Enter BLOCK, from house, L. u. E.

Oh, pa', do come to my assistance; it is as hard to keep these two fond lovers together, as to put four butterflies under a flower pot. Just now, Mr. Mastick was burning to go off by the train—now dear Angy is devoured by an inclination to embroider her aunt's petticoat.

GIMP. Yes—she is—she is—exactly-----

BLOCK. Oh, it must not be—it must not be—very likely I shall want your assistance! I've sent for your father already, and I expect him every minute.

GIMP. Oh—h—h ! (*groans*)

MARIAN. You have sent for Mr. Bunn to come directly ? Why, sir ? (*in a changed tone*)

BLOCK. (C.) How dull you have grown all of a sudden. To settle the preliminaries of marriage, to be sure.

MARIAN. (L. C.) Already ! (*aside*) I did not anticipate this. (*aloud*) Don't you think you are a little hasty, sir?

MASTICK. (L.) A little premature, sir!

ANGEL. (R.) What some would call harum-scarum, sir.

GIMP. (R. C.) Rather fast, sir—exactly!

BLOCK. Did ever I see such a string of slow coaches. The art of knowing one's own mind seems to have gone out of fashion altogether.

ANGEL. If you would let me go at once, sir—my aunt will be so very anxious.

GIMP. Yes; and aunt can be cantankerous when she likes—exactly!

MARIAN. And if the poor old lady really wants her niece's assistance, I don't see how we can detain her.

ANGEL. (*aside*) She wants me gone, too. What can it mean ?

BLOCK. How particularly anxious everybody has grown about old Mrs. Sharpcut; for I suppose, my dear, when you talk about your aunt, it is Mrs. Sharpcut you mean?

GIMP. Oh, exactly!

BLOCK. Bless you, don't be fidgetty on her account, I'll make it all right with her—I am in the habit of losing my money to her at long whist, and, therefore, I am one of her favourites; besides, I'll send a special messenger.

ANGEL. No, sir, no; I would rather go—my aunt is indisposed, and I am painfully anxious about her.

GIMP. Such a horrid toothache—I think they call it the gumbago—exactly.

MARIAN. And if the poor darling old lady is severely indisposed, what is such a salve to the bed of sickness as the presence of a young loving female relative?

MASTICK. (*sighs*) Ah !—indeed !

GIMP. Noble sentiment!

BLOCK. Niminy-piminy, mamby pamby twaddle about an old woman's toothache—Well, Miss Angy, I suppose you must go; but you must come back as soon as you can.

ANGEL. Oh, yes, certainly, (*crosses to L.*)

MARIAN. Unless you find poor dear Mrs. Sharpcut very ill. In that case, we shall have to bear the disappointment of not seeing you at all.

ANGEL. (*as*  *decidedly she wants me gone. Come, Tavy !*
(*going, L.—Tavy crosses to her, L.*)

BLOCK. I say Mastick, is this the ardour of the present generation ? Do you let the lady of your heart depart in that fashion ? Stop, stop. Miss Angy, there's a ceremony to be gone through, (*smacks lips*)

GIMP. (*to ANGELINA*) Angy, the old gentleman wants to kiss you.

MARIAN. No, no, decidedly not; there's no occasion for anything of the kind—it's improper—it's indelicate—it's superfluous.

ANGEL. I quite agree with you. Come, Tavy, come along.

Runs off, dragging GIMP with her.

BLOCK. Follow her, follow her at once—you are not half a fellow.

MASTICK. (*slowly following*) Must I ?

MARIAN. (*vehemently*) No, no, I say again, there's no occasion for anything of the kind. (*holds MASTICK by arm and coat*) Stir a step if you dare!

MASTICK. I'll do whatever you choose !

BLOCK. I tell you what, Miss Marian, I'm not at all pleased with you. When one young lady stands in the way of another, preventing all the little courtesies of courtship, she is guilty of a kind of petty treason against her own sex.

MARIAN. Lor', papa, you know it was I who found out the secret between our two friends. Wasn't it, Mr. Mastick?

MASTICK. (*dismally*) Ye—e—s.

MARIAN. And it was I who did everything to promote their happiness. Wasn't it, Mr. Mastick?

MASTICK. (*dismally*) Oh, certainly.

MARIAN. So I think I have earned a right to tease them a little. A woman who don't like to tease another, when an affair of the heart is concerned, may be a very good creature, but she is no true woman after all.

BLOCK. Ha! ha ! I'm afraid you are right; you are a set of malicious, wicked, tormenting darling little souls. But never mind, you'll find your time come, when you have an admirer of your own. (*crosses to c.*) I intend, Mastick, to give my girl hereto one of the richest men in the whole county ; I shall look beyond Pedlington, I assure you. Don't you approve of my notion—eh, Mastick?

MASTICK. Oh, certainly—nothing could be better.

MARIAN. You need not be so enthusiastic in the matter, Mr. Mastick; and to tell the truth, pa', I think I'm the person to be consulted rather than out friend here.

BLOCK. (C.) Whoever is consulted must agree with me as a matter of course. I intend to give my daughter a good round sum upon her wedding-day, and I expect a prime article for my money.

MASTICK. (L.) Of course—of course!

MARIAN. (R.) But does it not strike you, papa, that Mr. Benjamin Bunn may talk in precisely the same manner?

BLOCK. No, it doesn't. As I told you before, I will not hear any comparison between me and-----

MARIAN. But reason, papa, reason.

BLOCK. What have young girls to do with reason ? I'll get out of the way that I may not hear another word on the subject. *Exit into house, L.*

MARIAN. (*crosses to R.*) Poor dear papa! between his love for me and his hatred of the mayor his usual common-sense is wrecked altogether.

MASTICK. Yes, let me add that, what with our mutual love and your happy contrivance, I'm in a pretty predicament. I'm afraid, whether my heart breaks or not, that I must return to my old plan of a sudden retreat.

MARIAN. Oh, how base—how despicable—how cowardly!

MASTICK. Then I am to stop here and marry Miss Angelina?

MARIAN. Is this your constancy—is this your devotion? Oh, Frederick, Frederick!

MASTICK. Well, shall I put a bold face on the matter and confess that this pretended love is all a sham?

MARIAN. And convict me of a deliberate falsehood! Oh, Frederick, have you no more respect for me than that?

MASTICK. Then of the only three possible plans not one will do—Oh, Marian!

MARIAN. Therefore I'll leave you to exercise your ingenuity in devising something impossible—a love that confines itself to possibilities is not worthy of the name. Leander swam across the Hellespont. *Exit into house.*

MASTICK. Aye, and a pretty job he made of it in the long run. Besides, what was Leander's difficulty to mine? To resemble me Leander should be required to cross the Hellespont without swimming—without boat—without air balloon.

Enter BENJAMIN BUNN, L. 1 E.

BUNN. I think, sir—I may assume that Mr. Block is at home. My name is Bunn, sir, Benjamin Bunn!

MASTICK. *(aside)* The expected enemy! *(aloud)* Is Mr. Block at home? Well, sir—*(aside)* Shall I say "no" and put off the interview? Well, sir, I believe he has gone out to take a turn, and he went in the direction of the railroad, and if he happens to go to London you may conceive the possibility of his being detained a long time.

BUNN. Then, sir, this proceeding is odd. Mr. Block desired to see me at once. *(MASTICK goes up)*

Enter BLOCK, from house, at these words.

BLOCK. And he is very glad you are here, worshipful mayor.

BUNN. Why, this gentleman told me that you were not at home.

BLOCK. He! la, you must not mind what he says—his head is full of more pleasing images than anything like you or me, old fogeys as we are.

BUNN. *(aside)* I wonder what makes him so confoundedly pleasant.

BLOCK. I say, Mastick, just get out of the way for a minute, will you?

MASTICK. With the greatest possible pleasure.

Crosses L., and exit into house

BLOCK. Though it is about him I am going to speak, we shall get on better without him. Sit down—sit down, worshipful mayor.

BUNN. Thank ye; but before we begin our important business—for of course it is important, or you would not have

taken the liberty of—I mean you would not have condescended to summon me here. Please let me know why *you* did not call upon *me* ?

BLOCK. I feel the reproach, dear Mr. Bunn.

BUNN. Not at all—no reproach in the world. Only to take a man of business away from his business in the forenoon, is the most unbusiness-like proceeding I ever heard of, and the last thing I should have expected from a fellow tradesman like you, Mr. Block.

BLOCK. (*aside*) Fellow tradesman! I should like to knock him down ! (*aloud*) The cause of this breach of commercial etiquette will presently explain itself. Certain parties may presently be required, and then you will perceive that this is the only place fitted for our little discussion.

BUNN. I accept the apology, dear Mr. Block.

BLOCK. (*rising*) Apology!

BUNN. The explanation.

BLOCK. Oh-h! (*sits down*) You have a daughter, Mr. Bunn.

BUNN. Good.

BLOCK. Named Angelina—ahem ! but commonly called Angy for shortness.

BUNN. Agreed.

BLOCK. (*aside*) It's not so easy as I thought, (*aloud*) She's very fond of my girl Marian.

BUNN. So I hear. Girls of her age frequently form foolish attachments, dear Mr. Block.

BLOCK. So I tell Marian, dear Mr. Bunn. But with respect to your charming daughter—I suppose, like most fathers who have great bouncing girls on their hands, you are anxious to get her a good husband ?

BUNN. I suppose I am; at any rate, allow me to express my gratitude for the amount of thought you seem to bestow upon my affairs.

BLOCK. Don't mention it. Now, good husbands, as you are aware, generally expect large fortunes.

BUNN. Well, sir! (*jumps up*) And if they do, I fancy I can come down as handsomely with my girl, as any one in all Pedlington—aye ! and in the country adjoining.

BLOCK. No—no doubt, dear Mr. Bunn !

BUNN. And mind, Mr. Block, when I say that, I don't add—"present company excepted."

BLOCK. (*aside*) Vulgar wretch ! Certainly not, dear Mr. Bunn ; don't except anybody—living or dead—don't except even Croesus!

BUNN. (*aside*) Sneering old hypocrite ! (*sits*)

BLOCK. But at all events, if the proposed good husband

expects very little—is of that romantic disposition that points to love and a cottage-----

BUNN. I hate such dispositions.

BLOCK. And rightly; but still such a disposition can be turned to account on occasion. Now, I have a young gentleman in my eye.

BUNN. In which eye, Mr. Block—your weather-eye?

BLOCK. Dear Mr. Bunn! you are a wag! This young gentleman is of high—very high family!

BUNN. And limited means, I suppose?

BLOCK. He belongs to a profession illustrated by some of the noblest names that have adorned the world.

BUNN. That sounds like a rising man at the Bar.

BLOCK. The surmise is shrewd, but incorrect. Not to keep you longer in suspense, I refer to my excellent young friend, Mr. Mastick!

BUNN. Monstrous! You've brought me out in the prime part of the day, to propose that penniless young dauber of canvas as a match for my daughter. If I were a man of strong language I should say that I would see you and Mr. Mastick d----- d—but I'm not, so I leave the sentence unfinished. (*going off. L., in a rage, turns back*) I say, if you think Mastick such a great catch, why don't you bag him for your own daughter? (*MASTICK and MARIAN appear at door of house*)

BLOCK. Sir, allow me to remark that there is some difference between you and me.

BUNN. I know it; and on that very account I think the match more suitable to you. *Exit, L.*

BLOCK. That's a failure. (*MASTICK and MARIAN come forward*) The obstinate pig-headed purse-proud----- (*runs against MASTICK*)

MASTICK. Are all these compliments intended for me, Mr. Block?

BLOCK. No, no, my dear boy; at any rate, I should not call you purse-proud; I should be more discriminate in my abuse. But now make up your mind for a heavy blow.

MASTICK. Indeed, sir?

MARIAN. May I hear it, papa?

BLOCK. (*crosses to c.*) Certainly—certainly—my child! He needs the support of every friend. Now, attend! you are quite calm?

MASTICK. (R.) Yes.

BLOCK. (C.) Your nerves are well braced?

MASTICK. (R.) Like steel.

BLOCK. Then know, to your infinite horror and amazement, that the abominable Bunn refuses the hand of his daughter!

MARIAN. (*aside*) Excellent.

MASTICK. (*aside*) Thank goodness! there's a peril escaped.

BLOCK. Upon my word! he bears it very well considering. But I say! under that outward show of calm, you are not hiding any thought of strychnine—or the next river—or that sort of thing. He don't look suicidal, eh, Marian?

MARIAN. No—no—not very! But then, papa, thoughts are hard to penetrate.

BLOCK. Very true! So I tell you what, dear boy—what is not given, must be taken.

MASTICK. How sir!

BLOCK. You and Angelina must elope—yes—elope—upon my word, I'm glad the old fellow refused, after all.

MARIAN. Surely—this is a strange counsel-----

BLOCK. Not at all! You'll find Angelina at her aunt's, now—off with her at once! Stop! I know what you are going to say—you have not sixpence to defray the expenses of the journey. Now, look here! (*takes out pocket book*) This is a £100 note, and gives you free choice between Gretna Green, and a quiet church in the City of London, (*forces it upon MASTICK*)

MARIAN. But—papa—are you quite sure that it is not very wrong for a young lady to elope from her father's house?

BLOCK. Under ordinary circumstances—most decidedly! But in this case, what else can be done? You would not have this unhappy young man drown himself—would you?

MARIAN. No—no—certainly not! But still there is an impropriety-----

BLOCK. Not so great, after all! Indeed, when one thinks of it—the most illustrious lovers, are precisely those who have been married without the consent of their parents. If old Montague and Capulet had settled the marriage of their children over a quiet bottle, put up the banns in due order, and gone halves in a wedding breakfast—who the devil would ever have heard of "Romeo and Juliet."

MASTICK. But still, sir-----

BLOCK. Off with you at once, without another word! (*pushes him—he goes off L., into house, just stopping to exchange a meaning look with MARIAN*)

MARIAN. (*after pause*) Papa, you are sure that the advice you have given is—is—good. That Angelina will not do wrong-----

BLOCK. Wrong in marrying the man of her heart? Of course not. If you had lived as long as I have, and seen the misery caused by uncongenial unions-----

MARIAN. Oh, well, if it's all right, I'm glad, very glad. I should not like you to be the cause of unhappiness to any one, (*kisses him*) I should not, indeed, papa, (*hurries off into house*)

BLOCK. Now, what is the matter with her ? Surely girls are not in the habit of snivelling about the correctness of their father's opinions. It's a devilish cold-blooded age. In my time, the news of a friend's elopement would have sent a girl up to the skies. Ah ! we are getting a great deal too wise and prudent—that we are !

Enter BUNN, ANGELINA, and GIMP, L. 1 E.

BUNN. Ah! Mr. Block, I'm glad to find you at home. We did not part on the best of terms, just now; and when neighbours quarrel, I think they ought to make it up again as soon as they can.

BLOCK. Ha! and you have brought your daughter with you? (*aside*) There is a little hitch in our proceedings.

BUNN. Yes. I brought her here for a very particular purpose.

ANGEL. Now, don't, pa', don't!

BUNN. And I have brought my nephew for a very particular purpose, too.

GIMP. Now, uncle, I wish you would leave off.

BLOCK. Well, Mr. Bunn, I don't see any occasion for all this mystery.

BUNN. Why, you see, our little tiff arose about a very absurd proposal of marriage on your part—that it was absurd your better sense has possibly told you by this time.

BLOCK. Go on, worshipful mayor, go on ; your style of conversation is so delightful, one could listen to it for ever.

BUNN. However, to render a repetition of the absurdity absolutely impossible, I have come to state a little change that has just taken place in my domestic arrangements. No sooner had I reached home than I found that Tavy, here, had actually plucked up courage to pop the question to Angy, here—and that Angy had referred him to me.

BLOCK. Yes, exactly—how very droll!

ANGEL. Pa', I wish you wouldn't before me!

GIMP. You see it makes me bashful; and one can't look bashful without looking stupid.

BUNN. My dear nephew, as for that matter, you look the same under any circumstance. Well, of course, I gave my consent, and thus all is settled. The wedding day is fixed for this day three weeks; we shall be happy to see you as one of the guests. We hope and trust that Miss Marian will be one of the bridesmaids, and, if you like, you may bring Mr. Mastick to officiate as best man. There, I think that's all jolly and comfortable.

BLOCK. Oh peculiarly jolly and unquestionably comfortable. (*aside*) I wonder what the devil poor Mastick will do? Well,

I'm not given to superstition—perhaps, Miss Angy, you have heard how the ghost of Alonzo the Brave came and sat at the feast of the fair Imogen, though he had not received an invitation.

ANGEL. No, I haven't; but I suppose it's something in one of the journals.

BLOCK. Humph! happy to find you patronize the current literature of the day.

Enter LETTY from house with a note.

LETTY. Please, sir, Miss Marian told me to give you this note.

BLOCK. It's in her own hand! Why could not she speak to me herself! (*opens note and glances ovpr it rapidly*) Ha!

BUNN. (*nudges ANGELINA and whispers*) I say, that looks like something in one of the journals too. Nothing unpleasant I trust, dear Mr. Block!

ANGEL. I should be so concerned!

GIMP. If there is, you know—speak out.

BLOCK. (*aside*) And these people here! Mr. Bunn, I don't think you have seen my new conservatory in the other part of the grounds. Letty, just shew Mr. Bunn where it is—I'll join you directly.

BUNN. He wants me out of the way.

ANGEL. That's plainly to be seen.

GIMP. *Ye—e—s.* Exactly.

Exeunt BUNN, ANGY and GIMP, preceded by LETTY, R. U. E.

BLOCK. I'd have burst before I'd have moved a muscle in their presence! But now let me read again—let me be sure that my eyes did not deceive me! "Beloved father, I should never have fled your roof"—Fled my roof! "Had I not been convinced by the arguments you used to Mr. Mastick. Persuaded by you that the happiness of a lover is rather to be considered than duty to a parent, I have resolved without your consent to become the wife of Mr. Mastick, to whom my affections have long been engaged." Base, deceitful girl! and her face has been a living lie to me, since goodness knows when. "You will not see me again till I have ceased to bear the name of Marian Block." A girl, whom I trusted as my own heart, to play me this paltry, miserable, petty trick! She knew how I loved her—she knew that I could deny her nothing—she knew that if she had said to me that her happiness depended on her marriage with that man, I should have frowned a little, and resisted a little; but I should have yielded at last! No, no, I'm caught in my own net, I feel that! But she was not the person who should have entangled me in its meshes. Perhaps I am rightly served—but the blow should

not have been struck by that hand! " You will not see me again till"—I will never see her again, never, never, (*throws himself on seat*)

Enter MARIAN and MASTICK, softly, L.

False, deceitful girl!

MARIAN. You are quite right there, papa; I have told a dreadful story in that letter. You do see me again, although I have not changed my name.

BLOCK. Marian! What does this mean? Is this letter intended for a jest, written for the mere purpose of giving me pain?

MARIAN. No, no, dear papa. It was written in most terrible earnest; and if ever two poor young creatures tottered on the brink of dreadful matrimony, we were they.

BLOCK. But you don't intend to say, that after setting off, you actually turned back again, when you had committed yourself by this letter.

MARIAN. Even so, papa.

BLOCK. Darling! (*with a pretended frown*) Why, what a shameless hussey you must be to be sure. So infernally whimsical too; don't know her own mind for two minutes together. Elopes with a young fellow, and then turns back before she has reached the first milestone. Most ridiculous conduct; and I'm enraged—I am indeed, Marian! (*kisses her*) I am indeed, dear boy! (*shakes MASTICK'S hand*) But hang it—I am so pleased—psha!—I mean so vexed at your coming back, that I forgot to ask particulars. What was it after all that made you turn back, when you had once put your best—no, I mean your worst foot forward. Did you meet something unlucky?—three ravens—or two squinting old women—or what?

MASTICK. No, sir; we were warned to return by a very ancient oracle, called conscience.

BLOCK. Oh yes; I know—conscience is a very good fellow in his way, only he is apt to be rather slow in his suggestions—comes in as a sort of Job's comforter, after the mischiefs done. Be a little more explicit.

MARIAN. Well, papa, we had just reached the turning of the road—another step and the last corner of the house would have been out of sight; then I stopped and I looked at it, and the one projecting point of the roof assumed a new character—seemed to be the one link that connected me with a whole past of love and duty; and then I thought that even when our peaceful life had been ruffled by some trifling disagreement, I had never gone to rest for a single night, papa, without kissing and making it up; and now I was going to leave you justly incensed against me, on account of the advantage I had taken

of a few words hastily uttered—disobeying you in spirit, while I followed your advice to the letter.

BLOCK. Ah! all this struck you, did it, Marian? You, an unexperienced girl, while nothing of the sort occurred to our friend here.

MASTICK. Nay sir, I own my fault, but still-----

MARIAN. Don't be angry with him, papa! he is a very good boy under the circumstances. When my thoughts went in the right direction—he encouraged them—and when I, like a girl, talked of duty ; he, like a man, talked of honour—and do you know, the meaning of the words appeared to be much the same—and so—and so—really, I don't know that I have to tell any more.

BLOCK. No—you safely turned on your two heels, and came back to see the old stupid at home. Now, look here! You have contrived to let me know that you both love *me*, and that's a comfort to an old fellow at my time of life. Therefore—no—no, stop—Mr. Bunn ! Worshipful Mayor! Haven't you done looking at those cursed plants ? (*aside*) Very lucky I did not let him find out the purport of this letter. Mr. Bunn, don't be so infernally botanical!

Re-enter BUNN, ANGELINA, and GIMP.

Oh, here you are ! Look ! When we had a *tete-a-tete* a short time since—you recommended me to give my daughter to Mr. Mastick.

BUNN. Ha ! ha ! I believe I did say something-----

BLOCK. You gave very excellent advice, Mr. Bunn, and I act upon it. Mastick, my daughter is yours, (*joins their hands*)

MARIAN. Papa—this kindness——

BLOCK. Hush!

MASTICK. Sir, this generosity-----

BLOCK. (*aside*) Hold your tongue; be happy and don't bother.

BUNN. Ha, ha! this proceeding is somewhat sudden, is it not?

BLOCK. Is it possible to be too prompt in acting upon a good suggestion ?

BUNN. (*aside*) He gives me my answer. But there's something at the bottom of all this, or I'm a Dutchman.

ANGEL. (*very coldly*) Allow me to wish you every happiness, my dear Marian.

GIMP. Yes, and you may wish *her* joy in return, for she is going to be married to me.

MARIAN. Ah! then my own happiness is increased.

ANGEL. (*coldly*) Thank you, dear Marian, I have no doubt life will be perfect—heigho! (*takes GIMP'S hand*)

BLOCK. Let me see, your wedding is to take place in three weeks, ours shall be on the same day. We'll be jolly together, eh, neighbour ! and we'll be better friends in future.

Enter LETTY and TIBBITS.

LETTY. Excuse me, masters and missuses,—as a prudent woman is bound to do, I did my best to hear the coversation, but I missed the figure—did you say three weeks ?

BLOCK *and* BUNN. Three weeks.

LETTY. There now, you hear that, Tibbits, and you'll act accordingly.

TIBB. Honour bright!

BLOCK. What do you both mean ?

LETTY. Why you see we looked further beyond our noses than you, and we saw there was a something-----

BLOCK. Well, well! never mind that.

(BUNN *nudges* ANGELINA.)

LETTY. And so we said, on the day when young missus is married—

BLOCK. You and Mr. Tibbits would be married too.

LETTY. Lawks, sir, you are a conjuror, (*aside*) How very sharp people are in any business that is not their own.

BUNN. Three weddings on thesameday—if that don't astonish Little Pedlington, I don't know what will. And mind, as I'm purveyor to the Royal Family, I'll give the breakfast to the whole lot at my house.

BLOCK. And I'll accept your hospitality, worshipful mayor.

BUNN. Neighbour, your hand—we'll both forget tne past,

And try if neighbours can be friends at last.

BLOCK. At last? We always were fast friends, you know it.

BUNN. Perhaps we were, but then—we did not shew it.

MARIAN. (*to* BLOCK) You're sure, papa, that you forgive the wrong-----

MASTICK. So soon repaired.

BLOCK. Psha! nonsense, hold your tongue!

The whole affair is comfortably ended ;

And so—and so, the least said soonest mended.

ANGEL. I feel so happy I could almost cry. (*dismally*)

GIMP. Exactly, so do I.

LETTY.

Not I!

TIBB.

Nor I,

MARIAN. That's right! don't cry until the wedding day,

Then tears are very proper in their way;

Then weeping bridesmaids sobbing brides embrace,

Red are all eyes and long is ev'ry face,

That will do three weeks hence; and so meanwhile

We'll smile ourselves and ask our friends to smile,

Pleased with this moral, old and trite, but true,

That Number One should think of Number Two.

Curtain.