

DICKS' STANDARD PLAYS.

MABEL'S CURSE.

BY MRS. S. C. HALL.



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BY MRS. S. C. HALL.



[See page 5.

[illegible]

No. 424. Dicks' Standard Plays.

COSTUME.

RALPH BURNEY.—Buff coat, trunk breeches, high boots, close cut hair, moustache, high-crowned hat of the time.

MARTIN CLEVELAND.—English yeoman's dress—a light brown and red coat, of the character of Captain Copp's fashion, with tags—a red vest—drab loose breeches—drab high hat—leather pouch from waist belt.

LAURENCE BROWN.—A bold and characteristic sea dress of the period—tabbed jacket—large buttons—very loose breeches.

ROGER WOLF, and STARK.—Similar in character—Sea boots and fur caps.

JABEZ FLINT.—Grey-coloured doublet, with blue loose breeches—shoes tied—blue stockings—leather cross belt, with a small wallet, powder horn, and large knife slung from the waist belt.

CAROLINE BURNEY.—Plain silk dress of the time.

ANNIE LESTER.—Black bodice, with points round waist, trimmed with sky blue—sky blue skirt with black points, trimmed—a hat trimmed with points.

MAD MABEL.—Peasant's dress, drapery, &c., and dishevelled hair.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

EXITS AND ENTRANCES.—R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; D. F. *Door in Flat*; R. D. *Right Door*; L. D. *Left Door*; S. E. *Second Entrance*; U. E. *Upper Entrance*; M. D. *Middle Door*; L. U. E. *Left Upper Entrance*; R. U. U. *Right Upper Entrance*; L. S. E. *Left Second Entrance*; P. S. *Prompt Side*; O. P. *Opposite Prompt*.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.—R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; C. *Centre*; R. C. *Right of Centre*; L. C. *Left of Centre*.

R.

RC.

C.

LC.

L.

** The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.



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MABEL'S CURSE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Inside of Farmer Lester's House.—Door R. H., Window to open L. H.*

ANNIE LESTER *discovered looking through window, L. H. After a pause, comes forward.*

Annie. Laurence Brown and Martin Cleveland! It certainly is a very pleasant thing to be a village heiress, one has so many lovers! *(Laughs.)*

Enter R. H. D., MARTIN CLEVELAND, *unseen by Annie.*

Now which do I really love? Laurence Brown—he is very handsome, but then there is something so wild about him! He may do very well for a lover, but a husband is another matter. They do say he is Mad Mabel's son. Martin, dear Martin! Shall I make up my mind to love him?

Martin. *(R. H., coming forward and seizing Annie's hand.)* Why, you do it already!—you know you do!

Annie. *(Pretending to be offended.)* Keep your distance, sir.

Martin. *(Astonished.)* “Keep my distance, sir!” And you were just talking about loving me.

Annie. You, indeed! Master Cleveland, it was your betters I was thinking of. Love you, indeed! Why, you are not as tall by three inches as Laurence Brown. I hate a stumpy man!

Martin. “My betters!” Annie, who can you mean? Did your father, when he favoured Laurence Brown, ever ask how it was that for every broad piece that I showed he could show two? Did you ever— But I am putting myself in a passion for nothing. You never did—you never could love Laurence Brown.

Annie. And pray, why not, Master Cleveland?

Martin. “Master!” Ha! have you forgotten the beautiful ringlet I cut off with my rapier just before I joined the King's troops? Ah! Annie! No matter how you treat me, it shall remain next my heart as long as it beats.

Annie. You men never speak intelligibly; which is to remain next your heart—my curl or your rapier?

Martin. How fond of tormenting you are? But now, dearest Annie, that the Roundheads are gone—now that your father is content—for my sake—nay, Annie, for your own—

Annie. For my sake! Indeed, sir, I am very much obliged to you, upon my word! So, because you have talked over my father, you want to lord it over me. Permit me to say, Master Cleveland,

you think a great deal too much of yourself; but no matter—no matter—I wish you a good-day—good-day, sir.

Martin. Oh, very well; since it comes to that, good-day, Mistress Annie. It will be long e'er we meet again.

[Exit Martin, angrily, R. H. D.]

Annie. *(After a pause, looks round and laughs.)* He is very fond of me, that's certain! *(Mimicking.)* “Good-day, Mistress Annie.” I certainly do like him very much, but I think not quite so well since my father encouraged him. I do dearly love tormenting! It's almost the only pleasure we poor women have! Was he in earnest though when he said, “It would be a long time ere we meet again.” I wonder what “a long time” means? *(Goes to window and looks out.)* Shall I call him? If I do it shall be so gently. *(Calls.)* Martin! *(Louder.)* Martin! *(After a pause.)* Dear Martin! Hush! didn't I hear a noise? 'Tis he! And so, that's “a long time,” is it? *(Laughs.)* I mustn't appear to have been watching.

(Brings a chair forward and sits, her back to the door.—She sings.)

“Come, row me o'er,
Come, boat me o'er,
Come, boat me o'er to Charlie.”

Enter, R. H. D., JABEZ FLINT, *unseen by Annie.* Jabez wears a conical Cavalier hat, with a tuft of seaweed for a feather. His dress is that of a half smuggler, half fisherman. He has a hamper of fish slung at his back—on entering he puts it down, comes forward and taps Annie, who continues singing, on the shoulders. She does not seem to heed him. He then comes to the side, and puts his face close to hers. She screams.

Annie. *(R. H., jumping up.)* Oh, Jabez, Jabez, is it you? Who in the world would have thought of seeing you here?

Jabez. And pray, fair Mistress Annie, where else would you expect to see me, or seeing, where could you see me to so much advantage?

Annie. Well, I am glad you are come. Pray tell me the news. You know we call you the walking chronicle.

Jabez. News! Lord love you, Mistress Annie, there is none! It's not news, that some folk want to live without labour, by their wits—heaven save the mark! but they break for lack of stock, mistress—they break for lack of stock.

Annie. That will never happen to you, Jabez.

Jabez. Oh, you flatter!

Annie. But the news, Jabez?

Jabez. (*Mysteriously.*) Why, they do say that Colonel de Waldon, for the sweet sake of your sweet foster sister, will bring the old Roundhead Ralph Burney's pardon to the castle yonder, to-morrow.

Annie. That's no news!

Jabez. As I came along, I saw Mad Mabel shaking her head at the Castle.

Annie. That's no news! She has been doing so, they say—occasionally—these five-and-twenty years.

Jabez. A great many people wonder the marauding Cavaliers have not got the shot out of Ralph Burney's locker, before now.

Annie. La, Jabez, that's no news!

Jabez. Well—now look astonished—there's a gang of these very marauding Cavaliers about a mile off, at Hetherwold; and, as I was passing along the road, they stopped me this very morning and, ransacking my hamper, discovered a—

Annie. What, Jabez, what? Tell me at once!

Jabez. Why a little cask of animating fluid. (*Annie laughs.*) Unprincipled scoundrels! When I asked them for payment, they threatened to convert me into trellis-work—make a light character of me.

Annie. Would that be something new? Now don't look dignified, it does not become your merry face. If I am ever so dull, one of your smiles puts me into good honour.

Jabez. Well, it's very odd, but a great many people say precisely the same thing. Sometimes I wander about a great deal, but I never feel myself more at home than in this house. By the way, your foster sister, is about to be married to Colonel De Waldon. Could you say a word or two to the old Roundhead's daughter about brocade, Meeklin, and Jabez Flint?

Annie. No, indeed—I do not think I could—Master Burney hates smuggling.

Jabez. I don't believe it! Nobody hates smuggling. I should as soon dream of a person hating smuggling as of your hating Master Cleveland.

Annie. Well, I do hate him!

Jabez. Oh!

Annie. Indeed, you may believe it or not, as you please. We have quarrelled, and I do hate him—a good-for-nothing—careless—heartless—little monkey. (*Aside.*) Not to come back. (*Goes up.*)

Jabez. Oh! Now she expects me to contradict that, or she would not have said it. Women are born out of opposition,—eat—drink—sleep out of opposition,—fall in love, ditto,—and die ditto. My first wife—I think it was my first—either my first or third—was a rock a-head of me all her life, until I got her respectable employment in my own line, and then she died. Opposition is dictionary English, for female woman, and I'll prove it! (*Calls.*) Mistress Annie! (*Aside.*) I'll abuse Martin, and then—

Annie. (*Who has come down close to his elbow.*) Why do you look so innocent, Jabez?

Jabez. Do I look innocent? I only intended to look sorrowful. What you say about Martin Cleveland is perfectly true. He is a good-for-nothing careless vagabond!

Annie. Good for nothing, Jabez?

Jabez. Let me catch him, that's all! I'll break every bone in his skin for ill-using you.

Annie. (*Seemingly at a loss for words—enraged.*) Jabez! Jabez! I—I—Oh, you ugly sea-gull!

Jabez. Me ugly! Well, after that, Mistress—

Annie. Don't mistress me! Don't open your mouth. How often has that dear, kind creature, Martin—

Jabez. (*Aside.*) Oh! oh!

Annie. Got you out of your smuggling scrapes? How often has he bought your bad fish, that you might not lose by it?

Jabez. (*With mock solemnity.*) Stay!—touch not my honour—I deny the bad fish! Anything but that!

Annie. Hold your tongue—you—you—you land crab! Oh, that Martin were but here to defend himself; he'd make you eat your own words!

Jabez. They are not the worst food going these bad times.

Annie. I'll tell you what—If you dare to tell my father any of these stories!—but I know—I know he would not cast dear Martin off on the testimony of such a thing as you. (*Half crying.*) I'll find Martin—and he shall—oh! you—oh! oh!

[*Exit Annie at door.*]

Jabez. (*Laughing.*) Ah, it's always the way with woman! 'Tis her nature to take the part of the weak, the injured, and the helpless. Lord love her! Let the world but look cold on ye, and the fire of kindness lights within her breast, and burns as brightly there as the mid-watch beacon that saves you from the breakers!

[*Exit Jabez at door.*]

SCENE II.—Outside of Lester's Cottage.

Enter ANNIE, from Cottage.

Annie. I cannot tell which way Martin went—that impertinent Jabez has put me into a fever. I had no business to tease Martin; I will try and not do so any more—if I can help it! I think he'll be here soon. Ah! after all, humble love is the safest and the best. (*Looking off, R. H.*) Ah! there is Mad Mabel—oh, dear! she always frightens me. I'll go into the house and lock the door.

(*Annie is going into the cottage.—Mabel calls from without.*)

Mabel. (*Without, R. H.*) Annie Lester!

Enter MABEL, muffled up in a cloak, R. H.

Is it right to stand staring at an aged woman, whose head is grey, whose feet are sore, whose lips are parched, who has neither kin nor friend to say, Heaven bless you!—nor a spot where she may lay down her head and die?

Annie. Will you walk in, Mabel? I—I am glad to see you.

Mabel. Silence, girl! a lie ought to blister so young a lip. The time may come to you, as well as to your betters, when it will not bring a blush upon your cheek. But not yet—not yet! 'Tis sad for one who knows the world to look upon you—poor unfledged bird!—and think what you may be hereafter. I ought not to have been angry with your father's child, for he knew me before sin—first sin, and then sorrow—black, bitter, stormy sorrow—changed me from the light, proud—ay, 'twas the pride that did it! Pluck that rose from your bosom, and that riband from your hair. (*Annie appears terrified.*) I do not mean to frighten you, child, but the linnet looks ill tricked out in parrot's plumage. Listen! You know

Ralph Burney, and you love your foster-sister—his only child. A curse, mind ye—a curse has long hung over him. Ill got—ill gone! Some clouds have dropt mildew upon him already! Despite his guards, despite his power, his fate is near! The sun rose this midsummer morning in red, red glory; but the burning of that house will be far more bright before he rises with the morrow!

Annie. Mabel! Mabel! for the sake of the mercy you expect—

Mabel. I expect mercy! Shall I tell you of the mercy shown by yon Roundhead Justice in his hour of triumph, when he gave to the gibbet my fair boy? I was far away, or Ralph Burney had slept a long sleep. I could tell ye more—but no, no—I feel it here, in my brain—in my heart! Annie Lester, if ever you are fool enough to be a wife, pray, girl, pray that you may never be—

Annie. What, Mabel—what?

Mabel. A mother!

(Crosses to L.)

Annie. Poor Mabel! But can nothing be done to save them?

Mabel. Ay, 'tis of them you think, and not of me! It would break my heart to see the ruin of the place in which my days of innocence were spent—when he, who now lords it there, was but the servant of its master. (Weeps.) Child, child! there are many sorts of tears—some that come burning from the brain, others that save the heart from bursting!

(Crosses to R.)

Annie. Why not give information yourself?

Mabel. (Agitated.) Me! me!—go near that man—me! (Laughs scornfully.) They know me too well to let me reach the Castle gates.

Annie. They!—who, Mabel?

Mabel. (Impatiently.) I know that, through De Waldon's interest—the Royalist who loves his daughter—Ralph Burney has escaped the fate which fell on better men; that his full pardon is prepared, I also know—

MARTIN enters at back, R. H., but seeing Mabel and Annie, steps back and listens.

De Waldon is to bring it to-morrow. But the Roundhead has made himself a host of foes, who will hide their love of plunder beneath the cloak of loyalty. They will not wait the pardon. If the dwelling is prepared—the servants true—he may hold out until to-morrow. You understand me now? Let them know their danger, and the old towers may yet shadow my lone grave!

[Martin signifies he understands, and goes off, L. H.]

Annie. I thought Ralph Burney had grown loyal, and that his household was prepared.

Mabel. "Grown loyal!" A true Englishman is born loyal. "Household prepared!" Ay, with false knaves! Of what avail will the King's pardon be, if it comes after the sacking of his castle, and his own blood has steeped the threshold? Away! A modest mind and a brave spirit will guard your path. Be careful how you pass by Hetherwold. Heaven shield ye, girl!—Heaven shield ye!

[Exit Mabel, R. H., Annie, L. H.]

SCENE III.—*Hetherwold.*—A sloping path, leading to Castle Burney, the turrets of which are seen in the distance, on which the Royal flag is flying.—LAURENCE BROWN is discovered half-way the ascent, leaning over a rock, on the look-out. WOLF, STARK, and other MARAUDERS are grouped in different parts of the stage, some round a keg of spirits, which they are drinking. They come forward.

Wolf. Capital spirits! choice spirits, i' faith! How queer Master Jabez looked when I picked the cask from among the oysters.

Stark. So he did—ha, ha! Did you ever hear Jabez preach?

Wolf. Preach! no—nor tell a story either. Whenever he begins, "When I was at sea," I put in a stopper immediately.

Stark. That was more than ever you did into a bottle. Ha, ha!

Wolf. Ough! Yonder's our captain, on the look-out. Poor fellow! he never forgave Ralph Burney for dooming his brother, the time Mad Mabel, his mother, was out of the country. He'll have his revenge to-night.

Stark. He was only his half-brother, I think.

Lau. The night is closing. Despite all I have suffered at the hands of Ralph Burney, I have little mind to the sacking of the old castle. But now the King is fairly on his throne, he leaves us who placed him there to shift for ourselves. However, his Majesty cannot be displeased at our loyalty, as we call it, in this matter. Colonel De Waldon's interest will make all smooth for the Roundhead—so we must lose no time. (Looks towards the Castle.) My poor mad mother has a strange affection for those walls. Would that I knew her history, or my own! Listen! was not that a footstep?

Wolf. The wind among the trees.

Lau. It is time our scouts were doubled, to prevent the possibility of any news or assistance reaching the Castle before our work is done.

Wolf. Who should tell them, I wonder? Whoever did would have told a last tale. He's been let alone too long.

Lau. Hark! I certainly heard a footstep. There—will you be convinced now? (Pointing off, L. H.)

Wolf. (Looking off, L. H.) Why, it's Martin Cleveland!

Lau. Martin Cleveland! So—I wonder what he wants, or where he is going? Come, come, my lads—vanish—vanish, I say. I will deal with Master Martin.

[Marauders go off, U. E. R. H.; Laurence goes up.]

Enter MARTIN CLEVELAND, L. H.

Martin. That little, provoking, good-for-nothing minx! And yet I am sure she loves me—she has a noble spirit! I have followed her so far, to guard her from danger; yet I have not seen her pass this spot. If she were once in the Castle, I would to Colonel De Weldon, and then all might yet be well! I only care for them for Annie's sake. She certainly has the sweetest smile in the whole world!

Lau. (R. H.) Who has the sweetest smile in the whole world? Ha, ha, ha! Walls, trees, and stones have ears, Master Martin. You cannot sing, even in a forest, without finding more listeners than the birds.

Martin. What do you here at this hour?

Lau. Go on your way quickly, or you may meet those who will not take your presence quietly, as I have done.

Martin. Laurence, what devilry brings you here? What outrage is to be committed under sanction of the King's name? Who is to be waylaid? (*Aside.*) He little thinks I know his plans.

Lau. Even from you, Martin, I will not suffer this.

Martin. Shame, shame upon you, Laurence Brown. If you wish to continue a soldier, be faithful to your King, and study to preserve the laws that were made for honest men, and—

Lau. Fools!

Martin. It was not always thus.

Lau. Go your way, good preacher, and open a conventicle for old maids—ay, and young ones, too! A pretty heiress—a farmer's daughter, might not come amiss to the mild, moral, prudent Martin Cleveland, who turns his sword into a ploughshare; but this I tell you—others may pretend to Annie Lester's hand besides yourself. Remember it!

Martin. She shall be my wife, despite you or a hundred such. Laurence Brown, you are here for no good purpose. I know you are leagued with those desperate men who have twisted the laws to their own purpose; but I will thwart you, Laurence! Back, I say! (*Attempts to pass—Laurence presents a pistol at him.*) You would not murder me in cold blood!

(*Music.—Martin strikes down the pistol, they wrestle, Laurence is overcome—while down, he whistles. WOLF and others rush on; they seize Martin, who, after a struggle, is overpowered, and falls to the ground—Wolf is about to strike him. MABEL rushes on from L. H., and seizes the arm of Laurence, who, having risen, has drawn his sword.*)

Mabel. (c.) Hold, Laurence—all of ye, hold! Hurt not a hair of his head. Would you commit murder?

Wolf. (R.) Away, you hag of the wilderness! Why should we hold?—a rascally spy—

Mabel. (c.) Again I tell ye, hold! or by the sacred power which is given me to bless or curse, I will fasten a ban upon you all, that shall spread like the night-cloud over you and yours! Have you not heard that I can curse? To your dens, I say! (*They suffer Martin to rise, and all slink off, L. H. U. E.*) To your hiding-holes! I will take charge of Martin Cleveland. (*By this time all except Laurence is off.*) You, Laurence, I have warned before. Listen, boy! Have you forgotten who I am, that you thus brave me? By the memory of all I have said and suffered, I conjure you—I, who could command—entreat you to leave these men, but for this night. Laurence, Laurence, you know not what you do! I tell you, you cannot learn the crime you may commit—and I cannot, dare not, tell you! Go not with them. Sncer if you will, but I have seen that which warns me there will be a spilling of blood—there have been sounds on earth, and sights in the air— (*Laurence turns from her contemptuously.*) Ah! is it come to that? Then will I curse you as I have cursed him, whose house is almost desolate—and thus—

(*She lifts up her arm as if to anathematise.*)

Lau. (*In a supplicating tone, L. H.*) Mother!

(*Mabel looks at him for a moment, then bursts into tears, and rushes into his arms. Martin looks on with feelings of pity and astonishment.—Slow music.—Tableau.*)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Chamber in Castle Burney.—A window in centre opening on a turret.—Firearms and swords are hung around the walls.—RALPH BURNEY is discovered seated, and CAROLINE on a lower seat by his side. The drop rises to slow music.*

Bur. Though it is yet early, I wish you would go to rest. You look so pale, so very pale, my love.

Caro. Let me remain a little longer—it is you who appear ill. I wish the long expected pardon would arrive! Were it not that I know De Waldon well, I should call him tardy! I could fancy every cloud that passes to be the shroud of departing hope.

Bur. (*Kissing her forehead.*) Dearest, I cannot bear that you should be sad.

Caro. I was born under the influence of a capricious star. Dear father, I have heard my nurse say that in my infancy, I would sigh and sob as if my heart would break, and then as suddenly smile into merry laughter.

Bur. Come, rouse thee, love; you are thinking of De Waldon.

Caro. (*Rises.*) That weird woman—Mad Mabel, she is called—met me but yesterday, under the southern turret—I shrank from her with dread.

Bur. Did she speak?

Caro. She muttered, as she passed, something that sounded like a curse. (*Burney starts from his chair.*) Yet she did not speak it, father. I offered her my purse, and she would none of it; but laughed a laugh, so wild and scornful, that I covered my eyes, even thus, and when the mad sound ceased, she had fitted like the vision of a distempered mind!

Bur. She shall be expelled the country!

(*Crosses to c.*)

Caro. But I did not say she cursed me, dear father—no; and if she had, curses upon the innocent only bring good spirits to their aid.

Bur. (*With emotion.*) Child, you know not what it is to bend beneath a malediction. A curse is over all I do—a blight on all I cherish. My sons are dead—and you, who will inherit these fair lands, are unambitious as the sky-lark's mate, who builds her nest upon the dewy heath, while he mounts up to heaven.

Caro. Mount, then, my father, and your poor Caroline will make your nest so happy by her care, that you will seek it with a peaceful heart, when your flight is ended.

Bur. It is not unknown to you, that Annie's father and myself came to this country together. He was humble in his thoughts, and remained as he had been born. I was not so. The old proprietor of this castle was deeply involved both by politics and debt. I was his steward; and I grew so useful to him in his necessities that—acre by acre, his possessions became mine

Caro. Useful to him!

Bur. Ay—I lent him money when he needed.

Caro. I remember him well. Had he no child?

Bur. None born in wedlock. One girl there was, whom all accounted his, but I will not believe she was his daughter.

Caro. Indeed! I loved the old man, and would have nursed him to the last.

Bur. Then you would have nursed him in a mud-walled hut, for such was his last dwelling. You need not start—all became honestly mine own! I could not prevent his extravagance, nor his attachment to a fallen king.

Caro. But you tried, dear father? I know you did—counselled him well and wisely—you took no unfair advantage of his necessities—you—

Bur. (*Impatiently.*) You too taunting me! What crime did I commit?—and yet the cry is up as if I had been an ungrateful villain—the popular howl passes from lip to lip—but let them look to it! My pardon once proclaimed, I'll lord it like a lord again, and make them tremble!

(*Crosses to R. H.*)

Were you a boy, you could understand my feelings—but five brave sons, all gone!—that curse!

Caro. Speak of it no more. Let's talk of De Waldon. Shall I tell my dear father how grateful I am for the love that left my young choice free?—tell him of good De Waldon's zeal to serve him?

Bur. (*Not heeding her.*) Do you, then, dread to hear it?

Caro. (*Looking disappointed.*) Well, as you will, dear sir. I am attentive.

Bur. Men, my own Caroline, have not the gentleness of purpose nor the self-command that your soft sex possesses. Temptation comes to them in many forms that women know not of—and better far than I—have been betrayed by beauty.

(*Noise without.—Annie appears at the window, and looks in.*)

—What noise was that?

Caro. The wind sighs heavily among the trees, and through the ivy turret.

(*Turns to the window and sees Annie.—Starts—then goes to window—opens it.—ANNIE comes in hastily.*)

Annie. (*C.*) 'Tis a wild night, dear sir. How many are there in the house? My dear young lady, you look ill. Pray go to bed, and see that the windows are fastened. And oh, sir—sir, I want so much to speak to you.

Caro. (*L.*) Nothing, surely, that I may not hear, good Annie?

Annie. Yes—no, madam—that is—pray go to bed. I saw them, sir—saw them all with my own eyes!

Bur. (*R.*) What has disturbed you?

Annie. It was Mabel, sir—Mad Mabel, who told me. Mistress Caroline, pray go to your chamber.

(*Caroline appears astonished.—Burney and Annie talk apart.*)

Bur. (*C.*) Caroline, you must retire. There is no danger that I cannot avert. (*Aside to Annie.*) Have you any idea of their number?

Annie. I saw many—more than was good, I'll be sworn, sir.

Caro. What danger do you speak of, Annie?

[*Exit Burney, hastily, R. H.*]

Annie. Oh, nothing, dear lady, nothing.

Caro. I heard that a party of marauders were at Hetherwold; but though my father's pardon will

not arrive until to-morrow, his Majesty's pleasure is sufficiently known to prevent any outrage.

Annie. (*Agitated.*) Do not be alarmed, my dear young lady. Your father is prepared, and he will prepare the servants—and—(*Snatching a musket from the wall*)—I am prepared! When I was stealing through Hetherwold, and saw Martin, I thought my heart would jump out of my mouth. You must know, Mistress Caroline, I am not easily frightened.

(*Sees Jabez at the window—Screams, and running behind Caroline, falls on her knees.—JABEZ comes forward.*)

—Oh, master robber! have mercy—pray have mercy! (*Looking up.*) Why, it's only Jabez Flint! Do not be frightened, dear lady—it is only Jabez. How d'ye do, Jabez? Oh, I'm so glad to see you, Jabez, though it's more than you deserve.

Jabez. I beg pardon, Miss Burney, for coming here without permission, but certain things I heard make me think all is not right. I wanted to see the governor. Will you permit me, young lady, to bring in my hamper? If they see it there, they'll know I'm at the wrong end of the house, and my life would not be worth a sprat.

(*Brings in hamper.*)

Caro. I wish, Jabez, you would explain.

Enter BURNEY and SERVANTS.—*The Servants begin to take down the arms, Burney directing them.*

Jabez. (*Aside.*) I did not want these rascals to see me. I beg your honour's pardon—I took the liberty of bringing some rare Milton oysters for your honour.

Annie. (*Aside to Burney.*) Attend to him, sir.

(*Then gets to L. H.*)

Jabez. (*Having taken an oyster out of hamper—to Burney.*) You, see, sir, he makes all fast, and trusts no one; but I'll be sworn he has eyes, too—just here, sir. (*Gets close to him.*) Look to your bolts yourself, and see that the powder in your guns is not as wet as sand. (*Aloud.*) He's a beauty! (*Burney is surprised.—The Servants bustle about.*) And you, Annie Lester, come here. Hold your apron, and I'll give you a treat. (*Aside to her.*) I overheard the plot, but, I fear, too late. If you had but told me you were in the secret—but the women always turn me into a fool. (*To Burney.*) Rouse yourself, sir.

Bur. (*To Servants.*) Away, and bring your own fire-arms! Make doubly fast the passage entrance to the left!

[*Exit Servants, and Caroline, who has been prevailed on to go by Annie.—Burney has taken a gun and examined it.*]

Jabez. There, sir, the powder is as wet as duck-wood.

Bur. The villains!—my own servants, too!

Jabez. If we could only send a messenger to Maidstone—

Bur. Who can I send—who trust?

Jabez. No one. The marauders encircle the house, and will not let even me pass their line. They would skin me like one of my own eels—an operation that would not improve me in the least.

(*Turns up to hamper at window.*)

Annie. Let me go. I will invent some excuse. If I could only pass Laurence Brown;—it would not be easy to deceive him.

Jabez. (*Coming down c.*) Hurra! I have it; get into my hamper, I'll carry you at the risk of breaking my back. (*Puts hamper off at the c. window.*) There, there, in with you, and fear not. I'll sing as I go along; noise is good policy sometimes—it's taken for mirth. Lose not a moment. Once pass the park gates, we are safe. I shall not be the first man that has been hampered by a woman.

[*Exit Burney, R. H., Jabez and Annie at c. window.*]

SCENE II.—Same as Scene II., Act I.

WOLF discovered on the watch.—To the symphony of the following song he comes down.

SONG.—WOLF.

*We are here in the rifts of the glen,
In the lair of the fox is our den,
Ye that seek us, come hither like men,
We are here!*

CHORUS (*In the distance*).

We are here!

'Tis but slaves dwell in herds like the hart,

Enter STARK and another, who join in the next two lines.

*Fawn in courts, crouch in camps, crowd the mart,
Like the eagle and lion—apart—*

We are here!

Chorus of MARAUDERS, who enter.

We are here!

Wolf. Ay, we are here, but when shall we be there? (*Points off.*)

Stark. Ah! yon grow impatient, and no wonder. Did you throw up the blue light?

Wolf. Ay, ten minutes ago.

Stark. We all know our posts?

Wolf. Ay, our captain has been pretty particular about that. One would think by his delay it was the most dangerous thing he had ever engaged in.

Stark. How can that be? What can the old boy do by himself? He deserves no pity—he never showed none.

Wolf. Besides, we public characters are an example to the country. What is it called—re-re-tributive justice?—that's it. There'll be rare booty.

Enter LAURENCE, R. H.—He comes suddenly between them.

Lau. Who talks of booty? It's revenge I desire! We must wait full half an hour for the signal from the Castle to tell us all is quiet. Away! I will myself guard this path.

(*The Marauders are about to depart, when Jabez is heard singing.*)

*My beautiful fish, my capital fish,
The best of all covers to cover a dish.*

(*In anger.*) That's Jabez Flint! In the park, too! Fools! which of you let him pass?

(JABEZ appears on the pathway above. He places his hamper by a tree, as if to rest himself, and while Laurence speaks to Marauders, Annie is supposed to leave the hamper and hide behind the tree.)

Jabez. (*On the path, aside to Annie.*) Conceal yourself there till opportunity serves. I will manage it, and when you see the knaves' backs, forward on your road—I will follow. (*He comes down.*) Merry moonlight to you, my masters. Master Laurence Brown, you are the pattern of a gentleman, and those other gentlemen (*bows to them*), upon my honour, they are particularly handsome for dark men. Though I have not the pleasure of their acquaintance, when I was at sea I often met such—among the Moors. I wish you a pleasant evening, gentlemen. (*Going, R. H.*)

Lau. (*L.*) Stop, stop, my fine fellow! where have you been to at this time of night?

Jabez. Ah! ah! well now, that is good, that is comical—as if you didn't know. Why, I've been at the Castle. (*Aside.*) My back is almost broke.

Lau. Come, come, that won't do. We know that old Burney looks his gates at eight.

Jabez. Why, if you must know—(*significantly*)—but it's a secret—Mistress Caroline told Annie Lester to tell me that she wished to see some particularly fine lace.

Lau. Stuff, stuff!

Jabez. No, not stuff—lace! And so, says Annie—you know Annie Lester, she often talks of you—Mistress Caroline wants it to trim—a farthingale—to look smart to-morrow, as her sweetheart, Colonel De Waldon, is coming to see her. Very natural, was it not, eh? So, I stole up to her windows—sold my lace—

Wolf. (*Laying his hand on Jabez.*) Where's the money?

Jabez. Master Laurence, I'm not to be robbed, am I? I appeal to you!

Lau. Let him alone!

(*Laurence and Marauders come forward and talk together. Jabez goes near to where Annie is, and says, in a whisper—*

Jabez. Now—now—Annie—watch your opportunity; and quick on your way to Maidstone.

Lau. What are you jabbering about?

Jabez. (*As if looking in his hamper.*) I was jabbering to my oysters! I make them quite domestic. (*Sings.*)

*My beautiful fish—my capital fish,
The best of all covers to cover a dish!*

Wolf. (*Going up to hamper.*) Come, lend us some of your oysters—

Jabez. (*Preventing him, draws an oyster knife.*) Touch me not—strike me not—I'm a peaceable man! Nevertheless, those who strike flint, strike fire!

Wolf. Augh!—Strike a wooden head! Out of the way, fool!

Jabez. Come, I'll tell you a story, if you'll pay proper attention to me, and only listen—

All. Ay, ay—a story! Jabez, a story?

(*They all group round Jabez.*)

Jabez. When I was at sea—you know I was at sea.

All. To be sure we do, go on.

Jabez. Well, I am going on, if you won't interrupt me. When I was at sea—you've heard me say that before—I once saw a dolphin running after a shark—

All. What!

Jabez. No—a shark running after a dolphin!

All. Ah!

Jabez. (*Impressively, as if directing his voice to*

Annie.) Now, says I, to the dolphin—(Annie appears.)—make haste off—(Annie begins to move.)—now's your time—don't run, but step away quietly—(Annie is at the bottom of the path.)—under the very jaws of that scoundrel.—(Annie goes off U. E. R. H., Jabez sees her.) And so the dolphin did—

All. Well!

Jabez. Well, that's all the dolphin did!

Lau. Enough of this. To-morrow, Jabez—

Enter MABEL, R. H., suddenly.

Mabel. (Coming down c.) To-morrow—to-morrow—do you know what to-morrow means? How can you tell what to-morrow may bring? Laurence, I have warned you!

(Extending her arm.)

Lau. (Seizing her arm.) Pease—pease—(Aside to her.) See you not, Jabez—would you betray us? Where left you Martin Cleveland?

Mabel. (Abstractedly.) Gone!—with the last year's flowers.

Lau. If he has gone!—but she is mad, quite mad! Jabez, take charge of this poor woman—lead her to Farmer Lester's?

Jabez. (Aside.) That's too much of a good thing! No sooner got rid of one, but I am to be turned over to another!

Lau. Take charge of her, Jabez; her brain wanders—

Mabel. It does not wander, Laurence. Its thoughts are sad—fixed upon yonder turrets! Natural instinct will bring the wild deer to its lair, to die!—to die, where it was roused! (Shudders.) My spirit is sunk within me. Oh, that I could bless—as I have cursed!

Lau. Take her with you, Jabez; and remember, no blabbing—no chattering! (To Mabel.) Go with him. I pray you—go?

Jabez. Indeed, I'd rather not! she's not easy to manage. (Laurence half draws a dagger.) Well, if you will use such persuasive arguments. Come with me, good lady?

Mabel. (Laughs bitterly.) Good lady, indeed!—good lady! Think of the change, kind gentlemen! (Curtsies round.) Think of the change!—from Mad Mabel to good lady—good lady! Out, shrimp gatherer!—go with you—indeed, indeed!

(Mabel attempts to go R. H. Laurence leads her off L. H.)

Lau. (As going.) Follow us, good Jabez!

[Exit Laurence and Mabel, L. H.]

Jabez. (Aside, following with his hamper.) Tide-waiter to a mad woman. Oh, Jabez Flint! Jabez Flint! eatch me amongst them again—that's all I shall say at present. Coming, good Lady M.

[Exit Jabez, L. H.]

Wolf. She's more mad than ever—how wild she looked!

Re-enter LAURENCE, L. H.

Lau. I've seen the signal! Silence, and forward!

(Laurence leads the way—they ascend the paths.—The Scene closes in.)

SCENE III.—Same as First Scene, Act II.—The window in c. is barred.

Enter RALPH BURNEY, R. H., much agitated.

Bur. The wind is rising, and moans amongst the turrets of this old castle, like the wailing of

the dead. Jabez was right—there are none that I can trust within my house. I am beset, and dare not try to escape. If Annie finds De Waldon, we may yet be saved. (Wind.) Hush! the atmosphere is thick with curses that outhowl the blast! The very sins that tempted, laugh me to scorn! My innocent child! if I dared to pray, I would pray for thee. May the Great Power—

Enter CAROLINE, R. H., wildly.—She rushes to her father.

Caro. (Wildly) Father—dear father, what means all this? You told me you had the means of defence; yet here you are, alone! Where are the servants?

Bur. They have refused to aet. We are beset—without by cowards, within by traitors!

(Noise and shouts without.)

Caro. Where are your arms, dear father? Oh, that De Waldon were here! (With spirit.) You wear a sword—can you not draw it, father? Is your arm paralyzed?

Bur. It is—by guilt! conscience has cramped its sinews!

(Shouts.—Caroline throws herself on her knees by her father.—Noise and shouts increase at back.)

Caro. (Rising suddenly.) The bell!—the alarm bell!

(Caroline rushes to bell-rope, L.H.—Bell—crash—shouts—continues to pull it; the bell rings violently. The c. windows are forced open—lime light behind—shouts. LAURENCE rushes in. Burney draws his sword, but is disarmed by Laurence. Caroline rushes between them.)

Caro. Touch him not!

(She throws her arms around her father, R. H.)

Enter WOLF at c. window.

Wolf. Some devilry has been at work—De Waldon's troop is dashing up the avenue. Martin Cleveland is with them.

[Exit Wolf, c. window.]

Lau. (L. H.) Curses on him! One shot at the old Roundhead, and we are quits. My brother's death shall be revenged!

(Laurence draws a pistol, presents it at Burney—a shout at back. ANNIE rushes in at c. window, and places herself between Laurence and Burney. Laurence hastily goes out by c. window.)

Annie. (c.) Saved! saved! saved! Oh, my dear young lady, 'twas Martin did it, my dear young lady—he's a brave fellow!—I'll never quarrel with him again—stole away to Maidstone—so brave he is—and brought De Waldon's troop to the rescue. I met them about a mile from the park gates. We have made it up! (Pistol shot fired without—a scream.) 'Tis Mabel's voice! I saw her wandering in the crowd.

Enter MABEL, wounded, led in by attendants and soldiers at c. window.

Mabel. (c., faintly.) Let me rest here!

Enter, at c. window, LAURENCE and WOLF, brought on by soldiers.

Lau. (Breaking from them.) My mother wounded! Off, off, I say!

(Goes to Mabel, kneels, and supports her.)

Mabel. (*Raising herself a little, and looking wildly around.*) There is comfort in breathing my last breath beneath these walls. Ralph Burney, I would speak with you—Ralph Burney! (*Burney goes to her.*) Kneel.

(*He kneels, she whispers him, he becomes agitated.*)

Caro. Come away, dear father!

Mabel. (*Seizing Burney by the wrist.*) You, who murdered soul and body, will not now shun me, when my hours, my very minutes, are numbered.

Lau. (*As if roused by these words, suddenly rises, and grapples Burney.*) My mother! my brother! I will have justice for their blood!

Mabel. (*With a violent effort, lays hold of Laurence.*) As you would avoid your dying mother's curse, loose—loose your hold! It is your father you would murder! (*Laurence relaxes his grasp.*) Yes, villain as he is, he is still your fa—

Lau. Do not say that, mother. If I am his son, what must you be?

Mabel. (*Going to Burney—emphatically.*) Hear—hear that, Ralph Burney—did not that enter your heart? A son upbraiding his own parent, and that parent in the death struggle! But the undying curse is on you still. Have you forgotten it?

(*Annie has placed a chair, Burney sinks into it.*) Hear me, Ralph Burney. This house was your master's. I was his only child—the child of one he said he loved, yet wrong'd. You won me to betray my father's trust—you poisoned to rottenness my once pure heart, and then—(*kneeling*)—hear it, Heaven! you steeled his heart against me, and turned me from these doors!

Bur. (c.) Mabel, spare me!

Mabel. (r. c.) Did you spare me when I clung to your knees to bid you farewell, when I could have blessed you, even in my misery—at that moment you cast me from you—you called me by the name that rings for everlasting on woman's ear—when she deserves it. Then on the snow I knelt; I cursed a curse, at which you trembled. Ah! I travelled many weary miles to hear the music of the rattling stones upon the coffins of your children. Ay! it still works well! Death would be no punishment to what you suffer. Laurence, my sight grows dim! Perhaps it would have been better had I dealt in blessings. (*Looks round, sees Burney, rises.*) I would not die at his feet—not at his feet! (*Moves away from Burney.*) Laurence, I cannot see you—put your face close—close—closer—how cold you are—and so am I!—but I die within the old walls!

(*Dies.*)

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