

HOP-PICKERS AND
GIPSIES:

OR,

THE LOST DAUGHTER.

An Original Drama,

IN THREE ACTS.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

The Return of the Wanderer, Jenny Foster, Poul-a-Dhoil,
Mother's Dying Child, Lost Evidence, Clock on the Stairs,
Harvest Storm, Marble Bride, Life for a Life, Lady
Audley's Secret, Aurora Floyd, Marriage
Certificate, &c., &c.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
89, STRAND, LONDON.

EX TENS I V E H O P - G R O U N D S

Near WATERINGBURY in KENT, with Drying Houses, and the River Medway in the Distance.
Group of Hop-Pickers gathering in the Golden Harvest. . . . A Refugee from Saffron Hill.
The Generous Hop-Grower.

A FUGITIVE SCAMP AND HIS INNOCENT VICTIM.

Who is this Stranger? a "Man of Law" from London.

The GIPSY FORTUNE-TELLER and HER PREDICTIONS.

WIDGEON has his FORTUNE TOLD,

And does not relish it,—but how came the half-crowns in his boots? . . . £10 Reward for the Capture
of a Runaway Cheesemonger.

THE WRONG BIRD CAUGHT IN THE TRAP.

Providence sends a Protector to the Innocent.

PRODUCTION OF THE WILL.

ASTOUNDING REVELATIONS by the MAN OF LAW.

VIEW on the BANKS of the THAMES near Henley, with Exterior of a Villa!

THE BE TREAT DISCOVERED.

Mortified Dignity of a Flunkey. . . . Pangs of Remorse.

THE MADCAP GIPSY AND HER HUNTING VAGARIES.

Vain efforts to remedy defective grammar.

THE BADGERS DEFEATED.

The Man of Law harassed by Bloodsuckers.

Offer of silence—and the price!—and the answer. "Did you but know the loathing with which I regard you."

STORY OF THE ABSCONDED CLERK.

NAN BRIBES ONE OF THE BLOODSUCKERS.

DISCLOSURES TO THE MAGISTRATE.

The Scamp Counter-mined and Blown up.

HOW "EVIL DEEDS RETURN TO PLAGUE THE INVENTOR."

DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO RESCUE AN ACCOMPLICE.

CONFLICT AND TRIUMPH OF RIGHT.—TABLEAU.

EXTERIOR OF A FARM HOUSE

On the Frontier of Holland with Overhanging Vineyard and

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF DISTANT LAKE AND MOUNTAIN.

Metamorphosis of a Flunkey.

DUERT: Fluff and Dimity.

The Convict Neighbour.

BAFFLED HOPES OF SECLUSION.

The Gipsy Girl transformed into a Dutch Vrow.

SLEUTH HOUNDS ON THE TRACK.

ARRESTED & HANDCUFFED BY THE TOWN GUARD

ACCUSATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS.

THE GIPSY GIRL TURNS THE TABLES!

Another Roland for an Oliver. The STEEL ORNAMENTS Transferred.—(to the wrists of the escaped Convict.)

INNOCENCE OF THE PERSECUTED ESTABLISHED.

THE GIPSY GIRL FINDS A FATHER

GENERAL JOY AND GRATULATION.

Rattening. Diabolical Plot to Destroy a whole Family.

Saffron Hill on the look out. Atrocious work on the House Top.

THE BAG OF GUNPOWDER LOWERED THROUGH THE ROOF.

Explosion and Destruction of the Farm.

RESCUE OF THE FAMILY.

DESERVED FATE OF THE CRIMINAL.

[This Drama is the property of Mr. T. H. Lacy.]

HOP-PICKERS AND GIPSIES.

ACT I.

SCENE FIRST.—*Extensive Hop Grounds.* HOP-PICKERS
at work. Large barn with folding doors, L. U. E.

Enter HURST, R.

HURST. (*to HOP-PICKERS*) It's twelve o'clock, good folks, and I'd advise all who have dinners to leave off and get them in the shade, for the sun's at the highest, (*music—HOP-PICKERS exeunt R. and L. U. E.*) I never saw the hops look better—I shall have a fine crop this year.

Enter WIDGEON, a hop-picker, R.

WIDGEON. *I never saw the hops look better, and I never felt worse.*

HURST. What's the matter, my man ?

WIDGEON. I'm cracking all over with the heat, like a chesnut in a fire-shovel. I was brought up delicate, and miss the fresh breezes that play around my native hill.

HURST. And what hill may that be ?

WIDGEON. Saffron Hill, sir. Oh, there's no mountain breeze like it, nor mountain-peckers neither.

HURST. I thought by your looks that you came from London.

WIDGEON. Yes, sir, blessed London—there's no place like it. Oh, splendid city of bricks and mortar! I wish I could find myself knocked down by a cab in Holborn.

HURST. Humph! I should think it was a pity you left there.

WIDGEON. It was, indeed, sir.

HURST. And why did you ?

WIDGEON. Why, sir, there was a hole in the bottom of master's till, and half-crowns had an artful knack of dropping into my boots while I was serving—strange, sir, wasn't it?

HURST. Very strange.

WIDGEON. So I said when master made me pull off my boots, and found the money in 'em; I was so taken aback that you might have knocked me down with a crowbar—a feather, I mean.

HURST. Do you know that girl who was picking hops next to you to-day?

WIDGEON. No, sir, I don't; she's a young woman very *preserved* in her manners, and keeps herself *to herself* most tightly.

HURST. I don't think she's used to this kind of work.

WIDGEON. No, poor thing; I fancy she's like me, a very superior person, but I have the best of her in looks, I fancy.

HURST. Then mind you treat her with respect.

WIDGEON. When a gentleman meets with a lady like himself, he plants his hand upon his 'art and says, honour!

HURST. Go and get your dinner, and then make haste back to your work.

WIDGEON. (*crosses to L.*) I've got my dinner in my pocket: a penny loaf, a ha'porth of cheese, and a *farden*, ingon. Oh, my native London saveloys, how do I miss you! Farewell, also, to malt; it used to be porter from the tap, but now it's water from the pump. I shan't be long, sir; I'm not lazy, you won't catch me on the hop, but on the *hops*. (*exit, L.*)

HURST. I'm sure the girl has not been used to this sort of work. I fancy she's seeking concealment down here—if so, it may not be for a good motive, (*looks R. 2 E.*) There she is, sitting down apart from all the others, I'll go and put a few questions to her. (*going R. 2E.*)

Enter OLIVER SARGOOD, R. 2 E., meeting him.

OLIVER. One moment, Mr. Hurst; I was wishing to see you.

HURST. (*aside*) But I was not wishing to see you; there's too much of the scamp about him for me.

OLIVER. I intended calling on you before this, I've been in the neighbourhood a fortnight, and I don't mind telling you, that London has been getting rather hot for me of late. A set of men who are very superstitious as to dates

—creditors, I may as well call them, wished to find me lodgings in a very gloomy building, so as I always had an eye for rural scenery and fresh air, I preferred my liberty in the country rather than running the risk of losing it in London.

HURST. Well, if you find your time hang heavy on your hands, I'll give you a job at hop-picking.

OLIVER. Thank you, but I wouldn't rob a man of a day's work for the world, and that you know.

HURST. (*aside*) I know you for a very slippery customer in many respects, (*aloud*) How's your old aunt ? I heard you were reconciled to her, and living under the same roof together.

OLIVER. So we were, but we didn't agree very well.

HURST. (*aside*) I can guess whose fault that was. (*aloud*) You should have managed things better, for she's very rich, remember.

OLIVER. And I'm sorry to say I've forfeited her favour.

HURST. That was bad policy ; how did that happen ?

OLIVER. Well, you see, my aunt missed some of her jewellery, a diamond ring or two, but I found out who had them.

HURST. Indeed.

OLIVER. Yes; a girl who was in her service, called Honor Leeford ; when her boxes were searched, some of my aunt's property was found hidden there.

HURST. The diamond rings and all the other jewellery ?

OLIVER. Not exactly all.

HURST. (*aside*) I thought not. I can guess who had the rest.

OLIVER. Now until that girl is secured, tried and convicted, I shall never be able to re-instate myself in my aunt's favour.

HURST. Does your aunt think her guilty ?

OLIVEK. She don't, and that's the deuce of it. Come up to the head inn, and over some of their famous old ale I'll tell you more, (*crosses to B.*)

HURST. No, thank you, I've to look after the hop-pickers.

OLIVER. Oh, very well, then, adieu for the present, you'll see me again by and bye. (*exit R.U. E.*)

HURST. That's the scamp of his family ; they say there's always one black sheep in a flock, and he's of a particular dark colour. Something strikes me that yonder girl is the one he is in search of. (*looks R. U. E.*) Here she comes —I'll question her. (*retires up stage.*)

Enter HONOR LEEFORD, poorly dressed, R.U. E.

HONOR. I am not equal to this work ; I feel I must give it up. The walk down from London yesterday, and the constant dread of being arrested preys upon my spirits until I feel unequal to the task, I must find the master and tell him so. (*sees MR. HURST, and curtseys to him.*)

HURST. (*coming down*) Did you want me ?

HONOR. Yes, sir, to tell you I must give up this kind of work, it's too much for me. I—I—was obliged to try, I had no other resource, for persecuted by a relentless enemy, who-----

HURST. Who is called Oliver Sargood, I believe ?

HONOR. Ah! you know him then ? Oh, sir, that man hopes by accusing me of a crime I am innocent of, to screen himself.

HURST. Don't be alarmed, I know all about this robbery.

HONOR. But I am innocent, sir, indeed you may believe me. The property must have been placed in my box by some designing hand—by Oliver Sargood, I feel certain of it.

HURST. I have no doubt you are right; he was here just now.

HONOR. (*starting*) Here ? Oh, sir, he will have me arrested, and I am helpless, without a single friend to plead for me.

HURST. Not so, I'll prove one to you.

HONOR. You, sir !

HURST. Yes, you shall be one of the lambs in my fold, and Mr. Oliver Sargood is the wolf I'd keep from the door.

HONOR. Oh, sir, you are so kind to the poor orphan, for I have not a relation in the world except an uncle, my late mother's brother, he went abroad when I was a child, and I have never seen or heard of him since.

HURST. You shall remain in my house, until I can communicate with your late mistress. You need fear nothing of Mr. Oliver's hands.

HONOR. I am afraid, sir, my late mistress thinks me guilty.

HURST. If *she* does, *I* do not, for I fancy I can read innocence in your face, and deceit in Oliver Sargood's.

HONOR. Blessings on the chance that led me here, for I have found a friend where I least expected it.

HURST. That fellow, Oliver, must not know you are here, at present; and yet, if you go to my house he may

call there and see you. Wait for me in the barn, (*points to it*) In the meantime I'll try and get Oliver out of the neighbourhood, and your secret shall be safe with me until the time comes to disclose it.

(WIDGEON *looks on, listening, L*

HONOR. Oh, how kind of you.

HURST. (*opens barn door*) Go in before you are seen—but I have forgotten to ask your name.

HONOR. Honor Leeford, sir.

WIDGEON. (*aside*) Oh, that's her name, is it ?

HURST. I shall remember it.

WIDGEON. (*aside*) And so shall I; there must be some mystery in their getting so thick all at once.

HURST. (*points in barn*) Rest securely there until you see me again.

HONOR. I will, sir, thankfully and gratefully.

(*exit into barn.*

HURST. She's gone in unseen, (*turns and sees WIDGEON, who comes down*) No, she hasn't, this fellow has seen her.

WIDGEON. (*aside*) He looks as if I'd turned up at the wrong time.

HURST. What are you peeping and prying about here for?

WIDGEON. I'm not peeping and prying; I can't help having a pair of eyes in my head.

HURST. (*gives money*) Remember, you've seen nothing.

WIDGEON. And less than that, sir.

HURST. Keep your tongue quiet, and I may prove your friend.

(*exit, L. U. E.*

WIDGEON. He's given me a shilling; I can get four dinners out of that at threepence a day. If I was near Holborn Hill I could have a twopenny bason of soup, a ha'porth of taters, and ditto of cabbage—but down here, why, lor! there ain't nobody to cater for the million. It's bread and cheese one day, and cheese and bread the other. I wonder if this money would run to rashers of bacon, thin and streaky ? Let's see, (*reckoning on his fingers*) a quarter of bacon at tenpence a pound, cut into four, with a good many taters fried with it, that would be fine—or suppose I frizzle the bacon and let it drop on slices of bread. Let's see how far all this would run into a shilling, (*re-fleeting and counting.*)

Enter STEPHEN BELCOUR, R. U. E.

STEPH. (*aside*) This is the place she was last seen in, but I can't fall across anyone who has seen her. Perhaps this man may. (*to WIDGEON*) Are you at work here ?

WIDGEON. Hard, trying to stretch a shilling into eighteen-pence.

STEPS. Do you know if there is a girl among the hop-pickers called Honor Leeford ?

WIDGEON. No, I'm sure she isn't among the hop-pickers. *(aside)* For she's in the barn. But I won't tell *him*.

STEPH. From information I had received, I made sure I should find her.

WIDGEON. *(aside, starting)* From information he received! I think he's an officer from London, who wants her for some'ut—perhaps *I'm* wanted, too, for the money I dropped into my boots. Oh, powers of innocence, defend me!

STEPH. I wouldn't have missed the girl for a hundred pounds.

WIDGEON. I suppose that's the reward offered for her—I'm not worth half the money.

STEPH. Have you lived down here long ?

WIDGEON. Oh, ever so long—I've never lived anywhere else.

STEPH. Indeed ! I thought I'd seen you in London.

WIDGEON. London, sir! I don't know where it is, sir. *(aside)* Oh, isn't it getting warm! *(aloud)* Excuse me talking to you any longer, but my business must be attended to. Good day, good day! *(exit, humming a tune, R. U. E.)*

STEPH. Has that girl really left here ? I must be well satisfied of that before I leave the neighbourhood. To lose her after all the trouble I've taken wouldn't suit my plan at all. *(takes out book)* Let me see how far it is to the next town, *(looks over book.)*

Enter OLIVER SARGOOD, R. U. E., observing him.

OLIVER. *(aside)* There's an official cut about him that I don't like; he seems a kind of cross between a lawyer and a bailiff. He's after me, perhaps—how shall I find out ? *(BELCOUR turns and sees him)*  es me.

STEPH. *(aside)* Who's this,  nder ? He seems to be reckoning me up. I can tell by the look of him he don't belong to this locality.

OLIVER. Nice weather, sir.

STEPH. The very observation I was about to make.

OLIVER. A fine season for the hops.

STEPH. Is it ? Really I'm no judge.

OLIVER. A stranger in these parts, I presume ?

STEPH. Yes; and I don't think you're a resident.

OLIVER. No, I'm not.

STEPH. I should say that you came from London.

OLIVER. I've been there ; but I'm down here for pleasure at present.

STEPH. And I for business.

OLIVER. Legal?

STEPH. Legal.

OLIVER. (*aside*) I thought so. (*aloud*) Oh, I see, you want some poor devil for something.

STEPH. I do.

OLIVER. Money matters I suppose ?

STEPH. Yes, money matters.

OLIVER. If you describe the kind of person you want, I may assist you.

STEPH. It's a woman I'm searching for.

OLIVER. Not Honor Leeford ?

STEPH. That's the very person! How did you guess it?

OLIVER. Because I gave the information that caused her to be accused of the robbery.

STEPH. Oh, you did, eh? Then you are Mr. Oliver Sargood ?

OLIVER. I am.

STEPH. You said you were sure she was guilty, I believe ?

OLIVER. Yes, I felt it was my duty to say so ; and now you're here, I hope you'll do yours.

STEPH. Only let me meet with that girl, and you'll see what I'll do.

OLIVER. (*aside*) Then I'm safe.

STEPH. Can you give information where I can find her ?

OLIVER. I wish I could ; but I've a strong idea she's in the neighbourhood.

STEPH. So have I.

OLIVER. Let us both make inquiries. I'll go in one direction while you search in another.

STEPH. If I *do* find her, she'll have good cause to remember it. Come, we may secure her yet. (*exeunt R.U.E.*
—HONOR *comes from barn, watching them off.*)

HONOR. I shall be arrested if I try to leave the spot, but if the kind master of this place will only allow me to remain concealed until those men have left the neighbourhood I may escape; liberty is sweet, and a good name dear to me, so I'll struggle to preserve them both, (*laughter without, R. u. E.*) The hop-pickers are returning to their labour, I must go back to my hiding-place, (*exit into barn—music lively.*)

Enter NAN LOVEL, R. U. E., with a basket containing various wares, followed by HOP-PICKERS, male and female.

HOP-PICKERS. Come, come, Nan, tell us all our fortunes, and then we'll deal with you.

NAN. No, no; I'm tongue-tied till silver crosses my hand—Fortune's blind, and I'm dumb, (*holds out her hand.*)

Enter WIDGEON, R. 2 E.

WIDGEON. Here's a dumb woman speaking. Oh, what a wonder !

GIRL. (*to NAN*) Here's a crooked sixpence, (*gives it*) Now tell me my fortune.

NAN. (*takes GIRL'S hand, and holes at the palm of it*) You had a mother, also a father—your father had a mother too.

WIDGEON. }
and } Wonderful!

HOP PICKERS. }

NAN. (*to GIRL*) If ever you're a mother, you'd have a child.

WIDGEON. }
and } Surprising !

HOP PICKERS. }

NAN. The father will be a man, and the child either a boy or a girl.

WIDGEON. }
and } Astonishing!

HOP PICKERS. }

NAN. If that isn't a good sixpen'orth tell me what is ? and what's more, every word's true.

ANOTHER GIRL. (*to NAN*) I've got an old sixpence with a hole in it, let's see what you can tell me. (*gives it.*)

NAN. (*looking at her hand*) If ever you're married you'll have a husband.

GIRL. (*delighted*) I thought I should.

NAN. If he's fair he'll be of a light complexion, and if he's dark he won't.

GIRL. I thought he wouldn't be.

NAN. You've never met yet, in consequence of not having seen each other, but you'll meet when Mars approaches Venus, and the Great Bear takes a ride in the waggon and horses.

GIRL. I know it'll come true ; for I was dreaming of a waggon and horses all last night.

WIDGEON. (*crosses to NAN*) I think you're a humbug, and can't tell what's to come any more than I can. Do you think you can tell *my* fortune ?

NAN. Yes, if you cross my hand with a bit of silver.

WIDGEON. Will you return the money if you don't tell me the truth ?

NAN. Yes, I'll even make that bargain with you.

WIDGEON. (*aside*) I've a threepenny piece in silver. I'll learn my fate, and if I don't like it I'll kick up a row, and have the money back again, (*aloud—gives money*) Now then give me a good amount of futurity for the money.

NAN. (*looks at his hand*) You're from London.

WIDGEON. Just as if I didn't know that.

NAN. (*taking him aside*) You had a master.

WIDGEON. So I did.

NAN. He had a till.

WIDGEON. So he had.

NAN. You had boots.

WIDGEON. (*trembling*) Only two.

NAN. What did you put in 'em ?

WIDGEON. Only my feet!

NAN. Nothing else ?

WIDGEON. Yes, my stockings!

NAN. And your master's half-crowns ?

WIDGEON. Thank'ee, that'll do. I've had enough for my threepence, (*trying to release his hand*) Good day!

NAN. Stop a bit. (*looks at his hand*) I can trace a policeman.

WIDGEON. But do you think he can trace *me* ?

NAN. I can see a large stone building.

WIDGEON. (*aside*) I feel as if I was in it.

NAU. Have I told you enough ?

WIDGEON. Too much. I feel as if I should drop down.

NAN. Never mind, you'll soon be taken up.

WIDGEON. (*aside*) She's a female bobby in disguise. I shall find myself in irons directly, (*aloud*) Do let me go, and I'll owe you threepence more.

NAN. Run, fly, or you'll be caught hopping.

WIDGEON. Never again if I know it. (*runs off, R. u. E.*)

NAN. The fool! I overheard him talking to himself, or I shouldn't have known a word of his affairs.

HOP-PICKERS. (*come down and surround her, exclaiming*) " Now, my fortune! and mine! and mine !"

Re-enter HURST, L.

HURST. Come, come, to work all of you, what are you idling here for ? (*exeunt HOP-PICKERS, R. and L. U. E.*) This is through listening to you, I suppose, (to NAN) Why don't you keep in the fields ?

NAN. Because, sir, I like to see folks like you out of the common.

HURST. Be off. I've no stray chickens about here that ought to lay hold of.

NAN. Lor, sir, I wouldn't touch a chicken of yours, even if he walked up to me ready cooked on a cushion of bacon.

HURST. Nor do a bit of poaching for the world, I suppose? What do you come here for?

NAN. Only to turn the honest penny, sir? I sell needles, pins, pin cushions, meat-skewers, cabbage-nets, tape, twine, and babies' rattles, (*takes one from basket and rattles it*) Don't it put you in mind of the time when you was a baby, sir? with a very short temper and in very long clothes?

HURST. Nothing to-day, thank you.

NAN. (*showing night cap*) Look here, sir, a beautiful knitted night cap, good for keeping the draughts from the poll of your neck in winter time.

HURST. Pray go, my good woman, don't you see I'm busy.

NAN. You can't be, or else you wouldn't stand here and talk to me.

HURST. Egad, that's true. I take the hint, and *you*, take yourself off. (*exit R. u. E.*)

NAN. How suspicious folks are of gipsies; farmers think we want to steal their poultry, and mothers are afraid we want to steal their kids. I fancy *I* must have been stolen for if I don't remember either my father or mother. It seemed to me as if I sprouted up in the woods like a mushroom, and somebody put me in a basket till I was able to walk about. (*HONOR looks out of barn and sees her.*)

HONOR. Ah! some one is there! (*returns, in barn, closing doors.*)

NAN. Somebody said " Ah." (*looks round*) I don't see anybody here. Ah, in the barn, perhaps, (*goes to barn, tries to open door*) Somebody's holding the door inside—a thief, perhaps! If anything's missed, they'll be sure to say I took it. (*pulls door*) Come out, come out, and let's see what you're made of (*music—pulls door open, enters barn, and returns bringing on HONOR*) I say, my girl, this won't do. Nobody hides away in the daylight, except owls, bats, and bad sorts.

HONOR. I am here with no evil intention, I can assure you.

NAN. 'Tain't likely you'd own it, you *would* be a fool. Why, ain't you at work in the hop grounds.

HONOR. Because I dread meeting with my enemies.

NAN. (*aside*) The beaks, of course, (*aloud*) And what are you wanted for?

HONOR. I am wrongly, shamefully accused of robbery.

NAN. There's never a thief collared who don't say the same, *I* ought to know for I was brought up among 'em.

HONOR. It seems then you think me guilty ?

NAN. I only go by what I see ; and what *do* I see ? Why you stowing yourself away, and from what I've seen of the stowing away business—it generally amounts to a dodge for waiting till all's quiet, and then walking into a house, to walk out with as much as you can walk off with.

HONOR. Such was not my intention, believe me.

NAN. Wouldn't you be a fool if you said it was.

HONOR. You might have more feeling for one of your own sex—a poor orphan, reared by strangers.

NAN. I had to rear myself, and was chivied about right and left, and the more knocks I got—the harder they seemed to make me, but I must say, my girl, you don't look over artful or over plucky—you're down on your luck ain't you ? What they call needled at my twiggling you, and spoiling your deal ?

HONOR. You speak so strangely, that I don't understand you.

NAN. Don't you now ? Ah, it's bad when a girl's eddication is neglected. It don't make 'em able to fight cocum, I suppose you know what that means ?

HONOR. No ; I never heard the word before.

NAN. (*surprised*) And yet they send missionaries to foreign parts, when useful knowledge is so required at home!

HONOR. (*looking R. 1 E.*) Ah, Mr. Hurst is returning!

NAN. Hook it—hook it, or he'll nab you if you've been doing anything wrong.

HONOR. You're mistaken, he's my friend.

NAN. Your friend! Would you excuse one saying "Walker!" 'cause that's what I think ? Go back and keep quiet (*points to barn*) I won't split on you.

HONOR. I thank you sincerely, but what I've told you is the truth.

NAN. (*aside*) She's either very artful or very green.

Re-enter HURST, R. 1 E.

HURST. (*to NAN*) You here still ? (*aside to HONOR*) Why did you venture out ?

NAN. Oh, I say governor, this is how you do it eh ? Hiding your sweethearts in that artful fashion ! Oh, for shame!

HURST. Woman, do you know-----

NAN. Why, don't you see I do ? (*points to HONOR*) Oh,

I'm surprised at you! I do believe the old 'uns is the worst 'uns after all!

HURST. Believing, as I do, this poor girl's story, I am her firm, true, disinterested friend.

NAN. What! on the proper *jenny-vine* four-cornered square?

HURST. Give it any term you like. I place my faith in this poor girl, until I find she is unworthy my confidence.

HONOR. My kind, my only friend.

NAN. (*looking R.U. E.*) Who's these two chaps coming? Strangers, I suppose, by the look of 'em!

HONOR. (*looking R.U. E.*) One of them is my greatest enemy. Oh, pray save me from him!

HURST. Go into your hiding-place again—quick, quick!
(*exit HONOR into barn, to NAN.*)

Not a word, mind!

NAN. Not a word of what? I don't know anything!

HURST. Don't say you've seen that girl if you're asked! Send them away if you can—put them on a false scent; be careful, be faithful, and I'll not forget you. (*exit L. 1. E.*)

NAN. Well, I'm supposed to read the future; but I'm blessed if I can read the present! The cards have got so shuffled that I havn't one in my hand I can follow scent by!

Enter OLIVER and BELCOUR, R. U. E.

OLIVER. She's slipped through our fingers somehow.

STEPH. I wouldn't have missed her for a hundred pounds!

OLIVER. Indeed! Is she worth as much as that to you?

SIEFII. Aye, and more!

OLIVER. More! How so?

STEPH. You'll know soon enough. Oh, (*sees NAN.*) here's the gipsy we passed on the road, she may have seen her.

NAN. Cross the poor gipsy's hand with a piece of silver, good gentlemen, and let me tell your fortune!

OLIVER. Tell us if you've seen a strange young girl about here, and this gentleman will fill your hand with silver.

NAN. No! Will he though?

STEPH. I will, indeed! I want to discover a young girl who was working in the hop-grounds, but she has somehow disappeared all of a sudden.

NAN. Lor, what a pity! I wish I'd seen her, I'd have told you directly.

STEPH. Go and mix with the hop-pickers, you may be able to find something out for us.

NAN. You don't know how glad I shall be to do it; not for the money's sake, but to serve you. (*aside, and pointing over her left shoulder*) This way! (*exit R. u. E.*)

OLIVER. I have told you how important the girl's capture is to me, for when she's convicted of the robbery, I am certain of my aunt altering her will in my favour!

STEPH. Suppose it is altered already !

OLIVER. Ah, then you know-----

STEPH. A great deal more than you suppose ; but nothing can be done till we find the girl. She is the pivot on which the whole affair turns. Watch this spot well, for I am certain she can't be far off.

OLIVER. You can depend on me. You know how eager I am to secure her.

STEPH. Not more so than I am, believe me.

(*exit L. u. E. behind barn.*)

OLIVER. I'm in luck to meet with him (*takes printed bill out of his pocket*) I saw a man placing some of these upon the walls. I thought they related to the girl, but I see they concern quite a different person. (*looks over bill*)

Enter WIDGEON, R. I.E.

WIDGEON. I daren't venture from this place. I fancy I see a constable waiting for me at every corner !

OLIVER. (*reads bill aloud*) "Ten pounds reward—Absconded from the employ of Thomas Jenkins, cheesemonger, Holborn Hill, a young man named William Widgeon."

WIDGEON. (*aside, starting*) Eh? That's me!

OLIVER. (*reading*) " He is charged with embezzling and robbing his master of various sums of money, and was last seen in the neighbourhood of Faversham." (*sees WIDGEON*) Why, by his looks of fear and alarm something strikes me this is the very man !

WIDGEON. (*aside*) My time's come ! I'm wanted and found!

OLIVER. Your name's William ?

WIDGEON. No sir, it's Bill.

OLIVER. That's near enough, surname Widgeon ?

WIDGEON. No, Pigeon, I'll take my oath.

OLIVER. A reward of ten pounds is offered for you ?

WIDGEON. It's more than I'm worth—it is indeed.

OLIVER. There's an officer close at hand, and I shall detain you till he comes, (*collars him, NAN looks on listening R.*)

WIDGEON. Oh, little did I think you was down here to look for me.

OLIVER. Neither was I. It's a young girl named Honor Leeford that I'm in search of.

NAN. (*aside, points to barn*) Why he's after *her*.

OLIVER. Give me any information that may lead to her arrest, and I'll let you go.

WIDGEON. (*aside*) It must be the girl that Mr. Hurst put in the barn.

NAN. (*aside*) She's in danger ; I must try and get her out of it! (*exit into barn*)

WIDGEON. (*aside*) What shall I do ?

OLIVER. Don't be afraid to tell what you may know ; you'll lose nothing by it; but if you remain silent you may lose your liberty for some considerable time.

WIDGEON. (*aside*) I've heard somebody say that self-preservation is the werry first law of Natur', and I begin to think it is.

OLIVER. Quick, make up your mind.

WIDGEON. I'm doing so as fast as I can (*music tremulous Enter HONOR from barn, wearing NAN'S cloak and hat, and carrying basket—NAN looks out of barn and motions her off, L. u. E., then returns in barn exulting.*)

OLIVER. (to WIDGEON) Now then, have you decided ?

WIDGEON. I think you said I should lose nothing by it ?

OLIVER. Tell me where to find her, and here's a sovereign. (*shows one.*)

WIDGEON, (*aside*) Gold and liberty ! who could resist 'em. (*to OLIVER pointing to barn*) She's in the barn.

OLIVER. Indeed!

WIDGEON. Take a squint through the barn door and see if I don't speak the truth.

OLIVER, (*looks through chinks of barndoor*) I have her at last, (*gives the money*) Take that.

WIDGEON. I will.

OLIVER. Now go.

WIDGEON. In werry quick sticks, (*runs off, R. u. E.*)

OLIVER. Now let her escape me if she can. (*music—opens barn door, and brings out NAN who averts her face, and appears resisting*) It's no use your resisting girl, I've got you at last.

NAN. (*looking him in the face*) And who do you think you've got ?

OLIVER, (*releases her, amazed*) The Gipsy !

NAN. Cross my hand with a bit of silver and let me tell your fortune.

OLIVER. You've helped Honor Leeford to escape.

NAN. I have I glory in it; you bribed one man to be

tray her, but if you were to try and bribe me with every coin you have in your pocket, I'd say "no, no," a thousand times.

OLIVER. (*enraged*) Oh if you were a man!

NAN. If I were, I'd take a hedgestake in my hand, lay it across your shoulders, and not leave off till I'd broken the stick or every bone in your body.

OLIVER. I'm done after all.

NAN. And I helped to cook you. (*laughs*) Ha, ha, ha! It was a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip, and I'm the girl that made the upset, old boy.

OLIVER. (*aside*) I must find that officer—or lawyer—or whatever he is, and consider what's to be done, I fancy he can't be far off. (*going L. U. E. murmurs heard without*) Ah! my partner in the business has caught her, and is bringing her this way, my luck's not run out yet.

NAN. But her's is poor girl, and she'll be run in. (*music murmurs.*)

Enter STEPHEN BELCOUR, L. V. E. *bringing on* HONOR LEEFORD, *followed by all the hop-pickers.*

HONOR. Let me go, let me go ! I'm not guilty of any crime, I am falsely accused—I am, indeed—oh, pray release me !

OLIVER. You've got her, then ?

Enter HURST, L. 1 E.

HURST. What, is she taken poor girl ?

OLIVER. Poor girl, indeed ! why didn't I tell you what she has done.

HURST. Yes. But before I believe it, I must have the word of a better man than you.

OLIVER. (*points to BELFOUR*) Perhaps then you'll take that gentleman's word, he's down here to arrest her, and—

STEPH. And who told you pray, I was here to arrest her?

OLIVER. Why, didn't you ?

STEPH. No.

OLIVER. Then why did you seek her out ?

STEPH. To befriend her.

HONOR. }

NAN. }

HURST. }

and }

OLIVER. }

STEPH. Even so.

OLIVER. But you're an officer of the law ?

STEPH. No I'm not, I'm a man of law, and this poor girl's uncle.

HONOR. You my mother's brother, Stephen Belcour ?

STEPH. Yes ; that is my name.

HONOR. And you are here to befriend me ?

STEPH. Against every foe.

OLIVER. I'm not floored yet; my aunt charges her with robbing and I can prove it.

STEPH. Your aunt no longer lives, before she died she expressed an opinion in my presence and that of other witnesses, that we must look for the thief in the person of her nephew, *you* Oliver Sargood.

OLIVEB. My aunt dead ! then I am her next of kin.

STEPH. But not the next inheritor, for I have seen the will and brought a copy with me. (*produces it.*)

OLIVEB. But surely there's some money left me?

STEPH. Oh yes, there is *some*.

OLIVER. I thought so, perhaps you know the amount ?

STEPH. I do ; it's one shilling, just as much as she thought you were worth.

OLIVER. A shilling!

NAN. Buy a rope with it, and hang yourself out of the way.

OLIVER. I don't believe it, I'll dispute the will; who's the money left to ?

STEPH. One of the present company (*all look surprised*) let the will speak for itself. After bequeathing you the very handsome legacy I've already mentioned, it proceeds as follows :—" The bulk of my property in land, houses, money in the funds and personal property of every description ; I will and bequeath without let, or hindrance, to that unjustly persecuted girl, Honor Leeford." The innocent is rewarded (*embracing HONOR*) and the guilty disinherited! (*music lively, shouts from the HOP-PICKERS, all except OLIVER crowd round HONOR wishing her joy, as the act drop falls*)

END OF ACT I.

—————
TWELVE MONTHS ELAPSE.
—————

CHANGE OF DRESS FOR EVERYBODY.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Thames near Richmond, a villa R., built out and ascended by steps—music cautious.*

Enter ISAAC R. 2 E., an old gipsy, meeting ROB and DAVY two other gipsies, from L. 2 E.

ISAAC. Good news lads, she's found.

DAVY }
and } What! Our Nan?
ROB. }

ISAAC. Aye, she who left our tribe to take up with strangers; she's in there, (*points to villa.*)

ROB. What, in that fine house—are you sure?

ISAAC. I've seen her; she's got among friends who are trying to make a lady of her.

DAVY. Of Nan! What a good joke! She's a child of the woods and fields, and I don't think she could live under a house-roof contented, any more than we could.

ISAAC. She must be ours again, for if she only tells a quarter of what she knows, none of us are safe, and if she won't leave her friends, why then we'll make her. What a fine haul we could make of it now, if Nan would only row in with us; but the worst of that girl is, she has curious notions about honour and honesty, and I could never turn her from them.

ROB. I'm ashamed of her, she's a disgrace to us, and no true Romany, or she wouldn't stand at a trifle.

ISAAC. We must see what can be done, one of the new comers who has joined us seems ready for anything; but the other, I fancy he's a cur, but he may be useful as a jackal or decoy duck—here they are.

Enter OLIVER and WIDGEON dressed as gipsies, R. 2 E.

OLIVER, (*to ISAAC*) I'm here as you appointed, set me to work to do what you please, I'm ready for anything now.

WIDGEON. So am I, if it's not too dangerous. In time, perhaps, that malicious cheesemonger may forgive me, and I can return to Holborn-hill again.

ISAAC. What! to tell all you know about us? No, no, you've taken the gipsy oath of fidelity, and we'll see you keep it.

WIDGEON. What! you don't mean to say I'm apprenticed to you for life?

ISAAC. Not a moment longer.

WIDGEON. Thank you, I don't see how I could be.

OLIVER. (*to ISAAC*) Don't trouble about that fool, one word from me will always hold him in check, (*aloud*) No grumbling Mr. Widgeon, you know what's hanging over you.

WIDGEON. And you know what's hanging over you, somebody else is wanted as well as me.

OLIVER. Pooh, I'm only wanted for debt—you for robbery.

ISAAC. See that you obey us in whatever we set you to do, or you know your fate, (*to OLIVER*) I've news for you, the girl who escaped you in the hop grounds is found.

OLIVEE. What! Honor Leeford ?

ISAAC. Even so.

OLIVER. Then you've some plan to work, I reckon.

ISAAC. I have. Nan Lovel may desert *us*, but we'll never leave *her*.

WIDGEON. (*aside*) That's a strong hint for me, if I should try to do the same.

ISAAC. Let's away to our different nests, where we can watch this place, and when evening draws in, we'll set to work, come, (*music catious, exeunt L. u. E.*)

Enter FLUFF the footman, and DIMITY the ladies-maid, from villa.

DIMITY. Have a little more patience, Mr. Fluff, and things may come different.

FLUFF. I've lived with the best of families, and now to live with a worst 'un, and one of 'em a gipsy! Dreadful! Why I shall never get another place after this—young missus has been a hop-picker too—a hop-picker at so much a bushel—I can't think of it.

DIMITY. Well then, *don't* think of it.

FLUFF. There's one thing I can't help thinking of, and that's the awful cuts Miss Nan gives me over the calves with her riding-whip whenever she comes across me.

DIMITY. Oh, that's only her fun ; don't you see the joke ?

FLUFF. No, but I feel it. (*rubbing his calves.*)

HONOR. (*within villa*) Dimity, where are you ?

DIMITY. Here comes missus ; no grumbling before her, she's a dear nice lady.

FLUFF. That's more than I can say for her friend, for she's a nipper.

Enter HONOR front villa, R., well dressed.

HONOR. You two are always together—what can you have to talk about so much ?

DIMITY. Mr. Fluff was merely saying how playful Miss Lovel is.

FLUFF. (L. *aside*) Spiteful, she means.

HONOR. She'll improve in time ; she has been in rough company, and has much to learn.

FLUFF. Not in the way of horsemanship, ma'am, for I never did see such a will-o'-the-wisk on the back of an animal. Why, she'll take hedges, ditches, dykes, stiles, and five-barred gates as though she was a jockey riding a steeplechase, I declare if I don't blush to see her.

HONOR. Has Miss Lovel returned from her ride ?

FLUFF. Not yet, ma'am.

HONOR. She stays long.

FLUFF. She always does, ma'am; she's extremes in everything, and flies along the road like a straw in a whirlwind.

DIMITY. You don't understand, she's breaking her horse in.

FLUFF. And if she don't finish up by breaking her neck, why, I-----

HONOR. Silence; go in and attend to your duties.

FLUFF. (*aside to DIMITY*) One would think she was her sister, to stick up for her in the manner she does.

DIMITY. Absurd, she's no more her sister than she is her brother.

FLUFF. (*aside*) Ah, a thought strikes me, it *may* be her brother, and in disguise for some reason or other; I'll have a watchful eye upon her.

(*exit in villa, R., DIMITY is following.*)

HONOR. Dimity, I want you.

DIMITY. Yes, ma'am, (*coming down.*)

HONOR. Does my uncle have any visitors here when I'm out?

DIMITY. Not one, ma'am ; he don't seem to know anybody, and nobody don't seem to know him.

HONOR. DO you ever take in any letters for him?

DIMITY. Never, ma'am, he's never had one brough the postman or anybody else since he's been here.

HONOR. How strange.

DIMITY. So I thought, ma'am, and then when you're in bed and asleep, he wanders out and sometimes don't return till long after midnight, for I keep awake on purpose to hear him come in.

HONOR. How strange, (*aside*) That will do.

DIMITY. (*aside*) By her manner she seems as if it wouldn't do. (*exit into villa, R.*)

HONOR. Since I have inherited the money that was left

me my uncle seems strangely uneasy ; it seems as if he dreaded every approaching footstep, and yet what can he have to fear ? there is some secret, some dreadful weight upon his mind, and I shall not rest until I have discovered it.

Enter STEPHEN BELCOUR, in change of dress for the better, from villa.

STEPH. I thought you were in the house, Honor.

HONOR. As I often think you are, dear, when you are not.

STEPH. What do you mean?

HONOR. You have taken to strange wanderings lately ?

STEPH. *(starting)* How do you know that ?

HONOR. By your coining home so late of a night.

STEPH. *(aside)* My absence has been remarked then? *(aloud)* Business detains me, my dear, nothing else.

HONOR. Why you transact no business now, my dear uncle.

STEPH. I mean matters of importance which you need not be troubled with, and I trust you never will, *(sighs.)*

HONOR. And yet you seem unhappy, and I should like to see you otherwise, for you sought me out when I was in poverty, and by informing me of the good fortune that was in store for me I was rescued from the snares of a cruel enemy.

STEPH. *(aside)* And now I find myself in need of rescue ! If ever she should hear the truth—oh, horror, horror.

HONOR. *(aside)* How my words seem to pain him, I'll pursue this subject no further, but trust in time to solve the mystery.

NAN. *(without L. U. E.)* Yoicks, yoicks, tally ho! tally ho!

HONOR. *(looking off)* That's Nan ; I declare if the madcap has not been following the hounds, she said she would the first chance she had, and she's too impulsive not to keep her word. Here she comes, *(music lively.)*

Enter NAN, L.U. E., in riding habit, carrying whip.

NAN. He's trapped! he's trapped ! old Reynard's caught, and a splendid run we've had of it. Oh, how I wish both of you had been with us.

HONOR. You make me uneasy, you are so heedless of danger, I couldn't ride such a pace for the world.

NAN. I fancy I must have been born on horseback, for if I haven't been twenty miles since breakfast I haven't been a yard. Slapdash, crash, pell-mell, helter-skelter,

get near the leader, away we go neck and neck, and perhaps finish by going head over heels.

STEPH. (*aside*) I'm sorry I met her. I wished to leave here unobserved, but that will be impossible now.

NAN. Mr. Belcour, you're looking blue—not the right colour by any means—you mope yourself in doors all day, and then go out at night to meet the owls. Now I get up in the morning to hear the lark, and which is the prettiest bird of the two, pray? I'm not much of a scholar, but I fancy myself, as the gentle folks say, a greater follower of the mighty hunter *Fishrod*.

HONOR. You mean Nimrod?

NAN. Do I? I'm sure I thought the man's name was Fishrod, but whether Nimrod or Fishrod I'm ready to back myself for a match with him even stakes and money down.

STEPH. Miss Lovel, you forget yourself, you are not among the gipsies now.

NAN. Well, do not be angry—I was only talking a little bit rummy like—*rummy-antic*, don't you call it?

HONOR. I'm thinking of getting a private tutor for you, Nan, so that you may have some kind of education.

NAN. Oh, I'm not so bad off as regards my ABC, but I don't want to learn *jography*, for it ain't no use to me, nor history, nor the study of *rheumatics*, nor-----

HONOR. Mathematics, I suppose you mean?

NAN. I didn't know there was a Christian name to it, but if you say it's Mathew, of course I take your word.

HONOR. (*aside*) Happy ignorance, it might be folly indeed to try and make her wise.

(MATHEW BRANDON, a shabbily dressed man, looks on, L. v. E., and beckons to BELCOUR.)

BRAN. (*aside*) Hist, Steve!

STEPH. (*aside*) Ah, he is there—I come, (*follows MATHEW off, unseen, L. u. E.*)

HONOR. (*aside*) I should like to cultivate Nan's manners, somehow, but I hardly know how to set about it.

NAN. You're talking to yourself, Miss Leeford, I've always said that's very rude when there's a lady in company, isn't it. Mr. Belcour? Hollo, he's hooked it!

HONOR. Wouldn't it be as well to say that he had gone? I trust you won't be above learning.

NAN. No, that I won't, for I should be in a—in a—let's see, what do they call it? oh, *in, a grate full* if I did, and that I'm sure I'm not, for you tooked me out of bad company, put me into good, and if ever I forget it, I'm—I'm blowed—blessed I mean, blessed.

HONOR. I believe you've a good and honest heart, although it's a rough one, and I think I may repose confidence in you.

NAN. I won't split about anything you tell me, if that's what you mean.

HONOR. Yes, that's what I *do* mean. My uncle don't seem to rest. I don't know what's come to him of late.

NAN. Nightmare, perhaps?

HONOR. No, I mean in the day-time, it's then he seems so mentally disturbed.

NAN. I don't understand French.

HONOR. I mean he appears not quite right in his mind.

NAN. I see ; off his nut, you mean ?

HONOR. I wish I could find out the secret of his unhappiness.

NAN. Can I help you in any way ?

HONOR. By strict observation you might.

NAN. I think I know what you mean—artfully twigging him, eh?

HONOR. If I knew his distress perhaps I might alleviate it.

NAN. Go whacks with him, you mean? Ah, so you might. Well, then, if you like I'll fox him the first opportunity. I wonder where he is ?

HONOR. Perhaps in the house; I'll see, and then return and tell you. Remember, Nan, I rely on you as I would upon a sister, for I don't forget how you served me when we first met.

NAN. And how have you served me since ? Why, in the most cocum manner ; rigged me out to rights, given me nothing to do, and somebody to help me do it, and put the *kivering* of a house over my nut—my head, I mean, which, till I met you, never had any tiles over it except canvas.

HONOR. It was my pride to take you from evil into good, and if all who are able would take a fair flower from a bad soil and place it where it might bloom into goodness, so many wild weeds would not grow up around us, a reproach and disgrace to our humanity. *(exit in villa, R.)*

NAN. Isn't grammar a fine thing when you can ladle it out like that ? I never could make out where people find room in their heads to stow it all away.

(ROB, DAVY, and WIDGEON look on, observing her, L. U. E., they urge WIDGEON on, in dumb show, to speak to her)
If I could only write my name proper—wouldn't it be fine to be able to say " Nan Lovel, her mark." Oh, that would be plummy.

WIDGEON. *(coming down L.)* Well, I declare, if I didn't

think it was you, Miss Lovel; you don't know how glad I am to see you.

NAN. No, I don't, neither do I care.

WIDGEON. Don't be proud, 'cause you've got up in the world.

NAN. (*shaking whip*) You'd better be off before you go down. What have you followed me here for?

WIDGEON. (*points to ROB and DAVY*) Ask them gentlemen, they asked me to do it. (*ROB and DAVY come down, WIDGEON steals off, L. U. E.*)

ROB. We don't mean any mischief, unless you force us to use it, and I mean to speak gently and quietly to you. (*loudly and furiously*) Why the devil did you leave our tribe?

NAN. Because I thought I could do better out of your way than in it.

DAVY. But we don't think so.

NAN. Nobody wants you to.

ROB. (*going to take her hand*) Now look here, Nan ——

NAN. (*cuts his hand with whip.*) Paws off! the connexion's cut.

ROB. Yes, curse it, and so am I.

DAVY. (*to NAN*) We're not here alone, mind; and you know we're desperate men.

NAN. And what prevents me being desperate, too? None of you are either my father, my mother, or my brother. I'm a good hand at driving horses, and let's see if I can't drive *you*. (*music*) Take that, and that, and that. (*beats them off, R. and L. u. E.*) That's the way to dissolve partnership with them. Let savage dogs once know they're not to be masters, and see how soon they'll turn tail.

Enter ISAAC, R.U. E.

ISAAC. Easier far than I shall, Nan.

NAN. Indeed, and how's that?

ISAAC. Because I'm an old man, the chief of your tribe, and I know you wouldn't harm me.

NAN. That all depends as to whether you mean to harm *me*.

ISAAC. Suppose I could tell you a secret.

NAN. Well, go on, tell it.

ISAAC. No, no, not here; follow me to the tents, and when you do-----

NAN. Yes, when I do, hold me tight.

ISAAC. Would you not learn tidings of the future?

NAN. Oh, don't think to come over me with any of that

gammon—I know what the presents, and I find it quite good enough.

ISAAC. But the planets declare-----

NAN. There, there, that'll do ; you forget I've been in the line, and know all about it; havn't I promised wives' children, that never had 'em; girls, husbands, who've died old maids; young men, partners who've died bachelors; and fortunes to others who've found 'em so ragged that scarecrows were fools to 'em ! No, no, my cunning Isaac, here I am, and here I'll stay—I'm quite satisfied with my present fortune, so away and tell your liea to others. *(exit, L.*

ISAAC. So then, she sets me at defiance. She don't know how strong we muster in the neighbourhood ; we'll lie in wait for her, and the first' chance that offers, off she goes. *(exit, R. u. E.*

 Enter MATTHEW BRANDON *following* STEPHEN BELCOUR,
L. U. E.

STEPH. For mercy's sake, don't follow me here.

BRAN. Oh, I'll be merciful, if you'll be liberal.

STEPH. How do you think I can procure the money you are always demanding of me.

BRAN. That's your look out, all I know is, that I must have it because I want it. *(OLIVER looks on listening, R.U. E.*

STEPH. How long is this extortion to continue.

BRAN. Only as long as I live—you surely won't object to keep me as long as that. You know what you are—an escaped convict.

OLIVER. *(aside)* Indeed.

BRAN. And you also know the punishment that falls upon all who escape from Van Dieman's Land before they have worked out their sentence *honourably*, as I have done.

STEPH. Oh, if Honor were to know the degraded being what I am.

BRAN. The money your niece has come into will be useful for you to borrow from—if, as you say, you've none of your own.

STEPH. I've already taken from her means till I blush for myself, what excuse man can I make for obtaining another sum ?

BRAN. Tell her the truth.

STEPH. What! let her know the brand that is on my name, and the unmerited punishment that fell on me ?

BRAN. Every convict's punishment is *unmerited* of

course, mine was awfully so, there wasn't a more innocent duck than I was, till I was found out.

STEPH. I don't know how to get the money, but suppose I must try.

BRAN. You'll find it the cheapest way of getting out of it, for if you don't tip up, you'll find yourself in for it again, I'll take a walk for ten minutes, at the end of that time be ready for me, and remember that punctuality is the mainspring of business. *(exit, L. u. E.)*

STEPH. He alone knows my secret, one tongue alone can proclaim my doom. *(OLIVER comes down.)*

OLIVER. No, two. *(chord.)*

STEPH. What do you mean ?

OLIVER. Infernal mischief, if you don't agree to my wish.

STEPH. Ah, you heard what that man said who has just left me.

OLIVER. Every word ; you put a spoke in my wheel once by taking Honor Leeford from me, and now see how I'll put the screw on you. *I'll* make the terms now! Oh, how you exulted, as you read the terms of that will which made me penniless—and your niece a rich woman, but it's my turn now, for the price of my silence shall be the hand of Honor Leeford.

STEPH. *(seizes him)* Wretch! how dare you propose so infamous a bargain to me.

Enter HONOR, R.

HONOR. For heaven's sake, what is the matter ?

STEPH. I'm glad you're here or I might have had the villain's life, upon my soul, *(throws him off.)*

OLIVER. That would be a pity considering the crime's on it already.

HONOR. The crime !

OLIVER. The blow is destined to fall that will crush you both unless I have your consent.

HONOR. Our consent to what ?

OLIVER. Oh, he knows, he can tell you.

HONOR. Speak, dear uncle, and relieve me from this painful suspense.

STEPH. It is too terrible for me to tell.

OLIVER. Then I'll tell it for you :—In the first place, I demand your hand in marriage, and if it's not granted—he knows the consequences.

HONOR. *(starts)* My hand in marriage !

OLIVER. Nothing more, or nothing less.

HONOR. Contemptible villain! Did you but know one tenth part of the loathing with which I regard you, you would not dare to look me in the face as you make the vile proposal. To the winds with it, and all the harm you can do to either of us.

OLIVER. You are reckoning without your host, madam, ask *him* (*points to STEPHEN*) whether he dares despise me as you do.

HONOR. As *I* do, nay more, speak dear uncle and tell him so ; speak I say.

OLIVER. So I say, but he *don't* speak you see for all that.

STEPH. I'll confess all to you, my dear niece.

OLIVER. I wouldn't if I were you. I'd sooner persuade her to marry me, and so be sure of my silence.

STEPH. No, villain, I know her heart is as pure as your's is corrupt, and by the faith I have in her, she shall know the worst.

HONOR. The worst! Oh, what am I about to hear ?

STEPH. I was, for many years, clerk in a city bank, and had earned the respect and confidence of my employers. One fatal day all my happiness was dashed to the ground, and there was an end to all, a cheque was presented to be cashed, it bore the signature of one of our customers. Our principal, on inspecting it, discovered it to be a forgery, and declared that the writing resembled mine, and so it did—my astonishment was taken for guilt—agitation and surprise almost robbed me of the power to deny the charge. One of my fellow clerks, who had always regarded me with envy, swore that he had seen me sign the cheque, and that I had another in my pocket—I was searched, and to my horror, another forged cheque was found upon me; I was tried and sentenced to ten years transportation, but I made my escape, and reached London—I sought you out, the only relation left me. I heard of your good fortune, traced you down into Kent, and hoped for happiness, but this man, like an accursed spirit of evil forbids it.

HONOR. (*to OLIVER*) And is it out of sufferings like his, you would find the means to make me yours ?

OLIVER. Exactly.

HONOR. Then if I gave you my haud-----

STEPH. But you shall not; I'll meet my doom, and at least save you from *him*.

HONOR. But if he is silenced-----

STEPH. Even then I am not safe, for another also knows my secret.

HONOR. Another! Oh, what is to be done?

OLIVER. (*going up, R.*) I'll leave you to consider of it, but I'll not wait long, and when I return I must either have Honor Leeford for a wife, or the law shall have you.

(*to BELCOUR—exit R. U. E.*)

STEPH. Honor, half my misery is taken off my mind if I hear you say you think I am not a guilty man.

HONOR. Then I *do* say so, I believe you are not a criminal but a victim.

Re-enter NAN, R. U. E.

NAN. So do I, I don't mind owning that I've been listening and have heard all, you mustn't stay here, you must hook it. (*OLIVER looks on listening R. U. E.*)

HONOR. Yes, yes, that will be the best way.

STEPH. If we could reach the continent-----

OLIVER. (*aside*) Oh, that's your game is it? I'll stop that at once. (*exit, R.U. E.*)

HONOR. (*gives NAN keys*) I know we can safely leave this place in your care, take charge of what money there is in the house, I can procure more as we pass through London. I will then write and tell you our destination. (*to STEPHEN*) Oh, pray let us make use of every moment.

STEPH. I can think of no other plan, so come, come.

(*exeunt STEPHEN BELCOUR and HONOR into villa.*)

NAN. Well blow me—bless me, I mean, if everybody don't seem dropping on us, the gipsies want me and the beaks want *him*, but we must try and work it so that they shall have neither of us, I've got these keys and must think how I can work matters so that there shall be a squeak left for us yet. (*exit into villa.*)

Enter MATHEW BRANDON, L.

BRAN. I'll wait no longer, he shall come down at once with the money, and I know he will, for one taste of the penal settlements is enough for anybody. I'll make bold to knock and bring him out. (*going up to house, meets NAN entering from it.*)

NAN. Oh, it's you is it?

BRAN. Yes it's me, but I don't know you.

NAN. But I know you, know you to be a *peacher* and informer.

BRAN. Indeed, then perhaps you also know, what I've come for?

NAN. I do; now isn't yours a pretty way of getting a living?

BRAN. It's the way I do mean to live, though. I've got

Stephen Belcour in a vice, and I mean to squeeze all I can out of him.

NAN. But do you know there's another going to have a squeeze at him as well.

BRAN. Another ?

NAN. Yes, a fellow who heard you tell Mr. Belcour what you knew of him.

BRAN. (*starting*) The devil!

NAN. No, it isn't him; you'll see that gentleman quite soon enough, (*points R. u. E.*) That's the man; coming yonder.

BRAN. (*looking R. U. E.*) And he's talking to the magistrate. I'll go and tell all I know first, (*going up she pulls him back*)

NAN. Hold on, would you kill the goose that lays the golden eggs—you must outswear him in everything that he swears to.

BRAN. But the money I was to have-----

NAN. Here it is. (*gives it*) It's to stop your mouth if you'll stop the mouths of others, and lean only tell you this, I wish I knew how to do it without giving you a farthing ; but as you're well paid, of course you'll tell a good lie if I ask you.

BRAN. I'll swear to any mortal thing you like.

NAN. You *are* a nice man. This way then, and I'll give you your tip. (*music—exeunt, L. 2 E.*)

Enter OLIVER and MR. MOWBRAY, a magistrate, R.U. E.

OLIVER. It's true, sir, every word; Mr. Stephen Belcour, who lives yonder with his niece is an escaped felon. I can prove it.

MR. M. But have you any witnesses?

OLIVER. I can soon find one—a convict who was in New South Wales when he made his escape.

MR. M. I trust you are not making any mistake in the matter.

OLIVER. Not the slightest, sir. See, here he comes.

Enter BELCOUR and HONOR, from house.

HONOR. (*to BELCOUR*) Courage, courage, we have yet time.

OLIVER. I think not. (*to MR. MOWBRAY*) There is the man. (*pointing to BELCOUR*) An escaped felon, as I have already told you.

STEPH. (*aside*) The traitor ! I am lost.

OLIVER. (*to STEPHEN*) YOU wouldn't make friends with

me, so now I'm your enemy. Let him be arrested, (*to MR. MOWBRAY.*)

NAN. Arrested ! for what ?

MR. M. He says Mr. Belcour is a convict returned from transportation before his time.

NAN. *He* says so! Why now, your worship, don't he look the sort of man who'd say anything ? Let him *prove* it, that's the thing.

MR. M. Most certainly I shall require proof.

OLIVER. (*points L. 2 E.*) Then here comes the man who can give it.

Enter MATHEW BRANDON, L. 2 E.

STEPH. He here ? then there is no escape for me.

OLIVER. (*to MATHEW*) You're just the man I wanted, so now tell all you know.

BRAN. About what ?

OLIVER. (*points to BELCOUR*) About that man, you know him well.

BRAN. Who says so ?

OLIVER. I do.

BRAN. Why, you don't know what you're talking about, my good man.

OLIVER. What, do you mean to say that man (*points to BELCOUR*) is not a returned convict ?

BRAN. That dear good gentleman ? Oh, I'm ashamed of you!

NAN. (*to MATHEW*) Then you don't know Mr. Belcour at all ?

BRAN. I never saw him before in all my life.

OLIVER. It's false! you know him well. I saw you speaking with him on this very spot, not half an hour ago.

BRAN. Oh, you wicked, wicked man, how can you say so?

MR. M. Have I been brought here to be made a dupe ?

BRAN. You have, your worship ; don't stand it, I wouldn't.

MR. M. (*calling R. u. E.*) Constables, (*enter two CONSTABLES, R. u. E.*) Secure that man ! (*they secure OLIVER*) You were trying on some trick to obtain money, I've seen you with the gipsies, and it strikes me you're a bad character. (*to OLIVER.*)

NAN. (*to MR. M.*) A horrid 'un sir, a horrid 'un.

OLIVER. (*calls towards L.U. E.*) Isaac, Davy, Rob, will you see me taken like this ? (*music.*)

Enter ISAAC, DAVY and ROB, L.U. E., exclaiming

What's the matter—let the man go.

MR. M. Away fellows, or I'll have you secured also.

ISAAC. You'll have a tough job of it then, (*calls L. u. E.*) To the rescue, lads, (*music—enter GIPSIES, L.U. E.*) Release our comrade (*to GIPSIES*) and take that girl back to the tribe, (*points to NAN.*)

MR. M. (*as they advance*) Keep back in the name of the law.

ISAAC. The gipsies make their own laws, (*to GIPSIES*) Obey me lads, (*music—ISAAC and ROB seize NAN and try to drag her off, L.U. E.—they are met and resisted by BRANDON, who knocks them down, R.—DAVY seizes STEPHEN, GIPSIES rescue OLIVER, who seizes HONOR—enter DIMITY from villa with broom, she attacks the GIPSIES who have HONOR a prisoner—FLUFF enters from villa at the same time, with frying pan and knocks OLIVER down—MR. MOWBRAY, who has gone up stage, beckons on other CONSTABLES, R.U. E., they enter quickly and the GIPSIES are overpowered—MR. MOWBRAY, standing on steps of villa.*)

END OF ACT II.

All the above business to be done rapidly, and as one action.

—————
SIX MONTHS ARE SUPPOSED TO ELAPSE, AND THE ACTION OF THIS
ACT TO OCCUR IN HOLLAND.
—————

SCENE.—*A Dutch farm-house built out, R., landscape at
from back.*

*Enter DIMITY and FLUFF, dressed as Dutch farm servants,
house.*

FLUFF. Dimity, I don't like this change at all ; I feel lowered in the scale of servitude. I think it was quite bad enough to be brought to Holland, without being made to dress in brown Holland as well.

DIMITY. Never mind, it will make no difference in your wages.

FLUFF. But it will to my reputation when it's known what sort of a man I'm living under—a man who ought at the present moment be kept under by Government. Oh, 'pon my word, it's too degrading, it is indeed.

DIMITY. I believe our master was unjustly accused, and I don't blame him for trying to keep his liberty.

FLUFF. But if he's found out again, the law may keep *us* for lending a hand that enabled him to take to his legs.

DIMITY. Don't fear—if you keep your tongue still we're all right enough here.

FLUFF. But can you depend on *your* tongue remaining quiet?

DIMITY. In that respect I shall be a pattern of prudence.

FLUFF. Then you're not cut out by the same pattern that most women are.

DIMITY. Not I, indeed; something superior to that, I flatter myself.

FLUFF. Then there's that gipsy girl our master befriends—do you think she's cut out by a superior pattern also?

DIMITY. Oh, yes; true forest oak, firm, hard-grained, hard-handed, and soft-hearted.

FLUFF. Well, if Miss Nan's tribe let her escape so easily, then I *am* a Dutchman.

DIMITY. Oh, if they turn up we'll set the burgomaster about their ears.

FLUFF. Yes, and then they'd set him about our master.

DIMITY. That's the worst of it, but I think we're pretty snug down here; nobody knows it except *one* man, and they were obliged to let him know, or else he'd have to let somebody else know.

DIMITY. You mean that fellow called Mathew Brandon, I suppose—the respectable returned convict? Dimity, I'm afraid he's the fatal tin kettle that's tied to master's tail, and the Schiedam that the fellow seems mostly to live upon may loosen his tongue, and set it wagging at an awful rate.

DIMITY. Why, he'd be killing the goose for the golden eggs if he did that; it would stop the bribes he gets to hold his tongue.

FLUFF. Many men can't hold their tongues when the liquor's in 'em—it slips away from 'em like a greasy eel in a frying-pan.

Enter HONOR from house, in change of dress.

HONOR. What are you speaking of? Has anything happened?

DIMITY. No, ma'am; all is as calm and unruffled as a duck-pond in the dog-days.

FLUFF. I was only remarking, ma'am, that Mr. Mathew Brandon talks very strangely when he's in his tea-things—his cups, I mean to say.

HONOR. That is our greatest danger, and I always dread

it. I must still purchase his silence at any cost, for I will never see my uncle—innocent as I believe him to be—retaken to meet the punishment of an escaped convict. The dread of his discovery is my torture through the day, my sleepless dread by night. Even if we fled to a more distant land we might be no safer; here, then must we stay and hope for the best. Go in, and mind—not one word to Nan of the fear that agitates my heart.

DIMITY. Depend upon me, ma'am, *(going up with FLUFF.*

FLUFF. *(aside to DIMITY)* Just as if Nan didn't guess it already. Why, she's a very corkscrew at drawing things out.

DIMITY. *(going into villa and pulling him in)* Allow me to draw you in.

FLUFF. And in short-----

DIMITY. You're wanted here no longer. Come in, sir, come in. *(they exeunt into house.*

HONOR. And we were so happy in England until this unlucky discovery drove us here. And what are we now?—Bond slaves in the power of an unscrupulous man, who will be the shadow on our path wherever we go.

Enter MATHEW BRANDON, L., better dressed.

BRAN. Good day, my respected young mistress.

HONOR. I am no mistress of yours, sir, and you need not address me as such. You only affect this servility thinking perhaps that you will gain your ends better by such means, but you are mistaken.

BRAN. What then, I'll call myself your master, if that will suit you better.

HONOR. Master over my uncle perhaps, but not over me.

BRAN. I'm sure you can't grumble at the service I've rendered Stephen Belcour in England, didn't I swear he wasn't your uncle? and tell a wicked story, a thing I never did before in all my life.

HONOR. My uncle desired that you should keep away from here.

BEAN. I know that, but as the sweet little dicky-birds return to pick up crumbs from the hands that feed 'em, so do I come to ask food from yours.

HONOR. The sum we agreed to allow you is not due yet.

BRAN. Then I'll mortgage it.

(HONOR takes money from her pocket.)
I'll give you all I have.

BRAN. I ask no more, he who does is unreasonable an ungentlemanly.

HONOR. (*gives money*) Now go, for it would annoy my uncle to see you here.

BRAN. I've too much consideration in my gentle heart to annoy anybody, so I'll cut at once, (*aside*) Soon to come again.

HONOR. This man will keep increasing his demands until we are brought to ruin, and then he will tell all. Dark and gloomy is the future before us, without one ray of hope to cheer our way.

Enter NAN, in Dutch dress, R.

NAN. Well, this Holland is a jolly funny place, one ought to be a duck or a drake to live in it, it's all ditches—dykes—and *slutch* houses, everybody ought to be waterproofed like macintosh before they come here.

HONOR. Where have you been?

NAN. Into the market to see the Mynheers and *Mynheeresses*, lovely creatures with figures like hogsheads, or skittles with the dropsy, I'm trying to pick up the language.

HONOR. Indeed!

NAN. Oh *yaw, yaw, yaw*.

HONOR. Don't you find it difficult?

NAN. *Nien, Nien, Nien*, there seems to be a deal about sprats in it, for a man kept saying to me, "*Kester Holländer spratzen*," certainly said I. "How much a pound are they?" He went away saying something about "*Donner and Blützen*," I suppose that's "good-day" for he didn't come back with the sprats.

HONOR. I am ill with anxiety for my uncle's safety.

NAN. What's turned up to make you so down?

HONOR. That man, Mathew Brandon, has been here again.

NAN. I can guess what for, I wonder if we could get him quietly smothered here; for you may depend if we don't sink him somehow, we shall never be able to swim.

Enter STEPHEN BELCOUR, in farmer's dress from house.

HONOR. (*aside to NAN*) Here's my uncle, not a word to him of this man's visit.

STEPH. Well Honor are you beginning to feel at home here?

HONOR. (*crosses to him*) I shall soon, I hope, (*sighing*.)

STEPH. (*taking her hand*) You look pale and anxious,

your hand trembles—you've heard bad news—have you seen anyone?

HONOR. That man Mathew Brandon has been here again—I did not mean to tell you, but perhaps you ought to know it. He was flushed with liquor, and I dreaded his speaking of the past.

STEPH. (*aside*) I fear the same, but dare not say so.

NAN. Isn't there something you can buy called *have his carcass*, which puts people in prison, and never let's 'em out again?

STEPH. The case is beyond your help Nan, or I know we might count upon your assistance. I must meet this fellow and appeal to him as a man, for he holds my life in peril, and hope, peace and happiness seem denied to us.

NAN. Now this is one of the jolliest shames that ever was born.

HONOR. I can't think of what's best to be done.

STEPH. Nor I.

NAN. Nor I, we're all tied in a knot, like a curly pig's tail.

STEPH. But we must choose some course of action. Come and let us decide, I will yet make a bold struggle for the freedom I am entitled to, and sooner die in the effort to be free, than yield tamely to an unjust doom. Come, come, and let us arrange some plan.

HONOR. I am with you to the last, through any danger.

NAN. And I'm with both of you. (*exeunt HONOR and BELCOUR in house*) We're having a nice shake up, I'm sure, we take a place to live in on purpose to leave it again.

Enter ISAAC, DAVY, BEN, OLIVER and WIDGEON, R. 2 E.
observing her.

Oh, it's too bad, two times too bad. The question is what's to be done, and *when* is it to be done? I'm in a fix.

ISAAC. (*coming down R. with DAVY*) You are indeed, and we mean to put the screw on tighter.

NAN. You here?

OLIVER. (*coming down L. with WIDGEON*) Yes, and we're here too.

NAN. Oh, hare-skins and rabbit-skins!

ISAAC. You see we've followed you; you know too much for us.

NAN. Well, perhaps you'll find I do.

WIDGEON. Return to the fold, my chicken, I'll make you *my* biddy, and we'll live as lovingly together as mock turtles.

NAN. And so you think I'm cotched, I suppose ?

OLIVER. It seems very like it.

ISAAC. Nan Lovel, I promised your mother in her dying hour to see that you never abandoned your tribe.

NAN. It was like your impudence, then, for I've a right to please myself, and I will.

ISAAC. But you swore fidelity to us.

NAN. I was wrong—swearing don't become a young woman.

ISAAC. Will you return to us ?

NAN. (*aside*) To gain my own ends—I will.

ISAAC. Do you say you will ?

NAN. Yes, I will; but there's one thing you must do, before I go *into* the tribe again—you must kick him *out* of it. (*points to OLIVER.*)

ISAAC. It shall be done.

OLIVER. What! didn't you say you'd stand by me ?

ISAAC. I've altered my mind.

OLIVER. Why this is treachery—deception—roguery !

NAN. And who understands such things better than you do?

WIDGEON. (*aside*) Here'll be a row. I wish I was safe on Holborn Hill.

ISAAC. (*to NAN*) Where are the people you live with ?

NAN. I'll show you; it's some distance from here.

ISAAC. Never mind that, we're ready. We shall have them yet. (*to GIPSIES.*)

NAN. (*aside*) When you get 'em.

ISAAC. Come.

(*exeunt all but OLIVER and WIDGEON, R. U. E.*)

WIDGEON. (*aside, looking at OLIVER*) I don't care for this chap now he hasn't got the others to back him ; I'll out his acquaintance, (*aloud to OLIVER*) I know you no longer—dissolution of partnership, in consequence of one of the partners being a bad lot. (*OLIVER chases him off, R.*)

OLIVER. It serves me right for joining such fellows, but as drowning men catch at straws so did I make their acquaintance as a last resource, and now I'm left to my own means once again, and slender ones they are. (*going R., starts*) Why, here comes the fellow who swore he didn't know Stephen Belcour, while all the time he did; by the look of him, he's been drinking. I'll watch his movements, (*retires, L. 2 E.*)

Enter MATHEW BRANDON, R., slightly intoxicated.

BRAN. Fool that I am, I must needs get playing cards

with my betters, and be fleeced of every penny. Never mind, I'll go to my bank again, (*knocks at door of house.*)

Enter BELCOUR from house, starting as he sees him.

STEPH. You here again ?

BRAN. (*hiccups*) Yes, here I am. I've called on money matters.

STEPH. You've already had what we promised, and more I understand.

BRAN. And more I want.

STEPH. Suppose it's not convenient.

BRAN. Suppose you make it so; I'm the spider and you're the fly, struggling to break through the web in vain. Come, give me money.

STEPH. Not another penny.

BRAN. Then I'll raise the neighbourhood, I'll fetch the officers of the law, I'll-----

STEPH. (*seizes him*) You shan't stir; lie there, dog—lie there! (*throws him to the ground*) I'll make one last effort for life and liberty, trusting to meet those I loved in happier times ! (*Music—rushes off, L.U. E.*)

BRAN. Stop him, somebody—stop him—he'll escape!

Re-enter OLIVER, L. U. E.

OLIVER. No, he won't—I'm after him. Now will you swear he's the man ?

BRAN. I'll swear anything.

OLIVER. Then he's booked. (*exit, L.U. E.*)

BRAN. And a good job too; now let the law do it's worst on him.

Enter HONOR, from house.

Aha, Stephen Belcour has done it now; he struck me down like a dog, but when dogs can bite let folks beware their teeth.

HONOR. And all is known ?

OLIVER. It is ; he told me to do my worst, and so I have.

HONOR. The end has come, and the blow must fall.

(*music march.*)

Enter BELCOUR, brought on by two of the TOWN GUARD, L.U. E., handcuffed; VON RITZEN, the Burgomaster, and OLIVER follow. HONOR goes to BELCOUR.

STEPH. Farewell, farewell for ever !

OLIVER. (*to HONOR*) Now, my prond madam, you see what you have got by scorning me. Had you consented

to become my wife my tongue would have been silent, but now-----

HONOR. You've done your worst; and even though you have, I still prefer my lot, for I am free in heart and soul, and not the slave of a wretch I should loathe and scorn.

BRAN. *I was loathed and scorned too, but you find I'm a clencher.*

Re-enter NAN, R. U. E., coming down on MATHEW BRANDON'S L.

NAN. I've come to do a little clenching too, if you've no objection.

BRAN. (*meaningly*) Why, what can you do ?

NAN. You'll soon see, and you'll soon hear, (*calls R. u. E.*) This way, gentlemen.

Enter MR. HURST and MR. MOWBRAY, R.U. E.

BRAN. (*aside*) Hollo! what can they want here ?

HURST. (*to BRANDON*) I'm glad you're not gone; I was afraid we might miss you.

NAN. And that would be a pity, considering there's money bid for him.

BRAN. Money bid for me ! What do you mean ?

MR. M. (*to VON EITZEN*) I am an English magistrate, sir. Your prisoner, Stephen Belcour, has been from the first an innocent, persecuted man, unjustly accused and condemned. The real culprit has confessed that he committed the robbery, for which you, Stephen Belcour, were unjustly sentenced. The English Government has granted his pardon, and here it is. (*shows it to VON BITZEN.*)

STEPH. }

NAN. }

and }

HONOR. }

} Thank heaven!

RITZEN. Release the prisoner. (*BELCOUR is released.*)

BRAN. Oh, well, if he is pardoned, I don't bear anybody any animosity. Good day. (*going up, NAN confronts him.*)

NAN. Not yet—we want you.

MR. M. We do indeed, (*takes printed bill from his pocket*) I find by the bill issued in England that instead of Stephen Belcour being an escaped convict, you stand in that predicament, for you've some time yet to serve in New South Wales, and here is the warrant for your arrest, (*takes it from his pocket and shows it to VON RITZEN.*)

RITZEN. Secure him. (*two GUARDS do so. NAN points to handcuffs as they place them on BRANDON.*)

NAN. (*to BRANDON*) Your size exactly—number eights.

RITZEN. (*to GUARDS*) March !

BRAN. (*singing and looking at his handcuffs*) " Oh, 'tis hard indeed to give the hand where the heart can never be." (*music. He is marched of R., followed by VON RITZEN.*)

STEPH. He is gone, we are rid of him for ever.

NAN. And now you'll have to get rid of me.

STEPH. }
and } Of you Nan. How so ?
HONOR. }

NAN. Because as long as I'm with you, I can plainly see you will never be at peace, a gipsy I was born, and a gipsy I must die.

Re-enter ISAAC, BEN, and GIPSIES R. U. E.

ISAAC. You must indeed, and we are here to claim you, you may resist, may escape us for a time, but our tribe will pursue you wherever you may go.

NAN. Well, that's comfortable.

HURST. (*to ISAAC*) Then you swear she is a gipsy ?

ISAAC. I do.

HURST. Then I swear you lie, and you know it; no gipsy blood taints her veins, the woman you are pleased to call the queen of your tribe has died since you left England and confessed to me that Nan is my child ; who was stolen from me in infancy, I believe the woman and acknowledge Nan as my daughter before you all. (*takes her hand, HONOR, STEPHEN, and MR. MOWBRAY congratulate her.*)

NAN. Oh my! oh dear! oh lor! then I didn't spring up like a mushroom in the forest, but was born properly according to act of parliament.

HURST. (*to GIPSIES*) If you want to escape being arrested, you'd better go.

STEPH. The good news you have brought, sir, has made me a new man.

NAN. (*overjoyed*) And me a new woman. Oh, Miss Honor, I'm the daughter of a father—and a father is the daughter of me! I mean the daughter's the father of him. No, no,—I mean—will anybody tell me what I *do* mean ?

HONOR. Come in all of you, and the day shall finish in joy that was begun in sorrow.

OLIVER. (*aside*) Never, never!

HURST. (*to NAN*) No longer the poor wandering gipsy, but the daughter of a substantial English yeoman.

NAN. Oh, here's a dip in the lucky bag.

HONOR. (*to STEPHEN*) I seem to possess a new life—justice is done to your name at last, and you can roam the world free and innocent.

STEPH. I'll keep open house for a week, the wine shall flow, the song and toast go round ----

NAN. And so will we. (*taking their hands and dancing round with them in a circle saying*) "Here we go round the mulberry bush, the mulberry bush, the mulberry bush, on a cold frosty morning."

STEPH. Come in friends, come in. (*music lively, exeunt all in house but OLIVER and GIPSIES. The evening begins to draw in.*)

OLIVER, (*to GIPSIES*) You've heard what you've been told, you're not to darken the doors of honest men again, but if you'll only stand by me we'll darken 'em to some tune. (*WIDGEON looks on listening R. U. E.*)

ISAAC. (*to OLIVER*) What do you mean ? we'll stick at nothing that will yield us revenge.

OLIVER. When I was last with your gang, I noticed a bag of powder.

ISAAC. Yes, we took it from a carrier's cart with other waifs and strays, thinking it contained money.

OLIVER. Gunpowder is a dangerous thing to keep by you.

ISAAC. What would you do with it ?

OLIVER. Level their pride, and the house at the same time.

ISAAC. What! blow the place up ? do you know the danger ?

OLIVER. I'll risk that—aye and more to gain the revenge I thirst for, the confusion that will ensue, is sure to throw all the inmates off their guard, and enable you and your tribe to reap a rich harvest, when that is secured—off we go in safety, knowing we leave our enemies powerless behind us.

ISAAC. (*to GIPSIES*) What do you say lads ? (*conferring with them*) It shall be done, (*to OLIVER.*)

WIDGEON. (*aside*) Shall it though, we'll see.

ISAAC. But how will you get inside ?

OLIVER. I'll do it from the outside. See, a ladder stands most conveniently by one of the out-houses yonder, (*points off, L. U. E.*) I'll borrow it to reach the roof, then with my knife remove some of the tiles, and lower the powder down with a slow match attached to it, that being done, I descend the ladder quick as thought, and get safely out of harm's way to enjoy the revenge that will prove so sweet.

ISAAC. Come, then, with us, and the powder's yours.
(*music—they exeunt. L. U. E.*)

WIDGEON, (*coming down*) What I've heard has set me all of a jiggle. From that fatal moment when I dropped my

master's money into my boots I've been dropping down myself lower and lower, but I won't see them (*points to house*) sent higher and higher. No, I'll be a man—I'll be a Widgeon, (*looks L. U. E.*) Ah, before I've time to do what I'm going to do, *he's* coming to do what he's going to do. If I go in I shall be blown up with the rest, so I'll keep out, and think of some plan to get them out too.

(*music cautious—exit, R. U. E.*)

Enter OLIVER, with ladder, looking behind him as he enters L.

OLIVER. So all's safe—I'll lose no time, (*music continued, —He places ladder against house, ascends to roof, takes out knife and proceeds to loosen tiles.*)

Re-enter WIDGEON, takes up ladder and runs off with it,

R. U. E., *then returns, goes to door of house, opens it gently, and exclaims*

WIDGEON. Come out, come out, you're wanted !

Enter NAN, from house,.

NAN. But you're not wanted —be off.

WIDGEON. (*in a low voice*) Hush! or down goes your house! Speak above your breath and it'll all be blown, out of you. Look! (*points to roof of house*) He's there.

NAN. Ah ! he means to rob us.

WIDGEON. He does, and of your mortal existences, by means of combustibles.

NAN. What sort of *'bustibles* ?

WIDGEON. Gunpowder ; but if I don't save you from being blown up, blow *me* up.

NAN. Widgeon, Widgeon, if this is false I'll have your neck wrung, like they serve a pigeon.

WIDGEON. You shall wring me out like a towel in the suds, if you like, and when you find all I've said is true —

NAN. Why, then I'll say Widgeon's a duck.

(*exit in house—WIDGEON watches OLIVER.*)

OLIVER. (*having removed tiles*) That's done, and now for the next step. (*goes to work to make the opening wider.*)

WIDGEON. (*aside, threatening him*) Go on, go on, make the trap that's to hold you deep enough.

OLIVER. (*takes powder from his breast-pocket*) Here's the powder, now then to lower it down.

WIDGEON. Oh, why don't they come out, my stockings feel full of fish-hooks.

OLIVER. (*takes piece of thin cord from his pocket, and*

tying it round the neck of powder-bag) Now then to send it down.

WIDGEON, (*aside*) Mind it don't send you up. (*music—lower lights very gradually.*)

Enter NAN, HONOR, BELCOUR, HURST, MR. MOWBRAY, DIMITY and FLUFF, *from house.* *Music kept on through this.*

STEPH. (*to* NAN) But what does it all mean?

NAN. I'm saving you all like Lord *Mount-treacle* did the Parliament house. Go, go; and look, look! (*points to roof.*)

STEPH. (*sees* OLIVER) What is he doing?

NAN. Planning our destruction and working out his own. Stand back, and let us watch then, (*urging them to R.*) Further, further!

WIDGEON. Yes, do. *Furder, furder, more furder; furderer, more furderer!* (*music—they retire, R. 2 E.—OLIVER attaches slow match to powder in bag, lights it by means of a lucifer and lowers it through aperture in roof.*)

OLIVER. (*exulting*) It's done, and I'm off. (*turns to descend and sees ladder gone*) The ladder gone! 'Twill be death to remain here ! The match is nearing the powder closer and closer every moment ! I am on the brink of death ! Help ! help ! (*music—crash—explosion—the roof falls in—red fire, and murmurs without—OLIVER disappears. Re-enter* BELCOUR, NAN, HONOR, FLUFF, DIMITY, MR. MOWBRAY, HURST, VON RITZEN *and* GUARDS *with* ISAAC, DAVY *and* ROB *prisoners, followed by Peasantry. Tableau—red fire.*)

CURTAIN.