

ROUND AND SQUARE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ROUND (Secretary of the Tea and Tract Association).
SQUARE (Temporary Manager of Mr. Golightly's Dramatic Agency).
DR. DRAPER (President of the Tea and Tract Association).
GLADYS HARVEY (his Niece).
MISS BELLA BELLINGHAM (of the Frivolity Theatre).
MRS. WEEZER (Housekeeper).
WAITER.
BOY.

ROUND AND SQUARE.

The scene represents two business offices divided by a passage. Doors lead from the rooms into this corridor, which communicates with the staircase of the house. Both offices are furnished in very plain and simple style.

As the curtain rises, SQUARE is discovered in the left-hand office, reading a heavy-looking volume. He is dressed in sober attire,— long frock-coat, black tie, dark trousers, and has altogether a "serious cut" about him.

SQUARE (*rousing himself from book*). Well, I suppose I must leave "Zimmerman on Solitude" for the present? (*He shuts book and rings the bell.*)

Enter Mrs. Weezer.

MRS. W. Did you ring, sir?

SQUARE. Mrs. Weezer, you *know* I rang! Do not equivocate!

MRS. W. I'm very sorry, sir; I'ope no offence. What did you please to want?

SQUARE. I wished to speak to you about the board.

MRS. W. (*coughing*). Well, sir, I didn't know as you would require it, sir. I thought you only 'ad the office for business purposes; however——

SQUARE. Tut, tut! You mistake me. I mean the black board that was hanging in the passage when I came, and which I sent to the painters to have my name put in place of Mr. Golightly's.

MRS. W. Dear me, sir! Then is Mr. Golightly gone for good?

SQUARE. That is beyond me to say, Mrs. Weezer; but he has gone for six months— at least, so the magistrate says!

MRS. W. Six months? Oh, poor dear Mr. Golightly!

SQUARE (*raising his hand*). Once for all, Mrs. Weezer, you may as well understand that I have no sympathy with Mr. Golightly. On the contrary. He had induced a relative of mine to invest some money in this Dramatic Agency, and I am merely carrying on the business till it can be profitably disposed of.

MRS. W. Poor Mr. Golightly! When I think of old times— such a nice, civil-spoken gentleman as he was! He's been with us, off and on, these twelve years.

SQUARE. "Off and on"? Do you mean to say he has been in trouble before this?

MRS. W. (*coughing behind her hand*). Well, I believe there was a little something, sir, occasionally; but never so much as six months. And a more decent, respectable gentleman——

SQUARE. That will do, Mrs. Weezer. Kindly see about the board at once. (*Mrs. Weezer is going.*) By-the-by, what was that noise just now in the office opposite?

MRS. W. That room, sir? Oh, that's the new office of the Tea and Tract Association! They're just moving in.

SQUARE. Indeed! Is the earthquake over?

MRS. W. All over, sir! Indeed, I promised Mr. Round yesterday——

SQUARE. Mr. Round? Who is he?

MRS. W. The Secretary of the Association, sir. Such a cheerful, lively gentleman, too! You'd 'ardly think he was anything to do with improving the 'eathens. But there! as I say, you can't judge by appearances. I remember——

SQUARE. That will do, Mrs. Weezer! Don't forget about the board!

MRS. W. I won't, sir! I'll see about it at once! (*Going*).

SQUARE. Mrs. Weezer!

MRS. W. (*coming back*). Sir!

SQUARE. Don't forget to send me in the bill of fare from the restaurant opposite, that I may order my luncheon.

MRS. W. With pleasure, sir! (*Going*.) Poor Mr. Golightly! (*Exit through passage C.*)

SQUARE (*alone*). "Poor Mr. Golightly." indeed! To think that I, Severus Square, the President of the Clapham Conventional Cacklers, should be placed, even temporarily, in such a situation as this! A dramatic agent! Bah! Well, I suppose I must open my letters! (*Sits at desk, takes up letter, smells it.*) Patchouli! Peuh! (*Opens letter, and reads.*) "Dear r. Golightly,— I hear you have moved from over the water since I saw you last. I have given in my notice at the Frivolity, and want to see you about an engagement. I will call to-morrow about one o'clock. Yours ever, BELLA BELLINGHAM. P.S.—I send you by messenger my portrait as Prince Prettylegs. Isn't it snappy?" (*Disgusted.*) "Snappy!" Well, she doesn't seem to have sent it! (*Goes on opening letters.*)

Enter Round to his office R. He is a young, smartly-dressed man, and is clad in light clothes, a bright-coloured tie, patent-leather boots. Mrs. Weezer follows him into his office.

ROUND (*taking of his gloves*). Ah! all the furniture is in now, Mrs. Weezer?

MRS. W. Everything, sir! I can imagine, sir, 'ow hanxious you must be to get to work again. Ah! sir, what it is to have a mission in life!

ROUND (*doubtfully*). Hum! Ha! Yes!

MRS. W. I was only saying, sir, to Mr. Square, the gentleman in the Dramatic Agency Office opposite——

ROUND. A Dramatic Agency? (*Aside*) Strange coincidence!

MRS. W. Ah! I thought you mightn't quite like it, sir. It's just what I often feel myself. There mayn't be any real 'arm in it; still, it gives the place a *haroma*. By-the-by, sir, there's a parcel a man left for you this morning. I was out when it come, but——

ROUND. Thank you, Mrs. Weezer. (*By this time Round has taken off his gloves, hung up his hat, and removed and hung up his coat, previous to putting on office-coat.*)

MRS. W. Thank you, sir. Ah! sir, it's a great comfort to belong to a respectable profession! As I often say, what comes over the devil's back——

ROUND. Excuse me, Mrs. Weezer; but I am in the habit, from motives of economy, of changing the whole of my clothing before beginning work! (*Puts his hands to his braces, as if about to unbutton them.*)

MRS. W. (*flying in dismay*). Oh, in that case, sir, I'll say good-morning!
(*Exit.*)

ROUND. Good morning, Mrs. Weezer. (*Putting on office-coat*) The only way to get rid of her! (*Taking up a parcel*) Ah! the octavo leaflets, I suppose? Seems a strange way to pack them! I must look sharp, for I expect our new President, the Dean of Dunstable, will give us a look-up some time

to-day. (*He opens the parcel.*) What's this? (*Reading*) "Miss Bella Bellingham as Prince Prettylegs!" *Her* portrait! She has sent me her portrait! Then my patient adoration has at length borne fruit! My five shillings'-worths at Covent Garden have not been thrown away! The notes directed to the theatre are not entirely unanswered! This elation will render me unfit for business! Let me try and soothe my excited soul with the little ballad with which I used to beguile the weary moments when waiting to see her leave the theatre.

SONG.

I'm waiting at the stage-door,
I'm waiting, love, for thee;
I'm waiting, as I've done before,
Sadly and patiently.
The dressers hurry quickly out,
And soon return again,
With pots of bitter beer and stout,
And (sometimes) with champagne.
The doorkeeper looks out once more,
And scowls suspiciously:
I'm waiting at the stage-door,
Waiting, love, for thee!
Waiting,
Waiting,
Waiting, love, for thee!

The hand come out—the piece is done—
With instruments in cases;
The chorus ladies, one by one,
I look in all their faces:
And some are dark, and some are light,
And some are rather plain;
But none are like the vision bright
I long to see again!
The gilded youth, with studs galore,
And shirt-fronts broad and free,
Are waiting at the stage-door—
Waiting, love, with me!
Waiting,

Waiting,
Waiting, love, for thee!

(He seems overcome by his emotions, and gazes at the picture in a kind of trance.)

Enter to Square's office, Mrs. Weezer, carrying a restaurant "bill of fare."

MRS. W. Here's the bill of fare, sir.

SQUARE. Thank you!

MRS. W. I hope your appetite to-day is likely to be good, sir.

SQUARE. Well, Mrs. Weezer, I feel something wrong in my interior this morning—a feeling of sinking and gnawing.

MRS. W. Indeed, sir! I feel it sometimes myself. I always say——

SQUARE *(reading the bill of fare)*. Exactly, Mrs. Weezer. Duck and green peas, mutton cutlets and tomato sauce, cherry tart. I'm rather particular as to what I eat, Mrs. Weezer.

MRS. W. You look as if you would be, sir.

SQUARE *(returning the bill of fare to her)*. Yes; I think that will do.

MRS. W. And what will you take to drink, sir?

SQUARE. Ah! let me see. Suppose I say a bottle of best Sauterne. I don't think it would do me any harm. You see, Mrs. Weezer, I suffer very much from biliousness, and I can't go for long without something for my gastric juice to work upon. If I do, I suffer keenly.

MRS. W. *(sympathetically)*. Indeed, sir! Will you take anything else, sir?

SQUARE. You might tell them to send over some Stilton, if they have any quite ripe.

MRS. W. They have some very good, sir. The waiter told me it was quite the cheese. (*Going.*)

SQUARE. Mrs. Weezer! half the bird, mind.

MRS. W. Yes, sir. (*She goes outside door.*)

SQUARE (*going to door, which he opens*). And, Mrs. Weezer, the cutlets not overdone— the gravy *in* them, you know.

MRS. W. The gravy shall be in them, sir, you may depend. Well, I honly 'ope it won't disagree with him! [*Exit downstairs.*]

SQUARE. What a hollow mockery is lunch! What are cutlets, what is duck and green peas, to a man doomed to carry on an occupation entirely opposed to his principles? Why did my unlucky fate lead me to undertake the tinsel dignity of a Purveyor of Persons to the Stage, even though my position may be only a temporary one? (*He walks up and down his room uneasily.*)

ROUND (*gazing at the portrait*). How fair and frivolous she looks! What would the Association say — what would our Reverend President, the Dean of Dunstable, say, if he knew that the trusted Secretary of the Tea and Tract Association was a confirmed theatre-goer, and madly, hopelessly in love with a Queen of Opera Bouffe? Why did I ever dream that I could bow my neck to such a serious yoke? Too-beautiful Bella, this is your work! (*He rises distractedly, after placing the portrait on his desk.*)

DUET — ROUND and SQUARE.

SQUARE. In some slower occupation,
Oh, how happy I could be!

ROUND. Some dramatic avocation
Would be just the thing for me!

SQUARE. Some sedate and slow profession
Or Depot for clergymen,
Full of starch and self-repression,
I should be contented then!
(*soberly*) Oh, how happy I should be!
Tra la la la! Tra la la lee!
Oh, how happy I should be!

Tra la la la! Tra lee!

ROUND. Why did Fate, with grim decision,
Lay this gloomy yoke on me?

SQUARE. Why is it my daily mission
To deal in light frivolity?

ROUND. On the stage, with merry motion,
I could break-downs gaily trace;
Or, with passionate devotion,
Praise a Prima-Donna's face.
(*gaily*) Oh, how lively I could be!
Tra la la la! Tra la la lee!
Oh, how lively I could be!
Tra la la la! La lee!

BOTH. Oh, how happy, etc.
Oh, how lively, etc.

(At the close of the Chorus, both execute a characteristic dance round his room. Square doing an odd "Shaker-like" movement, flapping his hands, and moving his feet oddly; Round indulging in wild step-dance).

ROUND. Well, I suppose I must get on with my work. The Dean will be here directly, and ——

(The voice of Miss Bellinghain is heard singing outside, and Mrs. Weezer is heard directing her from below.)

MRS. W. Just along the passage, miss!

Miss Bellingham enters the passage.

MISS B. (*calling to Mrs. Weezer*). Which side did you say? I'll try this door! (*She opens the door of Round's office, and sees her own portrait.*) My photo! This is all right! (*Round is seated writing at his desk when she enters. He looks up.*)

ROUND. Miss Bellingham! (*He rises.*)

MISS B. That's my name. It's pretty well known by this time.

ROUND. It is! it is! (*Handing her a chair*) **Will** you be seated?

MISS B. Thanks. (*Aside*) Quite polite for a Dramatic Agent's clerk!

ROUND (*in a flutter*). I didn't expect you'd **call**!

MISS D. Why, didn't you hear from me?

ROUND. Well, I certainly received a——

MISS B. Of course. I've been looking forward to coming for some time.

ROUND (*aside*). She's been looking forward to coming for some time!
Oh, joy!

MISS B. I wish I could have come earlier.

ROUND (*aside*). She wishes she could have come earlier!

MISS B. I see you got my portrait all right. What do you think of it?

ROUND (*intensely*). It is exquisitely beautiful!

MISS B. (*coquettishly*). Ah! that was when I was younger!

ROUND. Don't say that. I'm quite sure you **never** were.

MISS B. (*aside*). He's very complimentary! (*Aloud*) Well when do you expect your governor in?

ROUND (*aside*). She means the Dean. (*Aloud*) Oh, not for half an hour, at least!

MISS B. Then perhaps I'd better not wait. (*She rises.*)

ROUND. Oh, **do!** pray do! (*He approaches her.*)

MISS B. I can look in again, you know.

ROUND. What! after coming in this kind delightful way, to leave so soon? Oh, do not go!

MISS B. But I really must! I have some shopping to do! Besides, I'm awfully hungry, and I feel quite ready for my lunch.

ROUND (*aside*). I must detain her at all costs. Ah! I'll ask her to have something to eat. Stop! I forgot. I gave my last half-crown to the cabman last night. What on earth am I to do?

MISS B. (*moving towards the door*). Come, I'll call on my way back - if I think of it!

ROUND. Stay, oh stay! (*Aside*) Cupid, assist me!

(*A waiter appears in the passage with a well-laden tray.*)

WAITER. Which is the room, I wonder?

ROUND. Perhaps Mrs. Weezer can get me tick. (*Goes out into passage, meeting waiter.*)

WAITER. Lunch for you, sir?

ROUND (*taken aback*). Lunch for me? Come on! Cupid, I thank thee! (*He shows the waiter in, who arranges the luncheon on the table.*)

SQUARE. They're a long time with that lunch!

MISS B. Is this your lunch?

ROUND (*aside*). I don't know whose lunch it is. (*Aloud*) It is - hem - a little modest collation I ordered in anticipation of your visit. I thought you might be tired with your journey, and-- (*aside*) It's all a mystery. But never mind - I'll go it. [Exit waiter.]

MISS B. (*pleased*). Really, it's very kind and thoughtful of you!

ROUND. Then you condescend to partake?

MISS B. Why, cert'nly, on one condition.

ROUND. Oh, name it; name it!

MISS B. That you join me!

ROUND (*aside*). Join her! Oh, rapture!

(*They sit at lunch, which is placed on desk C.*)

SQUARE. They're a very long time with that lunch!

WAITER. Is there anything else, sir?

ROUND. No, thank you. Oh, yes! some bread.

WAITER. Right, sir. New or stale, sir?

ROUND (*to Miss B.*) Do you like it new or stale?

MISS B. New, please.

ROUND (*aside*.) She likes it new. I **knew** she did! (*Aloud*) New, please.

WAITER. Very good, sir. I'll send it over. [*Exit.*]

MISS B. He's only brought one knife and fork. Never mind; I'll feed you!

ROUND (*aside*.) She'll feed me! (Miss Bellingham takes up pieces of food and feeds Round with a fork.)

SQUARE. I begin to feel a sinking inside!

MISS B. (*feeding Round*.) Sw-e-e-e-t!

ROUND (*aside*.) She calls me sweet!

SQUARE (*pacing room*.) Really this is too bad! I'm getting perfectly ravenous! (*He goes to door and looks out into corridor*.)

Enter BOY with two rolls on plate.

SQUARE (*rushing at boy and taking bread from him.*) What's this?

BOY. Bread, sir.

SQUARE. What do I want with bread? Where's my lunch?

BOY. I haven't seen anything of it, sir!

SQUARE. No more have I! Go and tell them to make haste! Be quick now; look sharp! (*He bullies off the astounded boy.*)

*(During this interval. Round has opened
bottle of wine; and poured to Miss B.)*

SQUARE. Bread! when I'm expecting duck and green peas, cutlets and tomato sauce! Bread! (*He picks off a piece and eats it.*) Ugh! (*He munches the bread.*)

MISS B. Well, how are you getting on?

ROUND. Splendidly!

MISS B. I'm sure I ought to thank you very much.

ROUND. Will you grant me a favour in return?

MISS B. Why, cert'nly. What is it?

ROUND. If you wouldn't mind singing something.

MISS B. Oh, you want to hear my voice?

ROUND. That's just what I *do* want!

MISS B. Oh, it isn't going off, I can tell you! Let me see; there's a little song I haven't sung for years - in fact, not since I made my first hit with it at the Oxford.

ROUND. Why, were you ever at the Oxford?

MISS B. Of course. That's where all the great artistes graduate. Just give me your hat and stick, please. (*Takes them, and puts on the hat.*) And have you an eye-glass? Yes! I'll have that too! (*She puts up the eye-glass.*) Of course, I'm a cut above this sort of thing now. (*She "shoots linen" during the symphony to the following song.*)

THE PICCADILLY PALSY.

The Grecian bend has had its day,
Also the Roman fall;
But we've a fashion, in its way,
Superior to all:
We imitate the ancient race
Of dandies long effete,
And go with a decrepit pace
Along St. James' Street.
For we waggle. (*She imitates the gait of a feeble dandy.*)
And we wobble,
And we lean upon a cane,
And we staggah
And we swaggah,
And we walk as if in pain.
You may wonder why we do it,
But we give our minds unto it.
And since it is the fashion, we must all be in it too;
So do remember, please,
We are shaky at the knees,
And the Piccadilly Palsy is the proper thing to do!

It may seem strange that golden youth
Should ape the tricks of age;
But to appear out-worn, in truth,
Is really quite the rage:
We're paralysed by pick-me-ups,
And crushed by cigarettes,
And bored by everything on earth
But B. & S. and bets.

And we waggle, etc., etc.

(At the conclusion of the song, she pokes Round in the ribs with the cane. Gladys Harvey enters the passage. She hesitates a moment, then goes to the door of Square's office and knocks.)

SQUARE (eagerly). Ah, **here it is!** Come in! (*Gladys enters.*) Humph!

GLADYS. Is this Mr. Golightly's office?

SQUARE (gruffly). It is!

GLADYS. And am I speaking to Mr. Golightly?

SQUARE. You are speaking to his representative.

GLADYS. Then I may address myself to you?

SQUARE. You may. Pray be seated. (*Gladys sits.*)

GLADYS. I saw the advertisement of your Agency in the Era. But first I think I had better tell you my history. It is sad and somewhat romantic.

SQUARE (*pressing his stomach furtively*). Is it **long**?

GLADYS. You shall judge. I am an orphan. (*She is affected and uses her handkerchief.*) My mother--

SQUARE. Do not weep for her.

GLADYS. Oh, sir, she was the only one I ever had! (*Square writhes in agony.*) I see my story already affects you.

SQUARE (*eating bread*). Pray proceed.

GLADYS. I was sent, when quite a little child, to be brought up by some distant relations in Germany. As I grew up, I cannot tell you how badly I was treated. No; I WILL not tell you!

SQUARE. Don't; please don't!

GLADYS. You will hardly believe it; but I was half-starved!

SQUARE (*rising and grasping her hand*). My dear young lady, I can fully sympathise with you!

GLADYS. At last I resolved to run away. I sold my little stock of jewellery, and came to England.

SQUARE (*groaning*). Oh!

GLADYS. I beg your pardon!

SQUARE. Nothing; nothing. Merely a passing twinge.

GLADYS. I resolved to go upon the stage, and came to you to ask if you would get me an engagement.

SQUARE. Hem!

GLADYS. I believe you undertake to introduce ladies to the stage?

SQUARE. Yes; that is one branch of our business. I think it only right to warn you that you are entering upon a most difficult and disagreeable profession. Still, if you like, I'll put your name on my books. (*He half-opens a ledger.*)

GLADYS. Is it so?

SQUARE. Many a glad young heart, sanguine and hopeful as your own, has started with the idea of playing Lady Macbeth to all the crowned heads in Europe, and ended by wearing tights in the Chorus. Still, of course, if you insist on it, I'll place your name on the books.

GLADYS. Really, sir, I feel undecided.

SQUARE (*gloomily*). Oh, do not let me influence you in any way! Our fee for booking is five shillings, and our terms are ten per cent. on all salaries for the first ten weeks. You will have to take twelve lessons from

our resident Professor of Elocution. His terms are a guinea a lesson, paid in advance. Shall I place your name on our books?

GLADYS (*hesitating*). What you say quite unsettles me.

SQUARE. Oh, don't let it influence you!

GLADYS. If there were any other way?

SQUARE. Have you no relations in London?

GLADYS. Only one; and he- oh, he would never acknowledge me! He has not seen me for years.

SQUARE. Who is he?

GLADYS. Dr. Draper, the Dean of Dunstable.

SQUARE. Dr. Draper! Why have you not applied to him?

GLADYS. I called at his house, but he was out of town.

SQUARE. Indeed! Why, I know him by sight, and saw him myself as I came down to business. He must have returned.

GLADYS. Oh, let me fly to him!

SQUARE. Better take a cab. But stay; may I not take your name as a client?

GLADYS. It is useless. I will seek my uncle at once.

SQUARE. As an individual, I applaud your resolution! As a Dramatic Agent, I deplore it. You will find a cabstand at the end of the street.

GLADYS. I am deeply obliged to you for your kind information. (*Gives him her hand.*)

SQUARE. Don't mention it. You're sure you won't let me-- (*opening book*).

GLADYS. No, thank you. Good-morning!

SQUARE (*opening door for her.*) Good-morning! (*Exit Gladys.*) What a charming young lady! I quite forgot my lunch for the moment.

ROUND (*to Miss B.*) Then you've no objection to a long engagement?

MISS B. No; I rather prefer it than otherwise.

ROUND. You see, I'm not quite certain what the governor would say.

MISS B. Oh, that'll be all right. I'll talk to him!

ROUND. You *will!*

MISS B. The only thing I'm particular about is the figure.

ROUND (*puzzled.*) The figure?

MISS B. Yes; that must be good, whatever the rest is.

ROUND (*rising and displaying himself.*) Well, here you are! Observe the broad expanse of manly chest. How will that suit you?

MISS B. Whatever *does* he mean?

ROUND (*attitudinising.*) Ajax defying the lightning! Statuesque, eh?

MISS B. (*aside.*) Surely the wine-- No; he's scarcely taken any. (*Aloud*) I was thinking about a tour.

ROUND (*aside.*) The wedding tour! Rapturous idea! (*Aloud*) Well what do you say to Brighton, or the Isle of Wight?

(They go on talking in dumb show.)

SQUARE (*rings his bell violently.*) This is disgraceful!

Enter Mrs. Weezer hastily.

MRS. W. Good 'eavens! sir, whatever is the matter?

SQUARE. Matter, Mrs. Weezer? Why, here have I been kept for more than an hour on an empty stomach waiting for my lunch!

MRS. W. I'm very sorry, sir. I'll go and see about it at once (*going out into the passage*). What a noosance he is - just as I was 'aving a bit of dinner! Let 'im wait; it'll do him good. [Exit.]

MISS B. By-the-by, did you get a letter from me?

ROUND. Well, no.

MISS B. That's odd! I directed it plainly enough - "Mr. Golightly's Dramatic Agency, 21, Wattlecross Street, Strand."

ROUND. Eh? (*Aside*) Can it be? (*Aloud*) What was the letter about?

MISS B. Oh! I told your governor that I had given in my notice at the Frivolity, and wanted to see him about an engagement.

ROUND (*blankly*). Was that all?

MISS B. Why, cert'nly!

ROUND (*anxiously*). And the portrait?

MISS B. Why, I sent that for him to hang in the office. Good advertisement, you know!

ROUND. Then I have been cruelly mistaken! But no matter, I will win her yet!

Enter DR. DRAPER into the corridor.

DR. D. To the right, on the second floor, to the Tea and Tract Society, the housekeeper said- I am certain she said to the right. (*He opens the door of Round's office, and sees Miss Bellingham and Round flirting.*) I beg pardon! (*He goes out quickly.*) I was indeed mistaken! (*He knocks at door of Square's office.*)

SQUARE. Here it is at last! Come in! (*Enter Dr. Draper.*) Da- Hem!

DR. D. (*aside*). A serious-looking gentleman! This must be right! (*He bows.*) Allow me to introduce myself: I am the Dean of Dunstable, the President of your Association!

SQUARE. I am proud to meet you, sir. What can I do for you? (*Aside*) Perhaps he's joined the Church and Stage Guild!

DR. D. Hem! You have not been installed here long, I believe?

SQUARE. Well, no-not very.

DR. D. Still, though this is my first visit, I had no difficulty in finding so well-known an institution as the Tea and Tract Society.

SQUARE. The Tea and Tract Society! Sir, you are under a mistake, - you are NOT in the office of the Tea and Tract Society!

DR. D. Then where am I?

SQUARE. In the heart of a Dramatic Agency! (*The Dean makes a precipitate rush for the door. Square catches him by the coat-tails.*)

DR. D. (*outraged*). Sir, I forbid you to detain me!

SQUARE. I must; I have something of importance to impart to you!

DR. D. Not here! not here!

SQUARE. Yes; before you leave this room! (*He leads back Dr. D.*) You are an uncle?

DR. D. I am!

SQUARE. Male or female?

DR. D. A niece - an only niece. I haven't seen her since she was a little child, only so high. (*He measures a height from the floor with his hand.*)

SQUARE. Her former height is immaterial. She was placed with some relatives in Germany?

DR. D. She was. What of her?

SQUARE. Let me break it to you gradually - your niece is not in Germany!

DR. D. No?

SQUARE. She has eaten her jewellery--

DR. D. I understand - that is, I don't.

SQUARE. She has crossed the Channel-

DR. D. Was - was she seasick? Where is she?

SQUARE. She was here a moment since - desperate, hopeless!

DR. D. And at this moment?

SQUARE. She is taking--

DR. D. Poison?

SQUARE. No; a hansom.

DR. D. Are you certain?

SQUARE. Well, it might be a four-wheeler.

DR. D. Bring her to me - bring her to me! Remember, I have not seen her since she was so high!

SQUARE. Calm yourself, sir; count a hundred: meanwhile, I will fetch your niece, if possible. The cabstand is at some distance. I may not yet be too late. (*He takes the Dean's hat in his hurry, and rushes out.*)

ROUND (*who has finished the bottle of Sauterne*). Miss Bellingham, I will open my heart to you! I, too, have aspirations! I would go upon the boards, like yourself. I feel a soul within me above the Tea and Tract Society!

MISS B. Above the *what?*

ROUND. Ah! I have betrayed myself! But it is better you should know all.

MISS B. All what?

ROUND. This is not Golightly's Dramatic Agency - that is opposite. It is the office of the Tea and Tract Society; and I am its secretary!

MISS B. (*indignantly*.) What! and I have been kept here--

ROUND. My love for you is my only excuse.

MISS B. Love, indeed! Let me go!

ROUND. Where?

MISS B. To the Agency, of course!

ROUND. Never! (*Takes her wrist.*)

MISS B. Unhand me! (*Struggle.*)

DR. D. Poor lost lamb! How I long to see her, and clasp her to my breast!

MISS B. Let go, I say! (*She pushes Round down in a sitting posture on the floor, and rushes into the Dramatic Agency Office. Dr. Draper clasps her in his arms.*)

MISS B. (*screaming*). Oh! (*She struggles.*)

DR. D. My darling! Do not shrink from me thus!

MISS B. Let me go, you wicked old man!

DR. D. Come, and I will be a father to you!

MISS B. Do you call *this* being a father to me?

DR. D. One kiss, my darling - only one!

MISS B. No! Get away! Help, help! (*In desperation, she inverts basket of waste-paper on Dr. Draper's head.*)

ROUND (*armed with his office ruler, rushing in and closing with Dr. Draper.*) Release her, ruffian! Police, police!

Enter Gladys. She sees Dr. Draper, his tie dishevelled, his hair ruffled, and his collar unbuttoned. At the moment of her entry, he throws off the basket.

GLADYS. My uncle! Ah! (*She faints in the arms of Square, who re-enters.*)

SQUARE. What does this mean?

ROUND. It means that this old ruffian has attacked this lady - Miss Bella Bellingham, - and I will defend her with my life!

(Gladys recovers, and makes a dash at the Dean's breast. He attempts to escape, breaking away from her up stage.)

DR. D. Another of them! Away, hussy!

Enter Waiter with the bill. Square rushes at him and seizes the paper.

SQUARE. Where's my lunch? What's this?

WAITER. The bill, sir.

SQUARE. The bill! You impertinent rascal! (*He crumples up the bill and throws it at the waiter, who rushes down the passage and escapes.*)

ROUND (*interposing*). Stay! I think I can tell you where your lunch is.

SQUARE. Where?

ROUND (*laying his hand on his chest*). Here!

MISS B. (*même jeu*). And here!

SQUARE. Who are you, sir? Explain yourself.

ROUND. I am the Secretary to the Tea and Tract Society; and this is Miss Bellingham, the celebrated actress!

DR. D. (*coming down*). Then, who is this young lady?

GLADYS. Your niece, your unhappy niece! (*They embrace.*)

ROUND. Sir, after what has happened, I see no alternative but to resign my post. A secretary who has wrestled with his president, has rendered himself impossible!

DR. D. But how are we to fill your situation on such short notice?

SQUARE. Sir, had I the offer, I would gladly undertake the duties of the position.

DR. D. I feel certain, sir, you would be the right man in the right place. But what is to become of your Dramatic Agency?

ROUND. It would suit *me* admirably!

SQUARE. Then you shall have it for a song!

MISS B. I can supply you with that.

SQUARE (*to ROUND*). Let us exchange offices.

They do so. Round and Miss Bellingham enter Square's office; whilst Square, Gladys, and the Dean go into Round's. The waiter, who returns with a new bill, stands hesitating in the passage.

Enter Mrs. Weezer, carrying a freshly-painted notice-board.)

MRS. W. Here it is, sir! *At* last!

ROUND and SQUARE. What?

MRS. W. The board, sir, with Mr. Square's name in place of Mr. Golightly's.

SQUARE. Bother the board! *Fetch me some dinner!*

ROUND. Now we have found in life our proper lines,

SQUARE. And neither 'gainst his daily lot repines.

ROUND. The only thing we ask to clear the air
Is this: your kind applause for Round

SQUARE. - and Square!

[CURTAIN.]