

FOGGERTY'S FAIRY

W.S. Gilbert

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FOGGERTY'S FAIRY

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FOGGERTY'S FAIRY
An Entirely Original Fairy Farce
in three acts

"On a banni les demons et les fees,
Le raisonner tristement s'accredite:
On court, helas! apres la verite:
Ah! croyer moi l'erreur a son merite!"
VOLTAIRE.

"Demons and fays are banished, hand in hand,
Stern Common Sense has ousted Necromancy:
Though fact, alas, now lords it o'er the land:
Trust me, there's something to be said for Fancy!"
VOLTAIRE.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

Frederick Foggerty } Young Surgeons { Mr CHARLES WYNDHAM
Walkinshaw } without practice { Mr GEO. GIDDENS
Talbot ... (a Wholesale Cheesemonger) ... Mr. W. BLAKELEY
Dr. Lobb ... } Mad { Mr A. MALTBY
Dr. Dobb ... } Doctors { Mr. H.H. ASTLEY
Blogg ... (a Mad Keeper) ... Mr A. REDWOOD
Uncle Fogle Mr A.M. DENISON
Walker } ... Wedding ... { Mr EDWARD H. BELL
Balker } ... Guests ... { Mr ALEX. VERTON
The Fairy Rebecca ... Miss ROSIE SAKER
Jennie Talbot {Engaged in Act I. to Foggerty.} Miss M. RORKE
{Engaged in Act II. to Walkinshaw}
Miss Delia Spiff .. (a matter-of-fact Old Lady) Miss M. DALY
Tottie } Jennie's { Miss F. HARRINGTON
Lottie } Bridesmaids { Miss K. RORKE
Aunt Bogle Mrs A. MELLON
AND
Miss De Vere ... (a romantic Lady) Mrs. JOHN WOOD

ACT I.

SCENE.—Drawing-room in TALBOT's house on the morning of his daughter's marriage to FOGGERTY. A large bow-window leads into a garden. TALBOT is discovered. The following guests are disposed about the room—UNCLE FOGLE (a snuffy old gentleman), AUNT BOGLE (a stout lady), WALKER and BALKER (two young men), and others. All are in extremely low spirits, except TALBOT, who endeavours to infuse a little cheerfulness into the company. All wear favours.

ALL [sighing]. Ah!

UNCLE FOGLE. Oh, dear me, dear me!

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TALBOT. What is the matter with you all? Do try and be cheerful. If my only daughter is going to be married to a penniless young apothecary, there's no occasion to treat her wedding as though it were a funeral. Pray, pray remember that this is, after all, a festive occasion.

FOGLE. My dear John, I wouldn't, for the world, say a word to cast a gloom over these—well, these rejoicings; but I can't help thinking, that, with her attractions, Jenny might have looked a little higher. You understand, I don't say it – I confine myself to thinking it.

AUNT BOGLE. You see, John, you know so little of Mr. Foggerty.

TALBOT. I knew him when he was a little boy of nine; he was a very clean little boy of nine.

BALKER. Ah! but a man's character is not formed at nine.

FOGLE. However, it's no use crying over spilt milk.

AUNT BOGLE. Very true—what's done can't be helped.

WALKER. Except it's mutton—and then what's under-done can't be helped. [All smile sadly at WALKER's joke.]

TALBOT [shaking WALKER's hand]. Thank you, Tommy; it's very kind and thoughtful of you to make that joke.

WALKER. I'll make another presently.

TALBOT. Thank you. I'm sure you will. I won't forget it. God bless you, Tommy.

AUNT BOGLE. After all, Mr Foggerty may be a very respectable young man.

UNCLE FOGLE. Equally, of course, he may not; but let us not anticipate disaster.

TALBOT. What was I to do? Jenny has, somehow, got a ridiculous idea into her head that she could never love any man who had ever loved before, and she is weak enough to believe that she has found this monstrosity in Foggerty. I've told her all sorts of anecdotes to his disparagement— not exactly true ones, because I couldn't find out any—but the sort of anecdotes that I dare say are true if one only knew. It's a painful thing, gentleman, for a father to have to admit, but my undutiful girl won't believe me.

FOGLE. It's a sad thing when a girl won't believe her own father!

WALKER. If she won't believe her own father, whose father will she believe? [All smile sadly at WALKER's joke.]

TALBOT. Thank you, my boy—thank you! It was just the same with poor, broken-hearted Walkinshaw. She fell in love with Walkinshaw because she thought he had never loved before, but she found out from Foggerty that Walkinshaw had already been engaged to somebody, so that settled him. Then she fell in love with Foggerty. We did all we could to fix him with an affair of some kind, but in vain; it's true we did rake up an old boyish flirtation of his, but he was rather young at the time—only nine—and it's not likely to have been serious.

AUNT BOGLE. I don't know—a boy who flirts at nine will flirt at ninety, that's my experience.

BALKER. Nine is a critical age—a man's character is often formed at nine.

TALBOT [looking off]. But Jenny's coming down—she's in the highest possible spirits, and I don't want her to be depressed. Those who feel

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they really can't bear up had better, perhaps, go and shed some tears in the garden [all go off except AUNT BOGLE, UNCLE FOGLE, and TALBOT], and, those who remain, please remember that you've been asked in order to contribute to the general hilarity, and, for goodness' sake, don't forget that this is really and truly a festive occasion. Come, let us all smile.

[All smile grimly as JENNY enters, in a flood of tears, and dressed in morning dress. She is followed by LOTTIE and TOTTIE, dressed as bridesmaids. She throws herself down on a chair, weeping bitterly. LOTTIE and TOTTIE comfort her.]

JENNY [weeping]. Oh dear! oh dear! What shall I do?

TALBOT. There's Jenny at it now! Bless my heart, she'll have a red nose at the church!

LOTTIE. There, there—don't cry—don't cry!

TOTTIE. It's sure to be all right—don't cry!

TALBOT. Now what is it, and why are you not dressed? What are you crying for?

JENNY. Oh, papa, papa—I'm to be married this morning, and—

TALBOT. She's to be married this morning, and she's crying about it! Isn't that like a woman? And whose fault is it, I should like to know?

JENNY. Oh, papa, I'm not crying because—because I'm g-g- going to be married to Frederick—but I've g-got to be at the church in half an hour, and my dress hasn't come home yet. [Fresh burst of grief.] Oh dear! oh dear! What shall I do?

TALBOT. Dress not come home?

[During all this UNCLE FOGLE and AUNT BOGLE preserve a ridiculous and immovable smile.]

JENNY. No, it was tight under the arms, so I sent it back, and it was to have come home this evening, and I've nothing to wear!

AUNT BOGLE. Don't cry, child. I've my own wedding—dress at home. It was made in 1820. I've never worn it but once. I'll lend it to you.

TALBOT. Why, that'll be the very thing.

JENNY [sobbing]. No—no. You—you're too fat. [UNCLE FOGLE and AUNT BOGLE, who have been smiling fixedly all this time, suddenly look disgusted.] I mean I'm too thin. [Exeunt AUNT BOGLE and UNCLE FOGLE in a huff.] Oh dear! what shall I do?

TALBOT. Come, come. I'll send for it. It'll be here directly. [To LOTTIE and TOTTIE] Pick her up, my dears, pick her up, and, above all things, don't let her have a red nose at the church. Powder it, my dears; powder it. This is a festive occasion and it absolutely must be powdered.

[Exit TALBOT.]

LOTTIE. There! It's sure to arrive in time.

TOTTIE. I'm sure I hope it will, if it's only to spite the ill-natured people who are always running Mr. Foggerty down.

JENNY. I don't care what they say. He has one virtue that would

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sanctify him in my eyes though his errors were legion. He, at least, has never loved before.

LOTTIE. Well, it's possible, dear, of course.

JENNY. Possible! I have it on the very best authority. He told me so himself. He ought to know, I suppose.

TOTTIE. He ought to, dear, of course.

JENNY. Oh, would you have me doubt the man I love? Would you have me love the man I doubt? Oh no! no! Love doubts not. Doubt loves not. He says he has never loved, and it is enough.

LOTTIE [to **TOTTIE**]. I'm sure I hope he hasn't, for if she found out, too late, that he had deceived her, what would she do?

[Exeunt **LOTTIE** and **TOTTIE**.]

JENNY [dreamingly]. What would I do? I don't know. It would be something with a knife in it, and there would be blood. I don't know whose—perhaps his—perhaps mine! Oh, I dare not think of it!—I dare not think of it!

[Enter **FOGGERTY**, sticking a flower in his buttonhole.]

FOGGERTY. There. It's wonderful how a tastily selected vegetable sets one off. [Sees **JENNY**.] Jenny! My own! Why, not dressed yet? What's the matter?

JENNY [dreamily]. I say I dare not think of it.

FOGGERTY. Why not?

JENNY [dreamily]. There would be blood, wouldn't there?

FOGGERTY. If you dressed yourself? No, I don't see why there should. There, go and put on your things.

JENNY [dreamily]. Yours or mine?

FOGGERTY. Yours, of course. What do you mean?

JENNY. I mean, if I found out that you had ever loved another—

FOGGERTY. Oh, of course, in that case mine; I would shed it myself.

JENNY. But you never have?

FOGGERTY. I? Never!

JENNY. This flirtation—when you were nine?

FOGGERTY. It was nothing. She made eyes at me in church.

JENNY. And what did you do?

FOGGERTY. I fled.

JENNY. In horror?

FOGGERTY. In horror. It was so bold of her. I was appalled.

JENNY. My delicate-minded Frederick! Oh, he has never loved till now!

FOGGERTY. Jenny, we are to be married to-day; do you think I might—

JENNY. I think so, dear; it is our wedding-day.

FOGGERTY. Under the circumstances, I think. [Kisses her. Both sigh.]

JENNY. I don't know how it is, it's very strange and unaccountable and unwomanly; but, although my dress don't fit, I feel almost happy!

FOGGERTY. I am glad you are happy, Jenny.

JENNY. I have always said that my love should only be given to one who had never loved before. I will not have a heart at second-hand. My husband must be one whose torch of love was lit by me alone, and you

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are such an one, are you not?

FOGGERTY. Yes; many a night and oft have I lain awake gazing at the moon, and wondering what manner of thing this love might be of which I had heard so much, this strange and irrational desire to spend a lifetime with the adored object; and, when I renewed my old acquaintance with you, the sun broke on my darkness, and all seemed clear as summer noon!

JENNY. My darling!

FOGGERTY. Do you think I might again?

JENNY. Yes, dear, I think so.

FOGGERTY. No, no—better not—better not.

JENNY. In my eyes, a man who has once loved is as a defaced postage—stamp—interesting, perhaps, to the collector, but to all others a thing of naught.

FOGGERTY. Such as poor Walkinshaw, for example.

JENNY. Such as poor Mr. Walkinshaw. I do not think I ever loved him, but he interested me because I believed that I was the first that had ever kindled the fire of love within his heart. But, to my horror and disgust, before we had been engaged a fortnight I learnt from you that he had already loved another.

FOGGERTY. I felt it to be my duty not to conceal from you a fact so material to your happiness, my poor child.

JENNY. Poor then, but poor no longer. Rich in the devotion of a heart that throbs for me, and me alone!

FOGGERTY. Oh! don't you think I might venture once more, to — No, no. We can wait—we can wait.

[Enter WALKINSHAW. He is in a most depressed condition, but gorgeously dressed, nevertheless.]

JENNY. Mr Walkinshaw!

WALKINSHAW. Nay, don't mind me. Proceed with your fondlings. Time was when I could not have witnessed them. But I must get used to it—it's good practice. Go on.

JENNY. It's your own fault, Mr. Walkinshaw. You led me to believe that yours was a virgin heart.

FOGGERTY. Too bad, Walkinshaw—too bad.

WALKINSHAW [furiously]. Foggerty, I submit to Miss Talbot's reproaches, for I respect and sympathize with the feelings that give them birth. But from you I will not stand it. Take care, sir—take care!

JENNY. Wouldn't you rather retire, Mr. Walkinshaw? It must pain you to see us like this.

WALKINSHAW. No—I must learn to bear it. Go on; but do it by degrees. Put your arm around her waist, Foggerty. There— let me get used to that first. [Writhes in anguish.]

JENNY. If you had been all that you represented yourself to be, you would to-day have stood in Frederick's place, and he would, very likely, have been your best man.

WALKINSHAW. And bad would have been the best! Miss Talbot, it is true that I had already loved, but whom? A woman who lived on actions

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for breach of promise—who had already brought eighteen such actions, and who was seeking every opportunity to make me the defendant in a nineteenth. Foggerty, oblige me by allowing Miss Talbot to rest her head on your shoulder.

FOGGERTY. Do you mean it? [She does so.]

WALKINSHAW. Oh, it is hard to bear!—it is hard to bear! [Writhing.] Now kiss her. [FOGGERTY does so.] Oh!!! [Writhing.]

JENNY. Mr Walkinshaw, you deliberately deceived me, and I can never believe you again.

FOGGERTY. I'm surprised at you, Walkinshaw, I am indeed.

WALKINSHAW. Miss Talbot, I admit that I deceived you. Still, if you will so far forget the past as to extend credence to me when I tell you, on the faith and honour of a broken-hearted gentleman, that your wedding-dress has just arrived, you will pour one drop of balm into a wound that has hitherto yawned balmless.

JENNY. My wedding-dress arrived! And you brought it! Oh, thank you, thank you. Mr Walkinshaw, there is much that is very nice about you. Oh, why did you deceive me once? But for that I might even now be—but no [looking at FOGGERTY], it is better as it is!

[Exit JENNY.]

FOGGERTY. Ha! ha! ha! poor Walkinshaw!

WALKINSHAW. Cheat! impostor! snake!

FOGGERTY. Not at all, Walkinshaw. I've merely profited by your example.

WALKINSHAW. Oh, this is hard—this is bitterly hard! However, you're not married yet, that's one comfort.

FOGGERTY. No; but I shall be in half an hour—and that's another.

WALKINSHAW. Don't be too sure; I have news for you. Delia Spiff, your late fiancée, arrived from Melbourne yesterday.

FOGGERTY. Are you in earnest?

WALKINSHAW. Look at that. [Hands newspaper.]

FOGGERTY [reads]. Blackball line—"Red Knight"—specie—passengers on board—Miss Delia Spiff! What's to be done? She'll come here of course! The Talbots are her only living relatives! Why, she may arrive at any moment, and if she should---

WALKINSHAW. It would be a just retribution. You trifled with her, sir! [Sternly.]

FOGGERTY. Trifled with her? Nonsense! you can't trifle with an old woman with a green umbrella. Besides, I was in Melbourne, starving, penniless. There, under my very nose, so to speak, was a comic old dowager, absolutely rolling in bank notes and sound securities—rolling in them, sir—under my very nose! What was I to do?

WALKINSHAW. A man of proper feeling would have looked the other way.

FOGGERTY. I had the bank notes before my eyes; they dazzled me. I didn't see the dowager—at least not clearly—until some weeks after I proposed to her. As soon as my eyes got used to the glare of the money the dowager dawned upon me.

WALKINSHAW. How did she look?

FOGGERTY. Fearful! I couldn't do it. I couldn't, indeed. You couldn't do it. I didn't like to tell her so, so I implied it gently

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and delicately. In fact, I bolted, and came to England. I found Jenny, the friend of my childhood, young and cheerful. She was engaged to you; but, nevertheless, she was quite cheerful. I felt it to be my duty to let her know how basely you had deceived her. You were dismissed, and I stepped into your shoes, in the assumed character of a gentleman who had never loved before. And in half an hour I marry her.

WALKINSHAW. Supposing, always, that Spiff don't turn up.

FOGGERTY. Walkinshaw, she shan't turn up. I won't give her time to turn up; we'll be off at once. [Impatiently.] What are we waiting for? Why don't they come? Why don't we start? What an extraordinary thing it is that a woman cannot be punctual! [Calling.] Jenny, are you ready? What! "five minutes?" It's an unreasonable time. Can't you come as you are? "Impossible?" Ridiculous! [Getting more impatient.] What is the reason of this preposterous delay? Why does everything go wrong to-day? Why have you got a confounded green waistcoat, and a ridiculous red tie? [Pulling him about.]

WALKINSHAW. Don't! I'm dressed for a wedding!

FOGGERTY. Dressed for a wedding? You're dressed for a lobster salad! [To footstool.] You get out! [Kicking it.] You're always in the way!

WALKINSHAW [at door]. This is what it is to play with women's hearts! But a terrible revenge will be mine. The wedding breakfast has yet to be eaten, and I supply the wine.

[Exit.]

FOGGERTY. Upon my soul, I believe I'm the unluckiest dog breathing! I did think I was safe this time. She'll come here, of course—and then— Why don't that girl come? [Calling.] Jenny, do come along! Never mind the hooks and eyes. You can do them in the carriage. What? "Couldn't think of such a thing." There, isn't that a woman all over? Dress— dress—dress. Always dressing, and never done with it. [Looking at watch.] Half—past eleven! We shan't get to the church for an hour, and if Delia should turn up! It's fearful—it's more than fearful. It's appalling! It's a fix that nothing short of a fairy godmother could get me out of. Why haven't I a fairy godmother? People used to have them. You had only to invite them to your christening, and they'd do anything for you. Now, I call that gratitude. But fairy godmothers are out of fashion now, and gratitude went out with them. Still, if there is such a thing as a guardian angel watching over me, here is an opportunity to show what she's worth, that may never occur again.

[Slow music. The wall opens, and the fairy REBECCA is discovered standing in front of a revolving star. He does not see her, but he hears the slow music.]

There's a confounded German band outside, with the clarionet out of tune, as usual.

REBECCA [coming down]. Mr Foggerty!

FOGGERTY. Eh! [Turns and sees her.] Hallo! I beg your pardon, but—

REBECCA. You don't know me?

FOGGERTY. I—that is— Well, no, I don't know you.

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REBECCA. I'm the Fairy Rebecca!

FOGGERTY. The Fairy Rebecca?

REBECCA. Yes; don't be frightened. I'm a good fairy.

FOGGERTY. Now, you be off; we've nothing for you. Come, away you go.

REBECCA. You don't believe me?

FOGGERTY. No, I don't believe you.

REBECCA [humbly]. Upon my word I'm speaking the truth. I really am a fairy, I am indeed. Didn't you see me appear?

FOGGERTY. No.

REBECCA. I came through that wall—right through it!

FOGGERTY. Can you disappear through it?

REBECCA. Certainly.

FOGGERTY. Then the sooner you do it the better.

REBECCA [going towards wall]. I think you're extremely unkind. I came simply because I thought I might be of use to you. But if you don't want me---

FOGGERTY. Stop. Are you, by any chance, in earnest?

REBECCA. Of course I'm in earnest; but it's the old story. Nobody believes in us nowadays. Time was when we mixed ourselves up, as a matter of course, in human business. We were a power then, and people were afraid of us. Whenever an important christening took place we were invited as a matter of course, and if any one of us was neglected, it was bad for the baby. Ah, those were days!

FOGGERTY. But that was some time ago. We don't associate ladies of your calling with frockcoats and trousers.

REBECCA. Exactly; and so our existence is reduced to a mere question of tailoring. If tights and trunks came in again, I suppose we should come in again with them.

FOGGERTY. I trust not. I trust not.

REBECCA. Why not?

FOGGERTY. Because they are not usually worn by ladies.

REBECCA [pettishly]. Come into fashion with them! One has to pick one's words in speaking to you, you are so matter-of-fact.

FOGGERTY. It's a matter-of-fact age.

REBECCA. Not particularly. Every age is matter-of-fact to those who live in it. Romance died the day before yesterday. To-day will be romantic the day after to-morrow.

FOGGERTY. Yes. Perhaps if you looked in again the day after to-morrow---

REBECCA. I'm speaking metaphorically. Don't be ridiculous. Now then, business. I'm your tutelary fairy.

FOGGERTY. My what?

REBECCA. Your tutelary fairy – your guardian genius. I hover over you – like this. [Hovers.] You know what I mean.

FOGGERTY. Am I to understand that you're always hovering over me when I don't know it?

REBECCA. Certainly.

FOGGERTY. Oh!

REBECCA. What's the matter?

FOGGERTY. Nothing. It's embarrassing, that's all. I wish I'd known it before! Has this hovering been going on long?

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REBECCA. About eighteen months—ever since your engagement to Delia Spiff. The fact is I was sorry to see a fine young man throwing himself away on a ridiculous old woman, so I said to myself, "That young man's making a fool of himself; I'll keep my eye on that young man."

FOGGERTY. Oh! you know about Delia Spiff?

REBECCA. To be sure. We all know about it. It's a standing joke up in Fairyland.

FOGGERTY. Is it? It's rather a serious matter down here. But—can I offer you anything?

REBECCA. Thank you. I'll take a glass of sherry and a biscuit. [He helps her. She drinks.] Now, then, what's the difficulty?

FOGGERTY. Oh, it's about that woman; she's the bane of my life! I'm on the point of being married to a most delightful girl, and I'm expecting Spiff to turn up every moment and claim me.

REBECCA. Ah! I thought as much! Well, what do you want me to do? I can't strangle Delia, you know, because I'm a good fairy.

FOGGERTY. What a pity.

REBECCA [with alacrity]. Yes; but I know a bad fairy who'd do it at once if I asked her.

FOGGERTY. No, no! I don't want to hurt Delia; but if you could manage to marry her offhand to somebody—to Walkinshaw, for instance—

REBECCA. No, it would be too hard on Walkinshaw. You see I'm a good fairy! The bad fairy I was speaking about would do it with pleasure if I asked her; but it would take time, and I suppose time is precious.

FOGGERTY. It is indeed. [Looking at his watch.] It's very annoying, for that woman's been the curse of my existence. All my misfortunes have had their origin in my engagement to her, and if I could blot her out of my existence I should be the happiest man alive.

REBECCA [musing]. Blot her out of your existence? Well, I think I could do that for you.

FOGGERTY [delighted]. You could!

REBECCA. Ye-es [considering], there's no difficulty at all about that; but—

FOGGERTY. Then I'll do it!

REBECCA. Don't be in a hurry. Think what you're about. If you blot Delia Spiff out of your career, you blot out at the same time all the consequences that came of having known her.

FOGGERTY. But, my good girl, that's exactly what I want to do!

REBECCA. Take care. The consequences of an act are often much more numerous and important than people have any idea of. Take your own case: you come of a good family, and you are proud of it.

FOGGERTY. We are the Lancashire Foggertys.

REBECCA. No doubt. You didn't do much towards it, and I don't see what you've got to be proud of; but still, proud you are. Now you would never have been born if your father had never met your mother.

FOGGERTY. I suppose not.

REBECCA. And your father met your mother in this wise. Some thirty-six years ago, as he was walking down Regent Street, his attentions were directed to a sculptor's shop, in which was a

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remarkable monument to a Colonel Culpepper, who died of a cold caught in going into the Ganges to rescue a favourite dog which had fallen into it. An old schoolfellow passed by, and, touching your father on the shoulder, asked him to dinner. Your father went, and at the dinner met your mother, whom he eventually married. And that's how you came about.

FOGGERTY. I see. If my father hadn't had that invitation to dinner I should never have been born.

REBECCA. No doubt; but your existence is primarily due to a much more remote cause. If your father hadn't loitered opposite the sculptor's shop, his schoolfellow would never have met him. If Colonel Culpepper hadn't died, your father would never have stopped to look at his monument. If Colonel Culpepper's favourite dog had never tumbled into the Ganges, the Colonel would never have caught the cold that led to his death. If that favourite dog's father had never met that favourite dog's mother that favourite dog would never have been born, neither would you. And yet you're proud of your origin!

FOGGERTY. I see. I never looked at it in that light. It's humiliating, for a Lancashire Foggerty.

REBECCA. It is humiliating. Well, now you see where you are, and you can do as you like. Here is a small phial and a box of prepared pills. When you wish to eliminate a factor from your social equation, all you have to do is express your wish and swallow the draught. When you wish to see me, all you have to do is express your wish and swallow a pill. But take my advice, don't use it except in the last extremity. Remember, if you obliterate an act and its consequences, it's impossible to say what incidents may or may not have taken their place. You are pretty nearly sure to find yourself in an entirely altered state of circumstances.

FOGGERTY. I understand. But---

REBECCA. Yes?

FOGGERTY. There's one question I should like to ask--- This is not a pantomime?

REBECCA. Bless the man, no.

FOGGERTY. It won't end in my being changed into Harlequin, and Jenny into Columbine, or any nonsense of that sort, will it? Because if it does---

REBECCA. You need not alarm yourself. This is not a Pantomime, but a very graceful and poetical Fairy Extravaganza. Rather dull, perhaps, but quite refined, and containing nothing whatever that could shock the sensibilities of the most fastidious.

FOGGERTY. That's quite sufficient. You understand the nature of my objection?

REBECCA. Perfectly---

FOGGERTY. It wouldn't be dignified---

REBECCA. I quite understand.

FOGGERTY. A Lancashire Foggerty jumping through a window!

REBECCA. Oh! it wouldn't do at all. Well, I must be off now, for I've got to dance second in a ballet in a fairy glen in half an hour. Remember, when you eliminate an act from your career, all its consequences, direct and indirect, are eliminated with it; so take my

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advice, and don't use it except in a last emergency. Where's my vampire? [Looking around.] Oh!—I see—thank you. [Placing herself opposite Vampire.] All right. Go!

[Vampire opens. She steps into it, it closes, and she disappears. Hurried music.]

FOGGERTY [bewildered]. So I've a guardian spirit, have I? I'm a sort of human ward in fairy chancery, and wherever I go, and whatever I do, there's a supernatural lady always at hand, popping in upon me when I least expect it, and looking down upon me when I haven't an idea of it. It's complimentary—it's even gratifying—but it's distinctly embarrassing. I'll defy any man to feel unconstrained and at his ease when he knows that there's an invisible young woman at his elbow all day long; and as for this phial—how do I know that my position will be improved if I use it? I don't like these unknown incidents that she alludes to. There's such a thing a getting out of the frying-pan into the fire. By Jove, when I think of the difficulties and dangers with which I'm surrounded, I feel uncommonly inclined to begin at the beginning, and wish that Colonel Culpepper's favourite dog's father had remained a bachelor to the end of his days!

[Enter JENNY in wedding-dress, followed by LOTTIE and TOTTIE.]

Oh, here you are at last. Now let's be off.

JENNY. And haven't you a word to say about my dress?

FOGGERTY. Eh, what? Oh, beautiful, beautiful. Now, do come!

LOTTIE. Isn't it lovely! Isn't it quite too charming?

TOTTIE. And look at the lace! It's Venetian point. And the bouquet! and do look at the wreath! It's absolutely heavenly.

FOGGERTY. Damn the wreath!

JENNY. Oh! [Bursts into tears.] Oh dear! did you hear what he said?

[Enter OLD TALBOT and WALKINSHAW, with the other guests from garden.]

FOGGERTY. Here you are at last!

TALBOT. Yes, all ready. Now then. [Sees JENNY crying.] Why, what's the matter now? You've got your dress, and what more do you want?

JENNY [crying]. Oh, papa! It's Frederick!

TALBOT. What has he done? Don't he like the dress?

JENNY. Yes—yes, he—he likes the dress, but—but—he damned the wreath!

TALBOT [horrified]. Foggerty, did you seriously damn that wreath?

FOGGERTY. Well, I damned it, but not seriously. It was a figure of speech.

TALBOT [to JENNY, who is whimpering]. There, there, you hear. It was a figure of speech. [To the others.] It was a poetical metaphor. A man may be allowed to indulge in a poetical metaphor on his wedding-day.

WALKER. If a man may not be allowed to indulge in a poetical

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metaphor on his own wedding-day, on whose wedding-day may he?

ALL. Ah! [Sighing.]

FOGLE. I cannot refrain, even at this supreme moment, from—

FOGGERTY. Stop—I know what you're going to say. I'm utterly unworthy of her. With her money, she might have done much better, and, no doubt, there's a good deal against me, if you only knew it. That's what you were going to say. Isn't it?

ALL. It is.

FOGLE. That sort of thing.

FOGGERTY. Well, then, I quite agree with you. It's carried unanimously. Now, let the subject drop.

TALBOT. Jenny, take my arm—Uncle Fogle offer your arm to Aunt Bogle; Walker take Lottie; Balker take Tottie; Foggerty, you follow with Walkinshaw, as a matter of course. [To all, who are looking very miserable.] Now, my dear friends, can't you manage to get up a smile? This is not a funeral.

AUNT BOGLE. Very true. Let us all smile.

[All smile except WALKINSHAW, who is scowling.]

TALBOT. Walkinshaw, if you don't smile you shall go home.

JENNY. Oh, Mr. Walkinshaw, pray smile, for my sake!

WALKINSHAW. For your sake? [Sighs, then, with an effort.] For your sake I will! [Assumes a forced smile.]

TALBOT. That's it—capital! and whatever you do, mind you keep that up. Now, then, away we go!

[They move towards door, when it opens, and MISS DELIA SPIFF enters. She is a very eccentric-looking old lady, and carries a large green umbrella.]

MISS SPIFF. Stop!

ALL. Who is this?

FOGGERTY [horrified]. Delia Spiff! I knew it! I'm a ruined man!

JENNY. Why, I declare it's Aunt Delia!

ALL. Aunt Delia?

MISS SPIFF. Yes; Aunt Spiff, arrived at Victoria Docks this morning, from Melbourne.

JENNY. Why, how fortunate! You're just in time for my wedding!

MISS SPIFF. Your wedding? Whom are you going to marry?

TALBOT. Mr. Frederick Foggerty.

MISS SPIFF. Oh, indeed!

FOGGERTY [confused]. Delighted, I'm sure.

MISS SPIFF [to FOGGERTY]. Well, you're a pretty fellow, you are!

JENNY. Frederick is generally admired.

MISS SPIFF [to FOGGERTY]. So I've caught you at last, have I?

JENNY. What do you mean?

MISS SPIFF. That young man belongs to me!

ALL. What!

MISS SPIFF. Here it is – black and white. [Producing document.] He admired me. I can't imagine what he saw in me to admire, but he saw

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something. I attracted him; he grew attentive. I fascinated him; he grew sentimental. I was coy; he proposed to me. I accepted him; he grew indifferent. I sang to him; he wearied of me. I danced before him; he fled!

WALKINSHAW. Oh, Foggerty, for shame! Too bad.

TALBOT [dismally]. You needn't smile any more at present, gentlemen.

JENNY. Frederick, what does this mean?

FOGGERTY. I believe she refers to me. It's nothing. It's a figure of speech, a mere form, commonly employed by elderly Australian ladies in—in renewing a—Platonic acquaintance. [Relapses.]

TALBOT. You hear? It's a figure of speech, a flight of metaphor—nothing more.

WALKER. If an elderly Australian lady may not be allowed to indulge in a flight of metaphor on renewing a Platonic acquaintance, who may?

TALBOT. To be sure. Thank you, Walker. [To company.] It's all right, you can smile again. [All smile mechanically.]

MISS SPIFF. Stuff and nonsense. There ain't much metaphor about me. I'm a plain fact.

FOGGERTY. A hideous fact!

JENNY [with an effort]. Aunt Delia, am I to understand that Mr. Frederick Foggerty offered marriage to you?

MISS SPIFF [indignantly]. Why, to be sure you are! What do you suppose he offered?

JENNY. It is well. I renounce him. You can go home, everybody. There will be no wedding to-day. Oh, papa, papa! to think that even he has loved before! [Sobs on TALBOT's breast.]

TALBOT [to company, who have preserved their fixed smile through this]. You needn't smile now, gentlemen. [All scowl.]

FOGGERTY. Jenny—I haven't—I didn't—it—it was a Platonic engagement.

MISS SPIFF. A Platonic fiddlestick!

FOGGERTY. Miss Spiff, you will not insist on your bond. You will be merciful! You will not dash the cup—dash it, the jug of happiness from my lips. You have a great heart, and so you will not do these things!

MISS SPIFF. Won't I? Come to the altar! [Collaring him.]

TALBOT. But my good woman.

MISS SPIFF. Woman yourself. [To FOGGERTY.] Come to joy!

TALBOT. Now, pray do be reasonable. Pray do let's have a little common sense.

MISS SPIFF. You shall. You want it. Hark ye, sir. You are in trade?

TALBOT. I am. Wholesale.

MISS SPIFF. So am I. Wholesale. What's your stock?

TALBOT. Mine's cheese.

MISS SPIFF. Mine's charms. It's a small business. There ain't many of them, and what there are ain't much to speak of. The stock's damaged, isn't it?

TALBOT. Well, as for that, I can hardly be so ungallant as to admit, to a lady's face, that—that---

MISS SPIFF. Stuff and nonsense. Is it damaged or is it not? Come! out with it. Yes, or no?

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TALBOT. Well, if you put it in that way, it is damaged.

MISS SPIFF. Not the sort of goods that one can get off one's hands every day of the week?

TALBOT. Oh, I don't say that. I can quite understand, for instance, that a snug, elderly gentleman, with a comfortable independence, would—

MISS SPIFF [abruptly]. Will you have me?

TALBOT [taken aback]. God bless me, no!

MISS SPIFF. Of course you wouldn't, and you're right. I wouldn't if I was you. Well, I've had a bid from that ridiculous young man. I knocked myself down to him and he fled.

FOGGERTY [on the sofa, feebly]. In all cases of dispute the goods to be put up again and knocked down to the highest bidder.

MISS SPIFF. But there ain't any dispute. Here it is—black and white. [Producing document.] "I, Frederick Foggerty, agree to marry you, Delia Spiff," and so on. I had it stamped. Business.

FOGGERTY. Jenny, once more, save me from this catastrophe! After all, you are rich, and it's a mere question of compensation!

JENNY. Away, sir! I regard you with horror! You have deceived a trusting young heart!

MISS SPIFF. And a suspicious old one!

AUNT BOGLE. Go, viper! We expected something of this sort.

TALBOT. But---

MISS SPIFF. Come to the altar—come to joy. [Collaring FOGGERTY.]

TALBOT. This is most exasperating—on a festive occasion! Confound you, why didn't you turn up before, ma'am? That wedding—dress wasn't made under twenty pounds, and it's wasted! Then there's the breakfast, and the carriages, and a new pair of trousers bought expressly for the occasion!

MISS SPIFF. Don't distress yourself. I'll take them off your hands.

TALBOT. They're not on my hands—they're on my legs, and I won't have them taken off on any account!

MISS SPIFF [to FOGGERTY]. Now, sir, are you ready?

FOGGERTY. Talbot, won't you say a word for me? Uncle Fogle, Aunt Bogle, Lottie, Tottie, Walker, Balker?

[All turn from him.]

UNCLE FOGLE. Not a word, sir. We felt sure of this all along, but, from motives of delicacy, we didn't say so. We confined ourselves to thinking it.

LOTTIE. We consider that Jenny had had a most fortunate escape.

TOTTIE. And we hope it will be a lesson to you for the future.

FOGGERTY. It's all over. I'm lost! Lead me away!

MISS SPIFF. Come to joy!

FOGGERTY. Stop! The draught! Rebecca's draught! I forgot that! Matters couldn't look worse than they are. It's a desperate remedy, but it's my only way out of it! [Staggers.] Oh! oh! Help! I'm fainting!

JENNY. Gracious, he's fainting.

[They wheel the sofa. JENNY rushes to him and supports him; he struggles to loosen his collar.]

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MISS SPIFF. Fainting? here's a pin. Prick him.

JENNY [to MISS SPIFF]. You brute! The eau-de-cologne – quick!

FOGGERTY. My tie, undo it! My waistcoat! Give me air! give me water! Quick! quick! Water—water—water! [Gasping, and kicking violently, on the sofa.]

JENNY [in great distress]. Oh, give him water—give him water, somebody!

[WALKINSHAW has poured out a glass of water and handed it to him. Slow music to end of act.]

FOGGERTY [rising and deliberately pouring the contents of the phial into the glass of water]. Ladies and gentlemen, I deliberately wish that my acquaintance with Miss Spiff, and all its consequences, may henceforward be blotted out of my existence!

[They all fall back in astonishment as FOGGERTY drinks. He falls insensible on the sofa. All group round him as he falls. Picture.]

ACT II.

SCENE.—A handsomely furnished back drawing-room in Harley Street. A wedding-bouquet on table. FOGGERTY is discovered asleep on a sofa. Enter FAIRY REBECCA through trap in stage.

REBECCA [looking at FOGGERTY]. Well, it's about time to wake him. Poor fellow, he little thinks how materially his acquaintance with Miss Spiff has affected his subsequent adventures! Now that he has obliterated her and all the complicated consequences that came of his having known her, he won't know whether he's on his head or his heels. I'm really rather sorry for him. However, I mustn't allow sentiment to interfere with duty. It's time to wake him, so here goes.

[Waves wand. FOGGERTY yawns, stretches himself and wakes.]

FOGGERTY [half awake]. Hallo! I've been asleep. [Yawns.] Dreaming too! What queer things dreams are! I dreamt that a Fairy appeared to me and gave me an ounce bottle, and told me that if I swallowed the contents— [Sees the phial in his hand.] Hallo! steady man, steady—pull yourself together! Why, as I am alive, here it is. The very one. [Reads direction label.] "To obliterate a circumstance, take two tea-spoonfuls in a glass of water." Then it couldn't have been a dream! I remember it all now. I was on the point of being married to

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Jenny—and Spiff turned up—and I determined to blot out Spiff—and I suppose I have blotted her out [looking round]; at all events she isn't here. [Sees REBECCA]. Hallo!

REBECCA. Hallo!

FOGGERTY. Well! here we are again!

REBECCA. Yes, here we are again.

FOGGERTY. So Spiff's blotted out?

REBECCA. Yes; Spiff's done with; no more Spiff.

FOGGERTY. No chance of her coming back—eh?

REBECCA. None whatever. Your acquaintance with Spiff and all its consequences are blotted out of your existence.

FOGGERTY. Come, that's something. But I don't know this room. Where am I?

REBECCA. You're where you would have been if you'd never known Spiff.

FOGGERTY. Of course I am; but where's that?

REBECCA. Can't tell, I'm sure.

FOGGERTY. Don't you know?

REBECCA. I don't say I don't know; I only say I can't tell.

FOGGERTY. Doesn't it occur to you that for a guardian spirit you take a rather airy and, if I may so express myself, philosophical view of your duties?

REBECCA. A guardian spirit? Oh, I'm not your guardian spirit now.

FOGGERTY. The deuce you're not?

REBECCA. Oh dear, no; that's all over—wiped out with Spiff.

FOGGERTY. And why wiped out with Spiff?

REBECCA. You will recollect that I became your guardian spirit because I was sorry to see a fine young man throw himself away upon such an old scarecrow as Spiff.

FOGGERTY. Well?

REBECCA. But as you haven't thrown yourself away upon Spiff, the occasion for my services hasn't arisen. You see you never knew Spiff.

FOGGERTY. Oh. May I ask if any other friends have been Spiffed out?

REBECCA. Once more, I'm not at liberty to say. [Going to trap.] You'll excuse me, I'm sure.

FOGGERTY. But you're not going without giving me some clue to my position?

REBECCA. I must; I can't help you, you must find it all out for yourself. I'm due at a Transformation Scene to change a respectable young plumber and a good plain cook into Harlequin and Columbine, and the gas is a serious item. I'm sorry I can't be of any further service to you; but, you see, I'm Spiffed out! Good morning. [On trap.] Go!

[She stamps her foot and disappears through trap.]

FOGGERTY [in bewilderment]. But, here, I say! I've no idea where I am, or who I am, or how I'm here, or whose house this is, and how I came into it—or, for that matter, whose trousers these are, and how I came into them! What am I to do? I can't go about asking people if they'll kindly tell me who I am, or if they'll be so obliging as to inform me where I live, or what I did yesterday, or what I've arranged

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to do to-morrow; they'd take me for a lunatic! And Jenny, how about Jenny? is she Spiffed out? No, no. I knew her long before I knew Spiff. So that can't be. Now, let me see. I was on the point of being married to Jenny when Spiff turned up and prevented the marriage. But Spiff's obliterated. So, of course the marriage went on, and of course I'm married to Jenny. By-the-by, I wonder if I've been married to her long? I hope not. When you're head over ears in love with a girl, as I was with Jenny, it's disappointing to go to sleep and wake up and find that you've been married to her ever so long, and got tired of her, as I'll be bound I have of Jenny. [Finds a letter in his pocket.] Hallo! Here's a letter. It's addressed to me—and opened! Now, who the deuce has dared to open letters addressed to me? Oh! I suppose I did. I don't recollect doing it, but that doesn't seem to signify. [Reads.] "Dearest, take heart." Hallo! this is not Jenny's hand! [Resumes.] "Dearest, take heart. Situated as we are towards one another, I do not think it would be quite prudent in me to call upon you." No, I should think not! "Nevertheless, in the course of to-morrow, I hope to be in a position to remove, for ever, the crushing load of anxiety under which you have so long laboured." That's all! No signature. Humph! It seems that I'm infernally anxious about something; it would be convenient to know what it is. I'll ask Jenny. But, stop a moment, perhaps Jenny doesn't know of this letter. Now, I wonder if she knows of it. I'll be bound she doesn't know of it. There's something about this letter— I don't know what—but something—that suggests that in all probability I shouldn't have shown it to her. Humph! I am extremely sorry to say that, notwithstanding the strictness of my principles, circumstances seem to point to the fact that I've been going it.

[Enter LOTTIE and TOTTIE in the bonnets and dresses they wore in Act I.]

LOTTIE. Oh, Mr. Foggerty!

FOGGERTY. Lottie! Tottie! I'm delighted to see you. I'm delighted to find that you're not Spiffed out.

TOTTIE. Not Spiffed out? Oh, but we flatter ourselves that we are spiffed out; at all events, we've got our best dresses on.

LOTTIE. I should think so; on this day of all others.

FOGGERTY. Of course; but I didn't mean that. Never mind. [Aside.] Now, by a judicious course of pumping, I shall find out exactly how I'm situated. [Aloud.] Well, what is it?

TOTTIE. A lady has sent this up [giving card], and says she must see you at once.

FOGGERTY [looking at card]. Malvina de Vere! I don't know Malvina de Vere.

LOTTIE. Oh, that's nonsense. She says you are her dearest friend.

FOGGERTY. Oh, absurd!

LOTTIE. Well, that's what she says.

FOGGERTY. The deuce she does! [Aside.] Now, this must be some one whom I should have known, if I hadn't known Spiff— some one, in fact, who's been Spiffed out. This is awkward. I wonder if Jenny knows of

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this? [Aloud.] By—the—by, where is Jenny?

LOTTIE. Jenny? Oh, she's upstairs, poor girl.

FOGGERTY [aside]. "Poor girl?" Why "poor girl," I wonder? [Aloud.] Ah, poor girl! How is she by this time?

TOTTIE. Oh, pretty well.

FOGGERTY. Pretty well? Not very well?

TOTTIE. Why, you can hardly expect her to be very well, on this day of all others.

FOGGERTY. Naturally. [Aside.] I wonder what day of all others this is?

LOTTIE. But still she is as well as can be expected.

FOGGERTY. As well as—— [Aside.] I see where I am now. I've been married some time, and—I wonder if it's a boy or a girl! It would be ridiculous to ask. I'll go and see her. [Going.]

TOTTIE. Where are you going?

FOGGERTY. Going? Why, to see Jenny, of course.

TOTTIE. Oh, you can't possibly see her, she's dressing.

FOGGERTY. Well, what of that?

LOTTIE. Upon my word, Mr. Foggerty.

TOTTIE. You can't go up to her; you must really wait till she comes down.

FOGGERTY. Oh, she is well enough to come down, is she?

LOTTIE. What a question; and on this day of all others! Of course she is.

FOGGERTY. Exactly; on this day of all others. [Aside.] What does she mean by "this day of all others"?

TOTTIE. It's a day I never expected to see.

FOGGERTY. Didn't you? Bless me, I knew all about it from the first.

LOTTIE. When one thinks of all the circumstances of the case, one sees how true it is that truth is stranger than fiction.

TOTTIE. Oh, what a novel it would make! Only think. The young and penniless apothecary who had never known what love was—

LOTTIE. The wholesale cheesemonger's daughter—

TOTTIE. Their meeting—the dawn of love in the apothecary's heart—

LOTTIE. The opposition of the cruel and mercenary parent—

TOTTIE. Her determination to wed the apothecary at all hazards—

LOTTIE. Everything at a dead lock! Then the discovery of the pill—

TOTTIE. At midnight—

LOTTIE. Its sudden renown—

TOTTIE. The pill in everybody's mouth—

LOTTIE. Stupendous fortune realized by the inventor in no time. All opposition removed, and they're to be married to— day!

FOGGERTY [who has been looking from one to the other in bewildered wonderment during this dialogue]. To—day!

LOTTIE. Of course! The successful young apothecary and the cheesemonger's lovely daughter are to be united to—day.

FOGGERTY [aside]. Today! [Aloud.] But I thought you said she was as well as could be expected?

LOTTIE. Well, so I did, and so she is.

TOTTIE. Bless the man, she's nervous and excited, of course, but she's not too ill to be married.

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LOTTIE. I should think not, indeed; one must be bad for that!

[Exeunt **LOTTIE** and **TOTTIE**, laughing.]

FOGGERTY. Then I'm not married after all, and, what's more, I'm to be married to-day! Why, of course, here's the wedding-bouquet! I see it all now. I've invented a pill, the pill's taken—I'm a man of fortune—and the wedding is to take place from my house. Why, with a little tact—a little judicious pumping—how easy it all is. By-the-by, I wonder where I live? [Looks out of window.] Harley Street! Of course it's Harley Street. A man who invents a successful pill always does live in Harley Street! But this lady—my dearest friend on earth. That's awkward—on one's wedding-day. I can't imagine anything more awkward—on one's wedding-day. Does Jenny know of this? I'll be bound Jenny does not know of this. There's something about this lady's method—I don't know what—that convinces me that I shouldn't have told Jenny anything about her. Foggerty, my boy, I'm extremely sorry to say that circumstances point to the fact that you've been going it!

[Enter **MALVINA DE VERE**. She is a tall, stately lady of middle age and tragical demeanour. She stands at the door for a moment—gazes at him melodramatically—then rushes to his arms.]

MALVINA. Frederick! At last! at last! [Gazes at him fondly.]

FOGGERTY [aside.] She's a bosom friend – no doubt about that! [Aloud, and much embarrassed.] I—a—have much pleasure in—

MALVINA. Don't speak, not yet [gazing at him], not yet, I entreat you! Let me drink you in!

FOGGERTY. Certainly. Be so obliging as to say when you've had enough.

MALVINA. There—I'm satisfied.

FOGGERTY [aside.] I wish I was.

MALVINA. Now speak to me! Oh! my love! My tender, tender love! Speak to me as you used to speak to me—call me by the name by which you used to call me!

FOGGERTY. Really— [Aside.] By George, I have been going it!

MALVINA. The old, old name—the pet name of so many happy memories—oh, call me by it, call me by it!

FOGGERTY. Certainly; I— [refers to visiting card] I believe I have the—a—pleasure of addressing Miss de Vere?

MALVINA. Miss de Vere! [Drawing herself back in great surprise.] Miss de Vere? Why, what means this? Why this extraordinary coolness, why this chilling formality—and on this day of all others?

FOGGERTY. I beg your pardon, but you took me so completely by surprise.

MALVINA. By surprise? Have you forgotten my note, and your reply to it? Read it, sir, read it. [Gives him a note.]

FOGGERTY. With very great pleasure. [Aside.] Now I shall find out that infernal pet name. [Reads.] "My own." That's all. [Disappointed.] I hate a fellow who calls a girl "his own." [Reads.] "I recognize the propriety of your scruples in the particularly delicate relation in

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which we stand towards each other. But I implore you to come and see me to—morrow morning, nevertheless." There, you see it says "to—morrow morning."

MALVINA. This is to—morrow morning.

FOGGERTY. Nonsense, that can't be, that's ridiculous. [Refers to note.] Oh, I see, it was dated yesterday.

MALVINA. And now, sir, before I proceed to that extreme measure to which I have been unhappily so frequently compelled to resort, perhaps you will be so good as to explain and satisfactorily account for the extraordinary coldness of your reception.

FOGGERTY. My coldness? Oh, that was my scrupulous regard for the respect due to you in the particularly delicate relation in which we stand to one another.

MALVINA. It was?

FOGGERTY. It was. Miss de Vere, I find it hard, very hard to continue this assumption of indifference to you; but I am proud—I am proud to say, that my better man is triumphant.

MALVINA. I see! I understand it all!

FOGGERTY [aside]. Then, by George, you've the advantage of me!

MALVINA. You will forgive the undeserved reproaches with which in my jealous madness I dared to assail you?

FOGGERTY. Say no more about them—they are pardoned.

MALVINA. Why, what a mad fool was I!

FOGGERTY. You were—I mean no—not at all. [Aside.] I wish she'd go.

MALVINA. But I have been so often the victim of heartless and systematic treachery!

FOGGERTY. Have you?

MALVINA. Why, you know I have.

FOGGERTY. So I do—of course—I know you have! Poor girl, poor girl! When I think of your sad story—

MALVINA. Ah! it is a sad story!

FOGGERTY. I know it is. [Aside.] That's a sad story! [Aloud.] But, bless me, it's eleven o'clock, and I've a most important engagement in half an hour, and I'm not dressed. Will you excuse me?

MALVINA. Oh, by all means.

FOGGERTY. I suppose my dressing-room's upstairs?

MALVINA. Really, Mr. Foggerty, I don't know where your dressing-room is!

FOGGERTY. No, of course not. How should you?

MALVINA. Exactly. How should I? But won't you say farewell to me before you go?

FOGGERTY. With great pleasure. But, at the same time, in accordance with the pledge contained in that letter, I must firmly resist the temptation to address you by that old pet name of happy memories, until the relations between us have become more indelicate—that is to say, less delicate than they are.

MALVINA. It is nobly spoken; it is like your heroic self. But you are anxious, are you not? You do burn with a feverish anxiety to hear the word that is to be spoken this afternoon?

FOGGERTY. Miss de Vere, I assure you, on the honour of a Lancashire Foggerty, that I am tormented with a fidgety anxiety on an infinite

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number of topics, and on that among others! Good morning.

[Exit.

MALVINA. He is gone! How strange and incoherent his manner—how wild and flighty his eye! Oh, mercy on me! can it be that he, too, is false to me? Can it be that I shall be once more driven to resort to the last and hated means of vindicating my rights? No, no—I'll not believe it—and yet— [Sees breakfast in back room.] Why, what is this? By the God of Treachery it is a wedding—feast! Whose? Oh, impossible! and yet, his strange embarrassment—his evasive hesitation! Oh, misery—oh, misery, if it should be! Why, what a cursed thing am I! What have I done that this blight should fall on me wherever I go? Why does Infidelity dog my path, while the serpent Treachery lifts his head on high and hisses forth a loud ha! ha! Oh, ye Fate—hags three; soul torturers, my defiance to ye all! The fight is betwixt ye and me, and I am not made of the stuff that yields.

[Enter JENNY in wedding—dress, as in Act I.]

JENNY. There, I think I look lovely! [Sees MALVINA.] A lady!

MALVINA [aside, with emotion]. It is the bride! Down, down, my heart! [Aloud.] Fear not, pretty one; I am but Malvina de Vere—a very sorrowful lady.

JENNY. I am sorry you are sorrowful.

MALVINA [with an effort]. And you—you are the bride in whose honour these festive preparations have been made?

JENNY [sighing]. Yes, I'm to be married to—day. How do you like my dress?

MALVINA. It is very well—it is very well. [Aside.] How my heart throbs! Down, little one; I must appear calm, and I cannot do so while you beat so rapidly. [Aloud.] You—you are about to be married to Mr. Foggerty?

JENNY. To Mr. Foggerty? Oh dear, no! What could have put such an idea into your head?

MALVINA. You are not going to marry Mr. Foggerty?

JENNY. Assuredly not! He is my husband's best man!

MALVINA [relieved]. It is well—it is very well! [Aside.] Little heart, you hear?

JENNY. You seem agitated! Can I offer you anything?

MALVINA. I am agitated, young bride. I—I can never gaze upon a wedding garb without remembering that I, who am a simple maiden still, might, but for man's perfidy, have been, ere this, a grandmamma.

JENNY. Have they been deceiving you?

MALVINA. Deceiving me? Eighteen times have I stood dauntlessly at matrimony's verge. Eighteen times my coward victim—that is to say, my betrothed—has quailed and fled! He, man in name, blanched at the very danger that I courted.

JENNY. That's so like them! And you, what did you do?

MALVINA. I took the only course that open to me lay. Eighteen times I offered up my bleeding heart a sacrifice at Themis' sympathetic shrine. Eighteen times did I lay bare its holiest workings, and call on all to come and gaze upon its palpitating pulp. And in each case I

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recovered substantial damages.

JENNY. You did nobly! And the nineteenth?

MALVINA. His fate is yet uncertain. For many months have I lost sight of him. Yet have I heard within the last few weeks that he is also false and seeks another bride.

JENNY. Oh, poor lady!

MALVINA. It matters little—there's a twentieth in the field, whose exquisitely sensitive regard for my most difficult and delicate position falls scarcely short of the phenomenal; but, ere I yield me to his ardent prayers, I must in honour satisfy myself that my nineteenth is false. This afternoon the problem will be solved.

JENNY. My heart bleeds for you, sad and gentle lady. But whither go you now?

MALVINA. I scarce can say! To wander up and down and to and fro, restless as a caged panther in his den, until the double-barrelled news is brought that I am free to love and bring my action!

JENNY. Nay, but I'll not consign you to the mercies of the inhospitable street. This is my house, or shortly will be so; pray rest you here, and when the solemn ceremony is over, we pray you join our merry-making, and in the wild delirium of the breakfast forget the harrowing trouble at your heart.

MALVINA. I thank you, maiden, for your sympathy. I'll not refuse the shelter that you proffer.

JENNY. You'll find my boudoir on the two-pair-back. So, for the nonce, farewell! May justice pour her balm upon your heart!

MALVINA. She has, my dear, in every other case, and, doubtless, will in this. Once more, farewell.

[Exit.

JENNY [looking after her]. Poor lady, with what a touching dignity she bears her many disappointments! Her sad, sad tale touches me to the heart, for I, too, have loved, but vainly. Oh, how I loved him – and he knew it not! But there – I may not think of him – henceforth I may think only of my Theodore!

[Enter WALKINSHAW.]

WALKINSHAW. Jenny! my own! at last—at last my own!

JENNY. Oh, Theodore—indifferent to me in all else, but interesting to me inasmuch as I am the only woman who ever kindled the fire of love within your heart, be true to me, be true to me!

WALKINSHAW. Be true to you? While life lasts!

JENNY. And do you love me?

WALKINSHAW. Love you? Haven't I settled the pill upon you?

JENNY. Yes, yes; you have been most generous. I am the only one; am I not?

WALKINSHAW. The only one, in truth.

JENNY. And you have never known the throb of love?

WALKINSHAW. Until you taught it me!

JENNY. It is something; nay, it is much. For you, my Theodore, I have no love, nor have I ever told you that I had; but I esteem you, Theodore, I respect you.

FOGGERTY'S FAIRY

WALKINSHAW. Oh, rapture! But you are sad.

JENNY. Oh, Theodore, a lady has been here, such a sad, sad lady! so tearful yet so calm—so calm and yet so woebegone— so woebegone and yet so dignified! Eighteen times has that poor lady been thrown over.

WALKINSHAW. Thrown over where?

JENNY. And even now she has reason to believe that the nineteenth is trifling with her feelings!

WALKINSHAW [in great terror]. Bless my soul. What's her name?

JENNY. Her very name is Poetry and Soul!

WALKINSHAW Oh, then, I don't know her. [Much relieved.] It sounds like a firm.

JENNY. She is called Malvina de Vere.

WALKINSHAW [horrified – aside]. It's she. If she finds me at home, she'll find me out. I'm ruined. [Aloud.] Where is she?

JENNY. Sobbing her heart out in the two–pair–back.

WALKINSHAW. In my house?

JENNY. In yours and mine. Poor tortured soul; she waits a wire from her solicitor.

WALKINSHAW [much agitated]. Jenny, I—I have heard of this lady. She—she is not altogether worthy of your sympathy—

JENNY. What!!! How dare you, sir!

WALKINSHAW. She—she lives on actions for breach. She engages herself to an unsuspecting young man—makes herself intentionally unpleasant. Her lover can't stand her, and breaks it off—and she immediately brings an action.

JENNY. Oh, shame on you to dare in my presence—in the presence of your wife that is to be—to palliate the conduct of a wretch who makes unpleasantness a ground for violating the troth that he has plighted! Oh, shame upon you—shame upon you!

WALKINSHAW. But, Jenny, I—

[Enter FOGGERTY dressed for wedding, and sticking flower in buttonhole.]

FOGGERTY. There—that's very nice. It's wonderful how a judiciously applied vegetable sets a man off. That'll do, I think. Now if I can only find some one who will give me a clue to— [Sees WALKINSHAW]. Walkinshaw my boy, you here!

WALKINSHAW. Certainly I am.

FOGGERTY. The very last man I expected to see, I give you my unadulterated word of honour! [Shaking hands enthusiastically.]

WALKINSHAW. The last man?

FOGGERTY. The very last, I assure you. I'm more delighted than I can tell you!

WALKINSHAW. Why? It's hardly likely that I should be absent on this day of all others!

FOGGERTY. Well, it's very friendly of you to say so. I won't forget it, Walkinshaw, depend upon it. Will you take anything? Do! Make yourself at home, you know. This is Liberty Hall. [Sees JENNY.] Jenny! at last! my own Jenny! Why, how superb you look, and to think that in half an hour— — [Kisses her.]

FOGGERTY'S FAIRY

JENNY [surprised]. Mr. Foggerty!

FOGGERTY. And now, tell me how you've been all this time— and what you've been doing—and, in short, tell me all about it.

JENNY. All about what? [He kisses her.] Don't!

FOGGERTY. But I must—I'm so happy, so overpoweringly and stupendously happy! [Kisses her again—she rises offended.]

WALKINSHAW [aside]. I wish Jenny wouldn't let Foggerty kiss her so much; of course it's all right, because they've known each other as children; but still I wish he wouldn't do it! She doesn't let me, and I don't see why she should let him.

[FOGGERTY, who has been paying attention to JENNY during this, attempts to kiss her.]

JENNY. Mr. Foggerty, you mustn't really. I'm astonished at you!

WALKINSHAW. He's overdoing it; upon my soul he is!

FOGGERTY. Pooh, pooh! nonsense; on this day of all others. [Kisses her again.]

WALKINSHAW [aside]. I can't stand this. [Aloud.] I say, Foggerty, of course it's all right. I know how you and Jenny are situated—but still I think—I think, on this day of all others—

FOGGERTY [surprised]. What do you mean?

WALKINSHAW. There's too much of it, my boy. I'd leave off if I were you—I would, indeed!

FOGGERTY. No, you wouldn't, Walkinshaw, you jealous dog! [Aside.] Poor devil, he hasn't got over his attachment to her yet, and it is rather rough on him.

WALKINSHAW. Kissing her under my very nose—

FOGGERTY. Not under your very nose—under her very nose. Ha! ha! But, don't distress yourself, it shan't occur again.

WALKINSHAW. You're overdoing it, my boy.

FOGGERTY. Well, perhaps I am.

WALKINSHAW. I'm sure you are.

FOGGERTY. I agree with you—it's not delicate.

WALKINSHAW. It's d----d indelicate.

FOGGERTY. Yes, on this day of all others!

WALKINSHAW. Exactly; on this day of all others!

FOGGERTY. Then say no more about it. Take one yourself.

WALKINSHAW. Oh, we're in no hurry; we can wait.

JENNY [sighing]. Ah, yes, we can wait!

FOGGERTY. The deuce you can?

WALKINSHAW. Yes; you see we've plenty of time before us.

JENNY [sighing]. Plenty!

FOGGERTY [aside]. Plenty of time before them? Now, what do they mean by that?

WALKINSHAW. Well, it's about time we were off. Let's see, are we all here? there's Uncle Fogle and Aunt Bogle for the first carriage, and Lottie and Tottie, and Walker and Balker, and your papa and my mamma – and – yes, we're quite complete. I'll get them all packed off, and then come back for you.

[Exit WALKINSHAW.]

FOGGERTY'S FAIRY

FOGGERTY. Jenny, I don't like Walkinshaw's manner.

JENNY. His manner is unfortunate, but you mustn't be too hard on him; he's nervous and agitated.

FOGGERTY. I can understand that; but still I don't like it, Jenny, I don't like it.

JENNY. Oh, you must make allowance for him, and on this day of all others.

FOGGERTY. Well, poor devil, I suppose he's more to be pitied than blamed.

JENNY. Pitied! Well, I'm sure.

FOGGERTY. Yes, pitied. Now, Jenny, it's no use affecting surprise. I can see as far through a millstone as most people, and, mark my words, that man's in love with you!

JENNY. Of course he is!

FOGGERTY. Oh, you've noticed it?

JENNY [surprised]. Noticed it? Why, of course I've noticed it!

FOGGERTY. Then I say he's very much to be pitied—he has a dismal prospect before him.

JENNY. Upon my word, Mr. Foggerty!

FOGGERTY. Life a blank, every hope crushed, every fond illusion wiped out, nothing before him but a melancholy prime, a blighted sere—and—yellow, and a solitary and desolate old age. Poor Walkinshaw!

JENNY. How dare you say these things to me?

FOGGERTY. Eh?

JENNY. I say how dare you? From this moment I devote myself, heart and soul, to his happiness; it shall be my only care, my only thought!

FOGGERTY. The devil you will!

JENNY. I will, I swear it! It will be my duty, and my duty I will do!

FOGGERTY. It seems to me that you take an exceedingly comprehensive view of your duty! Look here, Jenny; let's understand one another. [Sits by her, puts his arm round her waist.] I know you're as good a girl as ever stepped. Still— --

JENNY. Frederick—Mr. Foggerty—you mustn't!

FOGGERTY. Mustn't what?

JENNY. Put your arm round my waist.

FOGGERTY. Well, it is round your waist.

JENNY [struggling]. But I say you mustn't.

FOGGERTY. Why not? Walkinshaw can't see.

JENNY. That has nothing to do with it. I won't allow it, because it's not right—on this day of all others!

FOGGERTY. Indeed? I should have thought if ever there was a day on which I might be permitted to take such an innocent freedom, this day of all others is the day.

JENNY [crying]. How dare you say such things to me! It is most unkind to me, and most unfair to your friend.

FOGGERTY. My friend? Oh, Walkinshaw! I tell you he can't see.

JENNY. I don't care, it's most unfair to him.

FOGGERTY. It seems to me you've a remarkably tender regard for Walkinshaw's feelings!

JENNY. Certainly I have. As you know, I don't pretend that I love

FOGGERTY'S FAIRY

him.

FOGGERTY. Well, I should hope not!

JENNY. I mean as a wife is expected to love her husband.

FOGGERTY. Yes, that's what I mean!

JENNY. Yet I have a sincere regard for him, and, be assured of this, I shall always respect his privileges.

FOGGERTY. Upon my word, ma'am, situated as I am---

JENNY. Yes, I know, you were my childhood's friend; but that only makes it all the more dreadful, and sincerely as I esteem you, I must tell you at once that if ever you presume to attempt the slightest, very slightest, familiarity with me, except in Mr. Walkinshaw's presence, I shall give directions that you are never to be admitted into the house again!

FOGGERTY [utterly aghast]. But, Jenny, listen for one moment.

JENNY. It's useless, Frederick. It's best to begin as we mean to go on.

FOGGERTY. Oh! Don't you think you'd better marry Walkinshaw at once?

JENNY. Yes, we shall be too late if we don't start very soon.

FOGGERTY [furious]. I say, don't you think you'd better marry Walkinshaw--Walkinshaw--at once?

JENNY. I say yes, I do. I can't imagine what's detaining him.

FOGGERTY [bewildered]. Jenny! Jenny! [Suddenly.] Great Heavens! [Springs horrified to his feet.]

JENNY. What's the matter? You are ill--some water--quick-- quick.

FOGGERTY [gasping]. Jenny--attend to me! Am I to understand that you are really--going--to--marry Walkinshaw?

[During this she has loosened his necktie, and dabbed a wet handkerchief on his temples, as he leans tottering against a table.]

JENNY. How can you ask such a ridiculous question?

FOGGERTY. No, but are you? Answer me, yes or no. Are you?

JENNY. Am I? You know I am.

FOGGERTY. You are? [Overpowered.]

JENNY. Of course; don't be absurd.

FOGGERTY [wildly]. But don't marry him! For Heaven's sake don't marry him! Jenny, you shan't, you can't! I won't stand by and see it done! Oh, Jenny, Jenny, whom I love so deeply! [Sobbing.]

JENNY. Mr. Foggerty, you amaze me!

FOGGERTY [surprised]. Amaze you? Why, you know I love you!

JENNY. I? Indeed, I know nothing of the kind!

FOGGERTY. Why, I've told you over and over again!

JENNY. You have told me so? Never!

FOGGERTY. How can you say that? Didn't I propose, and didn't you accept me, and weren't we engaged, and--stop. No, no. [Aside.] I'm mixing it all up again!

JENNY [in blank astonishment]. Oh, you must have dreamt all this!

FOGGERTY. Exactly, that's it. I must have dreamt it. But did I never tell you that I loved you?

JENNY [weeping]. Oh no, no, no. Why didn't you? Why didn't you?

FOGGERTY'S FAIRY

FOGGERTY. I don't know. I—I suppose I forgot to mention it.

JENNY [wildly]. Oh, if I had only known—if I had only known!

FOGGERTY [excitedly]. Then—you loved me?

JENNY [horrified]. What have I said?

FOGGERTY. You did! You do! You can't deny it! You shan't deny it! You loved me, madly, passionately—how could you help it?

JENNY. Frederick—in mercy spare me! It is cruel, cruel to say such things to me, just as I am on the point of marrying another man!

FOGGERTY. But don't marry another man! He's unworthy of you—I'm not! I love you desperately—he doesn't! I'll do so all my life—he won't! He can live without you—I can't! I shall go mad if you don't have me—he shan't! Tell Walkinshaw to go and hang himself—he won't mind—he's a good-natured fellow, and he'll do it, if you say it's for me.

JENNY. Impossible! I could not tell him to go and do that. Oh, it is too late—too late! Oh, Frederick, why, why didn't you tell me this before?

FOGGERTY [wildly]. I don't know! there's my difficulty! Situated as I am, it's impossible to say. I thought I had. But it seems I hadn't. No doubt there's a reason for it if one only knew what it was—but one don't! I hope I'm clear?

JENNY [drying her eyes]. Not very, but any way it is too late now. The clergyman is at this moment waiting impatiently to unite me to Theodore Walkinshaw. I regard him with a wondering respect as one whose heart had never throbbed with love until I taught it to. But love him? No! I do not love him! After what you have elicited from me it would be worse than affectation to deny that my heart has long been yours, and, but for your unaccountable silence, we might have been happy. As it is, Frederick, we must never, never meet again. I embark on my married life with a bruised and broken heart. Farewell, for ever!

[Exit JENNY.]

FOGGERTY [wildly]. Jenny, Jenny, come back! Gone, gone from me for ever! To be knitted to Walkinshaw; and the poor child is fond of me, has been for years, ever since we were children! What was I about not to have seen it? Why didn't I tell her I adored her? That's just where it is! I don't know! I haven't the ghost of an idea! I see it all now! If I had never known Spiff, I should never have bolted from her to Jenny—never have interfered with Walkinshaw, whose courtship would have gone on swimmingly, and culminated in matrimony, as it's going to do to-day. And all this heart-breaking misery, this preposterous coupling of ill-assorted souls, this whirling chaos of discordant sympathies, is the consequence of the ill-omened matrimonial arrangements of Colonel Culpepper's favourite dog's father!

[Throws himself on sofa, and buries his head in pillow.]

[Enter WALKINSHAW and OLD TALBOT.]

TALBOT. Come, come, are we all ready? Then let's be off. Where's Foggerty?

FOGGERTY'S FAIRY

WALKINSHAW. Foggerty? Oh, here he is, on the sofa.

TALBOT. What's the matter with him! Isn't he well?

WALKINSHAW [aside to TALBOT]. Well, the fact is, I lost my temper with him just now, and it's upset him, but I'll make it all right.

[Goes to him.] Foggerty, my boy, come, come, cheer up, I didn't mean to speak unkindly to you; but really —

FOGGERTY [without turning round]. Oh, go, sir, go!

WALKINSHAW. Come, come, be reasonable, if you caught a fellow kissing the girl you loved—what would you do?

FOGGERTY [wildly]. What would I do? Shall I show you what I would do? I'd fly at him. Thus! [Flying at WALKINSHAW.] I'd shake him—thus! [Shaking him violently, and driving him down to proscenium.] I'd throttle him—thus! [Knocks him about wildly, WALKINSHAW quite limp and helpless in his hands.] I'd say, "Give her back to me you traitor! You double-dyed villain! You slayer of hopes! You assassin of hearts!" There! [Flinging him violently on the stage.] That's what I'd do!

WALKINSHAW [all of a heap and breathless on the floor, and much disordered in dress]. I see, thank you! I—I think you would be justified.

TALBOT. Dear! dear! [Helping WALKINSHAW up, and re-arranging his hair and cravat.] Foggerty, this is not pretty behaviour towards a bridegroom on his wedding-day!

FOGGERTY. Pretty behaviour! And you, infamous old traitor. Would you like to see what I would do to a scheming father who first gives me his daughter and then hands her over to somebody else? [Shaking him violently.]

TALBOT [bewildered]. It would be interesting, of course. Perhaps if you illustrated on Walkinshaw I should see it better than if you did it to me.

[All three with their costumes and hair very much disarranged.]

FOGGERTY. Walkinshaw! After all I have done for him, to rob me of the only girl I ever loved!

TALBOT. You loved my girl?

WALKINSHAW. Did you love Jenny?

FOGGERTY [sarcastically]. Did I love Jenny? Do you think I should have been engaged to her if I hadn't?

TALBOT. Engaged to her!

FOGGERTY. Engaged to her? Yes! Oh, I forgot; that's all been spiffed out! I've been mixing again!

TALBOT. Upon my soul I think you have! And pretty freely too!

FOGGERTY. There, don't mind me; don't take any notice of what I say! Give me air, or I shall choke! [Staggers on to balcony.]

TALBOT and **WALKINSHAW** [together]. I say, doesn't it strike you——

TALBOT. I beg your pardon——

WALKINSHAW. I beg yours.

TALBOT. After you!

WALKINSHAW. Not at all!

TALBOT. I was going to say, doesn't it strike you that there's

FOGGERTY'S FAIRY

something very incoherent in Foggerty's manner?

WALKINSHAW. The very thing I was going to say to you!

TALBOT. Mark my words; he's mad!

WALKINSHAW. Staring mad!

TALBOT. It's an awful thing!

WALKINSHAW. Appalling!

TALBOT. Glass of wine?

WALKINSHAW. With pleasure! [They take wine together.]

[Enter JENNY.]

JENNY. Stop!

TALBOT. But we can't be always stopping--what's the matter now?

JENNY. This wedding--it must not take place!

TALBOT and **WALKINSHAW** [together]. Mustn't take place.

WALKINSHAW. Jenny, what in the world do you mean?

JENNY. Stand off, sir! Do not dare to approach me! I regard you with contempt and loathing unutterable.

TALBOT and **WALKINSHAW** [together]. Jenny!

JENNY. Approach me not, I say! You have trifled with my most sacred feelings! You have outraged my tenderest sensibilities. I regard you as a snaky and systematic serpent--and thus--and thus--I extricate myself from your slimy toils. [Tears license.]

TALBOT. Oh, Jenny, Jenny, this is not pretty behaviour to your husband on his wedding-day!

JENNY. Pretty behaviour! Do you know that man?

TALBOT. Know him? Yes, very well!

JENNY. You know his smooth and plausible outside--but his inside--do you know that?

TALBOT. Really, my dear, I'm not his medical attendant; but what has he done?

JENNY. Unhinged and unstrung by the prospects of the approaching ceremony, I sought just now the congenial sympathy of the sad, sad lady on the second floor. As I approached her room I saw the door ajar--she was in close communion with her solicitor. [WALKINSHAW much agitated.] I heard his voice--and thus--and thus he spoke: "Console yourself, oh, sad, sad lady, for we have evidence that Walkinshaw--the fickle, fluttering, faithless Walkinshaw--is on the eve of marriage to another!" It was enough--too much--I cared to hear no more!

TALBOT. Dear me, Walkinshaw, I am surprised at you!

WALKINSHAW. But, Jenny, hear me.

JENNY. I will hear nothing. It is enough for me that you have loved. Henceforward to me you are as one that is dead! You are an obliterated postage-stamp--not the less obliterated because the die has been wielded by an unworthy hand. Happily, Truth, Honour, Rectitude, Morality, Propriety, Benevolence, Veneration, and First Love are on the Balcony. They meet in Frederick, and to him I confide my heart!

[FOGGERTY enters from balcony.]

FOGGERTY. Jenny! I was sure you would! I was sure that when you came

FOGGERTY'S FAIRY

to think it over you couldn't help it. But, Walkinshaw?

JENNY. He is dead.

FOGGERTY. That's very sudden.

JENNY. He is dead to me. He live to drag on a miserable existence, as a depressed and degraded monster.

FOGGERTY. I'm shocked at you, Walkinshaw!

WALKINSHAW. Miss Talbot, I cannot struggle against your determination. I know that when you say you will not marry me you mean it!

FOGGERTY. She did last time.

TALBOT. Eh?

FOGGERTY. Oh, nothing, nothing.

WALKINSHAW. I have only to ask that in memory of what I once was to you, you will keep my unhappy secret, and not subject me to the hideous consequences of an exposure.

JENNY. Sir, you deserve no mercy; but I am merciful. Your shameful secret is safe with me.

FOGGERTY. Walkinshaw, I'm at a loss for words in which to express definitely my sense of your infamous conduct, because I am not at present acquainted with the nature of your offence.

TALBOT. But, Jenny, you can't marry this man—he's mad! He can't contract matrimony—it would be illegal!

JENNY. They say you are mad, my own! Is it because you have never loved before?

FOGGERTY. Heed them not. They mistake the desponding utterings of a crushed heart for the maniacal ravings of an unseated brain!

[UNCLE FOGLE and TALBOT both about to speak at once.]

TALBOT. I beg your pardon.

FOGLE. I beg yours.

TALBOT. Not at all.

FOGLE. Go on.

TALBOT. I was going to say that we must get a Commission to sit on him.

FOGLE. Just what I was going to say.

TALBOT. It's a pitiable circumstance.

FOGLE. Horrible!

TALBOT. Deplorable!

FOGLE. Disastrous!

TALBOT. Glass of wine?

FOGLE. With pleasure. [They drink together.]

JENNY [coming down with FOGGERTY]. My own, own love! Mine, and only mine! Oh, tell me again you, at least, have never loved before!

FOGGERTY. Never! Often have I lain awake at night wondering what manner of thing this love of which I had heard so much might be, and now the sun has risen on my darkness, and all seems clear as summer noon!

JENNY. My love! Oh, this is ecstasy!

[During this, TALBOT and WALKINSHAW and others, have

FOGGERTY'S FAIRY

been warily approaching JENNY and FOGGERTY. TALBOT and WALKER seize JENNY, while WALKINSHAW, UNCLE FOGLE, and BALKER seize FOGGERTY. The lovers are torn asunder.]

FOGGERTY. Unhand me, villains!

JENNY. Frederick, my own! They are taking me from you!

FOGGERTY. Cowards! Thus and thus do I deal with ye!

[Throws them off. JENNY breaks from TALBOT. They rush to one another, and embrace.]

JENNY. Who shall separate us now? I am my own mistress!

FOGGERTY. And mine!

[Enter MALVINA. JENNY rushes to her, and clings round her neck. WALKINSHAW, seeing her, buries his head in a newspaper to escape recognition.]

MALVINA. Frederick, rejoice with me! The news, the great and glorious tidings, have arrived! My faithless lover is on the point of marriage with another, and I am at last free to accept those professions of affection with which for the last twelve months you have so eloquently pleaded, for my hand!

[JENNY recoils in horror from her. Turns and looks at FOGGERTY, then faints in TALBOT's arms. FOGGERTY stands confused for a moment, then turns round, rushes wildly to balcony at the back of the stage, and leaps out into the street. The others rush after him to stop him, but they are too late. MALVINA faints in the arms of WALKINSHAW, whose head is still wrapped up in a newspaper. Picture.]

ACT III.

SCENE.—Parlour in WALKINSHAW's house, night. Lamps lit. The general arrangement of the scene is the same as the scene of TALBOT's house in Act I. WALKINSHAW and TALBOT discovered.

WALKINSHAW. This is a dismal night, to what was to have been a fellow's wedding-day.

TALBOT. It might be more cheerful. But take heart, be sanguine. Perhaps you and Jenny would not have got on. You're not a very nice man, you know.

WALKINSHAW. No, I know I'm not, but it's rather hard that my having been once engaged to Malvina de Vere should cause Jenny to break off

FOGGERTY'S FAIRY

with me at the last moment. And for Foggerty, who has also fallen into that middle-aged harpy's toils.

TALBOT. Don't mind Foggerty. Jenny won't have him now. I have got evidence that he is stark, staring mad, and, between ourselves, I have applied for a Commission de lunatico to sit on him at once. I am going to make the appointment now.

WALKINSHAW. Hadn't you better wait till he comes back?

TALBOT. Hasn't he come back?

WALKINSHAW. No, it's eight hours since he took his leap from the balcony, and nobody has seen him since.

TALBOT. Dear me! I don't think he could have hurt himself seriously, for I saw him flying down the street, ten miles an hour with Malvina after him. [Looking out of window.] Here he is; he has jumped out of a four-wheeler, which is tearing down the street at full speed. And there is another four-wheeler tearing full speed after it. What can it mean?

[Enter FOGGERTY exhausted. Dress muddy and disordered, hair dishevelled. He throws himself into a chair, breathless.]

FOGGERTY. At last! Safe at last.

WALKINSHAW. Why, where have you been?

FOGGERTY. Everywhere.

TALBOT. You seem rather out of breath.

FOGGERTY. I am, a little.

TALBOT. A glass of wine?

FOGGERTY. With pleasure. [Helps himself to a glass of sherry, and drinks.]

WALKINSHAW. And where is Malvina?

FOGGERTY. I have given her the slip at last. When I left the house I bolted up Harley Street. Malvina followed. I got into a cab; she got into another. I said, "drive anywhere." He drove everywhere. I told him to drive like the devil. He drove like the devil. So did Malvina. Regent's Park, Primrose Hill, Kentish Town, Holloway, Ball's Pond, Dalston, Hackney, Old Ford, Bow, Whitechapel, London Bridge, Southwark. At Southwark my horse fainted; so did Malvina's. I jumped out—got another cab. So did Malvina. Off again, Old Kent Road, Peckham, Camberwell, Walworth, Kennington, Brixton, Clapham, Battersea, Wandsworth. At Wandsworth my horse fainted. So did Malvina's. Jumped out, but no cab to be found. Bolted, on foot, followed by Malvina; ran through Putney, Barnes, Mortlake, Kew, Chiswick, Turnham Green, Shepherd's Bush, Kensal Green, Malvina after me. At Kensal Green I fainted; so did Malvina. Off again, through Westbourne Park. At Westbourne Park I found a cab; so did Malvina. Off again; Maida Hill, Edgware Road, St. John's Wood, New Road, Harley Street. As I passed the door, jumped out unobserved, and left my empty cab tearing on ten miles an hour, and Malvina after it.

TALBOT. Aren't you tired after your stroll?

FOGGERTY. A little.

TALBOT. I am not surprised. Will you excuse me, I have a business

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appointment. [Aside to WALKINSHAW.] Don't let him go; keep him here till I return.

[Exit TALBOT.]

WALKINSHAW. That is a very determined woman.

FOGGERTY. A woman of singular strength of character.

WALKINSHAW [anxiously]. Do you think there is any chance of her coming here?

FOGGERTY. Not the remotest. [Knock heard.] There she is.

WALKINSHAW. Malvina here. She must not catch me. [Aloud.] Foggerty, you'll keep my secret—you'll not betray me?

FOGGERTY. Not for worlds.

WALKINSHAW. A thousand thanks. I will never forget it. [Shakes his hand and exits.]

FOGGERTY. I don't know what your secret is, but it's quite safe with me. There she is—it's no use, I can't go any further, fairly run to earth! [Throws himself into chair to right of stage.]

[Enter MALVINA from left, breathless, and much tumbled.
She throws herself into a chair to left of stage.]

FOGGERTY. Good evening.

MALVINA. Good evening.

FOGGERTY. London is a large city.

MALVINA. Enormous.

FOGGERTY. Capital cabs, though.

MALVINA. Capital cabs.

FOGGERTY. Didn't I catch sight of you in Southwark this afternoon?

MALVINA. Quite possible.

FOGGERTY. I thought it was you.

MALVINA. It was. Going to marry me?

FOGGERTY. No.

MALVINA. Don't you love me?

FOGGERTY. Not that I am aware of.

MALVINA. But you proposed to me.

FOGGERTY. I have no recollection of it.

MALVINA. I have got it in writing over and over again. [Produces a bundle of letters.]

FOGGERTY. All those mine?

MALVINA. Every man—jack of them.

FOGGERTY. May I look at them?

MALVINA. Not exactly—wasn't born yesterday.

FOGGERTY [aside]. No, you certainly were not.

MALVINA. You're quite resolved?

FOGGERTY. Quite. You must conquer this passion. I am sorry if I have encouraged hopes which are not destined to be realized; but, although I have a sincere regard for you, I can never be more to you than a friend.

MALVINA. That is your ultimatum?

FOGGERTY. That is my ultimatum.

MALVINA. Then again I have to resort to that dread expedient which a sympathetic country has provided for the unsuspecting victims of man's

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designing villainy. Allow me. [Gives paper to FOGGERTY.]

FOGGERTY. What's this?

MALVINA. It is a writ of summons at the suit of Malvina de Vere, spinster, against Frederick Foggerty, bachelor, to recover damages for breach of promise to marry.

FOGGERTY. Thank you. The damages, I see, are not stated.

MALVINA. Not yet. True delicacy shrinks from placing matters of this quasi-sentimental character upon a mere business footing. I thought it would be altogether more delicate if we could arrive at an estimate by a friendly calculation.

FOGGERTY. Very thoughtful.

MALVINA. It's a pretty idea; I always do it. Now, let me see. First of all there is my distress of mind, and consequent wear and tear of personal beauty.

FOGGERTY. Not worth naming. Miss de Vere is, if possible, more lovely than ever.

MALVINA. Yes, I know I am now; but oh! think, think of the anxious days and sleepless nights yet to come!

FOGGERTY. To be sure.

MALVINA. The worm in the bud---

FOGGERTY. True; I forgot the worm in the bud. How long do you think you will be before you get over it?

MALVINA. It generally takes about six weeks.

FOGGERTY. That is not very long.

MALVINA. Make it months if you like.

FOGGERTY. Not for worlds. You think the worm will have had enough in six weeks?

MALVINA. Oh, I think so. Six weeks at a guinea a day-- forty-two guineas.

FOGGERTY. Dear!

MALVINA. I couldn't do it for less.

FOGGERTY [getting his arm round her]. Make it pounds, do.

MALVINA. What a wheedling way you have! Very well, pounds. Then there is the disappointment, the blackness of a desolate future. What shall we say for the disappointment?

FOGGERTY. I shouldn't put that at a high figure if I were you. I shouldn't make a good husband.

MALVINA [politely]. Oh, I won't allow that for a moment.

FOGGERTY. No, but indeed I shouldn't.

MALVINA [insinuatingly]. Not even such a wife as I?

FOGGERTY. If anything could make a domestic man of me it would be the knowledge that I had a nice, snug, cosy creature like you waiting at home for me; but nothing could.

MALVINA. I don't think I could put the disappointment at less than a hundred.

FOGGERTY. A hundred! A hundred for such a good-for-nothing scamp as I? Ridiculous! It's absurd. You don't know what a ruffian I am. Fifty is the outside figure.

MALVINA. Oh, Mr. Foggerty, you under-rate yourself. I don't think--stand up. [He stands up.] No, I couldn't put the disappointment at less than a hundred.

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FOGGERTY. Fifty!

MALVINA. A hundred!

FOGGERTY. Split the difference, and say seventy-five.

MALVINA. Very well; but it's a positive insult to you to put it so low.

FOGGERTY. Don't mention it, I beg.

MALVINA. Then we come to the publicity of the thing--the shame of having to lay bare in open court the holiest feelings of our imperfect nature.

FOGGERTY. Haven't you got used to that yet?

MALVINA. Used to it? My dear Mr. Foggerty, believe me, that the agony of having to trot out one's affections for the entertainment of a ribald public becomes more excruciating each time. On the whole, I cannot quote the publicity at a lower figure than five hundred.

FOGGERTY. Four.

MALVINA. Five.

FOGGERTY. Split the difference, and say four hundred and fifty. Come, now, do, for me.

MALVINA. It's ridiculously cheap; but I never did in all my experience come across anybody with such coaxing ways. But then, there's the trousseau.

FOGGERTY. But that will do for next time. I suppose you have had the same trousseau in each case.

MALVINA. Oh dear, no! Only the last four cases. I find that a trousseau only lasts out six engagements. You see, it gets handled and messed. And there's the moth and change of fashion. I usually reckon it at twenty-five per cent. off prime cost. Prime cost two hundred--twenty-five off that-- one-fifty.

FOGGERTY. How much is that altogether?

MALVINA. Let's see. Six hundred and seventeen pounds. Then there are costs as between lawyer and client.

FOGGERTY. Say six hundred, all told, and then--who knows-- perhaps we shall be engaged again.

MALVINA. Oh, I couldn't do it. First-class evidence, you know, warm and flowery letters--all in your own writing.

FOGGERTY. Are they warm and flowery?

MALVINA. Ridiculously so. There's poetry in some of them-- your own.

FOGGERTY [aside]. My own! I wonder where I got it from? [Aloud.] But wait a moment, Jenny won't have me now. I really don't see what is to prevent me marrying you.

MALVINA. Nothing whatever, if you prefer that course; then there will only be the costs out of pocket.

FOGGERTY. There's the remains of a fine woman about you.

MALVINA. I am generally known as the Splendid Ruin.

FOGGERTY. You are a splendid ruin--a sprig or two of ivy and an owl under your arm and you would be complete. My dear girl, if it is a question of paying six hundred pounds and costs, or marrying you, I'll marry you.

MALVINA. You will?

FOGGERTY. Certainly. I must have seen something in you, or I shouldn't have proposed to you. I have no doubt you are a much more

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agreeable woman than you look.

MALVINA. Surely, surely, you know how agreeable I am by this time.

FOGGERTY. Yes—yes—no doubt; but—Malvina—

MALVINA. Call me by the old pet name—the name of happy memories.

FOGGERTY. Yes—that is just it—I don't know what it was.

MALVINA [astonished]. You don't know what it was?

FOGGERTY. Malvina, I will be candid with you. A singular misfortune has overtaken me—my mind, perfectly keen and sound at the present moment, is a blank as regards everything that took place before this morning—my memory is quite gone.

MALVINA. How remarkable!

FOGGERTY. Odd, isn't it?

MALVINA. Then that accounts—

FOGGERTY. For my not knowing that confounded pet name of happy memories, and fifty other things. Now, if you will undertake to tell me all about myself—who I am, what I am, where I am, and who and what everybody else is—and, in short, enable me to hold my position before the world without making an infernal fool of myself, I'll marry you out of gratitude. Now, is it a bargain?

MALVINA. Is it a bargain? I rather think it is a bargain. But what an extraordinary state of things.

FOGGERTY. Well, it is singular. I'll just run upstairs and make a change. You see what a state I am in after my run; and then the sooner you post me up to this morning the better.

MALVINA. I will; go, my love, and in the mean time I will draw up a statement of facts for your information. Farewell.

FOGGERTY. Farewell. Don't you think—

MALVINA. Think what?

FOGGERTY. That under the circumstances I might venture to—
—no—better not.

[Exit.

MALVINA: At last, oh Fate, thou smilest on me! There seems some prospect that that blighted bud, my heart, may blossom into wedded dignity. But who are these who break my solitude?

[Enter TALBOT, followed by DOCTOR LOBB, DOCTOR DOBB, and BLOGG, a rough sullen-looking man, who keeps in the background.]

TALBOT. Come in, gentlemen, pray. Be so good as to sit down. [Sees MALVINA.] Oh! the athletic lady. I beg your pardon, Mr. Foggerty—

MALVINA. Has sought the sacred precincts of his chamber, to make a certain change in his apparel.

TALBOT. Oh! exactly, he has had a fatiguing afternoon. [Aside.] Dear me, this is awkward.

MALVINA. I'll not intrude upon your converse, sirs. I wait an interview with Frederick, and will, with your permission, gentlemen, attend his coming in the two-pair-back.

[Curtseys and exit.

TALBOT. Fine woman, sound in wind and limb. [Aloud.] Gentlemen, the unfortunate subject of your investigation will be here in a very few

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minutes. You will not find him violent, gentlemen.

DR. LOBB. His paroxysms are mild, are they?

TALBOT. I should hardly call them paroxysms, they don't amount to that; I should rather describe him as the victim of extraordinary hallucinations.

DR. DOBB. Very sad indeed.

DR. LOBB. And what, my dear Mr Talbot, is the subject or bent of his delusions?

TALBOT. Well, gentlemen, among other singular misconceptions he is under the impression that he is the inventor of the famous "Longevity Pill."

DR. DOBB. Pardon me—the "notorious"—we don't use the term "famous" in connection with patent medicines. We call them "notorious."

TALBOT. Oh! then he thinks he invented the "notorious" Longevity Pill.

DR. LOBB. It is a very significant symptom. I remember the case of an unfortunate man who systematically infringed other people's patents, and actually made a fine fortune by doing so—mad, sir—hopelessly mad.

TALBOT. He also believes that he derives a very large income by its sale, when in point of fact he has not a penny in the world.

DR. DOBB. Oh, a very common delusion. I recollect an instance of a poor half-witted creature, who drew enormous cheques on a bank, at which he had positively no account whatever, and in a name which actually did not belong to him. The cheques were cashed and he was off to America before the delusion was discovered. Mad, sir—quite mad.

TALBOT. Then again, he will accept any theory concerning himself that you choose to suggest. You can make him believe that he is a soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor, ploughboy, apothecary, thief—all in turn. Remarkable, isn't it?

DR. LOBB. Not at all. Nothing more common. I once gave evidence in the case of an unhappy man, who obtained large sums of money from charitable people on the plea that he was a bricklayer's widow with twelve children. The poor fellow would have had twelve months' imprisonment, with hard labour, but for my evidence. Mad, sir, hopelessly mad.

TALBOT. If you will excuse me for a moment, gentlemen, I will send him to you. You will find the sherry on the sideboard. [Aside.] Clear-headed, logical men of sense, these mad doctors.

[Exit TALBOT.]

DR. DOBB [turning to BLOGG]. Now, Blogg.

BLOGG. Sir.

DR. DOBB. Attend to us.

DR. LOBB. Dr. Dobb means listen attentively to what we say.

DR. DOBB. If we find it necessary, as no doubt we shall, to give this unfortunate gentleman into your charge, you will humour him in everything.

DR. LOBB. Dr. Dobb means you will contradict him in nothing.

DR. DOBB. In nothing whatever.

DR. LOBB. In other words, in nothing at all.

BLOGG. All right, guv'nor.

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DR. DOBB. Now, mind you keep your eye upon him.

DR. LOBB. In other words, don't let him get out of your sight.

DR. DOBB. Whatever he says, accept his delusion.

DR. LOBB. My friend means, humour his hallucinations.

DR. DOBB. Agree to his statements at once, however absurd they may seem.

DR. LOBB. In other words, accept his theories, however ridiculous they may appear. [During this BLOGG is sitting, eating.]

DR. DOBB. It's the only way to deal with a confirmed delusionist.

DR. LOBB. There is no other course to take with a hopeless visionary.

[Enter FOGGERTY, unobserved.]

DR. DOBB. And now we had better go and prepare our report.

DR. LOBB. By all means. [Going.]

DR. DOBB [politely]. After you.

DR. LOBB. Couldn't think of it.

DR. DOBB. Oh, but I insist.

DR. LOBB. As you please.

[Exit DR. LOBB.]

DR. DOBB. D-----d coxcomb.

[Following.]

FOGGERTY [who has been staring at the Doctors in blank astonishment during this dialogue, turns to BLOGG, who is eating impassively]. Now, what is this? Is it alive, or is it stuffed?

BLOGG [finishing his supper]. I'm stuffed.

FOGGERTY. What are you doing here?

BLOGG. I'm keeping a eye on you.

FOGGERTY. Do I understand that your instructions are to follow me wherever I go?

BLOGG. No, 'cause you ain't agoing nowhere.

FOGGERTY [aside]. Now, how am I to deal with this ruffian? I could kick him out--at least, I think I could--but he seems to have some right here--he isn't a man in possession! [Aloud.] You aren't a man in possession, are you?

BLOGG. No, I ain't a man in possession.

FOGGERTY [suddenly]. I see what it is--he's a constable. I have committed a crime, which I shouldn't have committed if Spiff hadn't been Spiffed out. And these two black-and-white scoundrels are detectives. [Aloud.] I say, those two piebald idiots, who left as I came in, are detectives. You can't deny that!

BLOGG [stolidly]. I ain't agoin' to deny nothin'.

FOGGERTY [aside]. This is perfectly appalling! What have I done? What is my crime?--is it embezzlement, forgery, bigamy, highway robbery--what? That's it, I haven't an idea.

BLOGG. Don't take on so, there's lots in the same fix.

FOGGERTY. Lots in the same fix! Yes, I know there are; but they know what they've done, I don't. [Suddenly.] Walkinshaw is at the bottom of this.

BLOGG. Ah! Walkinshaw's at the bottom of it!

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FOGGERTY. Of course he is. He has led me into this; mind, whatever it is, he has led me into it!

BLOGG. Ah! he's led you into it.

FOGGERTY. Whatever it is, I will confess all. I will turn Queen's evidence against Walkinshaw, and will bring Walkinshaw to justice; and, in return for my services to the State, claim the Royal Pardon.

BLOGG. Ah, that is your game! Nothing like it!

FOGGERTY. Now you, sir, just attend carefully to what I say. I intend to make a clean breast of it and admit everything. [Aside.] It would simplify matters if I had some remote notion, just a vague, distant, glimmering of an idea, what Walkinshaw and I have done. Never mind: half a dozen shrewdly framed leading questions will pump it all out. [Aloud.] Now, then, are you ready to receive my confession?

BLOGG. All right—fire away.

FOGGERTY [aloud]. Now, then, you know, of course, when this deed was done, for which Walkinshaw and I will shortly have to answer to the outraged majesty of the law? [Waits anxiously for the reply.]

BLOGG [indifferently]. Oh, I know—fust of April.

FOGGERTY [seizing on the idea]. On the very first day of April, in the year of grace 1879, this deed for which Walkinshaw and I will shortly have to answer to the outraged majesty of the law was perpetrated. We selected the first of April because—because we were anxious to get it over as soon after March as possible. Now, then, when do you think we did it?

BLOGG [stupidly]. Can't say, I'm sure.

FOGGERTY. No; but guess.

BLOGG. I ain't good at guessin'.

FOGGERTY [aside]. What an unimaginative ass it is. [Aloud.] Come, now, make an effort—just one.

BLOGG [after a pause]. Twelve o'clock at night—when nobody was lookin'.

FOGGERTY. At the mystic hour of midnight, on the very first day of April, in the year of grace 1879, Walkinshaw and I, having previously ascertained that we were secure from the impertinent observation of casual passers-by, perpetrated that deed, for which we shall only too surely have to take our stand at the bar of the outraged majesty of the law. We selected midnight because it's generally darker then than it is in the daylight. Well, there I was. There I was, I say. I say I was there.

BLOGG. Alone?

FOGGERTY. Alone in the grim and ghostly solitude of that April midnight. I needn't tell you how I was occupied.

BLOGG. Maybe you was digging a hole?

FOGGERTY. Armed with a pickaxe and a spade, stripped to the shirt, and with the beady dews of mental agony upon my brow, I shovelled up the fat, black earth until the hole was wide and deep enough for—for the purpose we had in view. Scarcely had I satisfied myself that the hole was wide and deep enough for the purpose we had in view, when, what do you think happened?

BLOGG. Pr'aps Walkinshaw came up?

FOGGERTY. Creeping guiltily in the ghostly moonlight, as one whose

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mind was burdened with a crime too great for him to bear, Walkinshaw came up. You know as well as I do what that monster in human form had with him.

BLOGG. Maybe it was a sack?

FOGGERTY. It was a sack. Closed up at one end but open at the other for the convenience of removing whatever it was intended to contain. You see I am perfectly candid. I conceal nothing from you. That sack contained—the booty.

BLOGG. Oh! she was a booty, was she?

FOGGERTY. Eh?

BLOGG. I say she was a booty, was she?

FOGGERTY. She? Did you say "she"?

BLOGG. You said she was a booty!

FOGGERTY [recovering himself with an effort]. My dear sir, she was one of the finest women you ever saw in the whole course of your life! [Aside.] It's murder! By all the furies, it's murder. Who was she? What could have induced us to do it?

BLOGG. Was she dead?

FOGGERTY. Dead, but still warm. [Aside.] This is appalling! [Aloud.] And how—how do you think this unhappy lady met her miserable fate?

BLOGG [after a pause]. Pound and a 'arf o' arsenic?

FOGGERTY. Very near a pound and a half of arsenic—not quite, but very nearly—purchased in small doses for the ostensible purpose of killing rats, and administered to her by—whom do you suppose? [Waits anxiously for BLOGG's reply.]

BLOGG. Oh, Walkinshaw, of course?

FOGGERTY [relieved and shaking his hand]. My dear fellow, I did you an injustice. I took you for an ass. Allow me to apologize—you are one of the sharpest men I have met for a long time. Of course it was administered by Walkinshaw. And how do you suppose that fiend in human form contrived to administer this deleterious mineral to his ill-fated victim?

BLOGG [after a pause]. Apple pudden?

FOGGERTY. You are quite right; it was in an apple pudding— a large apple pudding, the apples having been previously pared and cut in quarters and the cores extracted. Now the question is—and a very important question it is—how far am I implicated?

BLOGG. Ah! that is the question.

FOGGERTY. True, I assisted him in disposing of the body. True I went even so far as to dig the hole that was to receive it. But then the question arises—how did I come to do it? How came I to be there at all?

BLOGG. Oh! you was a walkin' in your sleep.

FOGGERTY. I was in a state of the profoundest somnambulistic unconsciousness. I give you my untarnished word of honour I was snoring heavily during the whole transaction. As for the lady—who do you think she was? Of all unlikely people on the face of this earth, who do you suppose that beautiful but unhappy lady was?

BLOGG [pleasantly]. Suppose we say his aunt—his aunt Sarah?

FOGGERTY. It was his admirable aunt Sarah—as excellent and blameless a lady as ever stepped, and, I assure you, a first-rate

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aunt—a really capital aunt. In point of fact, she had but one fault in her composition, and I needn't tell you what that was.

BLOGG [after a pause]. Drink?

FOGGERTY. Her passion for alcoholic stimulants was that lovely but deeply injured lady's bane. Beginning with small and comparatively harmless drams, the detestable habit gradually grew upon her, and she got from one thing to another (for I am anxious to omit nothing, however insignificant, from my confession), until at last she degenerated into a monomaniacal dipsomaniac.

BLOGG. Lor!

FOGGERTY. Walkinshaw, one of the most exemplary nephews in the world, really couldn't stand it any longer. His credit as a gentleman, his position in society, his very means of livelihood were all affected by the disreputable habits of this abominable old lady—one of the finest women you ever saw. One day he made a large apple pudding and flavoured it with nearly a pound and a half of arsenic, and I, in one of those fits of somnambulistic unconsciousness to which I have been subject from infancy, dug a hole to receive the body, snoring heavily the whole time. [Aside.] There, I have done it now. What have I said? Oh, Walkinshaw, Walkinshaw, if I only had my fingers round your throat at this moment, justice would be balked of her victim.

[Enter WALKINSHAW hurriedly, in great coat, and rug, and carrying luggage.]

WALKINSHAW [in great distress]. She has found me out. She is after me. I can just catch the nine forty-five; but I have not a moment to lose.

FOGGERTY [seizing him]. Stop, scoundrel! Miscreant! Stop!

WALKINSHAW. What do you mean? Let me go! I'm bolting!

FOGGERTY. Bolting, are you? Not while I have the strength of twenty men, as I have now. [Struggling desperately with him.]

BLOGG [to WALKINSHAW]. You had best stop. Do what the poor gentleman tells you. Don't contrairy him.

WALKINSHAW. Stop! I can't stop! Let me go! Don't shake me! You're always rumpling me!

FOGGERTY [furiously]. Rumble you! I'll rumple you!

[Shakes him violently, WALKINSHAW quite helpless in his hands.]

WALKINSHAW [breathless]. Pray don't—let me go!

BLOGG. Better let the poor gentleman rumple you, if he wants to.

FOGGERTY. Abandon all hope of escape! Your diabolical treatment of that amiable and deeply-injured lady will soon be blown to the four corners of the earth. [Shakes him violently.]

WALKINSHAW. I didn't treat her handsomely, I admit. But you treated her just as badly as I did.

FOGGERTY [remorsefully]. I did. I know it. Guilty wretch that I am! But who led me into it? Who used his diabolical power over me to

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compel me to act as his accomplice? Oh, I could throttle you! [Shakes him.]

WALKINSHAW [faintly]. If you will kindly desist for a moment perhaps I could answer you.

BLOGG [aside to WALKINSHAW]. Don't contrairy him, sir. Best let the poor gentleman throttle you, if he wants to. It's the only way.

WALKINSHAW. Hush! She is coming! She is after me! Hide me—hide me! She follows me wherever I go.

FOGGERTY [flinging him off]. The conscience—stricken coward is haunted by the imaginary presence of his miserable victim!

WALKINSHAW [very faintly, and all of a heap]. Don't quite understand.

FOGGERTY. Understand that I have confessed everything. Your beautiful but ill—fated aunt Sarah---

WALKINSHAW. I haven't got an aunt Sarah.

FOGGERTY. Her unfortunate passion for drink—the apple pudding—the arsenic—her agonizing death—the blood—stained sack and its ghastly tenant—the midnight grave!

WALKINSHAW [very faintly]. Some mistake somewhere.

FOGGERTY. Officer, seize him!

BLOGG. But---

FOGGERTY. Seize him, I say.

BLOGG [going to WALKINSHAW, who is all of a heap against the table]. Werry sorry, sir! But the poor gentleman mustn't be contrairied. [Seizes WALKINSHAW.]

WALKINSHAW [very limp and helpless]. Don't you rumple me!

[BLOGG sits at table with WALKINSHAW, a helpless lump in his lap.]

[Enter MALVINA, hurriedly.]

MALVINA. He came this way. [Sees WALKINSHAW in BLOGG's lap.] Oh, here he is—now—now I have got you. [WALKINSHAW stares helplessly at her like an idiotic baby.]

FOGGERTY [to MALVINA]. Don't touch him, he is a murderer!

MALVINA. A murderer! [Recoiling towards FOGGERTY.]

[BLOGG rises, places WALKINSHAW on a chair like a helpless Guy Fawkes.]

BLOGG [aside to MALVINA, who is reclining in FOGGERTY's arms]. Take my advice, and don't you go too near him, miss. He is a madman.

MALVINA. A madman! [Recoiling from FOGGERTY, who for the first time understands that he is regarded as a lunatic, and assumes an expression of horror—struck surprise.] A murderer and a madman! And woe is me, it is to such men as these that I have handed over my unsuspecting heart!

[Enter TALBOT.]

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TALBOT [aside to **BLOGG**]. We are quite ready to remove him; but I'll break it pleasantly to him. [Aloud.] My dear Foggerty, I'm extremely sorry to say that it is necessary to place you under restraint.

FOGGERTY. Under restraint! I see it all now. They take me for a madman. It only needed this to complete my misery.

BLOGG. Come along o' me. There's a cab at the door, and it'll be done as comfortable as possible.

FOGGERTY. Away! [Throwing **TALBOT** and **BLOGG** off. **TALBOT** falls helplessly into a chair, **BLOGG** goes off.] Matters have reached a crisis. There's only one thing to be done. I have Rebecca's pills in my pocket. One last appeal to her, and if that fails, I give in. [Pours out a glass of water and swallows pill.] Rebecca! Appear!

[Hurried music. **REBECCA** appears through trap.]

REBECCA [impatiently]. Now, what do you want? I'm extremely busy, and this interruption is most annoying.

FOGGERTY. I won't detain you long. In my anxiety to appear equal to the intellectual pressure of the conversation, I've been led into making such preposterous statements that I run a very good chance of being hanged first and confined in a lunatic asylum afterwards.

REBECCA. Really this doesn't concern me. I've nothing to do with it. My guardianship is spiffed out.

FOGGERTY. Yes, I know it's spiffed out; but you're an extremely intelligent and accomplished young person—don't you think if you made an effort you could spiff it in again?

REBECCA. Out of the question. I should have to admit that I made a mistake, and I should be at once relegated to the back rows, among the stout ones, and never allowed to dance even in a quartette, and lately I've been dancing solo.

FOGGERTY. But—

REBECCA. I've nothing more to say; your situation doesn't concern me in any way. I beg I may not be interrupted again. [On trap, stamps her foot and says, "Go"—she descends through trap.]

FOGGERTY. Stop!

REBECCA [half down trap]. What do you want? [Remains half-way down trap.]

FOGGERTY. Allow me to remind you that I've forty-seven pills left, and I can call you up forty-seven times if I please. I don't want to make myself unpleasant to a lady, but if you're not civil, I'll give you a time of it.

REBECCA [rising through trap again]. Well, be quick. What is it?

FOGGERTY. Let's understand one another. When I took the draught all the consequences of my having known Spiff were obliterated.

REBECCA. Utterly.

FOGGERTY. But if I had never known Spiff I should never have got into a difficulty on account of Spiff, and if I had never got into that difficulty I should never have applied to you to get me out of it, and if I had never applied to you to get me out of it you would never have given me that infernal draught, which has been the cause of all the miseries with which I'm threatened.

FOGGERTY'S FAIRY

REBECCA. Dear me, I never thought of that.

FOGGERTY. In point of fact, I've been saddled with consequences from which, according to the terms of my contract, I ought to have been entirely free.

REBECCA. It certainly seems so. I'm very sorry.

FOGGERTY. Now all this comes of hurrying your work. If you'd do a little less bedevilment and do it well you'd make a better job of it in the end.

REBECCA. It's not bedevilment. I'm a good fairy.

FOGGERTY. Good, but stupid.

REBECCA. Good, but stupid. I hope you won't mention this?

FOGGERTY. That depends upon yourself. You've got me into this fix, and you must get me out of it. Restore matters to their original condition, barring Spiff, whom I won't hear of at any price, and we'll say no more about it.

REBECCA. Very good, I'll do it; but mind, it must never be known that I "tried back," or I should get into a terrible scrape. Are you ready for the change?

FOGGERTY. Quite ready.

REBECCA. Then "go."

[Waves wand. Slow music. Scene suddenly changes to scene of Act I., daylight. All the Fairies enter at the back and group until the end. TALBOT, MALVINA, and WALKINSHAW gradually revive from their swoon. MALVINA goes to WALKINSHAW.]

MALVINA. Walkinshaw! My own!

WALKINSHAW. Malvina! [Embraces.]

[Enter JENNY, followed by LOTTIE and TOTTIE in dresses of Act I., then UNCLE FOGLE, AUNT BOGLE, WALKER, and BALKER, all in dresses of Act I., with favours. JENNY rushes to FOGGERTY.]

JENNY. Frederick! My own.

FOGGERTY. Jenny! [Embraces.]

TALBOT. Now then—come along—the carriages have been waiting ever so long, and the clergyman is getting cold. Uncle Fogle take Aunt Bogle, Walker take Lottie, Balker take Tottie.

JENNY. Frederick! In ten minutes we shall be made one. Tell me once more that you have never, never loved before!

FOGGERTY. Never; wouldn't dream of such a thing! It's all right; it's all over—it's past—gone—spiffed out for ever!

JENNY. What's spiffed out?

FOGGERTY. Medical men—mad-house—breach of promise—execution—murdered Aunt Sarah! All gone!

WALKINSHAW. What's the man talking about?

FOGGERTY [suddenly serious]. Walkinshaw, you did not murder your aunt Sarah?

WALKINSHAW. Never!

FOGGERTY'S FAIRY

TALBOT. Oh, too absurd! Ha! ha! ha!

ALL. Ha! ha! ha!

FOGGERTY. Walkinshaw, you are going to be married to Malvina. If, in the fulness of time, Heaven should ever bless you with a little aunt Sarah, swear that that admirable woman's life shall be as sacred as your own!

WALKINSHAW. Before Heaven, I swear it.

FOGGERTY. I knew it! God bless you, Walkinshaw.

ALL. Ha! ha! ha!

FOGGERTY. And, Jenny—dear Jenny—you won't marry Walkinshaw, but, on the contrary, you'll marry me, and Walkinshaw will marry Malvina; she has an excellent constitution. And Walker, Balker, Lottie, Tottie, Fogle, Bogle, you'll all marry each other [all laugh]! and I declare I'm so happy I don't know whether to laugh or to cry. [All laughing.] Which shall it be? Oh, well, better be unanimous. Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

ALL. Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

[They pair off. FOGGERTY with JENNY, WALKINSHAW with MALVINA, WALKER with LOTTIE, BALKER with TOTTIE, UNCLE FOGLE with AUNT BOGLE, and move towards entrance, laughing heartily. Scene opens at back during this. Fairies enter, laughing heartily, and waving wands. REBECCA ascends on stool at back, also laughing. Red fire. Curtain.]