

Anstey F.

Voces Populi



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«Public Domain»

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An Evening with a Conjuror

Scene — *A Suburban Hall. The Performance has not yet begun. The Audience is limited and low-spirited, and may perhaps number – including the Attendants – eighteen. The only people in the front seats are a man in full evening dress, which he tries to conceal under a caped coat, and two Ladies in plush opera-cloaks. Fog is hanging about in the rafters, and the gas-stars sing a melancholy dirge. Each casual cough arouses dismal echoes. Enter an intending Spectator, who is conducted to a seat in the middle of an empty row. After removing his hat and coat, he suddenly thinks better – or worse – of it, puts them on again, and vanishes hurriedly*

First Sardonic Attendant (*at doorway*). Reg'lar turnin' em away to-night, we are!

Second Sardonic Attendant. He come up to me afore he goes to the pay-box, and sez he – "Is there a seat left?" he sez. And I sez to 'im, "Well, I *think* we can manage to squeeze you in somewhere." Like that, I sez.

[The Orchestra, consisting of two thin-armed little girls, with pigtails, enter, and perform a stumbling Overture upon a cracked piano. Herr Von Kamberwohl, the Conjuror, appears on platform, amidst loud clapping from two obvious Confederates in a back row.

Herr V. K. (*in a mixed accent*). Lyties and Shentilmans, pefoor I co-mence viz my hillusions zis hevenin' I 'ave most hemphadically to repoodiate hall assistance from hany spirrids or soopernatural beins vatsoever. All I shall 'ave ze honour of showing you will be perform by simple Sloight of 'and or Ledger-dee-Mang! (*He invites any member of the Audience to step up and assist him, but the spectators remain coy.*) I see zat I 'ave not to night so larsh an orjence to select from as usual, still I 'ope – (*Here one of the obvious Confederates slouches up, and joins him on the platform.*) Ah, zat is goot! I am vair much oblige to you, Sare. (*The Confederate grins sheepishly.*) Led me see – I seem to remember your face some'ow. (*Broader grin from Confederate.*) Hah you vos 'ere last night? – zat explains it! But you 'ave nevaire assist me befoor, eh? (*Reckless shake of the head from Confederate.*) I thought nod. *Vair vell.* You 'ave nevaire done any dricks mit carts – no? Bot you will dry? You never dell vat you gan do till you dry, as ze ole sow said ven she learn ze halphabet. (*He pauses for a laugh – which doesn't come.*) Now, Sare, you know a cart ven you see 'im? Ah, zat is somtings alretty! Now I vill ask you to choose any cart or carts out of zis back. (*The Confederate fumbles.*) I don't vish to 'urry you – but I vant you to mike 'aste – &c., &c.

The Man in Evening Dress. I remember giving Bimbo, the Wizard of the West, a guinea once to teach me that trick – there was nothing in it.

First Lady in Plush Cloak. And can you *do* it?

The M. in E. D. (*guardedly*). Well, I don't know that I could exactly do it *now*– but I know how it's done.

[He explains elaborately how it is done

Herr V. K. (*stamping, as a signal that the Orchestra may leave off*). Next I shall show you my celebrated illusion of ze inexhaustible 'At, to conclude viz the Invisible 'En. And I shall be much obliged if any shentilmans will kindly favour me viz 'is 'at for ze purpose of my experiment.

The M. in E. D. Here's mine – it's quite at your service. [*To his companions.*] This is a stale old trick, he merely – (*explains as before*). But you wait and see how I'll score off him over it!

Herr V. K. (*to the M. in E. D.*). You are quite sure, Sare, you leaf nosing inside of your 'at?

The M. in E. D. (*with a wink to his neighbours*). On the contrary, there are several little things there belonging to me, which I'll thank you to give me back by-and-by.

Herr V. K. (*diving into the hat*). So? Vat 'ave we 'ere? A bunch of flowairs! Anozzer bunch of flowairs? Anozzer —*and* anozzer! Ha, do you always garry flowairs inside your 'at, Sare?

The M. in E. D. Invariably – to keep my head cool; so hand them over, please; I want them.

[His Companions titter, and declare "it really is too bad of him!"

Herr V. K. Presently, Sare, – zere is somtings ails, it feels loike – yes, it ees – a mahouse-drap. Your haid is double vid moice, Sare, yes? Bot zere is none 'ere in ze 'at!

The M. in E. D. (*with rather feeble indignation*). I never said there were.

Herr V. K. No, zere is no mahouse – bot – [*diving again*] – ha! a leedle vide rad! Anozzer vide rad! And again a vide rad – and one, two, dree *more* vide rads! You vind zey keep your haid noice and cool, Sare? May I double you to com and dake zem away? I don't loike the vide rads myself, it is madder of daste. [*The Audience snigger.*] Oh, bot wait – zis is a *most* convenient 'at – [*extracting a large feeding-bottle and a complete set of baby-linen*] – ze shentelman is vairy domestic I see. And zere is more yet, he is goot business man, he knows ow von must hadvertise in zese' ere toimes. 'E 'as 'elp me, so I vill 'elp 'im by distributing some of his cairculars for 'im.

**[He showers cards, commending somebody's self-adjusting trousers
amongst the Audience, each person receiving about two dozen –
chiefly in the eye – until the air is dark, and the floor thick with them**

The M. in E. D. (*much annoyed*). Infernal liberty! Confounded impudence! Shouldn't have had my hat if I'd known he was going to play the fool with it like this!

First Lady in Plush Cloak. But I thought you knew what was coming?

The M. in E. D. So I did – but this fellow does it differently.

**[Herr Von K. is preparing to fire a marked half-
crown from a blunderbuss into a crystal casket**

A Lady with Nerves (*to her husband*). John, I'm *sure* he's going to let that thing off!

John (*a Brute*). Well, I shouldn't be surprised if he is. I can't help it.

The L. with N. You could if you liked – you could tell him my nerves won't stand it – the trick will be every *bit* as good if he only *pretends* to fire, I'm sure.

John. Oh, nonsense! – You can stand it very well if you *like*.

The L. with N. I *can't*, John... There, he's raising it to his shoulder. John, I *must* go out. I shall scream if I sit here, I *know* I shall!

John. No, no – what's the use? He'll have fired long before you get to the door. Much better stay where you are, and do your screaming sitting down. (*The Conjuror fires.*) There, you see, you *didn't* scream, after all!

The L. with N. I screamed to *myself*– which is ever so much worse for me; but you never *will* understand me till it's too late!

[Herr Von K. performs another trick

First Lady in Plush Cloak. That was very clever, wasn't it? I can't *imagine* how it was done!

The M. in E. D. (*in whom the memory of his desecrated hat is still rankling*). Oh, can't you? Simplest thing in the world – any child could do it!

Second Lady. What, find the rabbit inside those boxes, when they were all corded up, and sealed!

The M. in E. D. You don't mean to say you were taken in by *that*! Why, it was another rabbit, of course!

First Lady. But even if it *was* another rabbit, it was wearing the borrowed watch round its neck.

The M. in E. D. Easy enough to slip the watch in, if all the boxes have false bottoms.

Second L. Yes, but he passed the boxes round for us to examine.

The M. in E. D. Boxes – but not *those* boxes.

First L. But how could he slip the watch in when somebody was holding it all the time in a paper bag?

The M. in E. D. Ah, *I* saw how it was done – but it would take too long to explain it now. I *have* seen it so well performed that you *couldn't* spot it. But this chap's a regular duffer!

Herr V. K. (*who finds this sort of thing rather disturbing*). Lyties and Shentilmans, I see zere is von among us who is a broffessional like myself, and knows how all my leedle dricks is done. Now – [*suddenly abandoning his accent*] – I am always griteful for hanythink that will distrack the attention of the orjence from what is going on upon the Stige; naterally so, because it prevents you from follerin' my actions too closely, and so I now call upon this gentleman in the hevenin' dress jest to speak hup a very little louder than what he '*as* been doin', so that you will be enabled to 'ear hevery word of 'is hexplanation more puffickly than what some of you in the back benches have done itherto. Now, Sir, if you'll kindly repeat your very hinteresting remarks in a more haudible tone, I can go on between like. [*Murmurs of "No no!" "Shut up!" "We don't want to hear him!" from various places;* The Man in Evening Dress *subsides into a crimson taciturnity, which continues during the remainder of the performance.*

At the Tudor Exhibition

IN THE CENTRAL HALL

The usual Jocose 'Arry (who has come here with 'Arriet, for no very obvious reason, as they neither of them know or care about any history but their own). Well, I s'pose as we are 'ere, we'd better go in a buster for a book o' the words, eh? (To Commissionaire.) What are yer doin' them c'rect guides at, ole man? A shillin'? Not me! 'Ere, 'Arriet, we'll make it out for ourselves.

A Young Man (who has dropped in for five minutes – "just to say he's been, don't you know"). 'Jove —my Aunt! Nip out before she spots me... Stop, though, suppose she has spotted me? Never can tell with giglamps ... better not risk it. [Is "spotted" while hesitating.

His Aunt. I didn't recognise you till just this moment, John, my boy. I was just wishing I had some one to read out all the extracts in the Catalogue for me; now we can go round together.

[John affects a dutiful delight at this suggestion, and wonders mentally if he can get away in time to go to afternoon tea with those pretty Chesterton Girls

An Uncle (who has taken Master Tommy out for the afternoon). This is the way to make your English History real to you, my boy!

[Tommy, who had cherished hopes of Covent Garden Circus, privately thinks that English History is a sufficiently unpleasant reality as it is, and conceives a bitter prejudice against the entire Tudor Period on the spot

The Intelligent Person. Ha! armour of the period, you see!

(Feels bound to make an intelligent remark.) 'Stonishing how the whole art of war has been transformed since then, eh? Now – to me – (as if he was conscious of being singular in this respect) – to me, all this is most interesting. Coming as I do, fresh from Froude —

His Companion (a Flippant Person). Don't speak so loud. If they know you've come in here fresh, you'll get turned out!

Patronising Persons (inspecting magnificent suit of russet and gilt armour). 'Pon my word, no idea they turned out such good work in those times – very creditable to them, really.

BEFORE THE PORTRAITS

The Uncle. Now, Tommy, you remember what became of Katherine of Aragon, I'm sure? No, no – tut – tut —she wasn't executed! I'm afraid you're getting rather rusty with these long holidays. Remind me to speak to your mother about setting you a chapter or so of history to read every day when we get home, will you?

Tommy (to himself). It is hard lines on a chap having a Sneak for an Uncle! Catch me swotting to please him!

'Arry. There's old 'Enery the Eighth, you see – that's 'im right enough; him as 'ad all those wives, and cut every one of their 'eds off!

'Arriet (admiringly). Ah, I knew we shouldn't want a Catalogue.

The Int. P. Wonderfully Holbein's caught the character of the man – the – er – curious compound of obstinacy, violence, good-humour, sensuality, and – and so on. No mistaking a Holbein – you can tell him at once by the extraordinary finish of all the accessories. Now look at that girle – isn't that Holbein all over?

Flippant P. Not quite all over, old fellow. Catalogue says it's painted by Paris Bordone.

The Int. P. Possibly – but it's Holbein's *manner*, and, looking at these portraits, you see at once how right Froude's estimate was of the King.

F. P. Does Froude say how he got that nasty one on the side of his nose?

A Visitor. Looks overfed, don't he?

Second V. (*sympathetically*). Oh, he fed himself very well; you can see that.

The Aunt. Wait a bit, John – don't read so fast. I haven't made out the middle background yet. And where's the figure of St. Michael rising above the gilt tent, lined with *fleurs-de-lis* on a blue ground? Would this be Guisnes, or Ardres, now? Oh, Ardres on the right – so *that's* Ardres – yes, yes; and now tell me what it says about the two gold fountains, and that dragon up in the sky.

[John calculates that, at this rate, he has a very poor chance of getting away before the Gallery closes

The Patronising Persons. 'Um! Holbein again, you see – very curious their ideas of painting in those days. Ah, well, Art has made great progress since then – like everything else!

Miss Fisher. So *that's* the beautiful Queen Mary! I wonder if it is really *true* that people have got better-looking since those days?

[Glances appealingly at Phlegmatic Fiancé

Her Phlegmatic Fiancé. I wonder.

Miss F. You hardly ever see such small hands now, do you? With those lovely long fingers, too!

The Phl. F. No, never.

Miss F. Perhaps people in some other century will wonder how anybody ever saw anything to admire in *us*?

The Phl. F. Shouldn't be surprised.

[Miss F. does wish secretly that Charles had more conversation

The Aunt. John, just find out who No. 222 is.

John (*sulkily*). Sir George Penruddocke, Knight.

His Aunt (*with enthusiasm*). Of course —*how* interesting this is, isn't it? – seeing all these celebrated persons exactly as they were in life! Now read who he *was*, John, please.

The Int. Person. Froude tells a curious incident about —

Flippant P. I tell you what it is, old chap, if you read so much history, you'll end by *believing* it!

The Int. P. (*pausing before the Shakspeare portraits*). "He was not for an age, but for all time."

The Fl. P. I suppose that's why they've painted none of them alike.

A Person with a talent for Comparison. Mary, come here a moment. Do look at this – "Elizabeth, Lady Hoby" – did you *ever* see such a likeness?

Mary. Well, dear, I don't quite —

The Person with, &c. It's her living image! Do you mean to say you really don't recognise it? – Why, *Cook*, of course!

Mary. Ah! (*apologetically*) – but I've never seen her dressed to go *out*, you know.

The Uncle. "No. 13, Sir Rowland Hill, Lord Mayor, died 1561" —
Tommy (*anxious to escape the threatened chapters if possible*). I know about *him*, Uncle, he invented postage stamps!

OVER THE CASES

First Patronising P. "A Tooth of Queen Katherine Parr." Dear me! very quaint.

Second P. P. (*tolerantly*). And not at all a bad tooth, either.

'Arriet (*comes to a case containing a hat labelled as formerly belonging to Henry the Eighth*).
'Arry, look 'ere; fancy a king going about in a thing like that – pink with a green feather! Why, I wouldn't be seen in it myself!

'Arry. Ah, but that was ole 'Enery all over, that was; *he* wasn't one for show. He liked a quiet, unassumin' style of 'at, he did. "None of yer loud pot 'ats for Me!" he'd tell the Royal 'atters; "find me a tile as won't attract people's notice, or you won't want a tile yerselves in another minute!" An' you may take yer oath they served him pretty *sharp*, too!

'Arriet (*giggling*). It's a pity they didn't ask you to write their Catalogue for 'em.

The Aunt. John, you're not really *looking* at that needlework – it's Queen Elizabeth's own work, John. Only look how wonderfully fine the stitches are. Ah, she was a truly *great* woman! I could spend hours over this case alone. What, closing are they, *already*? We must have another day at this together, John – just you and I.

John. Yes, Aunt. And now – (*thinks there is just time to call on the Chestertons, if he goes soon*) – can I get you a cab, or put you into a 'bus or anything?

His Aunt. Not just yet; you must take me somewhere where I can get a bun and a cup of tea first, and then we can go over the Catalogue together, and mark all the things we *missed*, you know.

[John resigns himself to the inevitable rather than offend his wealthy relative; the Intelligent Person comes out, saying he has had "an intellectual treat" and intends to "run through Froude again" that evening. 'Arry and 'Arriet, depart to the "Ocean Wave" at Hengler's. Gallery gradually clears as Scene closes in

In an Omnibus

The majority of the inside passengers, as usual, sit in solemn silence, and gaze past their opposite neighbours into vacancy. A couple of Matrons converse in wheezy whispers

First Matron. Well, I must say a bus is pleasanter riding than what they used to be not many years back, and then so much cheaper, too. Why you can go all the way right from here to Mile End Road for threepence!

Second Matron. What, all that way for threepence – (*with an impulse of vague humanity*). The poor 'orses!

First Matron. Ah, well, my dear, it's Competition, you know, – it don't do to think too much of it.

Conductor (*stopping the bus*). Orchard Street, Lady!

[To Second Matron, who had desired to be put down there

Second Matron (*to Conductor*). Just move on a few doors further, opposite the boot-shop. (*To First Matron.*) It will save us walking.

Conductor. Cert'inly, Mum, we'll drive in and wait while you're tryin' 'em on, if you like —*we ain't in no 'urry!*

[The Matrons get out, and their places are taken by two young girls, who are in the middle of a conversation of thrilling interest

First Girl. I never liked her myself – ever since the way she behaved at his Mother's that Sunday.

Second Girl. How *did* she behave?

[A faint curiosity is discernible amongst the other passengers to learn how she – whoever she is – behaved that Sunday

First Girl. Why, it was you *told* me! You remember. That night Joe let out about her and the automatic scent fountain.

Second Girl. Oh, yes, I remember now. (*General disappointment.*) I couldn't help laughing myself. Joe didn't ought to have told – but she needn't have got into such a state over it, *need* she?

First Girl. That was Eliza all over. If George had been sensible, he'd have broken it off then and there – but no, he wouldn't hear a word against her, not at that time – it was the button-hook opened *his* eyes!

[The other passengers strive to dissemble a frantic desire to know how and why this delicate operation was performed

Second Girl (*mysteriously*). And enough too! But what put George off most was her keeping that bag so quiet.

**[The general imagination is once more stirred
to its depths by this mysterious allusion**

First Girl. Yes, he did feel that, I know, he used to come and go on about it to me by the hour together. "I shouldn't have minded so much," he told me over and over again, with the tears standing in his eyes, – "if it hadn't been that the bottles was all silver-mounted!"

Second Girl. Silver-mounted? I never heard of *that* before – no wonder he felt hurt!

First Girl (*impressively*). Silver tops to every one of them – and that girl to turn round as she did, and her with an Uncle in the oil and colour line, too – it nearly broke George's 'art!

Second Girl. He's such a one to take on about things – but, as I said to him, "George," I says, "You must remember it might have been worse. Suppose you'd been married to that girl, and *then* found out about Alf and the Jubilee sixpence – how would *that* have been?"

First Girl (*unconsciously acting as the mouthpiece of the other passengers*). And what did he say to *that*?

Second Girl. Oh, nothing – there was nothing he *could* say, but I could see he was struck. She behaved very mean to the last – she wouldn't send back the German concertina.

First Girl. You don't say so! Well, I wouldn't have thought that of her, bad as she is.

Second Girl. No, she stuck to it that it wasn't like a regular present, being got through a grocer, and as she couldn't send him back the tea, being drunk, – but did you hear how she treated Emma over the crinoline 'at she got for her?

First Girl (*to the immense relief of the rest*). No, what was that?

Second Girl. Well, I had it from Emma her own self. Eliza wrote up to her and says, in a postscript like, – Why, this is Tottenham Court Road, I get out here. Good-bye, dear, I must tell you the rest another day.

[Gets out, leaving the tantalised audience inconsolable, and longing for courage to question her companion as to the precise details of Eliza's heartless behaviour to George. The companion, however, relapses into a stony reserve. Enter a Chatty Old Gentleman who has no secrets from anybody, and of course selects as the first recipient of his confidence the one person who hates to be talked to in an omnibus

The Chatty O. G. I've just been having a talk with the policeman at the corner there – what do you think I said to him?

His Opposite Neighbour. I – I really don't know.

THE C. O. G. Well, I told him he was a rich man compared to me. He said "I only get thirty shillings a week, Sir." "Ah," I said, "but look at your expenses, compared to mine. What would *you* do if you had to spend eight hundred a year on your children's education?" I spend that – every penny of it, Sir.

His Opp. N. (*utterly uninterested*). Do you indeed? – dear me!

C. O. G. Not that I grudge it – a good education is a fortune in itself, and as I've always told my boys, they must make the best of it, for it's all they'll get. They're good enough lads, but I've had a deal of trouble with them one way and another – a *deal* of trouble. (*Pauses for some expression of sympathy – which does not come – and he continues:*) There are my two eldest sons – what must they do but fall in love with the same lady – the same lady, Sir! (*No one seems to care much for these domestic revelations – possibly because they are too obviously addressed to the general ear*). And, to make matters worse, she was a married woman – (*his principal hearer looks another way uneasily*) – the wife of a godson of mine, which made it all the more awkward, y'know. (*His Opposite Neighbour*

giving no sign, the C. O. G. tries one Passenger after another.) Well, I went to him – (*here he fixes an old Lady, who immediately passes up coppers out of her glove to the Conductor*) – I went to him, and said – (*addressing a smartly dressed young Lady with a parcel who giggles*) – I said, "You're a man of the world – so am I. Don't you take any notice," I told him – (*this to a callow young man, who blushes*) – "they're a couple of young fools," I said, "but you tell your dear wife from me not to mind those boys of mine – they'll soon get tired of it if they're only let alone." And so they would have, long ago, it's my belief, if they'd met with no encouragement – but what can *I* do – it's a heavy trial to a father, you know. Then there's my third son – he must needs go and marry – (*to a Lady at his side with a reticule, who gasps faintly*) – some young woman who dances at a Music-hall – nice daughter-in-law that for a man in my position, eh? I've forbidden him the house of course, and told his mother not to have any communication with him – but I know, Sir, – (*violently, to a Man on his other side, who coughs in much embarrassment*) – I know she meets him once a week under the eagle in Orme Square, and *I* can't stop her! Then I'm worried about my daughters – one of 'em gave me no peace till I let her have some painting lessons – of course, I naturally thought the drawing-master would be an elderly man – whereas, as things turned out, —

A QUIET MAN IN A CORNER. I 'ope you told all this to the Policeman, Sir?

The C. O. G. (*flaming unexpectedly*). No, Sir, I did *not*. I am not in the habit – whatever *you* may be – of discussing my private affairs with strangers. I consider your remark highly impertinent, Sir.

[Fumes in silence for the rest of the journey

The Young Lady with the Parcel (*to her friend – for the sake of vindicating her gentility*). Oh, my dear, *I* do feel so funny, carrying a great brown-paper parcel, in a bus, too! Any one would take me for a shop-girl!

A Grim Old Lady Opposite. And I only hope, my dear, you'll never be taken for any one less respectable.

[Collapse of Genteel Y.L

First Humorous 'Arry (*recognising a friend on entering*). Excuse me stoppin' your kerridge, old man, but I thought you wouldn't mind givin' me a lift, as you was goin' my way.

Second H. 'A. Quite welcome, old chap, so long as you give my man a bit when you git down, yer know.

First H. 'A. Oh, o' course – that's expected between gentlemen.

(*Both look round to see if their facetiousness is appreciated, find it is not and subside.*)

The Conductor. Benk, benk! (*he means "Bank"*) 'Oborn, benk! 'Igher up there, Bill, can't you?

A Dingy Man smoking, in a van. Want to block up the ole o' the road, eh? That's right!

The Conductor (*roused to personality*). Go 'ome, Dirty Dick! syme old soign, I see, – "Monkey an' Poipe!" (*To Coachman of smart brougham which is pressing rather closely behind.*) I say old man, don't you race after my bus like this – you'll only tire your 'orse.

[The Coachman affects not to have heard

The Conductor (*addressing the brougham horse, whose head is almost through the door of the omnibus*). 'Ere, 'ang it all! – step insoide, if yer want to!

[Brougham falls to rear – triumph of Conductor as Scene closes

At a Sale of High-Class Sculpture

Scene — *An upper floor in a City Warehouse; a low whitewashed room, dimly lighted by dusty windows and two gas-burners in wire cages. Around the walls are ranged several statues of meek aspect, securely confined in barred wooden cases, like a sort of marble menagerie. In the centre, a labyrinthine grove of pedestals, surmounted by busts, groups, and statuettes by modern Italian masters. About these pedestals a small crowd – consisting of Elderly Merchants on the look out for a "neat thing in statuary" for the conservatory at Croydon or Muswell Hill, Young City Men who have dropped in after lunch, Disinterested Dealers, Upholsterers' Buyers, Obliging Brokers, and Grubby and Mysterious men – is cautiously circulating*

Obliging Broker (to Amiable Spectator, who has come in out of curiosity, and without the remotest intention of purchasing sculpture). No Catlog, Sir? 'Ere, allow me to offer you mine – that's my name in pencil on the top of it, Sir; and, if you *should* 'appen to see any lot that takes your fancy, you jest ketch my eye. (Reassuringly.) I sha'n't be fur off. Or look 'ere, gimme a nudge – I shall know what it means.

[The A. S. thanks him profusely, and edges away with an inward vow to avoid his and the Auctioneer's eyes, as he would those of a basilisk

Auctioneer (from desk, with the usual perfunctory fervour). Lot 13, Gentlemen, very charming pair of subjects from child life – "*The Pricked Finger*" and "*The Scratched Toe*" – by Bimbi.

A Stolid Assistant (in shirtsleeves). Figgers 'ere, Gen'lm'n!

[Languid surge of crowd towards them

A Facetious Bidder. Which of 'em's the finger and which the toe?

Auct. (coldly). I should have thought it was easy to identify by the attitude. Now, Gentlemen, give me a bidding for these very finely-executed works by Bimbi. Make any offer. What will you give me for 'em? Both very sweet things, Gentlemen. Shall we say ten guineas?

A Grubby Man. Give yer five.

Auct. (with grieved resignation). Very well, start 'em at five. Any advance on five? (To Assist.) Turn 'em round, to show the back view. And a 'arf! Six! And a 'arf! Only six and a 'arf bid for this beautiful pair of figures, done direct from nature by Bimbi. Come, Gentlemen, come! Seven! Was that *you*, Mr. Grimes? (The Grubby Man admits the soft impeachment.) Seven and a 'arf. Eight! It's *against* you.

Mr. Grimes (with a supreme effort). Two-and-six!

[Mops his brow with a red cotton handkerchief

Auct. (in a tone of gratitude for the smallest mercies). Eight-ten-six. All done at eight-ten-six? Going ... gone! Grimes, Eight, ten, six. Take money for 'em. Now we come to a very 'andsome work by Piffalini – "*The Ocarina Player*," one of this great artist's masterpieces, and an exceedingly choice

and high-class work, as you will all agree directly you see it. (*To Assist.*) Now, then, Lot 14, there – look sharp!

Stolid Assist. "Hocarina Plier" eyn't arrived, Sir.

Auct. Oh, hasn't it? Very well, then. Lot 15. "*The Pretty Pill-taker*," by Antonio Bilio – a really magnificent work of Art, Gentlemen. ("*Pill-taker, 'ere.!*" *from the S. A.*) What'll you give me for her? Come, make me an offer. (*Bidding proceeds till the "Pill-taker" is knocked down for twenty-three-and-a-half guineas.*) Lot 16, "*The Mixture as Before*," by same artist – make a charming and suitable companion to the last lot. What do you say, Mr. Middleman – take it at the same bidding? (Mr. M. *assents, with the end of one eyebrow.*) Any advance on twenty-three and a 'arf? None? Then, – Middleman, Twenty-four, thirteen, six.

Mr. Middleman (*to the Amiable Spectator, who has been vaguely inspecting the "Pill-taker"*). Don't know if you noticed it, Sir, but I got that last couple very cheap – on'y forty-seven guineas the pair, and they are worth eighty, I solemnly declare to you. I could get forty a piece for 'em to-morrow, upon my word and honour, I could. Ah, and I know who'd *give* it me for 'em, too!

The A. S. (*sympathetically*). Dear me, then you've done very well over it.

Mr. M. Ah, well ain't the word – and those two aren't the only lots I've got either. That "*Sandwich-Man*" over there is mine – look at the work in those boards, and the nature in his clay pipe; and "*The Boot-Black*," that's mine, too – all worth twice what *I* got 'em for – and lovely things, too, ain't they?

The A. S. Oh, very nice, very clever – congratulate you, I'm sure.

Mr. M. I can see you've took a fancy to 'em, Sir, and, when I come across a gentleman that's a connysewer, I'm always sorry to stand in his light; so, see here, you can have any one you like out o' my little lot, or all on 'em, with all the pleasure in the wide world, Sir, and I'll on'y charge you five per cent. on what I gave for 'em, and be exceedingly obliged to you, into the bargain, Sir. (*The A. S. feebly disclaims any desire to take advantage of this magnanimous offer.*) Don't say No, if you mean Yes, Sir. Will you *'ave "The Pill-taker,"* Sir?

The A. S. (*politely*). Thank you very much, but – er – I think *not*.

Mr. M. Then perhaps you could do with "*The Little Boot-Black*," or "*The Sandwich-Man*," Sir?

The A. S. Perhaps – but I could do still better *without* them.

[He moves to another part of the room

The Obl. Broker (*whispering beerily in his ear*). Seen anythink yet as takes your fancy, Sir; 'cos, if so —

[The A. S. escapes to a dark corner – where he is warmly welcomed by Mr. Middleman

Mr. M. *Knew* you'd think better on it, Sir. Now which is it to be – the "*Boot-Black*," or "*Mixture as Before*"?

Auct. Now we come to Lot 19. Massive fluted column in coral marble with revolving-top – a column, Gentlemen, which will speak for itself.

The Facetious Bidder (*after a scrutiny*). Then it may as well mention, while it's *about* it, that it's got a bit out of its back!

Auct. Flaw in the marble, that's all. (*To Assist.*) Nothing the *matter* with the column, is there? Assist. (*with reluctant candour*). Well, it *'as* got a little chipped, Sir.

Auct. (*easily*). Oh, very well then, we'll sell it "A. F." Very glad it was found out in time, I'm sure. [*Bidding proceeds.*]

First Dealer to Second (*in a husky whisper*). Talkin' o' Old Masters, I put young 'Anway up to a good thing the other day.

Second D. (*without surprise – probably from a knowledge of his friend's noble unselfish nature*). Ah – 'ow was that?

First D. Well, there was a picter as I 'appened to know could be got in for a deal under what it ought – in good 'ands, mind yer – to fetch. It was a Morlan' – leastwise, it was so like you couldn't ha' told the difference, if you understand my meanin'. (*The other nods with complete intelligence.*) Well, I 'adn't no openin' for it myself just then, so I sez to young 'Anway, "You might do worse than go and 'ave a *look* at it," I told him. And I run against him yesterday, Wardour Street way, and I sez, "Did yer go and *see* that picter?" "Yes," sez he, "and what's more, I got it at pretty much my own figger, too!" "Well," sez I, "and ain't yer goin' to *shake 'ands with me over it*?"

Second D. (*interested*). And *did* he?

First D. Yes, he did – he beyaved very fair over the matter, I will say *that* for him.

Second D. Oh, 'Anway's a very decent little feller —*now*.

Auct. (*hopefully*). Now, Gentlemen, this next lot'll tempt you, I'm sure! Lot 33, a magnificent and very finely executed dramatic group out of the "*Merchant of Venice*," *Othello* in the act of smothering *Desdemona*, both nearly life-size. (Assist., *with a sardonic inflection*. "Group 'ere, *Gen'lm'n!*") What shall we say for this great work by Roccocippi, Gentlemen? A hundred guineas, just to start us?

The F. B. Can't you put the two figgers up separate?

Auct. You know better than that – being a group, Sir. Come, come, any one give me a hundred for this magnificent marble group! The figure of *Othello* very finely finished, Gentlemen.

The F. B. I should ha' thought it was *her* who was the finely finished one of the two.

Auct. (*pained by this levity*). Really, Gentlemen, *do* 'ave more appreciation of a 'igh-class work like this!.. Twenty-five guineas?.. Nonsense! I can't put it up at that.

[Bidding languishes. Lot withdrawn]

Second Disinterested Dealer (*to First D. D., in an undertone*). I wouldn't tell every one, but I shouldn't like to see *you* stay 'ere and waste your time; so, in case you *was* thinking of waiting for that last lot, I may just as well mention —

[Whispers]

First D. D. Ah, it's *that* way, is it? Much obliged to you for the 'int. But I'd do the same for you any day.

Second D. D. I'm *sure* yer would!

[They watch one another suspiciously]

Auct. Now 'ere's a tasteful thing, Gentlemen. Lot. 41. "*Nymph eating Oysters*" ("*Nymph 'ere, Gen'lm'n!*"), by the celebrated Italian artist Vabene, one of the finest works of Art in this room, and they're *all* exceedingly fine works of Art; but this is a *truly* work of Art, Gentlemen. What shall we say for her, eh? (*Silence.*) Why, Gentlemen, no more appreciation than *that*? Come, don't be afraid of it. Make a beginning. (*Bidding starts.*) Forty-five guineas. Forty-six —*pounds*. Forty-six pounds only, this remarkable specimen of modern Italian Art. Forty-six and a 'arf. Only forty-six ten bid for it. Give character to any gentleman's collection, a figure like this would. Forty-seven *pounds—guineas!* and a 'arf... Forty-seven and a 'arf guineas... For the last time! Bidding with you, Sir. Forty-seven guineas and a 'arf – Gone! Name, Sir, if *you* please. Oh, money? Very well. Thank you.

Proud Purchaser (*to Friend, in excuse for his extravagance*). You see, I must have something for that grotto I've got in the grounds.

His Friend. If she was mine, I should put her in the hall, and have a gaslight fitted in the oyster-shell.

P. P. (*thoughtfully*). Not a bad idea. But electric light would be more suitable, and easier to fix too. Yes – we'll see.

The Obl. Broker (*pursuing the Am. Spect.*). I 'ope, Sir, you'll remember me, next time you're this way.

The Am. Spect. (*who has only ransomed himself by taking over an odd lot, consisting of imitation marble fruit, a model, under crystal, of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and three busts of Italian celebrities of whom he has never heard*). I'm afraid I sh'an't have very much chance of forgetting you. *Good afternoon!*

[Exit hurriedly, dropping the fruit, as Scene closes

At the Guelph Exhibition

IN THE CENTRAL HALL

A Thrifty Visitor (*on entering*). Catalogue? No. What's the use of a Catalogue? Miserable thing, the size of a tract, that tells you nothing you don't know!

His Wife (*indicating a pile of Catalogues on table*). Aren't *these* big enough for you?

The Thr. V. Those? Why they're big enough for the *London Directory*! Think I'm going to drag a thing like that about the place? You don't really want a Catalogue – it's all your fancy!

Mr. Prattler (*to Miss Ammerson*). Oh, *do* stop and look at these *sweet* goldfish! Pets! Don't you *love* them? *Aren't* they tame?

Miss Ammerson. Wouldn't do to have them *wild*– might jump out and *bite* people, you know!

Mr. P. It's *too* horrid of you to make fun of my poor little enthusiasms! But really, – couldn't we get something and feed them? —*Do* let's!

Miss A. I dare say you could get ham-sandwiches in the Restaurant – or chocolates.

Mr. P. How unkind you are to me! But I don't care. (*Wilfully.*) I shall come here all by myself, and bring biscuits. Great big ones! Are you determined to take me into that big room with all the Portraits? Well you must tell me who they all are, then, and which are the Guelphiest ones.

Considerate Niece (*to Uncle*). They seem mostly Portraits here. You're sure you don't *mind* looking at them, Uncle? I know so many people *do* object to Portraits.

Uncle (*with the air of a Christian Martyr*). No, my dear, no; *I* don't mind 'em. Stay here as long as you like. I'll sit down and look at the people till you've done.

First Critical Visitor (*examining a View of St. James's Park*). I wonder where that was taken. In Scotland, I expect – there's two Highlanders there, you see.

Second C. V. Shouldn't wonder – lot o' work in that, all those different colours, and so many dresses. [*Admires, thoughtfully.*]

A Well-read Woman. That's Queen Charlotte, that is. George the Third's wife, you know – her that was so *domestic*.

Her Companion. Wasn't that the one that was shut up in the Tower, or something?

The W. W. In the Tower? Lor, my dear, no, *I* never 'eard of it. You're thinking of the Tudors, or some o' that lot, I expect!

Her Comp. Am I? I dare say. I never *could* remember 'Istry. Why, if you'll believe me, I always have to stop and think which of the Georges came first!

More Critical Visitors (*before Portraits*). He's rather pleasant-looking, don't you think? *I don't* like *her* face at all. So peculiar. And what a hideous dress – like a tea-gown without any upper part – frightful!

A Sceptical V. They all seem to have had such thin lips in those days. Somehow, *I can't* bring myself to believe in such very thin lips – can *you*, dear?

Her Friend. I always think it's a sign of meanness, myself.

The S. V. No; but I mean – I can't believe *every one* had them in the eighteenth century.

Her Friend. Oh, I don't know. If it was the fashion!

ABOUT THE CASES

Visitor (*admiring an embroidered waistcoat of the time of George the Second — a highly popular exhibit*). What lovely work! Why, it looks as if it was done yesterday!

Her Companion (*who is not in the habit of allowing his enthusiasm to run away with him*). Um – yes, it's not bad. But, of course, they wouldn't send a thing like that here without having it washed and done up first!

An Old Lady. "Teapot used by the Duke of Wellington during his campaigns." So he drank *tea*, did he? Dear me! Do you know, my dear, I think I must have *my* old tea-pot engraved. It will make it so much more interesting some day!

IN THE SOUTH GALLERY

Mr. Prattler (*before a portrait of Lady Hamilton by Romney*). There! Isn't she too charming? I do call her a perfect *duck*!

Miss Ammerson. Yes, you mustn't forget her when you bring those biscuits.

An Amurcan Girl. Father, see up there; there's Byron. Did you ever see such a purrfectly beautiful face?

Her Father (*solemnly*). He was a beautiful *Man* – a beautiful Poet.

The A. G. I know – but the *expression*, it's real saint-like!

Father (*slowly*). Well, I guess if he'd had any different kind of expression, he wouldn't have written the things he *did* write, and that's a fact!

A Moralising Old Lady (*at Case O*). No. 1260. "Ball of Worsted wound by William Cowper, the poet, for Mrs. Unwin." No. 1261. "Netting done by William Cowper, the poet." How very nice, and what a difference in the habit of literary persons *nowadays*, my dear!

IN THE CENTRAL HALL

Mr. Whiterose, *a Jacobite fin de siècle, is seated on a Bench beside a Seedy Stranger*.

The S. S. (*half to himself*). Har, well, there's one comfort, these 'ere Guelphs'll get notice to quit afore we're *much* older!

Mr. Whiterose (*surprised*). You say so? Then you too are of the Young England Party! I am rejoiced to hear it. You cheer me; it is a sign that the good Cause is advancing.

The S. S. Advancin'? I believe yer. Why, I know a dozen and more as are workin' 'art and soul for it!

Mr. W. You do? We are making strides, indeed! Our England has suffered these usurpers too long.

The S. S. Yer right. But we'll chuck 'em out afore long, and it'll be "Over goes the Show" with the lot, eh?

Mr. W. I had no idea that the – er – intelligent artisan classes were so heartily with us. We must talk more of this. Come and see me. Bring your friends – all you can depend upon. Here is my card.

The S. S. (*putting the card in the lining of his hat*). Right, Guv'nor; we'll come. I wish there was more gents like yer, I do!

Mr. W. We are united by a common bond. We both detest – do we not? – the Hanoverian interlopers. We are both pledged never to rest until we have brought back to the throne of our beloved England, her lawful sovereign lady – (*uncovering*) – our gracious Mary of Austria-Este, the legitimate descendant of Charles the Blessed Martyr!

The S. S. 'Old on, Guv'nor! Me and my friends are with yer so fur as doing away with these 'ere hidle Guelphs; but blow yer Mary of Orstria, yer know. Blow 'er!

Mr. W. (*horrified*). Hush – this is rank treason! Remember – she is the lineal descendant of the House of Stuart!

The S. S. What of it? There won't be no lineal descendants when we git *hour* way, 'cause there won't be nothing to descend to nobody. The honly suv'rin *we* mean to 'ave is the People – the

Democrisy. But there, you're young, me and my friends'll soon tork you over to hour way o' thinking. I dessay we 'aint fur apart, as it is. I got yer address, and we'll drop in on yer some night – never fear. No hevenin' dress, o' course?

Mr. W. Of course. I – I'll look out for you. But I'm seldom in – hardly *ever*, in fact.

The S. S. Don't you fret about *that*. Me and my friends ain't nothing partickler to do just now. We'll *wait* for yer. I should like yer to know ole Bill Gabb. You should 'ear *that* feller goin' on agin the Guelphs when he's 'ad a little booze – it 'ud do your 'art good. Well, I on'y come in 'ere as a deligate like, to report, and I seen enough. So 'ere's good-day to yer.

Mr W. (*alone*). I shall have to change my rooms – and I *was* so comfortable! Well, well, – another sacrifice to the Cause!

AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY

IN THE VESTIBULE

Visitors ascending staircase, full of enthusiasm and energetic determination not to miss a single Picture, encounter people descending in various stages of mental and physical exhaustion. At the turnstiles two Friends meet unexpectedly; both being shy men, who, with timely notice, would have preferred to avoid one another, their greetings are marked by an unnatural effusion and followed by embarrassed silence

First Shy Man (*to break the spell*). Odd, our running up against one another like this, eh?

Second Shy Man. Oh, very odd. (*Looks about him irresolutely, and wonders if it would be decent to pass on. Decides it will hardly do.*) Great place for meeting, the Academy, though.

First S. M. Yes; sure to come across *somebody*, sooner or later.

[Laughs nervously, and wishes the other would go

Second S. M. (*seeing that his friend lingers*). This your *first* visit here?

First S. M. Yes. Couldn't very well get away *before*, you know.

[Feels apologetic, without exactly knowing why

Second S. M. It's *my* first visit, too. (*Sees no escape, and resigns himself.*) Er – we may as well go round together, eh?

First S. M. (*who was afraid this was coming—heartily*). Good! By the way, I always think, on a first visit, it's best to take a single room, and do that thoroughly. [*This has only just occurred to him.*

Second S. M. (*who had been intending to follow that plan himself*). Oh, *do* you? Now, for *my* part, I don't attempt to see anything *thoroughly* the first time. Just scamper through, glance at the things one oughtn't to miss, get a general impression, and come away. *Then*, if I don't happen to come again, I've always *done* it, you see. But (*considerately*), look here. Don't let me drag you about, if you'd rather not!

First S. M. Oh, but I shouldn't like to feel I was any tie on you. Don't you mind about me. I shall potter about in here – for hours, I dare say.

Second S. M. Ah, well (*with vague consolation*), I shall always know where to *find* you, I suppose.

First S. M. (*brightening visibly*). Oh dear, yes; I sha'n't be far away.

[They part with mutual relief, only tempered by the necessity of following the course they have respectively prescribed for themselves. Nemesis overtakes the Second S. M. in the next Gallery, when he is captured by a Desultory Enthusiast, who insists upon dragging him all over the place to see obscure "bits" and "gems," which are only to be appreciated by ricking the neck or stooping painfully

A Suburban Lady (*to Female Friend*). Oh dear, *how* stupid of me! I *quite* forgot to bring a pencil! Oh, *thank* you, dear, that will do *beautifully*. It's just a *little* blunt; but so long as I can *mark* with it, you know. You don't think we should avoid the crush if we began at the end room? Well, perhaps it *is* less confusing to begin at the beginning, and work steadily through.

IN GALLERY NO. I

A small group has collected before Mr. Wyllie's "Davy Jones's Locker," which they inspect solemnly for some time before venturing to commit themselves to any opinion

First Visitor (*after devoting his whole mind to the subject*). Why, it's the Bottom of the Sea – at least (*more cautiously*), that's what it seems to be *intended* for.

Second V. Ah, and very well done, too. I wonder, now, how he managed to stay down long enough to paint all that?

Third V. Practice, I suppose. I've seen writing done under water myself. But that was a tank!

Fourth V. (*presumably in profound allusion to the fishes and sea-anemones*). Well, they seem to be 'aving it all their own way down there, don't they?

[The Group, feeling that this remark sums up the situation, disperses

The Suburban Lady (*her pencil in full play*). No. 93. Now what's *that* about? Oh, "*Forbidden Sweets*," – yes, to be sure. *Isn't* that charming? Those two dear little tots having their tea, and the kitten with its head stuck in the jam-pot, and the label and all, and the sticky spoon on the nursery table-cloth – so *natural!* I really *must* mark that. (*Awards this distinction.*) 97. "*Going up Top*." Yes, *of course*. Look, Lucy dear, that little fellow has just answered a question, and his master tells him he may go to the top of the class, do you *see*? And the big boy looking so sulky, he's wishing he had learnt his lesson better. I do think it's *so* clever – all the different expressions. Yes, I shall *certainly* mark that!

IN GALLERY NO. II

The S. L. (*doubtfully*). H'm, No. 156. "*Cloud Chariots*"? Not very *like* chariots, though, *are* they?

Her Friend. I expect it's one of those sort of pictures that you have to look at a long time, and then things gradually come *out* of it, you know.

The S. L. *It may* be. (*Tries the experiment.*) No, *I* can't make *anything* come out – only just clouds and their reflections. (*Struggling between good-nature and conscientiousness.*) *I don't* think *I* can mark that.

IN GALLERY NO. III

A Matron (*before Mr. Dicksee's "Tannhäuser"*). "Venus and Tannhäuser" – ah, and is that Venus on the stretcher? Oh, *that's* her all on fire in the background. Then which is Tannhäuser, and what are they all supposed to be doing? [*In a tone of irritation.*]

Her Nephew. Oh, it tells you all about it in the Catalogue – he meets her funeral, you know, and leaves grow on his stick.

The Matron (*pursing her lips*). Oh, a *dead person*.

[Repulses the Catalogue severely and passes on

First Person, *with an "Eye for Art" (before "Psyche's Bath," by the President)*. Not bad, eh?

Second Person, &c. No, I rather like it. (*Feels that he is growing too lenient*). He doesn't give you a very good idea of marble, though.

First P. &c. No —*that's* not marble, and he always puts too many folds in his drapery to suit *me*.

First P. &c. Just what *I* always say. It's not natural, you know.

[They pass on, much pleased with themselves and one another

A Fiancé (*halting before a sea-scape, by Mr. Henry Moore, to Fiancée*). Here, I say, hold on a bit – what's *this* one?

Fiancée (*who doesn't mean to waste the whole afternoon over pictures*). Why, it's only a lot of waves —*come on!*

The Suburban L. Lucy, *this* is rather nice. "*Breakfasts for the Porth!*" (*Pondering*). I think there must be a mistake in the Catalogue – I don't see any breakfast things – they're cleaning fish, and what's a "Porth!" Would you mark that – or not?

Her Comp. Oh, I *think* so.

The S. L. I don't know. I've marked such a quantity already and the lead won't hold out much longer. Oh, it's by Hook, R.A. Then I suppose it's *sure* to be all right. I've marked it, dear.

Duet by Two Dreadfully Severe Young Ladies, *who paint a little on China*. Oh, my *dear*, look at that. Did you ever *see* such a thing? Isn't it too perfectly *awful*? And there's a thing! Do come and look at this horror over here. A "*Study*," indeed. I should just think it *was*! Oh, Maggie, don't be so satirical, or I shall die! No, but *do* just see this – isn't it *killing*? They get worse and worse every year, I declare!

[And so on

IN GALLERY NO. V

Two Prosaic Persons come upon a little picture, by Mr. Swan, of a boy lying on a rock, piping to fishes.

First P. P. *That's* a rum thing!

Second P. P. Yes, I wasn't aware myself that fishes were so partial to music.

First P. P. They may be – out there – (*perceiving that the boy is unclad*) – but it's peculiar altogether – they look like herrings to me.

Second P. P. Yes – or mackerel. But (*tolerantly*) I suppose it's a fancy subject.

[They consider that this absolves them from taking any further interest in it, and pass on

IN GALLERY NO. XI

An Old Lady (*who judges Art from a purely Moral Standpoint, halts approvingly before a picture of a female orphan*). Now that really is a nice picture, my dear – a plain black dress and white cuffs – just what I *like* to see in a young person!

The S. L. (*her enthusiasm greatly on the wane, and her temper slightly affected*). Lucy, I wish you wouldn't worry so – it's quite impossible to stop and look at *everything*. If you wanted your tea as badly as *I* do! Mark that one? What, when they neither of them have a single *thing* on! Never, Lucy, – and I'm surprised at your suggesting it! Oh, you meant the next one? h'm – no, I *can't* say I care for it. Well, if I *do* mark it, I shall only put a tick – for it really is *not* worth a cross!

COMING OUT

The Man who always makes the Right Remark. H'm. Haven't seen anything I could carry away with me.

His Flippant Friend. Too many people about, eh? Never mind, old chap, you *may* manage to sneak an umbrella down stairs – I won't say anything!

[Disgust of his companion, who descends stairs in offended silence, as scene closes

At the Horse Show

Time —*About 3.30. Leaping Competition about to begin. The Competitors are ranged in a line at the upper end of the Hall while the attendants place the hedges in position.*

Amongst the Spectators in the Area are – a Saturnine Stableman from the country; a Cockney Groom; a Morbid Man; a Man who is apparently under the impression that he is the only person gifted with sight; a Critic who is extremely severe upon other people's seats; a Judge of Horseflesh; and Two Women who can't see as well as they could wish

The Descriptive Man. They've got both the fences up now, d'ye see? There's the judges going to start the jumping; each rider's got a ticket with his number on his back. See? The first man's horse don't seem to care about jumping this afternoon – see how he's dancing about. Now he's going at it – there, he's cleared it! Now he'll have to jump the next one!

[Keeps up a running fire of these instructive and valuable observations throughout the proceedings

The Judge of Horseflesh. Rare good shoulders that one has.

The Severe Critic (*taking the remark to apply to the horse's rider*). H'm, yes – rather – pity he sticks his elbows out quite so much, though.

[His Friend regards him in silent astonishment. Another Competitor clears a fence, but exhibits a considerable amount of daylight

The Saturnine Stableman (*encouragingly*). You'll 'ev to set back a bit next journey, Guv'nor!

The Cockney Groom. 'Orses 'ud jump better if the fences was a bit 'igher.

The S. S. They'll be plenty 'oigh enough fur some on 'em.

The Severe Critic. Ugly seat that fellow has – all anyhow when the horse jumps.

Judge of Horseflesh. Has he? I didn't notice – I was looking at the horse. [Severe Critic *feels snubbed*].

The S. S. (*soothingly, as the Competitor with the loose seat comes round again*). That's not good, Guv'nor!

The Cockney Groom. 'Ere's a little bit o' fashion coming down next – why, there's quite a boy on his back.

The S. S. 'E won't be on 'im long if he don't look out. Cup an ball *I* call it!

The Morbid Man. I suppose there's always a accident o' some sort before they've finished.

First Woman. Oh, don't, for goodness' sake, talk like that – I'm sure *I* don't want to see nothing 'appen.

Second Woman. Well, you may make your mind easy – for you won't see nothing here; you *would* have it this was the best place to come to!

First Woman. I only said there was no sense in paying extra for the balcony, when you can go in the area for nothing.

Second Woman (*snorting*). Area, indeed! It might be a good deal airier than what it is, I'm sure – I shall melt if I stay here much longer.

The Morbid Man, There's one thing about being so close to the jump as this – if the 'orse jumps sideways – as 'osses will do every now and then – he'll be right in among us before we know where we are, and then there'll be a pretty how-de-do!

Second Woman (*to her Friend*). Oh, come away, do – it's bad enough to see nothing, let alone having a great 'orse coming down atop of us, and me coming out in my best bonnet, too – come away! [*They leave*

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