

IN THREE VOLUMES.

*An Original Farce,*

IN ONE ACT.



BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

*First performed at the Royal Strand Theatre (under the management of Mrs. Swanborough), on Monday, February 27th, 1871.*

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**Characters.**

TWITTLES ( <i>an unknown Genius</i> )	...	Mr. H. CROUCH.
LIEUTENANT COCKLESHOT	...	Mr. WALTER JOYCE.
TUGBOOTS ( <i>a Tax Collector</i> )	...	Mr. E. CHAMBERLAINE.
SLOPS ( <i>a Painter</i> )	... ..	Mr. KINGHORNE.
VIOLET	... ..	Miss JENNY LEE.
MARY	... ..	Miss H. LENNOX.

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SCENE.

MR. TWITTLES' FIRST FLOOR.

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TIME IN PERFORMANCE—FORTY MINUTES.

## IN THREE VOLUMES.

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SCENE.—*A well-furnished Apartment. Windows practicable, R. U. E. and L. U.E., through which are seen ladders standing against house; doors, C. (to lock) and R.; writing table, R.c, covered with rolls of paper; chairs.*

SLOPS. (*heard singing without as curtain rises*)

"Ha, my dear boys, pray how d'ye do ?  
I hopes I sees you well.  
Perhaps ye don't know who I is—  
But I'm the Heastern swell.  
My chambers is in Shoreditch,  
And I fancies I'm a toff;  
From top to toe I really think  
I looks Immensikoff.  
Immensikoff," &c.

*During this song a postman's knock is heard, and MARY enters, C, with letter and papers which she lays on table.*

MARY. Another dose of master's literary compositions come back; won't he be delighted! Serve him right, too; what does he want to go soiling his fingers with pen and ink for, when he has £500 a-year of his own to do what he likes with ? Besides, among my set it isn't considered respectable.

SLOPS. (*without*) "Immensikoff, Immensikoff," &c.

MARY. Bother that painter, (*goes to window, R., and looks up*)  
I say, painter man!

SLOPS. (*outside*) Yes, my dear.

MARY. I'm not your dear, sir. You mustn't keep up that incessant howling or you'll drive master frantic.

SLOPS. (*descends ladder, R., and looks in*) Howling! What do you mean? You won't have my cornet-playing ?

MARY. That row you make with your mouth like buzzing through a comb—I should think not.

SLOPS. But hang it, there's only me on the job, and I can't paint down the outsides of a terrace by myself without something to vary the monotony.

MARY. What part are you doing now ?

SLOPS. The sashes of the bed room.

MARY. Where master sleeps ? You'll get his shirt out, I can tell you.

SLOPS. NO I shan't; I just saw him getting it out himself—of the drawers.

MARY. You're a stupid. I wish you'd take away some of the nasty ladders standing all round the house.

SLOPS. All right, I'll see after them, but I likes to do a little bit here and a little bit there just as it takes my fancy.

*Exit MARY, C.*

*(sings)* " Immensikoff, Immensikoff."

*Enter TWITTLES, R.*

*(aside)* Hullo ! the gov'nor. *(descends ladder)*

TWITTLES. *(looks round and goes to table)* Another pile of my immortal works—" Declined with thanks." Really it's enough to make one disgusted with human nature. *(takes up roll of paper and looks through end)* " Reflections on the Instability of Uncertainty" which I sent to the "Penny Toasting Fork." I expected that would come back—theres too much thought in it.

SLOPS. *(without)* "Immensikoff, Immensikoff," &c.

TWIT. *(listening)* There he goes again ! He has been chanting that divine inspiration about four hours this morning, during which time he's painted the lid of a water-butt and about six inches of drain-pipe. *(takes up letter)* What's this ? Oh! a letter from Swidge, with my manuscript! *(reads)* " Dear Twittles,—I have looked over your novel, and am much delighted with it. The scene between young Splotcher and his grandmother over the apple pudding—for a domestic scene—is perfection itself; but the work suffers from want of interest. If you want to startle people now-a-days, your first volume should end with an abduction, your second with a murder, and your last with a suicide. Can't you work these in ? but don't give us lay figures—make your characters flesh and blood.—Yours, Toppleton Swidge." That's *his* opinion. *(opens packet)* Wants incident, does it ?—then I must give 'em incident! I'll revise it at once. *(takes pen)* " Abduction !" " Murder !" "Suicide!" " Real flesh and blood!" *(bites pen)*

SLOPS. *(outside)* "Immensikoff! Immensikoff!" &c.

TWIT. *(in a rage)* Who the deuce can think two consecutive words with that noise dinging in one's ears ? *(goes to window, R., looks down)* Here, I say, you "light-hearted son of toil!" *(takes up roll of paper and shies it)* Hi! Missed him. Here goes again ! *(shies papers)* Hi!

SLOPS. *(outside, from below)* Hullo!

TWIT. HOW long do you intend continuing that specimen of Exeter Hall vocalization ?

SLOPS. (*outside*) Only till dinner time. But, I say, don't you do that again ; you've given me a bump.

TWIT. Then, egad, he ought to be very much obliged to me, for I declare a phrenologist wouldn't give twopence ha'penny for his whole head. No matter.

SLOPS. (*outside*) But it do matter, though; my head's quite nubbly enough.

TWIT. (*shuts window and returns to table*) Abduction—let me think. I'll turn to my " Police News." (*takes up large illustrated sheet*) No, I won't! I'll evolve it from my own inner consciousness. My heroine's name is " Myrtle," the hero, " Reginald de Nobblyville." (*writes*) Chapter fourteen. Give ten reasons of analytical conjecture for a thing, and ten against, and you can cover the paper in no time. (*writes*) " Myrtle had no sooner"—(*thinks and bites pen*) " Myrtle had no sooner"—(*thinks*) " Myrtle had no sooner decided on her course of action"—that's it. Hurray ! I've got it—" than"—(*loud rat-tat-tat heard—flings down pen*) Who the deuce is this! Hang it, this is how my brains are frittered away, and my mornings end in nothings. Some infernal visitor.

COCKLESHOT. (*outside*) Nonsense, don't tell me, I saw him just now at the window.

MARY. (*outside*) Some mistake, sir; master's name is-----

COCKLE. (*outside*) Yes, yes; if you don't let me pass I shall kiss you.

MARY. (*outside*) Well, I'm sure, sir. (*screams*)

TWIT. (*rising*) Confound it, this is too much ! It beats Immensikoff. (*the door is burst open suddenly*)

*Enter COCKLESHOT, C.*

COCKLE. There he is; I knew I wasn't mistaken. My dear Skinner, how do you do. (*shakes TWITTLES'S hand violently*)

TWIT. (*releasing himself*) What do you mean, sir—a total stranger.

COCKLE. YOU don't mean to say you've forgotten me.

TWIT. Eh ? No, I haven't forgotten you, because I never knew you.

COCKLE. YOU think so,—then prove it.

TWIT. Look here.

COCKLE. NO, no, look here. (*pointing to himself*)

TWIT. It's no use wasting time in useless argument.

COCKLE. That'll do, that'll do, I'm—Shut your eyes and guess.

TWIT. I shan't do anything of the sort. I've heard of individuals telling you to shut your eyes and guess while they walk off with the furniture. It's a dodge to put you off your guard.

COCKLE. Come, come, Skinner, no joking; you must guess, I won't go till you do.

TWIT. Will you go then ?

COCKLE. Yes.

TWIT. (*aside*) I'd better humour him—it'll save time. Is it a common name ?

COCKLE. Affected ignorance ! Say shuttlecock backwards.

TWIT. This is too much; shuttlecock backwards, it can't be done. Shuttlecotts—cottleshucks—cockleshots.

COCKLE. You've hit it.

TWIT. Which of 'em—which of the shots ?

COCKLE. Cockleshot; I knew you'd remember it. (*shakes hands*)

TWIT. (*aside*) Perhaps I do know him after all. I wonder whether my name really is Skinner?

COCKLE. DO you know how I found you out ?

TWIT. NO; I wish to goodness you *had* found me out.

COCKLE. Here, don't stand—sit down and I'll tell you all about it. (*takes easy chair and puts his legs up on another one, L. of table*) Let's see—do you smoke? (*sees cigar box on table*) All right; these'll do. You'd better have one. (*lights cigar*) I was going to tell you how I found you out.

TWIT. (*seated, R.*) And I had just remarked that I wish you had found me out.

COCKLE. But I know you don't mean it. Just this—I was passing by on the opposite side of the street—heard an altercation with a painter—looked up—when I recognized your face. To cross over and knock at the door was the work of an instant; to vociferate Skinner to the charming Mary was a second; to ascend the staircase in spite of her remonstrance—a third ; and here I am.

TWIT. Or rather here you've been for the last quarter of an hour.

COCKLE. The fact is, Skinner, after several years of foreign service in which I've been knocked about like a-----

TWIT. Shuttlecock backwards.

COCKLE. I returned to England only three months ago, so that the sight of a face I know is a perfect treat. But you, Skinner, of all friends in the world at this particular moment, do I most prize. (*aside*) How can I broach this difficult subject—house most convenient—(*aloud*) for I have a secret to confide in the recesses of your bosom, my boyhood's companion. (*with effusion*)

TWIT. (*very solemnly*) Cockleshot, if ever I was a friend of your youth, I don't wish to know a morsel of your private affairs.

COCKLE. My dear fellow, those are the very things which I

must confide in you. (*aside*) How to begin? (*aloud*) What are you doing there—scribbling? (*takes up manuscript*)

TWIT. That, sir, is the manuscript of an original novel which I am now revising, and I'm just filling in a few sensational bits. (*aside*) By the bye, if this Cockleshot has led an active life, his experience might be of use. I say, Cockleshot, have you ever abducted anybody?

COCKLE. (*looks round*) Hush! (*aside*) How could he have hit on that—the very thing I was about to propose? (*aloud*) No, but I don't care how soon I begin, if you'll only give me your assistance. Listen!

TWIT. I'm all ears.

COCKLE. Hush! (*whispers*) I can see 'em. (*rapidly*) Your house is pleasantly situated for spying the neighbours all round, Skinner. Now do you know anything of an old codger in the next row named Tugboots.

TWIT. Tugboots! Yes, he's a poor-rate collector and an individual whom I abominate for the quantity of taxes he delivers, and the juries he makes me serve upon.

COCKLE. Bravo, that's first rate. Then you wouldn't at all object to playing a little joke at his expense?

TWIT. Certainly not; within the bounds of a proper Christian feeling I should enjoy anything that would make him desperately savage.

COCKLE. (*aside*) Just what I want. (*aloud*) Well then, old Tugboots has a very charming daughter whom I met at a party two months ago, and with whom I'm deeply in love—Violet.

TWIT. Violet Tugboots? What a name for a heroine. (*making note in MS.*)

COCKLE. Exactly what she's fitted for—a three volume novel. In return she's sincerely attached to me.

TWIT. A clear proof of lunacy.

COCKLE. But she is so aggravatingly romantic that she will not allow me to introduce myself to her father. Of course I've proposed, and of course I want to be married, but as she is under age, if I run away with her it would be a case of abduction.

TWIT. Abduction! The very thing. (*making a note*)

COCKLE. Then I may rely on your aid? (*rising*)

TWIT. (*courageously*) You may. How do you feel now?

COCKLE. Better, thanks.

TWIT. What do you propose?

COCKLE. This. I have a special license in my pocket, have made an appointment at a church close by, and only wait my opportunity for securing Violet. Now in case she should be watched, and a pursuit organized, it struck me as you have a back entrance here, that instead of proceeding straight to the

church, my Violet could enter your street door, which could then be barricaded or screwed up so as to detain any one while she would escape quietly at the back.

TWIT. Oh, that's it. But if Tugboots demands admittance?

COCKLE. You can say : " Never! unless you would pass over my dead body." I expect this at least, Skinner, from a man of your nobility of disposition.

TWIT. Come, come. Nonsense! he can pass over the door mat and welcome, but I object to the dead body.

COCKLE. Is it a bargain ?

TWIT. Well—yes.

COCKLE. Then in ten minutes I shall return. My dear Skinner, good-bye for the present. (*shakes hands*) In ten minutes.

*Runs out. c.*

TWIT. (*looking after him*) Ten minutes, Cockleshot. I don't know that man from Adam, and this is how he proposes to let me in for it. Old Tugboots won't like it, that's certain. It'll serve him right, but I wonder what they can do to you for it. If it's abduction I don't want to be brought in as an accessory before the fact. No, no, still it's " flesh and blood"—the very thing wanted for my novel. (*takes up newspaper—starts and reads*) " Abduction—The learned judge in summing up regretted that in the present state of the law he could not give the prisoner more than two years." The old brute! quite enough too. Yet stay; what's Cockleshot to me or I to Cockleshot ? Shall I get rid of the responsibility by putting old Tugboots up to the move at once ? Get him in here and enjoy the parental agony. Egad, I will. That Cockleshot said he'd be here in ten minutes; there's just time. (*writes*) "Tugboots, if you " would stay the rashness of youth and the compunctions of " after-remorse in the breast of the innocent, gulp down your " toast and coffee and rush to No. 1, Pawkins Crescent, as " soon as you receive this." How to send it?

SLOPS. (*outside*) "Immensikoff, Immensikoff," &c.

TWIT. (*goes to window, R.*) Ha! I'll let go the painter. (*calls*) Hi! There he is talking to somebody instead of doing his work. Hi ! (*shies roll of paper*)

SLOPS. (*outside*) I say, you've knocked that into my eye.

TWIT. You story, I hit you on the nose. Come here, I want you directly.

SLOPS. (*appearing*) But, I say, I can't leave this pail of whitewash and my paint.

TWIT. Bring 'em up here, I'll take care of 'em.

SLOPS. (*hands in a pail of whitewash, paint pot, and coil of rope*) Now then, guvnor, what is it ?

TWIT. Do you know Chimney-pot Villas ? Then leave this

note at number two and sneak away without anybody seeing you. Do you appreciate beer.

SLOPS. (*fumbling with cap which he drops in the room*) No, sir, I drinks it.

TWIT. Then you shall have a gallon of fourpenny.

SLOPS. Right you are. I shall have my work to do to get through that at dinner time. But my cap.

TWIT. Never mind your cap—be off! (*SLOPS disappears*) Now to prepare the apartment for a deed of violence. I dare say old T. will want to chuck the furniture about. Shall I have up the kitchen chairs or shall I restrain him? Perhaps the sudden grief 'll turn his hair white. No matter, I shall photograph in words the sublimity of his despair. Where had I got to? (*turns to manuscript*) "Myrtle had no sooner"—(*loud knocking heard*) There they are.

*Enter COCKLESHOT and VIOLET, C.*

COCKLE. My old school-fellow, Skinner, allow me to introduce to you Violet.

TWIT. Really delighted, I'm sure. (*aside*) I'd no idea Tug-boots had anything so nobby on his premises; must cultivate this acquaintance. Bother that letter!

VIOLET. Sir, any friend of Mr. Cockleshot's-----(*bows*)

TWIT. Oh, yes; Cockleshot's boyhood's companion—the friend of his youth—exactly so! (*aside*) I wish I could get my letter back. (*fidgets away to window, R.*)

COCKLE. You are sure you escaped unperceived, Violet?

VIOLET. Yes, papa was only just up and shaving.

COCKLE. You can rest a few moments then, with Skinner's permission. But I say, old chap, you don't look well all of a sudden. What are you fidgeting about for?

TWIT. Nothing. (*takes up COCKLESHOT'S hat and crams papers into it in confusion, looking out of window*) Slops only just started? There he goes! If I could only stop him! What can I hit him with? (*shies papers*) He mounts the steps—knocks at the door—delivers the note! Oh, lor, it's all over! (*falls into chair by window*)

VIOLET. Really, Charles, we disturb your friend—he's going to faint!

COCKLE. Faint, nonsense! this'll bring him to! (*gets paint pot*)—make him as fresh as paint.

TWIT. (*recovering*) Thank you.

COCKLE. Violet, my dear, are you quite ready?

VIOLET. Yes, Charles; I'll just arrange my shawl.

COCKLE. Now we're off.

VIOLET. Thanks, Mr. Skinner, for your accommodation. (*loud knocking heard*)

COCKLE. Who's that ?

TWIT. (*looking out*) Tugboots himself.

VIOLET. (R.) My father! We're lost. (*loud knocking*) What's to be done ?

COCKLE. (R.) Bolt!

TWIT. (C.) The street door, right you are. (*loud knocking*)

COCKLE. Remember your promise—over your dead body.

TWIT. No, no, over the defunct door mat. I'll do what I can. The abduction ! End of Vol. One! Red Fire! Tableau!

*Strikes attitude and runs out, c.*

COCKLE. Violet, you must run into this room (R.) and lock the door, while I pop out on the ladder for a few minutes. (*picks up SLOPS' cap*) They won't recognise me in this. (*gets out of window, R. c, while VIOLET runs in, R.—loud crash heard*)

TWITTLES *rushes in, c, and puts back against door.*

TWIT. Mary had opened the door, confound her, and Tugboots has crossed the door mat, but I've beaten him up the stairs. (*looks round*) Both gone—but where? Ha! he comes.

TUGBOOTS. (*without*) Let me in or I'll break the door down!

TWIT. I shan't. The longer I keep him, the better for Cockleshot. Perhaps he's got a balloon outside and will soon be out of sight.

TUG. (*outside*) Let me in I say. (*bursts c. door open*) Now, sir ?

TWIT. (*dodging round table*) I say, Tugboots, if this is the way you fulfil your duties of tax collector, I shall report you to the Board of Guardians, sir.

TUG. Blow the Board of Guardians, sir.

TWIT. Oh, very well—you said it.

TUG. (*out of breath*) I've called-----

TWIT. Then you needn't shout.

TUG. (*shouting*) I say I've called-----

TWIT. I admit it, Tugboots, so don't repeat yourself. If you can say anything lively about the poor rate, do it like a man. Don't come to an idiotic pause—I mean to a *fool's* stop.

TUG. You know me ; I'm a man who stands no nonsense. My daughter has run away from my house—I have tracked her here. So, sir, produce her as you value your future existence.

TWIT. (*aside*) Pathetic opening chapter to the second volume; but I don't see my way clear to the "murder" as yet. (*making note*)

TUG. Understand me, I've got a case of abduction against you. That'll be seven years, mind.

TWIT. Seven years ? Get out. Look here, Tugboots, you may be a very good man at a sewers rate at fourpence in the pound, but you're a noodle at criminal law. (*showing paper*) They can't give you more than two.

TUG. Then you shall have two, if you don't confess all.

TWIT. Very well, then, I will. Ten minutes ago, a young and lovely female, accompanied by a man in the garb—(*aside*) let's see, what had he on ? Cockleshot's been everywhere—something vague—(*aloud*) in the garb of a nomadic excursionist, approached my house, which you are aware is rated a great deal too highly, and against which I mean to appeal; mind that, you bloated official.

TUG. Go on, sir.

TWIT. You like it, do you ? you attenuated extortioner.

TUG. No, no ; continue your narration.

TWIT. They caught my eye from the window, and implored me to shelter them ; I did so. Now when I ran down stairs to let you in, they were here ; when I came up they had vanished.

TUG. (*catching hold of TWITTLES*) Then the shortest way to discover 'em is to visit the rooms.

TWIT. Look here, Tugboots, if you catch the young man, what will you do to him ?

TUG. Murder him!

TWIT. (*aside*) *Murder him!* all right, the very thing I want; it'll fit in beautifully. (*making a note*)

TUG. You shan't leave me.

TWIT. I don't want to.

TUG. We'll lock the door that they mayn't get in here again. *Drags TWITTLES out, c.*

*Enter COCKLESHOT, R. C, through window—VIOLET from R.*

COCKLE. Gone at last, Violet?

VIOLET. Yes, Charles, but how are we to go. (*tries door*) The door's locked.

COCKLE. Bother,—but a thought strikes me. Old Skinner's a good sort, he won't mind being upset on a pinch. Suppose when he comes back you fall on your knees and implore him to spare you, while I arrive to your rescue through the window, and earn your father's gratitude, and, of course, your hand.

VIOLET. Capital, Charles, the very thing, so delightfully romantic. I'll let my back hair down and give way to the most frantic emotion. (*struggling dramatically with COCKLESHOT*) Unhand me, villain !

COCKLE. Nay, fair beauty—not so. One fond embrace before we part.

VIOLET. Never!

COCKLE. Just a little one as a sweetener.

VIOLET. No, Charles; not now.

COCKLE. Yes!

VIOLET. No!

COCKLE. (*snatching a kiss*) Now to act the part of the gallant deliverer! (*loud noise heard—they both run to window, L.C.*) By Jove, if your papa hasn't been shut out into the back yard!

VIOLET. See! he is trying to climb on the water-butt to get at this ladder.

COCKLE. The very thing! "We'll arrange our plan for him to overhear. Get up your sobbing. (*runs R.*)

VIOLET. (*R.*) Hadn't I better faint first?

COCKLE. Yes; I'll watch over you.

*Gets out of window, R. C.*

*Enter TWITTLES, C.*

TWIT. Ha, ha, ha! done him at last—got him outside the back kitchen door and bolted him out! Now to get rid of my friends by the front way. (*looks round—sees VIOLET*) Hullo! where is that Cockleshot? The young lady crying!

VIOLET. (*aside to COCKLESHOT*) Shall I begin now?

COCKLE. (*pops up R. and down again*) Keep it up. (*VIOLET sobs violently*)

TWIT. My dear Miss Tugboots. She's going to faint! Would you like to sit outside on the door-step?—a cold stone is a capital thing.

COCKLE. (*pops up—aside*) Scream. (*VIOLET screams*)

TWIT. Here! a pen'orth of Epsom salts, somebody—sal volatile, I mean, Mary!

*Lifts VIOLET, who struggles violently to restrain him, and runs out, c.*

COCKLE. (*pops up, R.*) Violet gone! Hang it, Skinner, this won't do! (*TUGBOOTS puts head up outside window, L.C.*) Ha! old Tugboots. (*bobs down*)

TUG. (*breathless*) The rascal to serve me such a trick. Fortunately this ladder was handy, although perched on the top of a water butt, but at the risk of breaking my neck I've got up. (*COCKLESHOT puts head up, R.*) Somebody at the opposite window, who is it? (*they both bob down, then up again, then COCKLESHOT up, then TUGBOOTS up, this is to be done once or twice; at last they watch each other*) A stranger!

COCKLE. (*aside*) He doesn't know me.

TUG. (*in a loud whisper*) What are you doing there?

COCKLE. (*aside*) I'll convey the answer in an expressive wink.

TUG. (*aside*) Whatever it is he does it like winking. (*getting through window*) One of the lower orders with a felonious object; if so, I have him in my power. (*beckons mysteriously*)

COCKLE. (*getting through window*) The old fellow's having a lark with me.

TUG. (*aside*) A little familiarity will do wonders. (*aside*) All right my chickaleary covey, I'm fly. (*winks—aside*) I'll give him a touch of the Great Vance. (*winks*) I'm up to the double tiddy wink fakement over the trotter kicksies.

COCKLE. Are you ? Then perhaps you'll put *me* up to it if it's worth knowing.

TUG. Don't be frightened, I won't hurt you. (*they take stage mysteriously and come down, clutching wrists*) 'Tis well—you're safe with me; but how came you here?

COCKLE. (*thinks, then tragically goes through pantomime, points to ceiling, then to floor, then to window*) The ladder!

TUG. I know that, but why ?

COCKLE. (*aside*) That sort of business seems to go down with him—why? (*aside*) Now to express in pantomime that I was "walking down the street," that's easy enough. (*walks violently round stage*)

TUG. (*collars him*) No, you don't walk off in that way.

COCKLE. My dear sir, I was about to express to you-----

TUG. Yes, yes, we know all that.

COCKLE. How I was walking down the street, when I heard wild shrieks for help proceeding from this apartment.

TUG. Then she is still here—what else ?

COCKLE. My first impulse was to take violently to my heels, for fear I might be implicated as a witness, and have to attend a police court.

TUG. Naturally enough.

COCKLE. My next to climb an adjacent lamp-post, that I might overlook and ascertain the cause of the disturbance, when I fortunately spied yon ladder.

TUG. (*seizing his hand*) Brave young man, worthy young man, the courage and devotion you have displayed, prove to me that I may confide in you—I will. The heroine of the drama is my daughter, who is concealed on these premises; will you assist me to recover her ?

COCKLE. As an officer in such a cause would I get my sword out readily.

TUG. How much is it in for?

COCKLE. No, no, I don't mean that, but I've left it at home.

TUG. Then run home and get it.

COCKLE. But first, may I ask how you discovered your daughter was here ?

TUG. Read this, (*shows letter*) Delivered to me anonymously, ten minutes ago, but I recognised the handwriting to be that of the owner of this house.

COCKLE. Never; Skinner has then betrayed me.

TUG. Betrayed you?

COCKLE. I mean you, the vagabond!

TUG. It's a case of abduction-----

COCKLE. That shall meet with the swiftest retribution. (*with intensity*) Say, old man, what should be the reward of him who returned your daughter spotless to your arms ?

TUG. Reward! My dear fellow, I'd insist on his marrying her right off. (*aside*) Glad to get rid of her. (*aloud*) Be off for your sword, while I fetch my blunderbuss; you take charge of the front of the house, I'll surround the back. (*goes to door, c. and tries it*)

COCKLE. You must descend by the ladder. (*hurries TUG-BOOTS to window, L. and assists him out*)

TUG. Hum! that's a nuisance, for this one wobbles so. Suppose we change?

COCKLE. Not worth while. TUGBOOTS *disappears, L.*

VIOLET *peeps in, c.*

VIOLET. Is it all right, Charles ?

COCKLE. (*whispers*) Yes, your father's yonder, I'm friends with him; but where's Skinner ? how did you get away ?

VIOLET. He's ripping up a bolster to get feathers to burn under my nose.

COCKLE. Indeed! Then 'twas he who betrayed us. (*gets out of window, R.*) Swords and blunderbusses ! we return directly. (*disappears*)

VIOLET. Betrayed by that detestable Skinner ! a beautiful elopement so completely spoilt; he shall smart for his interference. (*writes*) " Your perfidy is discovered, in ten minutes you will cease to exist—swords and blunderbusses ! Cockleshot—Tugboots." Now to place this where he can see it. (*throws paper on floor*) He comes! (*hides behind door, C.*)

*Enter TWITTLES, C.*

TWIT. I wonder what has become of the juvenile Tugboots ? she's escaped.

VIOLET. Vengeance! (*runs out and locks door, c.*)

TWIT. Hullo, confound it! (*tries door*) I'm fastened in (*shouts*) Miss Tugboots, here's a grateful return for the sacrifice of a bolster! What does it mean ? (*sees paper on floor*) Ha ! (*reads*) " Ten minutes to exist ! Swords and blunderbusses! Cockleshot—Tugboots!" (*runs to window, R.*) As I live, there's Cockleshot coming down the square with a pair of swords, and Tugboots with the family blunderbuss! I'm a dead man; no I'm not. I've still a pail of whitewash at my disposal.

SLOPS. (*outside—sings*) " Immensikoff, Immensikoff," &c.

TWIT. The painter! Come back just in time. (*runs to window, R.*) Hi, you sir!

SLOPS. (*outside*) What is it—no larks?

TWIT. I should think not. (SLOPS *ascends, R.*) Now then, if you want to earn two gallons of beer, jump in. (SLOPS *does so, TWITTLES gives him paint pot*) Stand firm with your paint pot and poke a brushful into the mouth of the first man who tries to come through.

SLOPS. Right you are, guv'nor.

TWIT. (*dragging pail over to window, L.*) Tugboots wants a whitewashing, he shall have one. (*noise heard without, TWITTLES watching*) He mounts the water-butt—he grasps the ladder! Up, Slops and at 'em! (COCKLESHOT'S *head appears, R.*—SLOPS *dabs at it with brush and it goes down*—TWITTLES, L., *pours out pail of whitewash—loud splash heard—ladder disappears, gun goes off!*)

TUG. (*without*) Murder! (*noise, which continues*)

TWIT. Heavens! the ladder's tumbled a way, and he's dropped into the water-butt.

COCKLE. (*Jumping in, R.*) What?

TWIT. Tableau! Murder! Oh, Cockleshot, Cockleshot, here's a climax to my second volume, I meant him to murder you. (*falls into COCKLESHOT'S arms*)

SLOPS. (*looking out, L.*) The old gent's all right. He's gone in straight.

TUG. (*outside*) Help me out, help me out.

TWIT. (*reviving*) It's all right. The rope—here goes. (*flings out coil of rope*) Catch hold! (TUGBOOTS *is dragged in at the window exhausted—clothes covered with whitewash*)

VIOLET. (*running in c.*) My father, saved!

TUG. Saved! confound it—I've caught my death of cold. (*sneezes*)

TWIT. Then you've no business to collect taxes like a lamplighter.

TUG. You villain, I'll bring an action-----

VIOLET. No, don't, papa—think of my reputation.

COCKLE. And of the fulfilment of your promise to the preserver of your child. (*takes VIOLET'S hand*)

TUG. Oh, nonsense! I can't sacrifice my daughter in this way. I don't know your name.

TWIT. Don't you? then I'll tell you. Lieutenant Shuttlecock, I mean Cockleshot—of the Foreign Service.

TUG. Then you know each other?

TWIT. No, we don't; he knows me, but I don't know him.

VIOLET. Papa, forgive us. It was only a little plot to obtain your consent to our marriage this morning.

TUG. Plot! Consent—ridiculous nonsense. Did you say

Cockleshot ?—the son of Captain Cockleshot, an old rate-payer in this parish.

COCKLE. The same.

TUG. All right, I'm agreeable, but I can't stay here; I must go and change my clothes. (*goes towards door, C.*)

TWIT. Here, stop, Tugboots—just wring yourself out, will you—don't run about like a watering pot over my carpet.

TUG. Get out. Ugh ! (*runs out, c.*)

TWIT. Besides, what are the young couple to do? They must have a father to get married.

VIOLET. Then, sir, may we add to our obligations, and ask you to assist on the occasion?

COCKLE. Do come, Skinner, there's a good fellow.

TWIT. Look here, Shuttlecock, I ain't a Skinner, but I'll come. (*takes up novel*) It's all experience—real flesh and blood—I must pen my sensations while they are vivid. First Vol., abduction; Second Vol., murder! but what am I to do for the last, I don't feel inclined to go in for suicide.

COCKLE. Think of that afterwards; you're delaying my marriage.

TWIT. (*with a burst of satisfaction*) Marriage! Ha, ha ! That's it. Suicide, poor devil! (*makes note*)

SLOPS. (*coming down*) Excuse me, guv'nor, hadn't I better have that beer?

TWIT. Certainly, and I shall retain you to liven 'em up with " Immensikoff" during the wedding breakfast.

VIOLET. Shan't forget your kindness, Mr. Skinner.

TWIT. One moment. (*puts on hat*) Now then. (*takes novel, and comes down to foot-lights—to audience*) I'll just read over my morning's work to you. (*reads impressively*) " Myrtle had no sooner decided on her course of action, than"—(*pauses*) No, hang it, I can't go on—that fellow Tugboots' absurd conduct in getting into my water-butt, has quite ruined my feelings—so that instead of a novel—what do you say—it strikes me it's more like a farce—"IN THREE VOLUMES."

**Curtain.**