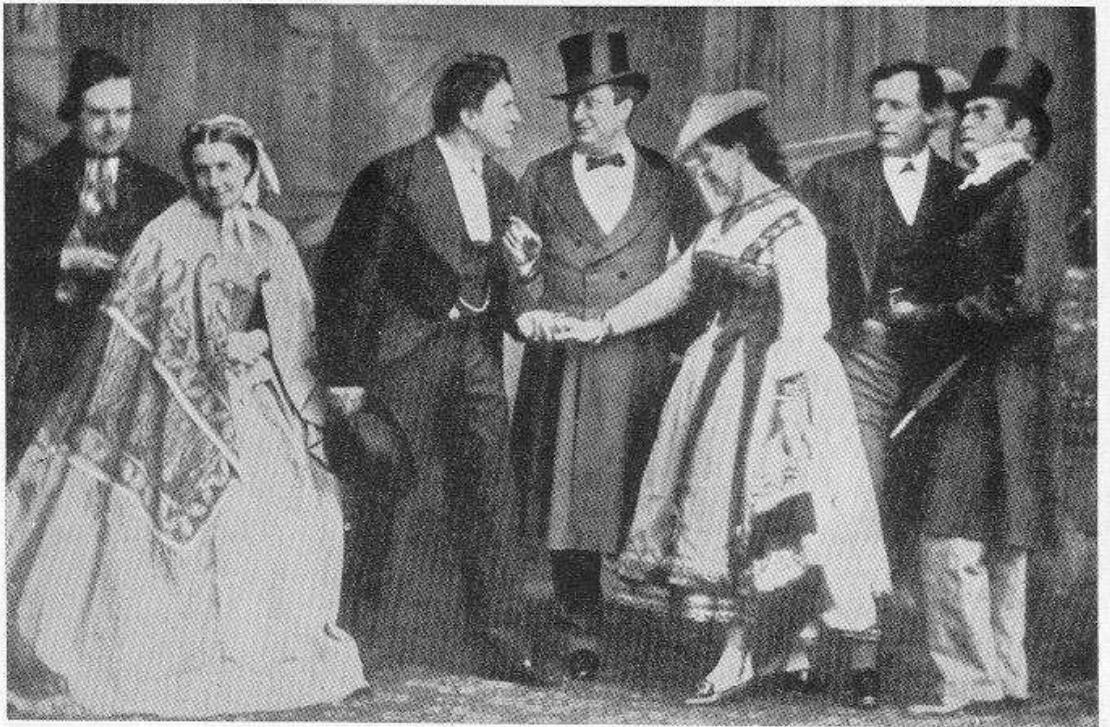


**No Thoroughfare: A Drama [correct first edition]  
– by Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins (1867)**



A carefully-posed cast photo showing Joey Ladle (Benjamin Webster), Sally Goldstraw (Mrs. Alfred Mellon), George Vendale (Henry G. Neville), Jules Obenreizer (Charles Albert Fechter), Marguerite (Carlotta Leclercq), Walter Wilding (John Billington), and Bintrey (George G. Belmore).

**Foreword**

What was the most successful play Dickens worked on? How much did he contribute to it? And, why has text of the play gone unseen until today?

The first question has an easy answer—the most successful play claiming Dickens as playwright was *No Thoroughfare*. The piece was a dramatization of the short story of the same name, which had appeared in the Christmas Number of *All the Year Round* the same year. The Christmas Story and the play are always credited to “Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins”, but the drama was, in fact, written almost entirely by Collins, working under Dickens’s long-distance supervision. Also assisting in the adaptation was the actor Charles Albert Fechter, a mutual friend to the two authors, whose role as the villainous Obenreizer would be the great hit of the performance. A letter from Dickens to an American publisher tells how he initiated events (1 Nov 1867):

I will bring you out the early proof of the Xmas No. We publish it here on the 12th. of December. I am planning it out into a play for Wilkie Collins to manipulate after I sail, and have arranged for Fechter to go to the Adelphi Theatre and play a Swiss in it. It will be brought out, the day after Christmas

Day.

– *Pilgrim* 11:469

Dickens did soon set sail for his second trip to America (9 Nov), and kept in touch concerning the planned play. It looked as if he would be able to sell the theatrical version in the U.S., and he wrote Collins (28 Nov):

...I have little doubt of being able to make a good thing of the Drama, and, if necessary, I will get it up. But what I shall want as soon as *I can possibly have them*, are:

1. A detailed Scene Plot from Fechter
2. His notion of the Dresses
3. A copy of the Play itself, Act by Act, as you do it.
4. together with any stage Directions that Fechter has in his mind.

– *Pilgrim* 11:491–92

Fifteen years later, in “Wilkie Collins’s Recollections of Charles Fechter”, Collins gave his own slightly different version of how the play came about. He starts by describing the short story:

I had the honor of writing the Christmas story called “No Thoroughfare” in literary association with Charles Dickens. We invented the story at Gadshill, in the Swiss châlet which had been Fechter’s gift to Dickens. When our last page of manuscript had been set up in type, I returned to other literary labors which had been suspended in favor of “No Thoroughfare,” and which kept me so closely employed that I saw nothing of my brethren in art for some little time. During this interval Fechter had read the proof-sheets, had (to use his own phrase) “fallen madly in love with the subject,” and had prepared a *scenario* or outline of a dramatic adaptation of the story, under Dickens’s superintendence and approval. This done, Dickens took his departure for the United States, leaving the destinies of the unwritten play safe, as he kindly said, in my hands. Fechter next presented himself with the *scenario*, laid the manuscript on my desk, offered me a pen with a low bow, and said: “Dickens has gone away for six months; he will find ‘No Thoroughfare’ running when he comes back.” For once, in this case, a modern prophecy was actually fulfilled.

– Field, 163

More of Collins’s recollections, of the play’s opening night, and of Fechter’s stomach-wrenching stage fright, appear in the Afterword.

Wilkie Collins did, as requested, mail Dickens each act of the play as it was completed (see Adrian, below). Dickens’s response to the final act has survived. Collins had written a letter, raising a few issues, and leaving matters up to Dickens’s “sole discretion” (*Pilgrim* 11:520). Dickens’s suggestions were all incorporated into the printed version. Presumably there was some such correspondence for each of the five acts.

*No Thoroughfare* debuted at the Adelphi Theatre on 26 Dec 1867, while Dickens was still in America. Despite his doubts, it was a big hit; it ran for 151 performances (finishing on 16 May 1868), after which the production moved to the Standard Theatre in Shoreditch, and kept right on performing (beginning 27 June 1868). According to Collins, the play eventually reached 200 performances. The play as a whole was well received, though some papers complained about its length. The first notice Dickens saw was from the London *Times*; this is reprinted in its entirety in the Afterword. From another interesting review:

In the fourth act the excitement of the play culminates. The first scene is

laid in the room in the Swiss inn, where Obenreizer tries to drug his victim, and secure his papers; the second, perhaps the finest bit of realistic scenery which the skilled hand of Mr. Grieve has ever placed upon the stage is the mountain pass where Obenreizer taunts Vendale with his approaching doom, until the latter, to foil his would-be robber, springs over the precipice. This scene was acted with the greatest spirit by Mr. Fechter and Mr. Neville; and the manner in which the leap was taken by the last-named gentleman, was highly artistic and effective....The weight of the piece lies mainly on the shoulders of Mr. Fechter, who, for the first time since his sojourn in England, has been fitted with a part in which his foreign accent is in his favour. He played throughout with the greatest earnestness and skill, and while the softer passages of his love-making were as graceful and tender as ever, he gave due emphasis to the darker side of the character.

— *Daily Telegraph*, 27 Dec 1867, quoted in Bolton

Dickens, by now an experienced amateur theatre manager, had planned the much-praised mountain scenery together with Grieve (*Pilgrim* 12:17).

Dickens, Collins, and Fechter had also decided on the cast together (*Pilgrim* 11:520).

Georgina Hogarth, Dickens's sister-in-law and housekeeper, wrote about her reaction to the play, and also about the long-distance interaction between the two authors. Her letter has been quoted recently:

The letter [17 Jan 1868] goes on to describe Georgina's reaction after she and Mamie had seen *No Thoroughfare* at the Adelphi. Although Fechter had acted in it 'most admirably' and it was 'admirably put on the stage', she imagines 'how much better it would have been with the Master Hand—on getting it out!' Even though Dickens had collaborated on it, 'it was too long and laboured—as usual poor Wilkie Collins—the same thing explained to his audience (whom he always seems to consider a collection of infant boobies) over and over again. We really wondered at it because we hear it has been greatly cut about twice the first night—and now it marches more quietly and slightly. Charles would, I know, be most especially surprised at its success for he seems to have had little hope of it, from what he says in his letter. Of course, he had the piece sent out to him in acts, as Wilkie wrote it—[Charles considered it] *hopeless*, although done with such great pain—[he thought] that it wanted *life* (as it does!) in short that it "doesn't walk but goes about in a run". However, it has taken and seems to be the Christmas success—the house is crammed every night—and the places are all let as far as a fortnight in advance'.

— quoted in Adrian, 10

Dickens soon returned to London (2 May), saw the play acted, and happily did not feel that it was quite hopeless. He wrote to an American friend (14 May): "I have seen *No Thoroughfare* twice. Excellent things in it; but it drags—to my thinking. It is, however, a great success in the country, and is now getting up with great force in Paris" (*Pilgrim* 12:108). Wilkie Collins, by contrast, had been thrilled with the piece. He wrote Dickens (10 Jan), describing Fechter's performance in "the most glowing terms", saying "Here Fechter is magnificent...Here his superb playing brings the house down...I should call even his exit in the last act one of the subtlest and finest things he does in the piece...You can hardly imagine what he gets out of the part, or what he makes of his passionate love for Marguerite" (*Pilgrim* 12:57).

*No Thoroughfare: A Drama* was, as noted, a hit, and was revived in many forms for years to come. Many variants were written, staged and published. The first Collins/Dickens effort was revived in Liverpool (1868)

and Boston (1871). The play was translated into French as *L'Abîme*, and staged in Paris; Fechter was producer, but did not act. Dickens himself visited to assist during rehearsals (May 1868). Oddly enough, this French version was translated back into English again, and given in New York City (1873). Pirated versions began to appear four days after the London premiere, and were staged in Boston (1867), Brooklyn (1868), Broadway (1869), and more. Two burlesque parodies were put on (1868, 1869). Various versions continued to show up in New York, Boston, London, and Philadelphia (through 1891), but for these—indeed, for every performance—we can never be quite certain which variant was staged. A newly-written stage adaptation was produced at Islington (1903), but since then, no productions are known; and in fact, the story has never appeared in any form on television or in the cinema. Furthermore, it has almost never been the subject of critical study.

One reason for the sharp drop-off in popularity, of course, is that the play is exuberantly stagey and melodramatic, and will not always appeal to modern tastes. But there is another much more subtle factor at work. The first edition of *No Thoroughfare: A Drama* was first published in 1867. It was privately printed by the Offices of *All the Year Round*, and was quite a rare collector's item. No version of the play appeared in any collected edition of Dickens until 1908, when B.W. Matz included it in his National Edition of Dickens's works. But Matz did not have access to the first edition. Apparently the text Matz used was a New York pamphlet, one of De Witt's acting plays, from 1868. The text varies in every line from the first edition. It is the kind of corrupt text which comes about when a corrupt actor or stagehand tries to reconstruct an entire play from memory, and then reuse it. It appears to trace back to one of the many pirated productions which were so popular in America. The DeWitt/Matz text was reprinted in turn in a few more anthologies, and has been the standard version for almost a century now. (We have made the DeWitt/Matz version available on-line as an e-text, separately, for comparison and historical purposes.) The correct play has been long neglected, in part simply because this degraded version was so bad.

While preparing new editions of Dickens's plays for the Internet, this editor examined all versions available, and was surprised to find that the Chadwyck-Healey Literature Online database contained an entirely different and better version of *No Thoroughfare: A Drama*—a version based on a first edition. A true first edition of the play was located, a rigorous electronic text was prepared, and the results now await you. The first edition is reprinted here through the courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries.

Thus enough of history, scholarship, and research; now it's time for mystery, menace, romance, and suspense, as our hero strives to foil a faithless forger, and struggles to cross a treacherous pass in the frozen Alps, all to find the rightful heir to a legacy, and win the hand of a beautiful Swiss maid. We are proud to present *No Thoroughfare*, a long-hidden work by Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens, in a correct text now made widely available for the first time ever. Let the show begin.

# NO THOROUGHFARE.

A Drama.

IN FIVE ACTS.

*(Altered from the Christmas Story, for Performance on the Stage.)*

BY

CHARLES DICKENS AND WILKIE COLLINS.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED AT THE OFFICE OF ALL THE YEAR ROUND,

26, WELLINGTON STREET.

1867.

[ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.]

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

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WALTER WILDING.

GEORGE VENDALE.

BINTREY.

OBENREIZER.

JOEY LADLE.

MAÎTRE VOIGHT.

MONK.

Visitors (Ladies and Gentlemen), Servants, Monks,  
Guides, &c. &c. &c.

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MARGUERITE.

THE LADY.

SALLY GOLDSTRAW.

MADAME DOR.

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Scene of the first Three Acts—London.

Scene of the last Two Acts—Switzerland.

Period—The Present Century.

## NO THOROUGHFARE.

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### ACT I.

(*In Three Scenes.*)

FIRST SCENE.—*The exterior of the Foundling Hospital. A dark night. The wind heard moaning.* “THE LADY,” plainly dressed, is discovered waiting at the door by which the nurses of the Foundling enter and leave the institution. THE LADY listens at the door, then takes a turn on the stage, and returns to the door. At the same moment two or three nurses pass out. THE LADY, after eyeing them carefully, one by one, under the lamp which is over the door, lets them go, without speaking to them. A pause after the last nurse has gone out. SALLY GOLDSTRAW appears at the door. THE LADY recognises and stops her. The dialogue begins.

*The Lady.* Stop!

*Sally.* What do you want, ma’am?

*The Lady.* A word with you in private.

*Sally.* Are you mistaking me for somebody else? I have never seen you before.

*The Lady.* I saw you this morning. You were pointed out to me by a friend who was willing to assist me so far. You are known here as Sally Goldstraw. And you first entered this institution, on this very day, twelve years since. It was impossible for me to speak to you this morning, for it was impossible for me to see you in private. I must speak to you now.

*Sally.* You seem to know all about me, ma’am. Might I make so bold as to ask, who *you* are?

*The Lady.* Come and look at me under the lamp.

*Sally* (*looking at her under the lamp.*) I don’t know you. I never saw you before to-night.

*The Lady.* Do I look like a happy woman?

*Sally.* No, ma’am. You look as if you had something on your mind.

*The Lady.* I have something on my mind. I am one of the many miserable mothers who have never known what a mother's happiness is. If my child is still living, he is in the Foundling Hospital—he has grown to be a boy, and I have never seen him!

*Sally.* I am heartily sorry for you, ma'am. But what can I do?

*The Lady.* You can carry your memory back through twelve years. You can recall the day when you first entered that house.

*Sally.* Twelve years is a long time, ma'am.

*The Lady.* Is it long to *you*? Think how long it has been to *me*! Through all those years I have paid the penalty of disgracing my family. Through all those years I have lived in foreign lands—lived on the one condition that I should not be seen again in England. Only a week since I found myself independent of that condition—placed in the possession of a fortune—free to come back to my own country. Sally Goldstraw! I have come back with one hope. It lies in your power to make a happy woman of me.

*Sally.* How can I do that, ma'am?

*The Lady.* Here are two guineas in this paper. Take my poor little present, and I will tell you.

*Sally.* You may know my face, ma'am; but you don't know *me*. There is not a person in all the Foundling who hasn't a good word for Sally. Could I be so well thought of if I was to be bought?

*The Lady.* I do not mean to buy you. I only mean to reward you very slightly.

*Sally.* If helping you is right, ma'am, I desire no reward for doing it. What do you want?

*The Lady.* I want you to look back through the past time. The day when you first entered the Foundling must be a marked day in your memory.

*Sally.* It is a marked day.

*The Lady.* You may have forgotten many things that happened since. You must remember everything that happened on that day.

*Sally.* Everything!

*The Lady.* Do you remember a baby being received into the Foundling when you were first employed there?

*Sally.* I remember it well.

*The Lady.* Is the child living?

*Sally.* Living, and hearty, thank God!

*The Lady.* Perhaps, you took care of him when he was a baby?

*Sally.* No, ma'am. The baby was sent to our institution in the country; and I was kept here to learn the ways of the house.

*The Lady.* I have learnt the ways of the house, too. The baby was christened in the chapel here, before it was sent away to the country?

*Sally.* Yes, ma'am. And I saw the christening.

*The Lady.* They gave the child a name—a christian name and a surname. What was it?

*Sally.* Don't ask me! We are not allowed to tell.

*The Lady.* The child was my child! You *must* tell me! (*SALLY turns away.*) Come back! come back! You may one day marry. As you hope to be a respected wife—as you hope to be a proud mother—as you are a living, loving woman, tell me the name! (*Falls on her knees.*)

*Sally.* Don't, don't, ma'am! You are trying to make me do wrong!

*The Lady.* Only his name, Sally! Only his name!

*Sally.* Oh, dear! dear! I ought to say No—and I feel as if I was going to say Yes.  
Do let me go!

*The Lady.* His name, Sally! His name!

*Sally (relenting).* Will you promise?

*The Lady (rising).* Anything!

*Sally.* Put your two hands in mine. Promise you will never ask me to tell you more than the christian name and surname which they gave to the child?

*The Lady.* I promise!

*Sally.* Walter Wilding.

(THE LADY embraces her in silence. The two go out at different sides of the stage. The scene changes.)

SECOND SCENE.—*The Boys' dining-room at the Foundling. The boys at dinner. A bright, cheerful scene. Visitors—ladies and gentlemen—present, looking on. Among the visitors, THE LADY. She passes down the table—which crosses the stage obliquely, and is lost to view behind the scene—looking anxiously at the boys one by one. SALLY GOLDSTRAW is among the nurses in attendance. THE LADY keeps out of her way, and SALLY is too busy to notice her. Two of the visitors, a husband and wife, come down to the front.*

*Wife.* Mr. Jones, what do you mean by bringing me here?

*Husband.* You wanted to come here, dear.

*Wife.* I consider this place to be a sink of iniquity. How dare you to tell me I wanted to come to a sink of iniquity.

*Husband.* It seems to be pretty cheerful for a sink, dear.

*Wife.* When I think of the histories of these wretched children, I blush for human nature.

*Husband.* Human nature ought to be much obliged to you, dear.

*Wife.* A Foundling Hospital is an encouragement to vice. A man who brings his wife into a place which encourages vice, is a man lost to the commonest sense of decency. Give me your arm directly.

*Husband.* Yes, dear.

*Wife.* Mr. Jones, you are a fool!

*Husband.* Considering that I have married you, dear, perhaps you had better keep that opinion to yourself.

(*Exeunt.*) (A second husband and wife come forward.)

2nd *Wife.* Mr. Brown, this is the most interesting sight I ever saw in my life. I should like to kiss every one of those boys.

2nd *Husband.* Think of our own boys, my dear. They wouldn't thank you for kissing them at dinner-time.

2nd *Wife.* I hope these poor little fellows are happy! It's so sad to think that they never knew a mother's love, and never climbed on a father's knee!

2nd *Husband.* Look at them, my dear! Our own boys couldn't eat a better dinner than that.

*2nd Wife* This is a noble charity! This is helping the helpless as Christians should.

*2nd Husband.* A noble charity, as you say. I have counted forty boys in this room, my dear, who are every one of them as fat as our Tom!

(*They walk up, and join the other visitors. In the vacant space left on the stage, SALLY GOLDSTRAW and THE LADY suddenly meet.*)

*Sally.* You here again! What did you promise me last night?

*The Lady.* I said I would never ask you to tell me more than you told me then. I don't ask you to say another word. You can add to the debt of gratitude that I owe you, without speaking. Good Sally! Kind Sally! Show me my boy!

*Sally (aside).* Oh, dear, dear! I'm going wrong again!

*The Lady.* My heart is breaking, among all these children. Oh, think that my boy is here, and that I don't know him!

*Sally.* Hush! not so loud. I am going to pass down the table. Follow me with your eyes. The boy that I stop and speak to, will *not* be your boy. But the boy that I touch will be Walter Wilding.

(*She passes down the table. Speaks to one boy, and touches the boy next to him, keeping her hand on his shoulder, and patting it. Both boys are seated with their backs to the audience. SALLY, after lifting her hand from the boy, looks for the last time significantly at THE LADY, and goes out, following the line of the table, which is lost to view behind the scenes. THE LADY approaches the boy, and speaks to him.*)

*The Lady (stooping over him).* How old are you?

*The Boy.* I am twelve, ma'am.

*The Lady.* Are you well and happy?

*The Boy.* Yes, ma'am.

*The Lady.* Would you like to be well provided for, and to be your own master when you grow up?

*The Boy.* Yes, ma'am.

*The Lady.* Would you like a home of your own? Would you like to find your mother who loves you?

*The Boy.* Oh yes, ma'am, dearly!

(*THE LADY kisses him, and turns away to hide her tears. At the same moment three strokes are heard on the end of the table hidden behind the scenes. A voice says, "Silence, for grace!" The boys all rise. The men among the visitors remove their hats. The grace is sung by boys' voices off the stage, to a simple hymn tune. At the last notes a double curtain closes slowly over the scene. On each division of the curtain is inscribed in large letters, visible to the whole audience: "TWELVE YEARS ELAPSE." After a short interval, filled up by appropriate music, the curtain is withdrawn again, and the next scene opens on events which are supposed to occur, after the lapse of twelve years.*)

THIRD SCENE.—*The Court-yard in the establishment of WILDING AND CO., wine merchants, of Cripple Corner. A large counting-house with an open door, on one side. An entrance to the cellars, down steps. A large door in the flat, with a smaller door near it, various objects connected with the wine trade scattered*

*about the yard. WALTER WILDING, dressed in mourning, and BINTREY, discovered seated at a little table in the court-yard, with a bottle of wine between them.*

*Wilding.* Excuse my receiving you in the open air, Mr. Bintrey. What with the anxieties I have had lately, and what with the heat of the weather, I have been a good deal troubled with a giddiness in my head, and a singing in my ears.

*Bintrey.* And the fresh air clears your head, and quiets your ears? Just so, Mr. Walter Wilding—just so!

*Wilding.* Do you like this “forty-five,” sir?

*Bintrey. (smacking his lips).* Like it? I am a lawyer. Did you ever hear of a lawyer who didn’t like port? Capital wine, sir! In your place I shouldn’t be quite so free in giving such wine away, even to my lawyer!

*Wilding.* And now, as to my affairs, Mr. Bintrey. I think we have got everything straight. A partner secured.

*Bintrey.* A partner secured.

*Wilding.* A housekeeper advertised for—

*Bintrey.* Housekeeper advertised for. “Apply personally at Cripple Corner, Great Tower-street, from ten to twelve—” to-day.

*Wilding.* My late dear mother’s affairs wound up, and all charges paid—

*Bintrey.* And all charges paid. Without taxing the bill, which is the drollest professional circumstance I ever met with! (*Observes WILDING looking through the counting-house door, and looks that way too.*) I see you have had the portrait of your mother hung in the counting-house?

*Wilding.* My dear mother, as you know, placed me in this business, Mr. Bintrey. I have two portraits of her. One I keep in my own room. The other I hang in my counting-house, in remembrance of all that she has done for me. It seems like yesterday, when she came to the Foundling, and asked me if I should like to live in a home of my own, with the mother who loved me. From that time I became her confidentially acknowledged son. From that time, we were never separated till death took her from me, six months ago. Everything that I have—everything that may come to me in the future—I owe to her love. I hope *my* love consoled her for all that she had suffered in her earlier life. She had been cruelly deceived, Mr. Bintrey. But she never spoke of it—she never betrayed her betrayer!

*Bintrey.* She had made up her mind, and she could hold her peace. A devilish deal better than ever *you* will!

*Wilding.* I can no longer show my love and honour for her; but I can show that I am not ashamed of her. I mean, that I am not ashamed of having been a Foundling. I, who never knew a father of my own, can be a father now to all in my employment. I shall expect my new partner, I shall expect my new housekeeper, to help me in keeping this resolution. We will revive the good old times, when the head of a business, and the clerks and servants of a business, all lived together as one family. I have told my people that they shall lodge here under the same roof with me, and eat here at the same table with me.

(JOEY LADLE appears, from the cellars.)

*Joey.* Respecting this same boarding and lodging, young Master Wilding?

*Bintrey.* (to WILDING). Here is one of your new family. (*Pointing to JOEY'S leathern apron and bib.*) This boy's pinafore won't want much washing, and won't wear out in a hurry!

*Wilding.* Well, Joey?

*Joey.* Speaking for myself, young Master Wilding, if you want to board me and lodge me, take me. I can peck as well as most men. *Where* I peck, ain't so high a object with me as *what* I peck. And that ain't as high a object as how much I peck.

*Bintrey.* You ought to have been a lawyer, Mr. Joey. Where *we* peck isn't as high an object with *us* as what we peck, and how much we peck. Victuals in your case, and fees in ours. Human nature is the same in all professions, Mr. Wilding. I'll take another glass of the forty-five port.

*Joey.* Are we all to live in the house, young Master Wilding? The two other cellarmen, the three porters, the two 'prentices, and the odd men?

*Wilding.* Yes, Joey. I hope we shall all be an united family.

*Joey.* Ah! I hope they may be.

*Wilding.* They? Rather say we, Joey.

*Joey.* Don't look to me to make "We" on it, young Master Wilding. Don't look to me to put a lively face on anything. It's all very well, gentlemen, for you that has been accustomed to take your wine into your systems by the convivial channel of your throttles, to put a lively face on it. But I have been accustomed to take *my* wine in at the pores of the skin—and, took that way, it acts depressing. It's one thing to charge your glasses in a dining-room with a Hip—Hip—Hooray, and a Jolly Companions Everyone. And it's another thing to be charged yourself, through the pores, in a low dark cellar and a mouldy atmosphere. I have been a cellarman my life through—and what's the consequence? I'm as muddled and as melloncolly a man as lives. A pecking-machine, sir, is all that I am capable of proving myself, out of my cellars. But that you're welcome to, if it's worth your while to keep such a thing on your premises.

*Bintrey.* I don't want to interrupt the flow of Mr. Joey's philosophy. But it's past ten o'clock—and the housekeepers will be coming to apply for the vacant place.

*Wilding.* Let them come, and welcome. My good friend, George Vendale, has undertaken to see them for me, and to pick out the woman whom he thinks will suit me best. (BINTREY nods, and turns to go out.) You're not going?

*Bintrey.* I have an appointment in court. I'll look in on my way back, and hear what you have done.

(*Exit.*)

*Joey.* So, you've been and taken young Master George Vendale partner into the old business?

*Wilding.* Yes, Joey. My old friend George Vendale begins, as my partner, to-day.

*Joey.* Don't change the name of the Firm again, young Master Wilding. It was bad luck enough to make it Yourself and Co. Better by far have left the old name of the old Firm—Pebbleson Nephew. Good luck always stuck to Pebbleson Nephew. You should never change luck when it's good, sir.

*Enter GEORGE VENDALE, from the house.*

*Vendale.* I have seen the housekeepers, Walter. There is only one woman in the whole collection who isn't a Gorgon. I like her face and her manner—and she is coming here to be presented to you. Her name is Sarah Goldstraw.

*Wilding.* Goldstraw! Surely I have heard that name before?

*Vendale.* If she is an old acquaintance, so much the better (*Looking towards the house.*) This way, Miss Goldstraw. Here is Mr. Wilding!

*Enter SALLY GOLDSTRAW.*

*Sally (aside).* Wilding!

*Joey (aside).* I agree with Master George. That's a sound woman, outside and in!

*Vendale.* (*to WILDING.*) This is a busy morning with *me*. I am going to the Docks—then back again to the house, to speak to the gas-fitter about the new light in the dining-room. Good-bye, for the present!

(*Exit through the counting-house.*)

*Wilding. (to SALLY).* Will you step into the counting-house, if you please?

(*Aside.*) Her face is familiar to me! Where did I see it last?

*Sally (advancing a few steps, and stopping thoughtfully).* Wilding!—No, no, it can't be? Wilding's a common name. How foolish I am!

*Joey (to WILDING).* Take her, young Master Wilding! You won't find the match of Sarah Goldstraw in a hurry. (*Aside, returning to the cellars.*) I feel as if I had taken something new in at the pores. (*Looking back at SALLY.*) Has that pleasant woman brought a streak of sunshine with her into this moloncolly place? And am I a-walking in it on my way back to the cellars?

(*Exit into the cellars.*)

*Wilding.* Let me show you the way into the counting-house.

*Sally (rousing herself).* I beg your pardon, sir.

(*She goes on to the counting-house—and is about to enter the door, when she suddenly starts back with a scream, and sinks on a bench in the yard.*)

*Wilding.* What's the matter? what have you seen to frighten you?

*Sally.* Nothing!

*Wilding.* Nothing?

*Sally.* Might I ask——? there's a portrait in the counting-house, sir——

*Wilding.* The portrait of my late mother. What is there in that to frighten you?

*Sally (aside).* His mother. The lady who spoke to me twelve years since! (*Rising and addressing WILDING.*) I hope you will excuse me, sir, I would rather not take up your time. I—I don't think the place would suit me.

(*Attempts to retire.*)

*Wilding. (stopping her).* Wait a minute. There's something wrong here—there's something I don't understand. Your face puzzles me; your name puzzles me—good Heavens! I have it! You were the nurse at the Foundling, when I was one of the boys there twelve years since!

*Sally (aside).* What am I to say to him?

*Wilding.* You were the woman who took pity on my poor mother. She often talked of it to me. A nurse told her my name, and pointed me out to her at dinner. You were that nurse.

*Sally (sinking back on the bench).* Heaven forgive me, sir, I was that nurse!

*Wilding.* Heaven forgive you? What do you mean? Speak out!

*Sally.* Oh, sir, don't ask me to speak out! I may make you rue the day when you first let me into your house.

*Wilding.* You can do nothing worse than frighten me as you are frightening me now.

*Sally.* Compose yourself, sir! If I *must* speak, I *will*. You said a minute since that the lady——

*Wilding.* She calls my mother “the lady!” When you talk of my mother, why don’t you call her my mother?

*Sally.* You said just now, sir, that the lady often talked of what had passed between herself and me. Are you calm enough to remember what she told you?

*Wilding.* Calm or not, it is impossible that I can forget it. You told my mother that you were present when I was first received at the Foundling. You saw me christened; you heard me named Walter Wilding. You said that I was removed to the institution in the country, and that you remained at the institution in London.

*Sally.* All quite true then, sir—and all quite true now. But you don’t know—and at that time, I didn’t know either—what happened at our place in the country. A strange lady—one Mrs. Miller—came there, six months after the child had been removed from London. Her object was to adopt one of our foundlings; and she was provided with the necessary authority. The child she chose, was the infant whom I had seen christened—the child of the lady whose portrait hangs there.

*Wilding.* Why can’t you speak plainly? You mean *me*?

*Sally.* I mean the child of that lady, sir. You are *not* her child. (*WILDING starts.*) You were not received into the Foundling until three weeks after the date I am speaking of. I was absent at the time—or this would never have happened. You, in your turn, were christened at the chapel in London. There was a question of what name to give you. The name of the child who had been taken away from us, was a name to spare—and it was given to *you*. You, too, were taken to the country. At three years old you were brought back to the London Foundling. I was ignorant of all the circumstances. What could I conclude, when you came back to us, under the name of Walter Wilding, but that you were the child whom I had seen christened by that name? How could I know that there had been a first Walter Wilding, adopted, and taken away, and a second Walter Wilding put in his place?

*Wilding. (staggering back).* Is it getting dark? Are my eyes failing me? Give me a hand—I don’t know where I am.

*Sally (supporting him, and placing him on the bench from which she has risen).* Shall I get you some water, sir? Shall I call for help?

*Wilding.* Wait—give me time. (*Rousing himself suddenly.*) How do I know your story is true?

*Sally.* Should I have told it, sir, in my situation, if it had *not* been true?

*Wilding.* Oh me! oh me! I loved her so dearly! I felt so fondly I was her son!

(*His head sinks. SALLY kneels by him and supports it on her bosom.*)

*Sally.* Let it rest here, sir. This is not the first time. I have rocked you to sleep, on my bosom, many and many a time when you were a boy.

*Wilding.* She died, Sally, in my arms—she died blessing me as only a mother could have blessed me. Oh, if you *were* to speak——Why not have spoken sooner?

*Sally.* I only knew it myself, sir, two years since. I found the work at the Foundling too much for me, and left to take a housekeeper's situation. I went to say good-bye to a friend at our place in the country, and there I heard it for the first time. Where was I to find the poor lady? Where was I to find *you*? It's not my fault, sir. If you hadn't forced me to it, I wouldn't have spoken now.

*Wilding. (rising).* What! you would have left me ignorant of the truth? You would have left me usurping the place, enjoying the fortune that belongs to another man? He must be found! Who was the stranger who adopted the child?

*Sally.* The lady's name was Mrs. Miller, sir.

*Wilding.* Where is she?

*Sally.* It's nigh on four-and-twenty years since, sir. All that is known of her is, that she took the child to Switzerland.

*Wilding.* Switzerland? What part of Switzerland?

*Sally.* Nobody heard at the time, sir; and nobody knows now.

*Enter BINTREY.*

*Bintrey.* Well? Have you engaged the housekeeper? (*Noticing WILDING'S agitation.*) What's the matter?

*Wilding. (to SALLY).* Tell him, in your own words—I can't tell him in any words of mine! (*SALLY and BINTREY speak apart.* WILDING continues, *in soliloquy.*) She left me her fortune—she left me all that I possess, in the firm persuasion that I was her son. I am not her son. I have got the place, I have innocently taken the inheritance of another man. He must be found, Mr. Bintrey!

*Bintrey. (leading SALLY towards the house).* Wait in the house a little, and let me speak to him. (*SALLY goes into the house.* BINTREY turns and addresses WILDING.) This is a sad business, Mr. Wilding. But I can't see that Sarah Goldstraw is to blame.

*Wilding.* To blame? She's a good kind woman, and she shall stop here, in my service. Never mind that now! Mr. Bintrey, the lost Walter Wilding must be found!

*Bintrey.* After a lapse of four-and-twenty years? Not easy, to say the least of it.

*Wilding.* I tell you *her* son must be found. It may take time; I may die before it's done—Stop! I must make my will—a will leaving everything to him—before I sleep to-night.

*Bintrey.* Gently! gently!

*Enter GEORGE VENDALE from the house.*

*Wilding.* Oh, George, you come at a terrible time! You don't know what has happened!

*Vendale.* My dear Walter! the woman herself has told me. I saw her here on my return from the Docks, and she entreated me, as your old friend, to go and comfort you.

*Wilding.* Encourage me, George! Take my side. I am determined to find the lost man, and to restore everything to him—for *her* sake, and for the love I bear to *her* memory.

*Bintrey.* How are we to find the man, Mr. Vendale? If we advertise for him, we invite every rogue in the kingdom to set up a claim. Taking our friend's own view—which I, for one, don't share—this restitution is impossible. Try what way you please, Mr. Wilding, you will find this is a case of No Thoroughfare!

*Wilding. (passionately).* The restitution must, and shall, be made! I have got what belongs to another man. I am an Impostor!

*Vendale.* My good friend, that is simply absurd. No man can be an impostor without being a consenting party to the imposition. Clearly, you never were *that*. As to your enrichment by the lady whom you believed to be your mother, it arose out of the personal relations between you—out of the pure love she had for *you*, out of the pure love you had for *her*. A mistake for which you were neither of you responsible, can't alter that.

*Bintrey.* Besides, the man may be dead.

*Wilding.* The man may be living! We know that the child was taken to Switzerland. That is the clue to follow. If neither of you will help me, I will go to Switzerland myself!

*Vendale.* Hush! hush! You know we will both help you to any object that you really have at heart. Compose yourself, Walter; we will return to this painful subject later in the day.

*Enter JOEY.*

*Joey (to WILDING).* A gentleman has stopped at the door, sir, in a cab. He wishes to see you.

*Wilding.* Who is he?

*Joey.* A stranger, sir. Here is his card, and a letter.

(JOEY withdraws and waits at the back.)

*Wilding. (to VENDALE).* See who it is! I can't receive anybody.

(Hands VENDALE the card and letter.)

*Vendale. (starting as he reads the card).* "Mr. Obenreizer!"

*Bintrey. (looking over VENDALE'S shoulder at the card.)* From Switzerland.

*Wilding.* Switzerland! Whoever he is, I'll see him.

*Bintrey.* You have changed your mind rather suddenly.

*Wilding.* The one trace of the lost man is in Switzerland. Even this stranger may help us.

*Vendale. (after reading the letter).* Mr. Obenreizer is not a stranger. He was an old acquaintance of mine, when I was travelling abroad. This letter is from our correspondents—Defresnier and Company, the wine-merchants of Neuchâtel. They introduce Mr. Obenreizer as Agent for their house, and as now intending to establish himself in England. And they recommend him warmly to the friendly consideration of Wilding and Company.

*Wilding.* What sort of a man is he? How is it you never mentioned him before?

*Bintrey. (aside).* Mr. Vendale looks confused. That's a bad sign to begin with!

*Vendale. (to WILDING).* I had my reasons, Walter. When Mr. Obenreizer and I first met abroad there was somebody with him. In plain English, there was a young lady——

*Wilding.* His daughter?

*Vendale.* He is no older than you and I.

*Wilding.* No older than I am!

*Vendale.* No older. The young lady was his ward; and——

*Bintrey.* And you fell in love with her? Excuse my legal habit of helping an unwilling witness.

*Vendale.* I'm not an unwilling witness in *that* part of the matter. I have been in love with her ever since—I am in love with her now—I shall be in love with her to the end of my life. Is *that* sufficiently explicit, Mr. Bintrey?

*Bintrey.* I can't say, Mr. Vendale. I'm not professionally acquainted with the subject.

*Wilding.* I don't see what tied your tongue about all this, George—so far.

*Vendale.* The truth is, I was very young at the time, and very anxious to make an impression on the young lady. I drifted into some foolish boasting about myself and my family position. I have had sense enough to be ashamed of it since, and Mr. Obenreizer's arrival makes me feel doubly ashamed of it now.

*Wilding.* Do you object to see him?

*Vendale.* Certainly not! We are to be connected with him in business. Let us get the meeting over; and the sooner the better.

*Wilding.* (to JOEY). Ask Mr. Obenreizer to step this way.

(JOEY opens the door of the house, and OBENREIZER appears. JOEY goes out.)

*Obenreizer.* (advancing). Mr. Walter Wilding?

*Wilding.* My name is Wilding, sir. You come excellently introduced. I am glad to see you. (Presenting BINTREY.) My friend, and legal adviser—Mr. Bintrey.

*Obenreizer.* Charmed to make Mr. Bintrey's acquaintance.

*Bintrey.* (aside). Too civil by half! I don't like him.

*Obenreizer.* (noticing VENDALE). Ha! my fellow-traveller, Mr. Vendale! How do you do? So glad! (Takes VENDALE lightly by each elbow, by way of embrace.)

*Vendale.* You hardly expected to meet me again here, as a partner in the firm?

*Obenreizer.* On the contrary! I heard at Neuchâtel you had become a member of the firm. Besides, what did I tell you when we were on the mountains? We call them vast—but the world is so little! So little is the world that one cannot keep away from persons. Does one wish to keep away from *you*? Good Heavens, no! And you are quite well? So glad! (Taking VENDALE by the elbows again.)

*Bintrey.* (aside). He has rather a tigerish way of being glad!

*Wilding.* (overhearing BINTREY). What?

*Bintrey.* Charmed with Mr. Obenreizer's sentiments—that's all!

*Obenreizer.* (continuing to VENDALE). And you have had the condescension to come into trade? *You*, descended from so fine a family! A dealer in wines! Stop, though! Wine? Is it trade in England, or profession? Not a fine art?

*Vendale.* Mr. Obenreizer, when we last met, I had only come of age—I was young and foolish; and I had just inherited the fortune left to me after my parents' death. I have grown a year or two older, and I have got rid of my boy's vanity, since that time.

*Obenreizer.* Your vanity? Bah! You tax yourself too heavily—you tax yourself as if it was your Government taxing you! My dear sir, I like your condescension. It ennobles

trade! The misfortune of trade, is its vulgarity. Any low people—I, for example, a poor peasant—may take to it, and climb by it. Yes, Mr. Wilding! Yes, Mr. Bintrey! I possess your English virtue of frankness. I own myself a man of low origin—bah! for all I know, a man of no origin at all!

*Wilding.* (to BINTREY). Do you hear that?

*Bintrey.* (to WILDING). I'm deaf, on principle, to all humbug!

*Vendale.* May I ask after your ward! Is Mademoiselle Marguerite well?

*Obenreizer.* (suddenly altering in manner, and speaking feelingly and seriously).

Mademoiselle Marguerite is, I am happy to say, sir, quite well!

*Bintrey.* You are rather young, Mr. Obenreizer, to be a lady's guardian.

*Obenreizer.* (as before). Young in years, Mr. Bintrey; old in discretion and experience. The father of this young lady—whom it is the honour and happiness of my life to protect—was, by origin, a peasant like myself. He had watched me from my childhood—he had seen me win my way honestly, inch by inch, higher in the world, as he had won his. He died, a lonely man who had outlived all the friends of his own time—he died, knowing that he could trust me. I received his priceless charge—the charge of his child. At my request, her little fortune was secured to her, independently of me, when she comes of age. I only accepted the small yearly sum which her father left to me, on *that* understanding. I shall live and die true to my sacred trust! (*Resuming his former manner.*) Mr. Wilding! you are asked to put confidence in me in matters of trade. I am not sure of my origin—I am not even sure if my parents *were* my parents after all. But one thing I know! I must be open as the day; I must be true as steel—or my friend's daughter would never have been trusted to these peasant's hands!

*Wilding.* (aside to BINTREY). He is about my age—he is not sure of his origin; he is not sure of his parents. You hear him again?

*Bintrey.* (to WILDING). No, I don't hear him again!

*Vendale.* (to OBENREIZER). Is Mademoiselle Marguerite in Switzerland?

*Obenreizer.* (seriously). Mademoiselle Marguerite is here. With her excellent relative, Madame Dor.

*Wilding.* Do you mean that the ladies are waiting for you? (OBENREIZER bows.) Beg them to join us directly! I am shocked to think that ladies should have been kept waiting at my door. I'll go and fetch them myself!

*Obenreizer.* Not for the world!

(Exit.)

*Vendale.* (aside). I shall see her again! Oh, if she only remembers *me* as I remember *her*!

*Wilding.* (to BINTREY, speaking earnestly). I must ask him about his early life. There may be something providential in the accident which has brought this man here today!

*Bintrey.* Mr. Wilding, when Mr. Obenreizer comes back, will you favour me by doing something?

*Wilding.* Certainly! What can I do?

*Bintrey.* If you choose to make a great effort, you can hold your tongue!

(Enter OBENREIZER, leading in MARGUERITE, and followed by MADAME DOR. MADAME DOR has a dirty glove on one hand, which she is

*cleaning with india-rubber. Sitting or standing she always keeps her back turned on the persons about her.)*

*Obenreizer.* (to WILDING and BINTREY, presenting MARGUERITE). My ward—Mademoiselle Marguerite! (WILDING and BINTREY bow. MARGUERITE notices VENDALE, betrays her pleasure at meeting him again, then glances at OBENREIZER, and suddenly restrains herself. She and VENDALE talk apart. Meanwhile OBENREIZER, in his jesting tone, introduces MADAME DOR.) Madame Dor! the guardian angel, gentlemen, of my gloves and stockings! (MADAME D. bobs sideways to WILDING and BINTREY, and plumps down, with her back to everybody, cleaning the glove. OBENREIZER continues.) You adore domestic details in this country, Mr. Wilding! You insist on nothing else in your books; you will buy nothing else in your pictures. Behold (pointing to MADAME D.) the most domestic woman in existence! To-day, she is cleaning my gloves; to-morrow she will be darning my stockings; the day after she will be up to her elbows in suet and flour, making my puddings—my good, solid, indigestible English puddings! You admire her fine large back, don't you? Bah! her back is a baby, compared to her heart!

*Vendale.* (to MARGUERITE). Have you ever thought since of our happy days in Switzerland?

*Marguerite.* Over and over again, Mr. Vendale. Do you remember our lakes and mountains?

*Vendale.* (in a whisper). I only remember you!

(MARGUERITE turns aside confused.)

*Obenreizer.* (tenderly to MARGUERITE). I am afraid the journey has fatigued you? I am afraid all these new faces here confuse you. (MARGUERITE makes a sign in the negative.) No? Ah! you are too kind to let me be anxious about you! You will acknowledge nothing that can give me a moment's pain! (She passes on to WILDING and BINTREY, who speak to her apart. OBENREIZER turns abruptly to VENDALE.) Ha! Mr. Vendale, I will make that charming creature's English home, a home that is worthy of her! Where the money is to come from, who knows? But it shall be done! Silks, and satins, and laces, and flowers—my ward shall have them all. Can your sound English sense understand a man who sacrifices everything to one dominant idea? I dare say not! You are so well brought up in England; you are so prosperous and so rich! I was brought up in the cowshed with the cow! I was brought up barefooted, to beg for halfpence on the highway! While your parents were saying to you, "Nice boy, come and kiss us!" my parents (if they were my parents) were saying to me, "Little wretch! come and have the stick!" (WILDING makes an attempt to speak to OBENREIZER. BINTREY holds him back.) Bah! we were a sordid set where I passed my young life. I wish I could forget Switzerland.

*Marguerite.* For my part, I love Switzerland.

*Obenreizer.* (anxiously to MARGUERITE). Then, I love it too! I have said nothing to hurt you, I hope? A slip of the tongue, dearest! Remember that we are speaking in proud England!

*Marguerite.* I speak in proud earnest. I am not ashamed of my country—I am not ashamed of being a peasant's daughter.

*Vendale.* (to MARGUERITE). I understand your feeling, and admire it.

*Obenreizer.* (to MARGUERITE, after looking at his watch). I am sure you are fatigued! I am sure you need rest and quiet! *En route*, my dear Marguerite! *en route*, my good Dor! Mr. Wilding, I am delighted to have presented myself.

*Wilding.* Mr. Obenreizer——

*Bintrey.* (behind WILDING). Hold your tongue!

*Obenreizer.* (gaily to WILDING). We must be firm friends—we must do business together—we must exchange hospitalities when I have a home of my own. I am eager for your English puddings! I adore your glorious grogs! (*Turns away, and rouses MADAME DOR.* BINTREY persists in silencing WILDING.)

*Vendale.* (to MARGUERITE). When shall we meet again?

*Marguerite.* It depends on Mr. Obenreizer!

(*She joins OBENREIZER.*)

*Obenreizer.* Adieu, gentleman, for the present! Mr. Wilding, you shall hear from me to-morrow. (*Giving his arm to MARGUERITE.*) Now, dearest, for our house-hunting in this great city! We will find you the prettiest home to live in that London can produce!

(*He goes out with MARGUERITE.* MADAME DOR follows sideways, still cleaning the glove. At the same moment, VENDALE and BINTREY, at either side of the stage, and WILDING in the middle, all three turn towards the audience, each speaking in turn, in a whisper to himself.)

*Vendale.* He is the kindest of guardians!

*Bintrey.* He is the greatest of rascals!

*Wilding.* He may be the lost man!

THE END OF THE FIRST ACT.

## ACT II.

(*In Three Scenes.*)

FIRST SCENE.—*The drawing-room at OBENREIZER'S lodgings. The room is richly furnished. On one side of the stage, MARGUERITE, elegantly dressed, stands at a window, looking out. On the other side, OBENREIZER is engaged at an open desk, counting and arranging a sum of money in gold and bank-notes. In the centre, at the back of the stage, MADAME DOR sits, with her back to the audience, cleaning a glove. A lapse of three months is supposed to have occurred since the First Act.*

*Marguerite.* (speaking to herself). Mr. Vendale knows that to-day is my birthday—and yet Mr. Vendale never comes near me! (*Remains at the window, looking out.*)

*Obenreizer.* (counting the money). One hundred, two hundred, four hundred—four hundred and fifty. Fifty pounds still wanting to make up the five hundred—the sum which I must replace—or I am a lost man! Oh, this ruinous luxury! this hollow show of prosperity and wealth! Will Marguerite ever know what the splendour she lives in has cost me? We have been three months in England. Have I produced no impression on her

by all that I have done in that time? I *must* have produced an impression! She has been more familiar—there has been something almost affectionate in her manner to me lately. She thinks less—she evidently thinks less of that man, Vendale.

*Marguerite.* (*at the window*). No signs of Mr. Vendale! And yet I felt so sure that he would come to me on my birthday!

*Obenreizer.* (*handling the money*). Vendale knows that it is her birthday. If he sends her a present, it will be the most brilliant present that wealth can buy. What am *I* going to give her? Nothing but the flowers that she loves!—the flowers whose eloquence I trust to speak for me. If I only dared use this money, I know whose birthday gift should be the richest! I have a month before me—the five hundred pounds won't be wanted for another month. Dare I run the risk? Madness to think of it! Every farthing I can spare must be scraped together to make up the missing sum. Discovery brands me as a felon—discovery ruins me for life. I'll lock the money up—the sight of it tempts me. Vendale? Bah! he is overwhelmed with business—he will forget her birthday. (*Putting the money into a drawer.*)

*Marguerite.* (*joyously*). Ah! I didn't reckon on him in vain. There he is in the street! (*Turns to OBENREIZER.*) Mr. Vendale is coming!

*Obenreizer.* (*pausing, before he closes the drawer*). He *has* remembered the birthday! Come what may of it, Vendale shall not get the upper hand of me now! (*A knock at the door.*) Come in!

*Enter VENDALE, with a jeweller's case in his hand. He bows to OBENREIZER, and passes on to MARGUERITE.*

*Vendale.* (*to MARGUERITE*). May I offer you my best wishes and congratulations? Will you honour me by accepting a little memorial of this happy day? (*MARGUERITE receives the present hesitatingly.*)

*Obenreizer.* A little memorial! Oh, Mr. Vendale! how modestly wealth speaks, when it speaks in England!

*Marguerite.* (*to VENDALE*). You are very kind—I am much obliged to you, Mr. Vendale. (*Aside.*) I hope he has remembered that a simple present is the only present I can accept from *him*!

*Vendale.* (*to MARGUERITE*). You don't open the case? Will you favour me by looking at what is inside?

*Obenreizer.* (*aside*). I can bear it no longer! (*Snatching the money out of the drawer.*) The die is cast! (*To MARGUERITE*.) Excuse me, dearest, for one moment. Mr. Vendale reminds me that *my* birthday present has not been made yet! (*Goes out, stopping for a moment to speak to MADAME DOR, and to show by a gesture that he desires her not to leave VENDALE and MARGUERITE alone in his absence.*)

*Marguerite.* (*opening the case, and taking from it a plain gold locket and chain*). Oh, Mr. Vendale! how well you have understood me! A present that I might have received from a person in my own rank of life!

*Vendale.* Is my little offering forgiven, as well as accepted?

*Marguerite.* More than forgiven! I own you have pleased and flattered me! (*She places the locket in the bosom of her dress, and seats herself on the sofa.*)

*Vendale.* (*looking towards MADAME DOR*). Madame Dor! Is there no way of getting that piece of human furniture out of the room? Stay! Her head nods—her stocking falls into her lap. Best of women! yield to Nature's weakness, and mercifully fall asleep!

*Marguerite.* (*noticing MADAME DOR, and rising to wake her*). Madame Dor!

*Vendale.* (*taking MARGUERITE'S hand, and leading her back to the sofa*). Don't disturb her! I have been waiting to tell you a secret, which must be heard by nobody but ourselves. Let me tell it now!

(*He seats himself by MARGUERITE on the sofa. She takes up her embroidery, and tries to hide her confusion, by affecting to work.*)

*Marguerite.* (*coquettishly*). What claim can I have, Mr. Vendale, to know your secrets?

*Vendale.* I can never tell you, if you persist in looking at your work. (*MARGUERITE shyly looks up at him*.) We have often talked of those delightful days in Switzerland, when we were fellow-travellers. I have often told you of the impressions I brought back with me to England. But there is *one* impression that I have never mentioned yet. Can you guess what that one is?

*Marguerite.* I am very bad at guessing, Mr. Vendale. It was an impression of the mountains, perhaps?

*Vendale.* No: a much more precious impression than that.

*Marguerite.* An impression of the lakes?

*Vendale.* No. The lakes are not associated with my happiness in the present, and my hopes in the future. Marguerite! all that makes life worth having, hangs for me on a word from your lips. Marguerite! I love you!

*Marguerite.* (*sadly*). Oh, Mr. Vendale, it would have been kinder to have kept your secret! Have you forgotten the distance between us? It can never, never be!

*Vendale.* There can be but one distance between us—a distance of your making. My love! There is no higher rank in goodness, there is no higher rank in beauty, than yours! Come! whisper the one little word! Tell me you will be my wife!

*Marguerite.* Think of *your* family! and think of *mine*!

*Vendale.* (*drawing her nearer to him*). If you dwell on such an obstacle as that, I shall think but one thought—I shall think I have offended you.

*Marguerite.* (*turning towards him innocently*). Oh no! (*She stops, confused, and tries to disengage herself*.) I didn't mean that! I—I don't know what I mean! Let me go, Mr. Vendale!

*Vendale.* (*kissing her*). Call me George!

*Marguerite.* (*softly*). George!

*Vendale.* Say you love me!

*Marguerite.* (*timidly touching his cheek with her lips*). I love you! (*A pause*.)

*Footsteps heard outside.* MARGUERITE starts to her feet.) Leave me! He is coming back!

(MADAME DOR wakes with a start. She drops several old gloves, which all roll off her lap together. VENDALE hurries to the back to pick them up for her. MARGUERITE stands looking towards the door, uncertain whether to go or stay. OBENREIZER appears, radiant with triumph. He has a jeweller's case in his hand, and is followed by two men, who place pots of rare flowers, under his directions, in different parts of the room.)

*Obenreizer.* (to MARGUERITE). Look, dearest, at the flowers—and tell me if one of your favourites has been forgotten!

*Marguerite.* (confusedly). You are too kind! How can I thank you?

(She takes VENDALE'S locket nervously out of her dress.)

*Obenreizer.* My birthday present is not made yet! You are pleased with the flowers; but the flowers will wither with time. I have another and a better gift, which will always remind you of me. Marguerite! I have inherited no fortune from my parents. All that I possess I owe to my own exertions—and that little “all” I offer to you. (Handing her the jewel-case.) Wear these, dearest, and give them a beauty which is not their own!

*Marguerite.* (opening the case, and taking out a diamond necklace). Oh! how could you buy this! How can a girl like me wear such diamonds as these? You will not be offended? I do wish you had been satisfied with only giving me the flowers! (She has spoken these words—feeling OBENREIZER'S eyes fixed eagerly on her—timidly and with embarrassment. She places the necklace on the table, mechanically arranges VENDALE'S locket round her neck, suddenly realises the effect of what she is doing on OBENREIZER, starts, and turns away abruptly to MADAME DOR.) Madame Dor! it's getting late! Come and help me to dress for dinner.

(She hurries out, taking MADAME DOR with her. VENDALE remains at the back, looking after her.)

*Obenreizer.* His locket round her neck, and my necklace left on the table! I have risked the horrors of discovery—I have sacrificed my honour—I have put my whole future in peril to win her love—and this is my reward! Curses on your glitter and your beauty! You have ruined me for life!

(He snatches up the diamonds, and throws them from him in a frenzy of rage. The moment after, VENDALE approaches him with both hands extended cordially.)

*Vendale.* My dear friend, I have something to say to you! (A stifled cry of fury and a threatening gesture escape OBENREIZER. He controls himself the moment after, and, without taking VENDALE'S outstretched hands, points to a chair. VENDALE continues.) What is the matter? Has anything happened to annoy you?

*Obenreizer.* My nerves are out of order. I'm not quite myself to-day. Don't notice! You want to speak to me. Take a seat. This is business, I suppose?

*Vendale.* (seating himself, with a look of surprise). Business! Something much more interesting than business. I am afraid you are hardly well enough——?

*Obenreizer.* (seating himself). I am quite well enough. What is it?

*Vendale.* Mr. Obenreizer, you must have observed, long since, that I feel no ordinary admiration for your charming ward.

*Obenreizer.* I have not observed it.

*Vendale.* My admiration has grown into a tenderer and deeper feeling——

*Obenreizer.* Friendship, Mr. Vendale?

*Vendale.* Love. (OBENREIZER starts to his feet. VENDALE continues.) I appear to surprise you?

*Obenreizer.* (breaking out). You——! (Masters himself by a great effort, and resumes his chair.) You petrify me.

*Vendale.* Shall I wait till you have recovered yourself?

*Obenreizer.* No!

*Vendale.* You wish me to go on?

*Obenreizer.* Yes!

*Vendale.* You are Mademoiselle Marguerite's guardian. I ask you to confer upon me the greatest of all favours—I ask you to give me her hand in marriage.

*Obenreizer. (breaking out).* You ask me——! (*Checks himself.*)

*Vendale.* I beg your pardon?—I didn't hear——

*Obenreizer.* One word, sir. You have said nothing about this to the young lady herself?

*Vendale.* I have opened my whole heart to the young lady.

*Obenreizer. (furiously).* Mr. Vendale——! (*Controls himself once more.*) Mr. Vendale, what sort of conduct is this? As a man of honour speaking to a man of honour, how can you justify it?

*Vendale.* The customs of your country and mine differ. Why do you receive my proposals in this strange way? What objection do you see to favouring my suit?

*Obenreizer.* I see one immense objection. My ward is the daughter of a peasant, and you are the son of a gentleman. In this country, such a marriage as you propose is an outrage on society.

*Vendale.* Mr. Obenreizer, I may claim to know my own country better than you do. In the estimation of everybody whose opinion is worth having, my wife herself would be the one sufficient justification of my marriage. In offering her my love, I *know* that I am also offering her the respect of all my friends. I am not so rich as you suppose me to be; but I can give my wife a home and a position that are worthy of her. My present income is fifteen hundred a year, and I have the fairest prospect of soon making it more. Do you object to me on pecuniary grounds?

*Obenreizer.* Yes!

*Vendale. (in astonishment).* Why?

*Obenreizer.* Because you are not rich enough.

*Vendale.* I have just told you that I have fifteen hundred a year!

*Obenreizer.* Enough, I dare say, for an English wife in your own station. Not more than half enough for a foreign wife, who has all your social prejudices to conquer. Answer me this. On your fifteen hundred a year, can your wife have a house in a fashionable quarter, a footman to open her door, a butler to wait at her table, and a carriage and horses to drive about in? Yes? or No?

*Vendale.* No!

*Obenreizer.* One more question, and I have done. Take the mass of your lovely and accomplished countrywomen. Is it, or is it not, the fact, that a lady who has a house in a fashionable quarter, a footman to open her door, a butler to wait at her table, and a carriage and horses to drive about in—is a lady who has gained four steps in female estimation, at starting?

*Vendale. (aside).* He has betrayed himself at last. The mercenary motive is at the bottom of it all! (*To OBENREIZER.*) You view this question as a question of terms?

*Obenreizer.* Of terms beyond *your* reach.

*Vendale.* On your own showing, you could offer no valid objection to my proposal, if I had three thousand a year. I shall have a word to say to you presently about that part of the question. But I will wait till you have consulted the wishes of Mademoiselle Marguerite, first.

*Obenreizer.* What has she to do with this discussion?

*Vendale.* She has the same interest in it that I have.

*Obenreizer.* What do you mean?

*Vendale.* I have had the assurance from her own lips that she loves me.

*Obenreizer.* (*furiously striking the bell on the table*). We'll see about that! (*A WOMAN-SERVANT enters.*) Mademoiselle Marguerite! (*The SERVANT retires.*)

*MARGUERITE enters.* OBENREIZER looks at her as she slowly advances towards him.) Her colour is rising! How lovely she looks!

*Marguerite.* (*to OBENREIZER*). You wish to speak to me?

*Obenreizer.* Yes, dearest. I have something to say to you, at the request of this gentleman. Mr. Vendale asserts—— (*His voice falters; he turns aside abruptly.*)

*Marguerite.* You look worn and anxious. Are you ill? I am so sorry!

*Obenreizer.* (*in a voice broken by emotion*). She pities me! The angel looks down and pities me!

*Marguerite.* (*innocently*). Have I said anything to distress you?

*Obenreizer.* (*bitterly*). You have turned the knife in the wound—that's all! No! no! no! I don't mean that—I mean nothing! We are forgetting Mr. Vendale. Marguerite! He has said—(*struggling with himself*)—he has said that you love him. (*MARGUERITE'S head droops.*) It is not true—is it?

*Marguerite.* (*in low, but perfectly firm tones*). It is true!

*Obenreizer.* (*aside, in a whisper*). Damnation!

*Marguerite.* (*looking up at him in alarm*). How strangely he looks!

*Vendale.* (*to OBENREIZER*). Are you satisfied now?

*Obenreizer.* Wait a little!

*Marguerite.* (*looking at OBENREIZER*). He frightens me!

*Obenreizer.* (*to MARGUERITE*). A word more—a little word more, dearest, between us. You know that I alone have authority over you as your guardian?

*Marguerite.* (*fearing a dispute between the two men*). Yes.

*Obenreizer.* If Mr. Vendale is ever to marry you, it must be with my consent?

*Marguerite.* Yes.

*Obenreizer.* You promise to be guided in this matter by my regard for your welfare, and by my better knowledge of the world?

*Marguerite.* Yes.

*Obenreizer.* If I say wait—whatever Mr. Vendale may say—you will wait my time?

(*VENDALE attempts to interpose. MARGUERITE, in terror of what may happen, silences him by a gesture.*)

*Obenreizer.* (*enforcing the question*). You will wait my time?

*Marguerite.* Yes.

*Obenreizer.* Mr. Vendale, are you answered?

*Vendale.* I am not answered. You have heard from herself that she loves me. In her presence, I tell you again that I love her. In her presence, state your objection to me. I repeat my proposal.

*Obenreizer.* I decline your proposal.

*Vendale.* On what ground?

*Obenreizer.* On the ground of your income.

*Vendale.* Fifteen hundred a year, is—in your opinion—not enough?

*Obenreizer.* Not more than half enough!

*Vendale.* That is your objection?

*Obenreizer.* That is my objection.

*Vendale.* I take you at your word. Mr. Obenreizer! I will double my income.

*Obenreizer.* Easier said than done!

*Vendale.* Watch the course of my business for another year, and you will see it done.—*Marguerite!* will you wait for me?

*Marguerite.* Willingly, Geor——! (Sees OBENREIZER looking at her, and corrects herself.) Yes, Mr. Vendale!

*Vendale.* In a year more, you shall be my wife!

(He turns towards the door.)

*Marguerite.* (impulsively following him). George!

*Obenreizer.* (calling her back furiously). Marguerite!

*Marguerite.* (looking at him with a cry of terror). Oh!

*Vendale.* You have frightened her!

*Obenreizer.* (to MARGUERITE). Have I frightened you?

*Marguerite.* I was a little startled—that's all! (She looks at VENDALE. He attempts to approach her. OBENREIZER places himself between them).

*Obenreizer.* No, Mr. Vendale. You are not her husband yet!

(The Scene closes on them.)

SECOND SCENE.—*A room in WILDING'S house. Side entrances, right and left. A door in the flat scene. BINTREY enters from the side, and knocks at the door in the flat. It is opened by SALLY GOLDSTRAW, who closes it behind her before she speaks to BINTREY.*

*Sally.* Did you wish to see Mr. Wilding, sir?

*Bintrey.* Yes. I have been away a week on business, and I want to ask him how he does.

*Sally.* You can't see him now, sir. He has promised me to lie down, and try if he can get a little sleep. The new doctor warned me not to let him be disturbed.

*Bintrey.* What, another doctor called in! When I was here last, Mr. Wilding was able to walk and talk. All he complained of was the oppression in his head. You don't mean to say he is dangerously ill?

*Sally.* He is able to walk and talk still, sir. But I am afraid he is dangerously ill, for all that. Three days since he alarmed us dreadfully—he had a fit. The doctors say that a second attack will be the death of him. I have my orders not to let him be vexed or disturbed. And, to own the truth, sir, I am afraid he would be both vexed and disturbed, if he saw you.

*Bintrey.* Come! that's plain speaking, at any rate. What have I done to upset him, if you please?

*Sally.* He can't rest night or day, sir, for thinking of the lost Walter Wilding. And he blames you for stopping his inquiries, when he wanted to make them, and when he had health and strength to do it.

*Bintrey.* My good woman! you have your duty towards Mr. Wilding; and I have mine. *My* duty is to keep my old friend and client from being swindled by the first rogue who chooses to impose on him. (*Aside.*) Obenreizer, for example!

*Sally.* Still, you might humour him, sir, mightn't you? He does take it, Mr. Bintrey, so much to heart!

*Bintrey.* I *have* humoured him—I have drawn his will. And what's more, I have let him execute it. The most absurd document that ever was put on paper! Mr. Vendale and I are charged, as his executors, to find a lost man, without knowing where to look for him—and to give that man a fortune, no matter who or what he may be, if he ever turns up! In drawing that will, I have committed professional suicide—and here's a worthy woman who tells me I haven't humoured my client!

*Sally.* I'm sure you mean well, sir! But he's so anxious and so ill—and I am so sorry for him! In old days at the Foundling, I used to call him "my boy." And somehow—I can't explain it—he seems to be growing back, in this distress of his, to be "my boy" again!

*Bintrey.* You *may* be old enough to be his mother, Miss Goldstraw—but you don't look it, at any rate!

*Sally* (*curtseying*). Thank you, sir!

*Bintrey.* Don't mention it! Come! come! I see you think I may be of some use in quieting poor Wilding's mind. What can I do?

*Sally.* Help him, sir, to find the lost man.

*Bintrey.* Help him to find somebody who will relieve him of every farthing he has in the world! If I do, I'll be—

*Sally.* Hush, sir! I don't think you understand poor Mr. Wilding's case. He is not to be reasoned with in this matter. It will be the death of him if his present anxiety is not relieved.

*Bintrey.* Was there ever such perversity? A man dying with anxiety to see another man make a pauper of him!—There! there! I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll help him, but it must be on my own terms. If the lost man *is* to be found (the devil take him!), it's my address he shall apply at, and not Wilding's. If he gets half the fortune out of *me*, he may think himself lucky! I hate the fellow by anticipation! Tell Mr. Wilding I'll make inquiries—and say, I'll call and report to-morrow. Will that pacify him?

*Sally.* I'm sure it will, sir. Ah, you may be rough outside, Mr. Bintrey—but you have a good heart.

*Bintrey.* Don't take away my character, Miss Goldstraw!

(*Exit.*)

*Sally* (*looking after him*). It's no laughing matter, Mr. Bintrey. If something isn't done to quiet his mind, I tremble to think of what may happen before long!

(WILDING enters by the door in the flat. He is clothed in his dressing-gown. His manner expresses mental, rather than physical, weakness.)

*Wilding.* Did I hear Mr. Bintrey?

*Sally* (*starting, and turning round*). Oh, sir! I am afraid we have disturbed you.

*Wilding.* You have *not* disturbed me. I can't rest; I can't compose myself. Every day I live, I am doing a new injustice to the man whose place I have taken, whose fortune I have got. Nobody helps me—nobody tries to find him!

*Sally.* Mr. Bintrey will try, sir. He told me to say so, a minute since.

*Wilding.* Mr. Bintrey will put it off—Mr. Bintrey doesn't see this as I see it—Mr. Bintrey suspects people, without reason. (*Walking apart, and speaking to himself.*) Obenreizer is the man! I think of it by day; I dream of it by night; and all my thoughts and all my dreams point the same way—Obenreizer is *her* son! (*Returning to SALLY.*) Sally!—may I call you Sally, for the sake of old times, when I was a boy?

*Sally.* Oh yes, sir! Try and be like what you were in the old times. You were always patient when you were a boy. Try and be patient now!

*Wilding.* Yes! yes! Something happened to me, Sally, a day or two since. Did I faint? Or—was it a fit? Tell me—I want to know!

*Sally.* It was a fit, sir.

*Wilding.* Ah! and there was a strange feeling in my head before it came on. Is it coming again? Sally! There is somebody whom I want to see—somebody whom I *must* see, before the day is out.

*Sally.* Not now, sir! Wait till you are stronger!

*Wilding. (aside).* My time may be short. I *must*, and *will*, speak to Obenreizer! (*To SALLY.*) Where is Mr. Vendale?

*Sally.* He left word, I think, sir, that he had gone to Mr. Obenreizer's.

*Wilding.* To be sure! His heart is set on that pretty young lady, Sally—he has gone to propose for her. My dear good George! I am well enough still to feel all my old interest in his happiness! Send to Mr. Obenreizer's, Sally—say I want to see them both; Mr. Obenreizer and Mr. Vendale. (*Aside.*) George doesn't distrust him as Bintrey does—George will help me.

*Sally.* You are not fit to see them, sir.

*Wilding.* I insist on seeing them!

*Sally.* If I do send, will you promise to go back to your room, and try to compose yourself?

*Wilding.* Yes! yes! Do it.

*Sally (opening the door for him to go in).* It shall be done, sir.

*Wilding.* Thank you! You have relieved my mind. (*Stops and turns round at the door.*) You are very little altered, Sally, since the old times. Mr. Obenreizer says the world is so small that the same people are always crossing each other in it again and again. Here are you and I together once more. It seems as if I was coming round again to the Foundling to die.

*Sally.* You are not going to die, dear Mr. Wilding!

*Wilding.* Send where I told you.

(*He goes into the room.*)

*Sally (alone).* It's a risk, I'm afraid, in his state. But I have promised to do it—and I must!

(*She goes out at the side.*)

THIRD SCENE.—*The Cellars at Cripple Corner. Heavy growths of red-tinged fungus hang from the vaulted roof. Casks of all sizes occupy the place. Above and between the casks are deep, dark recesses, used as “bins” for the bottled wine. A ray of daylight streams down through the entrance, which communicates by steps with the court-yard above. Heavy stone pillars support the roof. The darkness, except where the daylight falls, is dimly illuminated, here and there, by a lamp. In*

*some places the obscurity is complete. JOEY LADLE is discovered occupied with his measuring rod and his cellar book, measuring spaces, and making entries. He finds his way from one place to another by the help of his cellar lamp. The lamp gives a flickering and uncertain light. While JOEY is still absorbed in his work, VENDALE appears at the entrance above, descends slowly into the cellar, and advances to the front.*

*Vendale.* I can't find it in my heart to go into the house. I should vex poor Wilding if I told him what has happened between Obenreizer and me. My own spirits are depressed by the interview, now that the excitement of it is over. Can I do what I said I would do in the heat of the moment? *Can I double the value of this business in a year's time?* I don't know—I can settle to nothing to-day. I have been wandering about the streets without aim or object. And here I am, as restless as ever, wandering about the cellars, I don't know why. (*Notices JOEY.*) Oh! you're here, are you, Joey?

*Joey.* Oughtn't it rather to go, "Oh! you're here, are you, Master George?" It's my business to be here—but it ain't yourn.

*Vendale.* Don't grumble, Joey!

*Joey.* Oh! I don't grumble. If anything grumbles, it's what I've took in through the pores—it ain't me. Have a care as something in *you* don't begin a-grumbling, Master George. Stop here long enough for the Wapours to work, and they'll be at it. Yes; they'll be at it—trust 'em. (*Turning away to go on with his work.*) And so you've regularly come into the business, Master George?

*Vendale.* I hope you don't object, Joey?

*Joey.* I don't, bless you! But Wapours objects that you and your partner are both on you too young. You and young Master Wilding have been and changed the name of the firm. If you'd been old enough to know better, you wouldn't have done that. Mark my words! You've changed the luck of the firm—and you'll find it out!

*Vendale.* Pooh! nonsense!

*Joey.* "Pooh"'s easy said—and "nonsense" follows it naterally enough! I ain't been down here all my life for nothing. I know, by what I notices down here, when it's a-going to rain, when it's a-going to hold up, when it's a-going to blow, when it's a-going to be calm. I know, by what I notices down here, when the luck's changed, quite as well!

*Vendale.* (*holding up his lamp to the fungus on the roof.*) Has this hideous-looking growth anything to do with your divination? We are famous for the fungus in this vault, are we not?

(*Takes up the measuring rod, and moves the fungus backwards and forwards, slowly.*)

*Joey* (*stepping back*). We are, Master George. If you'll be advised by me, you'll let that alone!

*Vendale.* Ay, indeed? Why?

*Joey.* For three good reasons, Master George.

*Vendale.* Let's hear them! First reason, for letting the fungus alone——?

*Joey.* Because it rises from the casks of wine, and you had better not know what sort of stuff a cellarman takes into himself when he walks in the same all the days of his life.

*Vendale.* (*still moving the fungus*). Second reason?

*Joey.* Because at a stage of its growth it's maggots—and you might fetch 'em down upon you.

*Vendale.* (*starting*). Is it maggots there?

*Joey.* Not that one, Master George. That one's growed out of the maggots.

(*VENDALE once more moves the fungus.*) I wouldn't keep on touchin' it, sir, if I was you!

*Vendale.* Why not?

*Joey.* For the third reason, Master George, which I haven't mentioned yet.

*Vendale.* Well! what is the third reason?

*Joey.* Take a look at its colour first!

*Vendale.* I am looking at it.

*Joey.* Is it like clotted blood?

*Vendale.* Like enough, perhaps.

*Joey.* More than like enough, *I think*.

*Vendale.* Say it's exactly like. What then?

*Joey.* Master George! They do say——

*Vendale.* Who?

*Joey.* How should *I* know who? Them as says pretty well everything! How can *I* give 'em a name, if *you* can't?

*Vendale.* True. Go on.

(*A momentary pause. OBENREIZER appears in the stream of daylight at the top of the steps. He advances into the cellar, now lost in the darkness, now visible again in the dim lamplight. Neither VENDALE nor JOEY notice him.*)

*Joey* (*very slowly and earnestly*). They do say, that the man as gets by accident a piece of that dark growth right upon his breast——

*Vendale.* Right upon his breast——

*Joey* (*as before*). ——will for sure and certain——

*Vendale.* For sure and certain——

*Joey.* (*in low warning tones*). ——die by Murder. (*Suddenly striking VENDALE on the breast, with a cry of horror.*) By the Lord! you've got a bit of it on *you*!

*Vendale.* A bit of it on *me*? Yes! there it is on the ground.

*Joey* (*holding up the cellar lamp, and disclosing a large red stain on the front of VENDALE'S shirt*). And there's the mark on your shirt—as red as blood!

(*OBENREIZER suddenly appears before them.*)

*Vendale.* (*starting*). What do you want here?

*Obenreizer.* (*speaking with marked seriousness and restraint*). I owe you an apology, Mr. Vendale—and I have come here to make it. I don't alter the terms on which I give you my ward in marriage. But I regret the violence of language and manner with which those terms were imposed on you. I ask your pardon. (*Holds out his hand.*) Will you shake hands with me?

*Vendale.* Mr. Obenreizer, I accept your apology! (*Takes his hand, and drops it, shuddering.*) Excuse my noticing it—your hand is very cold.

*Obenreizer.* (*gravely*). A heavy heart makes a cold hand, Mr. Vendale. Another errand brings me here, besides my errand of apology. There is sad reason for my saying the words which have made us friends again.

*Vendale.* What is it?

*Obenreizer.* I have earned the right to offer you my sympathy—and I do offer it. A message came to my house, soon after you had left, summoning us both to Mr. Wilding's presence. I presumed you had gone to him before me—I followed you, as I thought, to the house here. Nothing had been heard of you; and I came to the cellars to inquire for you myself. Mr. Vendale! rouse your courage. I bring miserable news.

*Vendale.* Wilding? Let me go to him directly!

*Obenreizer.* Wait! He has had a second fit.

*Vendale.* Dead?

*Obenreizer.* Dead!

*Vendale.* Oh, my poor Walter! My dear, dear friend! (*A pause.* VENDALE turns to JOEY, and points to the stain on the front of his shirt.) You said this was a warning of death. How little we thought that your superstition would come true!

*Joey.* I said more than that, Master George! Death was not the word.

*Vendale.* What was the word?

*Joey.* Murder.

THE END OF THE SECOND ACT.

### ACT III.

(*In Three Scenes.*)

FIRST SCENE.—*The Counting-house at Cripple Corner. A door at the side. A door in the flat scene, opening on the court-yard of the First Act. VENDALE and SALLY GOLDSTRAW discovered. They are both dressed in mourning.*

*Sally.* Have you any more orders to give me, sir?

*Vendale.* No.—Stop! I have a question to ask you. Now that poor Wilding is buried, many things occur to me, which it was impossible to think of when we first felt the calamity of his death. How came Mr. Obenreizer to be present at his last moments?

*Sally.* Mr. Wilding insisted, sir, on sending for Mr. Obenreizer—I don't know why.

*Vendale.* It seems strange, certainly! What could there be in common between them? On the first day of Mr. Obenreizer's arrival in England, I remember poor Wilding looking at him with an appearance of extraordinary interest, and speaking to Mr. Bintrey in a very earnest way. My attention was occupied at the time; and I paid no heed to what passed between them.—Tell me exactly what happened, Sally, on the day of Mr. Wilding's death.

*Sally.* I sent for Mr. Obenreizer, sir, and I sent for you—I did it to pacify my poor master. The messenger found Mr. Obenreizer at home; but nobody knew where to find you.

*Vendale.* I had bad news to tell my poor friend; and I purposely kept out of the way of telling it.—Go on.

*Sally.* Mr. Wilding got more and more disturbed in his mind, sir, while the messenger was gone. I sent for the doctor; and the doctor persuaded him to get to bed.

But there was no quieting him that way. He insisted on knowing it, when Mr. Obenreizer came alone to the house. He declared he would leave his bed, and go down-stairs—unless Mr. Obenreizer was brought up to see him. The doctor said to me, “The risk of irritating him, in his present state, is the worst risk of all. Let the person come up.”

*Vendale.* Well?

*Sally.* The moment Mr. Obenreizer came into the room, sir, my poor master started up in his bed, and looked at his visitor with a dreadful eagerness, and fought and struggled for breath to speak. The doctor ordered Mr. Obenreizer out of the room again instantly. It was too late. The only sound that passed Mr. Wilding’s lips was the sound of your name, sir. The fit took him the moment after, and it was all over. He spoke in a thick, husky way—but I am sure he spoke your name.

*Vendale.* I don’t doubt it, Sally. I am charged by his will to accomplish the one object which we all know he had at heart—the finding of the lost namesake, whose place he had innocently usurped. The uppermost thought in his mind, when he felt death coming, was to rely on *me*. My poor dead friend—I will be true to your trust! If the lost man lives, you shall not have reckoned on my help in vain! (*A knock is heard at the door leading into the yard.*) Who’s there?

(JOEY LADLE opens the door. He carries a letter in his hand.)

*Joey.* Me, sir.

*Vendale.* Wait one moment. (*JOEY waits at the door. VENDALE turns to SALLY.*) One last question. Did Mr. Obenreizer make any remark, when he was first told of Wilding’s death?

*Sally.* He only said, sir, that he was shocked to hear of it; and that he would go and break the news to you.

*Vendale.* The mystery of what Wilding wanted with him remains as impenetrable as ever. Perhaps time may clear it up, Sally! (*Turns to JOEY.*) Well—what is it?

*Joey (advancing).* A letter, sir, from foreign parts.

*Vendale. (taking the letter).* From our correspondents in Switzerland! From Defresnier and Company, the wine-merchants of Neuchâtel! (*Opens and reads the letter.*)

*Joey (to SALLY).* Do you find yourself a little easier, Miss, now they’ve put poor Master Wilding in the ground? There’s no consolation going, like the consolation of a funeral—provided the undertaker does his duty.

*Sally.* We must all learn to submit to our losses in this world, Mr. Joey. I am learning, I hope, to submit to mine.

(*She goes out by the side door.*)

*Joey (looking after her).* Beautiful language! The parson himself couldn’t have put it prettier than that! (*Trying to repeat SALLY’S words.*) I’ll say it over again, after her, like the catechism. “We must all submit to learning, Mr. Joey—which is one of our losses in this world.” Lord! how true!

*Vendale. (crushing the letter in his hand).* Another misfortune, coming close on Wilding’s death! A loss of five hundred pounds, at the time of all others when money is of most consequence to me!

*Joey.* Anything wrong, Master Vendale?

*Vendale.* As wrong as can be, Joey.

*Joey.* Ah! I said it would come. “You’ve been and changed the name of the firm; mind you haven’t been and changed the luck of the firm!” My own words to him as is

gone. It's foreign to my nature, Master George, to crow over the house I serve. Please to understand, I don't set myself up for a prophet! (VENDALE makes a gesture of impatience.) You won't get over it, that way, sir! You'd better open your heart to me. I know what's at the bottom of this—it's them six cases of red wine.

*Vendale.* The devil take the six cases of red wine!

*Joey.* The devil brought 'em, sir! (VENDALE withdraws to an office-desk, smoothes out the letter, takes other letters from the desk, and compares them one with the other. JOEY goes on.) Now let's put the thing plainly. Here's a large consignment of Swiss champagne comes to this house, from our foreign correspondents at the place they call Nooshattle. And among that consignment I find six cases of red wine that didn't ought to be. I says to myself, "In the time of Pebbleson Nephew no mistake was ever made in a consignment delivered at these doors; the luck's gone—Lord help us at Cripple Corner! the luck's gone!" And what follows? You write out, sir, to tell 'em at Nooshattle of the mistake. And they write back to you. Not satisfied on your side, you write again. Not satisfied on their side, *they* write again. There's their letter on the desk before you, as full of bad news as an egg's full of meat! And here am I that foretold it all—took it in, you may say, at the pores. Do I crow over the house I serve? No! Do I set myself up for a prophet? No! I return, with molloncolly steps, to the Wapours below—respectfully reminding you, sir, of what the precious woman, Miss Goldstraw, said just now. "We must all submit to losses, Mr. Joey—which is one of our learnings in this world." Golden words, Master George. Take 'em to heart, sir! take 'em to heart!

(Exit into the yard.)

*Vendale.* (still absorbed over the letters). Letter number one—I write to tell Defresnier and Company of the red wine being sent with the white. And I refer incidentally to a payment of five hundred pounds made by our house to theirs, some time since. Letter number two—Defresniers write back to apologise for the mistake, and then add that the five hundred pounds alluded to has never been received by their house. Letter number three—I write back, enclosing them a copy of their own receipt for the sum. Letter number four—is Defresniers' answer, just put into my hands. (*Leaving the desk, and coming forward with the letter in his hand.*) Let me read it again. (Reads.)

"DEAR SIR,—I write to you, in the absence of my partner who has gone on business to Milan. The receipt of which you enclose a copy can be nothing but a forgery. The remittance of five hundred pounds must have been intercepted and stolen on its way to our hands. Suspicion points at a person who was not long since in our employment. We refrain from mentioning his name, until we are sure of his guilt."—Who can this man be? In my position, it is useless to inquire!—"Let us at once see the original receipt, and compare the handwriting in it, with certain specimens of handwriting in our possession. Don't trust the post. Send a private messenger—and let him be a man who has been long in your service; who is accustomed to travelling, who is capable of speaking French, and who can be trusted to let no stranger scrape acquaintance with him on the route."—Where am I to find the man, in this office? None of the clerks are accustomed to travelling abroad. None of the clerks can speak French. And what is the reason for this extraordinary caution? Here it is—"If the person whom we suspect is really guilty, circumstances may have occurred to put him on his guard—and, in that case, he is a man to hesitate at nothing, if he can get possession of the receipt which is the only evidence against him. Tell no one in existence of the turn things have taken. Everything depends

on your interpreting *literally* the warning I give you in this letter.”—I know the man who writes those words—I am certain he would not have written them, without a serious reason for it. What am I to do? I have nobody whom I can rely on to send.

(OBENREIZER enters from the court-yard, shown in by JOEY. JOEY stands apart for a moment, watching.)

*Obenreizer.* (to VENDALE). A thousand pardons! I am afraid I disturb you!

*Joey* (aside, looking at OBENREIZER). It was him as stole in when that bit of stuff fell on Master George’s breast! It’s him as steals in again, now, when bad news comes to Master George. He brings ill luck. I don’t like Mr. Openrazor!

(JOEY returns to the yard, looking back suspiciously, before he closes the door.)

*Obenreizer.* Is there any business this morning that I can do?

*Vendale.* You come at a bad time, Mr. Obenreizer. You find my business threatened with a loss of five hundred pounds.

*Obenreizer.* (starting). Five hundred pounds!

*Vendale.* A remittance of ours to that amount has been stolen from the correspondents to whom we sent it.

*Obenreizer.* Stolen!

*Vendale.* And a forged receipt sent to us in their name—the name of your old employers, Defresnier and Company.

(He looks again at the letter in his hand.)

*Obenreizer.* How—how has it happened?

*Vendale.* (pointing to the desk). There is the correspondence. You can see for yourself. (OBENREIZER goes to the desk, and reads the letters. VENDALE continues, aside.) Obenreizer was in Defresnier’s employment. He may be able to throw some light upon it! Suppose I show him the forged receipt? (Takes a key and opens the door of the iron safe in which his papers are kept.)

*Obenreizer.* (watching VENDALE from the desk). Has he got the receipt? Oh, if he only takes it out of the safe!

*Vendale.* (producing the receipt). Here it is! (He drops the letter which he has hitherto kept mechanically in his hand—picks it up again—and looks at it. At the same moment OBENREIZER stealthily advances a step towards him from the desk—then looks back to see that the door leading into the yard is closed. VENDALE continues.) The letter! I had forgotten the caution. I am warned to trust nobody.

(He returns to the safe, and stands before it, hesitating, with his back towards OBENREIZER.)

*Obenreizer.* (stealthily advancing). Not a soul to see us! And I am the strongest of the two!

(At the moment when he is within arm’s length of VENDALE, the door from the court-yard is loudly opened, and JOEY reappears. OBENREIZER starts back.)

*Joey.* Did you call, Master George?

*Vendale.* No! Don’t interrupt us!

*Joey* (aside, after a suspicious look at OBENREIZER). I won’t shut the door this time!

(He goes out, leaving the door into the yard open.)

*Vendale.* (to OBENREIZER, putting back the receipt). Well? Have you read the letters?

*Obenreizer.* I can't tell you how surprised and sorry I am! Let us hope there is some mistake.

*Vendale.* I have another letter, received this morning, which confirms the news.

*Obenreizer.* May I see it?

*Vendale.* It forbids me to act on my own discretion; otherwise you should see it directly.

(*He turns to lock the safe. At the same moment OBENREIZER turns, and looks towards the yard. The door is wide open, and JOEY and his men are passing backwards and forwards within view.*)

*Obenreizer.* (aside). Force is hopeless. I'll try fraud! (To VENDALE.) Suppose you show me the receipt?

*Vendale.* The very thing I was thinking of! But there's an obstacle in the way. This letter insists on my keeping the whole thing a profound secret from everybody.

*Obenreizer.* Without excepting *me*? Surely they must have forgotten——?

*Vendale.* No doubt they have forgotten! I had thought of asking your advice. And more—the receipt must be conveyed to Switzerland by private hand. I don't know who I can trust——

*Obenreizer.* Take it yourself—and I'll go with you. Nothing could happen better. I came to tell you this morning that I have business which forces me to go to Switzerland.

*Vendale.* (aside). Leave Marguerite!

*Obenreizer.* If Defresnier's partner had remembered what he ought to have remembered, he would have saved you a world of trouble. As it is, what can you do? You are acting in a very serious matter, and acting entirely in the dark. As a man of business, you have no choice. You must be guided, not by the spirit, but by the letter of your instructions. You must go as I go—at once!

*Vendale.* I must speak to Marguerite first.

*Obenreizer.* By all means! Come and dine at my house—bring your luggage with you—and we will start by the mail train together. Is it agreed?

*Vendale.* Agreed!

*Obenreizer.* At seven to-night?

*Vendale.* At seven to-night.

*Obenreizer.* You take the receipt of course?

*Vendale.* I take the receipt.

*Obenreizer.* (aside). And I take it from you on the road!

(*Exit.*)

*Joey.* I'll carry your luggage, sir, to Mr. Openrazor's house.

*Vendale.* You have been listening!

*Joey.* Not exactly, sir; but I've heard everything, for all that!

(*The Scene closes.*)

SECOND SCENE—*A room in WILDING'S house—the room already shown in the Second Scene of the Second Act. Enter SALLY GOLDSTRAW, followed by JOEY.*

*Sally.* Mr. Joey!

*Joey.* Miss Goldstraw!

*Sally.* Your proper place is in the cellars; and my proper place is in the house.

*Joey.* If you prefer the cellars, Miss, I'll follow you, *there*, with the greatest pleasure.

*Sally.* Why do you want to follow me at all?

*Joey.* For the reason, Miss, that the first man followed the first woman—because he took a liking to her!

*Sally.* And the first woman, Mr. Joey, led him all wrong afterwards. I don't desire you lead *you* wrong. I wish you good morning.

*Joey.* Please to stop where you are, Miss. There's another reason for my follering you. I'm uneasy in my mind.

*Sally.* How can I help that?

*Joey.* How can you help that? I'll tell you. What do you do, when you cut your finger, and it hurts you? You take a bit of rag, and you smear a bit of balsam on it, and you clap the whole on the place, and you're all right again. I'm the cut finger; and you're the balsam and the rag.

*Sally.* I'm much obliged to you, Mr. Joey, for likening me to balsam and rag!

*Joey.* You're heartily welcome, Miss! At the same time, if you please, we won't lose sight of the state of my mind. P'r'aps it's the Wapours I've took in at the pores. P'r'aps it's the gift of prophesying which has come strong on me lately? Whether it's one, or whether it's t'other, I'm uneasy in my mind about the way things is going on in this house. Now just look into the matter, to please me! (*Attempts to put his arm round her waist.*)

*Sally.* I don't look at things with my waist, Mr. Joey—and *you* don't look at things with your arm! (*Aside, after a glance at JOEY'S leather apron.*) How can a man possibly fall in love, when he wears such an apron as that?

*Joey (aside).* She likes my apron. What follers her liking my apron? She likes *me!* (*To SALLY.*) Look at it, Miss, with any part of you you please, so long as you do look at it. It all begun with poor Master Wilding changing the name of the Firm. He changed the luck of the Firm, when he did that. What happens afterwards? He dies to begin with. Then, a bit of that cursed stuff in the cellars falls on Master George. Then, a letter comes from foreign parts, and brings bad news. And now, here's Master George going away from us in a hurry, in company with that Mr. Openrazor, who turns my stomach whenever I look at him. If something ain't done to bring the luck round, you mark my words—it will end badly!

*Sally.* Bring the luck round! Why are you looking at me? Who's to do it?

*Joey.* You!

*Sally.* I! What can you be thinking of? Why, I am the cause—the innocent cause, Mr. Joey—of everything that you complain of! If I had not come here to apply for the situation, poor Mr. Wilding need never have known the truth—and all the rest of it need never have happened. If you know your own mind, you ought to hate me! I am the miserable creature who has brought the ill luck into the house——

*Joey.* All the more reason, Miss, for you to bring the good luck back again. (*Aside.*) That was well said, I think!

*Sally (aside).* He has evidently fallen in love with me, in spite of his apron!

*Joey.* You can do it, Miss, as easy as one and one make two.

*Sally.* How, Mr. Joey?

*Joey.* By changing your name, Miss, from Goldstraw (which is good) to Ladle (which is better). (*Aside.*) That was well said, I think!

*Sally.* What, Mr. Joey! You, of all the people in the world, recommend me to change the name of the Firm? What next, I wonder?

*Joey.* A woman's not a Firm, Miss. And Lord forbid she ever should be!

*Sally.* The women are much obliged to you, Mr. Joey, for another compliment!

*Joey.* The women are heartily welcome, Miss Goldstraw.

*Sally.* You have a very sudden way of making love. Have you ever done it before?

*Joey.* I've tried, Miss—but I never got as far as this. I would be slower about it, I do assure you, if I only had the time. The Wapours are waiting for me. And, after the Wapours, there's Master George's luggage to be taken to Mr. Openrazor's house. And, after that, there's no knowing, in the state of my mind, what may happen next. I think I might persuade you, Miss, if I might make so bold as to speak with my arm—and if you'd be so obliging as to listen with your waist. (*Puts his arm round her.*)

*Sally.* The "Wapours" are not waiting for *me*, Mr. Joey; and *I* want time to decide. (*Disengaging herself.*) The institution of marriage is a very serious thing. And the sooner a man and a woman learn to view it in that light, the better it may be afterwards for all parties.—I wish you good morning!

(*Exit, right.*)

*Joey (looking after her).* Beautiful language! I'll fix it in my mind, before I forget it. (*Trying to repeat the words.*) "The institution of a man and a woman is a very serious thing. And the sooner they're married afterwards, the better for all parties." Lord! how true!

(*Exit, left.*)

THIRD SCENE.—*The drawing-room at OBENREIZER'S lodgings—as shown in the First Scene of the Second Act: with this difference, that it is now supposed to be night, and the lamps are lit. Dinner, untouched, is on the table. MARGUERITE, OBENREIZER, and VENDALE are discovered. The two last wear their travelling costume. OBENREIZER is on his knees, at the back of the stage, packing a portmanteau. VENDALE, near the front, sits thoughtfully at the table, with a cigar in his mouth, which he has allowed to go out. His luggage, ready for the journey, is seen in a corner of the room. MARGUERITE, restless and agitated, passes backwards and forwards, giving OBENREIZER the various things he wants to pack for the journey. These different objects are so arranged on a side table, as to oblige MARGUERITE to pass and repass VENDALE on her way backwards and forwards. The words she says to VENDALE, at the beginning of the scene, are all spoken in an under tone of warning at the time when she passes him. MADAME DOR sits in an unoccupied part of the stage, with her back turned as usual, cleaning the gloves with which OBENREIZER is going to travel.*

*Obenreizer.* (*receiving a folded coat from MARGUERITE.*) I really can't allow you, dearest, to wait upon me in this way! You must *not* fatigue yourself by going backwards and forwards with my things for the journey!

*Marguerite.* I am not in the least fatigued—and I beg to be allowed to help you.  
(*She returns to the side table, takes up the next thing wanted, and, stopping a moment, speaks to VENDALE, on her way back to OBENREIZER.*) Change your mind, George!  
Don't travel with him!

(*She goes on to OBENREIZER.*)

*Vendale.* (*speaking to himself*). How strangely she persists in warning me not to go! The suddenness of this journey has shaken her nerves. (*To MARGUERITE, as she passes.*) There is really nothing, love, to alarm you!

*Marguerite.* (*passing back by VENDALE, from the side table*). You know the little photograph I have got of you. This afternoon he took it up, and looked at it. (*Goes on to OBENREIZER—returns—and continues to VENDALE.*) I saw his face in the glass when he looked at your portrait. George! you have offended him!

*Vendale.* I!

*Marguerite.* (*after first fetching the next thing*). He is as merciless as a tiger! He is as secret as the grave! Don't go with him, George!

(*Goes on with the next travelling article to OBENREIZER.*)

*Vendale.* (*as MARGUERITE passes him again*). My darling! you are completely mistaken. (*MARGUERITE takes the next thing from the table, without answering.*) VENDALE continues as she passes back.) He and I were never better friends than we are at this moment!

(*MARGUERITE shakes her head, and goes on to OBENREIZER.*)

*Marguerite.* (*returning*). Don't go, George!

*Vendale.* (*stopping her*). I know, love, how hard it is to part——! (*MARGUERITE disengages herself, and fetches the last thing from the table.*)

*Marguerite.* (*passing back*). I can submit to the parting, if you will only go *alone!* (*Passes on to OBENREIZER, and comes back rapidly to VENDALE, before OBENREIZER can close his portmanteau.*) It will be too late in a minute more! Change your mind, George! change your mind!

*Obenreizer.* (*coming down to the front*). Ten thousand thanks, Marguerite, for your help! Vendale! Time gallops with us travellers—in five minutes more, we must be off! (*VENDALE rises, and tries to quiet MARGUERITE, while OBENREIZER is looking for his courier's bag.*) My travelling-bag?—Ah! here it is! (*He takes the bag from a chair, opens it, and addresses VENDALE.*) Can I take anything for you? You have no travelling-bag. Here is the compartment for papers, open at your service!

*Vendale.* Many thanks. I have only one paper of importance about me, and that paper I am bound to take charge of myself. I won't part with it till we get to Neuchâtel.

*Obenreizer.* (*aside—with a smile*). Won't you!

*Marguerite.* (*to VENDALE*). Look at him now!

*Obenreizer.* (*turning away at the same moment*). Madame Dor! my gloves! (*MADAME DOR hands them to him over her shoulder.*) Guardian angel of my baggage—beautifully cleaned!

*Vendale.* (*quieting MARGUERITE*). You hear him? He is in the best possible spirits! You are frightened, darling, at your own fancy.

*Enter JOEY LADLE.*

*Joey.* Master George!

*Vendale.* (*impatiently*). The luggage is all right, Joey! You needn't wait.

*Joey (producing a letter).* I've brought you another letter, sir, from foreign parts. It's been sent on, by private express, from Dover to our office. (*VENDALE opens the letter.*)

*Marguerite.* (*to VENDALE*). Is your journey put off?

*Obenreizer.* (*to VENDALE*). News from the Swiss Firm?

*Vendale.* Let me read the letter! (*MARGUERITE, OBENREIZER, and JOEY all draw aside, and all eagerly watch VENDALE. VENDALE reads the letter.*) "Sir,—Not half an hour after our second partner, Monsieur Rolland, had written to you, a deplorable calamity happened in his family. A fatal accident has deprived him of his son and only child. Monsieur Rolland, overwhelmed by this misfortune, is unable to attend to any business, and has been ordered away by his medical man. Our other partner—Monsieur Defresnier—is, as you know, detained at Milan by business. In this condition of things, I am obliged to request you to send the forged receipt on to M. Defresnier who is alone competent to deal with the question, in the present affliction of the other principal of our Firm. I have sent the necessary office-papers to Milan. And I entreat you, in your own interests, as well as in ours, to lose no time. Your obedient servant, HARTMANN (chief clerk in the house of Defresnier and Company)."

*Marguerite.* (*coming forward*). Well?

*Obenreizer.* (*coming forward*). Well?

*Vendale.* (*to MARGUERITE*). I am afraid you will be disappointed. The journey is lengthened—we must go to Milan.

*Marguerite.* (*aside*). My last hope gone!

*Obenreizer.* (*aside*). I breathe again!

*Vendale.* (*to OBENREIZER*). There is no objection to your seeing *this* letter. There is even a reason for your seeing it. You have engaged to accompany me as far as Switzerland. In this winter weather, I can scarcely expect you to go on with me, and cross the Alps.

(*Hands the letter to OBENREIZER*).

*Obenreizer.* My friend! I do nothing by halves. If you cross the Alps—winter or summer, I cross them with you!

*Vendale.* Bravely said, brother-traveller! Joey! take a pen, and alter the address on my portmanteau from Neuchâtel to Milan. Do you know how to spell it? M I L A N. (*He speaks aside with MARGUERITE, trying to compose her. OBENREIZER silently reads the letter.*)

*Joey (to himself, while altering the address).* I can spell out more than that, Master George! I can spell out that Miss Margaret don't like this journey of yours no better than I do. I'd give something to hear what *she* has to say about it.

*Obenreizer.* (*to himself, folding up the letter*). Witnesses may intrude themselves on the railways. Servants may be in the way at the inns. On the mountain, there are neither witnesses nor servants! On the mountain, I have got him! (*Returning the letter to VENDALE.*) En route, my friend! We have not another minute to spare.

*Joey.* I'll take your luggage, Master George. The cab's at the door. (*Takes out VENDALE'S luggage. MADAME DOR follows in triumph with OBENREIZER'S portmanteau.*)

*Obenreizer.* (to MARGUERITE). Adieu, my charming ward! Remember me in my absence, Marguerite, as kindly as you can. I know how precious he is to you. Trust to me—I'll take care of him!

(Exit.)

*Marguerite.* (clinging to VENDALE). Oh, George! don't, don't, don't go!

*Obenreizer.* (outside). Vendale!

*Vendale.* Compose yourself, my angel! In less than a month, I shall be back again!

*Obenreizer.* (as before). Vendale!

*Vendale.* One last kiss!

JOEY re-enters.

*Joey.* He's a-waiting for you, Master George.

(VENDALE hurries out.)

*Marguerite.* Gone! Gone in spite of all I could say to him! What's to be done?

*Joey.* Give me your hand, Miss—and I'll tell you!

*Marguerite.* Both! both!

*Joey.* Look at me!

*Marguerite.* I do! I do!

*Joey.* Have you got courage enough to do a desperate thing?

*Marguerite.* Try me! I'm no fine lady. I'm one of the people, Joey, like *you!*

*Joey.* It's borne in on your mind that he's in danger; and it's borne in on mine.

*Marguerite.* Yes!

*Joey.* He has gone, past all calling back.

*Marguerite.* Yes! yes!

*Joey.* Follow him, Miss. And I'll go with you!

(MARGUERITE clasps her hands with a cry of delight. The curtain falls.)

THE END OF THE THIRD ACT.

## ACT IV.

(In Three Scenes.)

FIRST SCENE.—*A bedroom in a Swiss inn. Time, night. The bed is at the back of the stage. At the side, a door. A small table near the door. A heavy latch on the inner side of the door. At the opposite side, a fireplace. The candles on the table are burning low in their sockets. The red light of the fire is the principal light in the room. VENDALE is discovered, lying on a sofa. OBENREIZER is with him, walking backwards and forwards in the room.*

*Vendale.* How still the night is! I hear a rushing sound somewhere in the distance. Is it a waterfall?

*Obenreizer.* Yes. A waterfall on the lower slopes of the mountain.

*Vendale.* The mountain that lies between us and Italy! The mountain that we cross to-morrow!

*Obenreizer.* (*stopping in his walk, and pursuing his own train of thought*). It sounds like the old waterfall at home. The waterfall which my mother showed to travellers—if she *was* my mother!

*Vendale.* If she *was* your mother?

*Obenreizer.* (*still pursuing his thoughts*). The sound of that waterfall changed with the weather, as does the sound of all falling waters, and flowing waters. I remember it as sometimes saying to me for whole days—"Who are you, my little wretch?—Who are you, my little wretch?"—I remember it other times saying, when its sound was hollow, and storm was coming up the pass—"Boom! Boom! Boom! Beat him! Beat him! Beat him!" like my mother in a rage—if she *was* my mother.

*Vendale.* Why do you say "if"?

*Obenreizer.* What do I know about it? I am so obscurely born, how can I say? I was young: the rest of my family were men and women. My so-called parents were old. Anything is possible of a case like mine.

*Vendale.* Did you ever doubt——?

*Obenreizer.* Bah! Here I am in the world. What does it matter how I come there?

*Vendale.* At least you are Swiss?

*Obenreizer.* How do I know? I say to you: "At least you are English." How do *you* know?

*Vendale.* By what I have been told from infancy.

*Obenreizer.* You believe what you have been told from infancy? Good! To cut it short—I will believe what *I* have been told from infancy, too.

(*Resumes his walk up and down the room.*)

*Vendale.* Have you no recollections of your early days?

*Obenreizer.* (*continuing his walk*). I have recollections of feeling hunger; I have recollections of feeling cold; I have recollections of feeling the stick! *There* is the biography of my early days! Pity me or laugh at me, which you please—and then forget all about me, as soon as possible. Twenty years ago I should have begged your loose halfpence of you. Now, all I beg of you is—to change the subject!

(*Goes to the window, opens the shutter, and looks out.*)

*Vendale.* (*speaking to himself*). There is something he won't confess about his early life. Is there any clue here to what Wilding wanted with him in the bygone time?

*Obenreizer.* (*closing the window-shutter, and addressing VENDALE*). Dark and cold, my brother-traveller! Not a creature passing on the earth! Not a star to be seen in the heavens! Your fire is burning low—we must mend it. (*Goes to the door and calls off.*) More wood! (*The WAITER enters, and puts wood on the fire.* OBENREIZER continues; *standing near the door, and speaking to himself.*) Where will he put the receipt to-night? If he sleeps, I shall find out. But suppose he wakes? I'll make sure. (*Takes a phial from his breast-pocket.*) I'll try the laudanum to-night.

*The Waiter* (*to VENDALE*). Any more orders, sir.

*Vendale.* No more orders.

*Obenreizer.* Yes! one more order! Bring some of the best brandy you have in the house. (*The WAITER goes out.*) The cold is piercing, in spite of all the fire we can make here. A little brandy will do neither of us any harm.

*Vendale.* I am afraid it will be bad brandy in such a place as this.

*Obenreizer.* Our flasks are empty—bad brandy is better than none. (*The WAITER enters with brandy and two wine-glasses on a tray.*) Put it here.

(*The WAITER puts the tray on the table near the door.*)

*Vendale.* (to the WAITER). Have you got your orders for the morning? (*The WAITER crosses to VENDALE.* OBENREIZER, *with his back towards them, drugs a glass of brandy at the table.* VENDALE continues to the WAITER.) Do the guides know that we want them for crossing the mountain?

*The Waiter.* Yes, sir.

*Vendale.* You are to call us early, mind.

*The Waiter.* At four o'clock, sir?

*Vendale.* At four o'clock. (*The WAITER goes out.* OBENREIZER crosses with the drugged brandy to VENDALE.)

*Obenreizer.* You are a judge of these things. Try it, and tell me. (VENDALE drinks the brandy.) Bad, I'm afraid?

*Vendale.* It has a coarse after-flavour. I don't like it!

*Obenreizer.* (taking the glass from him). There is a little still left in the glass. I'll try it next. (Puts the glass to his lips.) Booh! It burns! Vile bad brandy; as you say! (Throws the rest into the fire.)

*Vendale.* The time is getting on, isn't it? Look at your watch; mine has stopped.

*Obenreizer.* The time is getting on! We must get what rest we can. One word before I leave you. When you are travelling, do you lock your door at night?

*Vendale.* Not I! I sleep too soundly.

*Obenreizer.* You sleep so soundly? What a blessing!

*Vendale.* Anything but a blessing to the rest of the house, if they had to knock me up from the outside of the door! If the waiter comes in and wakes me, I shall not disturb the other people in the inn.

*Obenreizer.* I understand. I leave my room open also. But let me advise you one thing. I am a Swiss who knows. When you travel in my country, always put your papers—and your money also, of course—under your pillow. Always under your pillow!

*Vendale.* You are not complimentary to your countrymen!

*Obenreizer.* My countrymen are like the majority of men. The majority of men will take what they can get. Adieu! At four in the morning.

(*Exit.*)

*Vendale.* (rising from the sofa and mending the fire). My travelling-companion is a strange fellow. And the strangest part of him is—what he said just now about his early life. I fancy I can guess, for the first time, what poor Wilding wanted with him. It seems wonderful now that the thing never struck me before. The adopted child was taken to Switzerland, as we know. Obenreizer is Wilding's age. Obenreizer doubts if his parents were his parents. Obenreizer speaks English with so little accent, that English might have been the first language he learnt. Is the lost man now sleeping in the next room to me? (*Takes a turn on the stage.*) My head feels heavy—the effect of the cold, I suppose? (Puts more wood on the fire, and crouches over it, warming himself.) Poor Wilding's last

wishes are sacred to me. His whole fortune is left to the missing man—and that man is not found yet. I'll question Obenreizer more closely! (*Paces the stage once more.*) My head feels heavier and heavier. That bad brandy is affecting me already, no doubt. Foolish of me to drink even the little I did. (*Stops, pursuing the former train of thought.*) Suppose it turns out that Obenreizer *is* the missing man? Should I like him to be the real Wilding? I get on very well with him, but I should hardly like that. Should I like him to be rich? No—he has influence enough over Marguerite as it is, and wealth might give him more. (*A pause, his head sinks on his breast—he rouses himself by an effort.*) What am I thinking of? Ought any likings or dislikings of mine to stand between me and the discharge of my duty to my dead friend? No! Come what may of it, that duty shall be done. To-morrow—when my head is clearer—I'll think of it again. (*Goes to the window and looks out, closes the shutter, and returns to the sofa.*) I'm in bad condition for crossing the mountain. My legs feel weary, only with walking about the room. (*Stretches himself on the sofa.*) An hour's rest will put me right—the sofa is nearest the fire. I feel sleep coming on me—I'll stop here. (*Closes his eyes. For a few moments nothing happens on the stage; then the candles go out suddenly in their sockets. The firelight is left in the room. In a moment more the heavy latch on the inner side of the door is raised softly. The door opens by an inch at a time, and OBENREIZER steals in. He wears nothing but his trousers and his flannel shirt. The collar of the shirt is thrown open, and the sleeves are turned up to the elbows. Advancing towards the bed, his foot strikes against the table. VENDALE starts up and rushes across the stage to him.*)

*Vendale.* What now? Who is it?

*Obenreizer.* (*surprised and seizing him by the shoulders*). Not in bed yet! Then something is wrong!

*Vendale.* (*releasing himself*). What do you mean?

*Obenreizer.* First tell me—are you ill?

*Vendale.* Ill? No.

*Obenreizer.* I have had a bad dream about you. I tried to rest after it, but it was impossible. I was anxious to know you were safe—and yet I was afraid you would laugh at me! I have been minutes hesitating at the door—I have at last come in. You satisfy me that my dream *was* a dream—shall I leave you again? My fire has gone the way of your candles. Do you wish to sleep?

*Vendale.* I was sleepy enough before you came in. The surprise seems to have roused me. Stop here, and keep me company—and welcome.

*Obenreizer.* Ah! it was a bad dream! I thought you were ill—I thought I had a wrestle with a robber. You see I was stripped for it?

*Vendale.* (*pointing to a dagger in the belt round OBENREIZER'S waist*). And armed too, I see?

*Obenreizer.* A traveller's dagger that I always carry on the road. Do you carry no such thing?

*Vendale.* Nothing of the kind.

*Obenreizer.* (*moving towards the bed and looking at the pillow*). And no pistols?

*Vendale.* (*lying back drowsily on the sofa*). No arms of any sort.

*Obenreizer.* You Englishmen are so confident! (*Feels under the pillow, and continues aside.*) The receipt is not there. Has he got it about him?

*Vendale.* Where are you?

*Obenreizer.* (*approaching the sofa*). I am here.

*Vendale.* (*more and more drowsily*). I had something I wanted to ask you. I intended to ask it to-morrow. Why not now?

*Obenreizer.* Why not, if you can remember it?

*Vendale.* (*sinking into sleep*). It was something very important. You were concerned in it——You know what it is——

*Obenreizer.* Something about to-morrow?

*Vendale.* Yes—to-morrow. (*Falls asleep*.)

*Obenreizer.* The laudanum has done its work at last! Now to find the receipt! It is not under his pillow! Has he by any chance forgotten, and put it in his valise? (*Searches VENDALE'S portmanteau*.) No! not there. Has he been looking at it, and left it anywhere about the room? (*Lights a match, and looks about the room*.) No! It is not left about the room. It must be on him—he said in London he would keep it about him. Have I given the laudanum time enough? Yes! (*Looking down at VENDALE*.) There he lies helpless at my mercy—the man who has come between me and Marguerite—the man who carries my ruin in the pocket of his coat—the man whose life I doubly thirst to take! Patience! patience! The inn is lonely; but the mountain is lonelier still! (*Feels over the breast-pocket of VENDALE'S coat*.) Has he got it here? Softly! Softly! Let me unbutton his coat. (*As he unbuttons VENDALE'S coat, a loud knock is heard at the door of the room*.)

*The Waiter* (*speaking outside*). Four o'clock, gentlemen!

*Vendale.* (*starting up*). Who's there? Come in! (*The WAITER enters the room, OBENREIZER crosses to the door as the WAITER crosses to VENDALE*.)

*Obenreizer.* (*speaking to himself*). He crosses the mountain with me to-day. On the mountain I'll kill him!

(*The Scene closes on them*.)

SECOND SCENE.—*The exterior of the Swiss Inn. The day is breaking. The objects of the scene, and the persons of the scene, are only visible as shadows in a mist. Two high peaks of mountains, white with snow, are faintly discernible through the darkness. The WAITER at the inn, and three guides—JEAN-PAUL, JEAN-BAPTISTE, and JEAN-MARIE—appear like shadowy figures before the inn door.*

*The Waiter.* Well, my lads, the day has broken at last. What do you say to the weather, now?

*Jean-Paul.* I say the weather will do.

*Jean-Baptiste.* I say doubtful!

*Jean-Marie.* I say—bad!

*The Waiter.* You must make up your minds. The two gentlemen have waited till they can wait no longer.

*Jean-Paul.* I am ready to cross the mountain with the gentlemen—if the others will go with me.

*Jean-Baptiste.* I should like to consult my father. My father knows the mountain by heart.

*Jean-Marie.* I can see for myself that there's a storm coming. I smell the snow, I feel the hurricane, in the air. No money that the gentleman can offer will tempt me to cross the mountain with them to-day.

*Enter OBENREIZER and VENDALE, equipped for crossing the mountain.  
They are followed by BAPTISTE SENIOR.*

*Obenreizer.* (to the GUIDES). Well? are you ready at last?

*Vendale.* (to the GUIDES). My patience is at an end! I am sick and weary of all this doubt and delay!

*Obenreizer.* You hear what my friend says? Do you cross the mountain with us, or not?

*Jean-Paul.* I say yes—if the others will say yes too.

*Jean-Marie.* I say, No! Offer me what you like—No!

*Jean-Baptiste.* I say—put the case to my father here, and let *him* settle it. My father, gentlemen, is the oldest guide in these parts. He knows the mountain; he knows the weather; and he speaks the truth.

*The Waiter.* You may depend on the old man, gentlemen. I can certify to that!

*Obenreizer.* (to VENDALE). You have been in Switzerland before? You know the meaning of this? They want us to double our terms—that's all!

*Vendale.* Do they think we are children? Are they attempting to frighten us?

*Obenreizer.* You shall judge for yourself! (*Taps BAPTISTE SENIOR on the shoulder.*) Now, you wise man of the mountains! What weather shall we have to-day?

*Baptiste Senior.* You will have a storm to-day.

*Obenreizer.* (to VENDALE). What did I tell you?

*Baptiste Senior.* You will have snow enough to bury you as you stand upright. You will have wind enough to blow the breath out of your body, and the hair off your head. You will have thunder and lightning. You will feel a cold you never felt before. You will see a darkness you never saw before. If you're weary of your lives, cross the mountain to-day.

*Vendale.* Upon my word! a pretty confident opinion.

*Obenreizer.* Bah! Two napoleons would change his opinion.

*Baptiste Senior.* Two thousand napoleons wouldn't change it! (*To VENDALE.*) Come here, if you please! You haven't said I'm to be bribed—I'll tell you. (*Pointing to the mountain peaks.*) Look up there! How many peaks can you count showing white through the mist!

*Vendale.* Two.

*Baptiste Senior.* There's a third peak.

*Vendale.* Why don't I see it?

*Baptiste Senior.* Because the storm-cloud is on it already. When that peak is hidden, while the other peaks show—beware of the mountain; there's mischief coming! Did you hear the waterfall last night? Storm! Have you seen the cows restless, and the goats out of temper? Storm! Did your door stick in the jambs when you opened it this morning? Storm! Take your own way. I have warned you—and I wash my hands of it.

*Jean-Baptiste.* I say what my father says.

*Jean-Marie.* I said as much for myself, before your father spoke.

*Jean-Paul.* I can't go, unless the others go too.

*The Waiter.* We will do our best, gentlemen, to make you comfortable at the inn.

*Obenreizer.* A formidable chorus, truly! Decide for yourself, Vendale. Your immortal Shakespeare says somewhere that discretion is the better part of valour.

*Vendale.* Fair weather or foul, I have no time to lose—and I am for pushing on.

*Obenreizer.* Don't let *me* influence you. I am mountain born—I know the pass up there as I know my A B C.—I have heard these poor devils of guides ply their trade in this way, hundreds of times. It's different with you—you may feel inclined to believe them. I'll wait here if you like?

*Vendale.* I have waited too long already. I have pressing occasion to cross—

*Obenreizer. (to the GUIDES).* You hear? He has pressing occasion to cross.

*Vendale. (to OBENREIZER).* You know the mountain. If you will risk it, I will!

*Obenreizer. (to the GUIDES).* I risk it, at my friend's request. (*To VENDALE.*) I'm your man! I'll guide you to your journey's end! Say when—and I am ready!

*Vendale. (leading the way out) Now!*

*Baptiste Senior (stopping VENDALE).* One last warning, sir! *You* didn't tell me I was to be bribed. There are five places of shelter on the road. Past the five places, there is the wooden cross, and there is the convent. When the storm comes on, don't try to brave it. If there is shelter near, take shelter instantly!

*Obenreizer. (to VENDALE).* How they stick to their trade! Our old friend here is inimitable. He hasn't given up the hope of plundering you yet!

*Vendale.* Are you ready?

*Obenreizer.* Come along!

(*They go out. Great excitement among the GUIDES, who follow a few steps, and remain at the side, looking after the travellers eagerly.*)

*Jean-Paul (calling after them).* Not too fast, gentlemen! Spare your strength at starting!

*Jean-Baptiste (calling).* Don't forget the shelter on the road!

*Jean-Marie (calling).* Don't rush on your own destruction. Come back!

*The Waiter (calling).* When the snow falls, sound the way with your sticks. Keep the Track!

*Baptiste Senior.* Spare your breath! They have as much chance of keeping the Track—as you have of being master of this inn.

*The Waiter.* I don't know that. They are both stout walkers.

*Baptiste Senior.* They are both dead men!

(*He leads the way into the inn. The others follow. The Scene changes.*)

THIRD SCENE.—*The Pass on the Mountain.* On the right of the stage, at the back, a steep path winds downward through rock and snow. The path is supposed to lead down from the convent—which is not shown in the Scene—and to connect it with the Track over the mountain. The Track itself crosses the stage longitudinally, from the bottom of the convent path, and is continued, sloping downwards, until it is lost to view off the stage on the left. Along its farther side from the audience, the ground composing the Track rises to a sharp edge, which represents the brink of an unseen precipice. Opposite the Track, and beyond it, the mountain rises again on the other side of the abyss, in steep walls of rock, snow, and ice, and is lost to view at the top of the stage. There is supposed to be a lull in the storm. The snow still falls. But the howling of the wind is low, the lighting comes at long intervals,

*and the rolling of the thunder in prolonged echoes is only heard faintly in the distance. The wind and the thunder—both low—must continue through the Scene, the voices of the actors being heard above it. On the Scene being disclosed, OBENREIZER and VENDALE are discovered descending the path from the convent. They both stop when they get to the level Track. VENDALE cautiously peers over the brink of the precipice.*

*Vendale. (pointing to the precipice).* Another precipice! A gulf frightful to see!  
Have we struck the Track once more?

*Obenreizer. (sternly).* We have struck the Track.

*Vendale.* The storm seems to have passed over.

*Obenreizer.* The storm will come again.

*Vendale.* I'm numbed and sleepy. I feel the drowsiness I felt last night at the inn.  
What does it mean?

*Obenreizer.* It means the journey is over!

*Vendale.* Over—in this desolate pass? Over—before we have reached Milan?

*Obenreizer.* Over—before *you* have reached Milan. I promised to guide you to your journey's end; and I have kept my promise. The journey of your life ends here.

*Vendale.* What!

*Obenreizer.* Fool!—I have drugged you at the convent.—I drugged you last night at the inn! Fool!—I am the thief and the forger. In a minute more, I shall take the proof from your dead body!

*Vendale. (confusedly; feeling the influence of the laudanum).* You villain! What have I done to you?

*Obenreizer.* Done? George Vendale! you shall hear what you have done. I love Marguerite! I sacrificed my honour, I took the money which was not mine, to buy luxuries for *her*! I love Marguerite—and you are the man who has come between us! You are the man who hounded me into buying the diamonds! *You* maddened me into spending the money which would have replaced the missing sum! *You* led to the discovery that the sum was missing! *You* carry my ruin at this moment in the pocket of your coat! *You* disgrace me in her eyes, if you live to see her again! You die! If you had a thousand lives, you die!

*Vendale.* Stand off! Coward! murderer! Stand off!

*Obenreizer.* Murderer? I don't touch you! I take the paper—I leave you here—and you die. I can wait! You will be asleep in two minutes; any sleep in the snow is death; you are sleeping as you stand.

(Approaches VENDALE.)

*Vendale. (shaking off the stupor for the moment).* Stop! Stand back from me! God bless my Marguerite—may she never know how I died! Stand back, and let me look at your murderous face! Let it remind me of something left to say!

*Obenreizer. (approaching VENDALE, and stopping again).* Curse him! how he glares at me!

*Vendale. (wildly—lapsing back into the stupor).* No! no! no! Villain as you are, I must say the words. Obenreizer! the trust of the dead—Obenreizer!—

*Obenreizer.* Come! the paper!

*Vendale.* No!

*Obenreizer.* My courage fails me. I'll wait no longer. Give it up!

*Vendale.* No!

*Obenreizer.* Now—or never!

*Vendale.* Never!

(*He thrusts OBENREIZER back, with a last effort—rushes to the end of the Track—and throws himself over the precipice.*)

*Obenreizer.* (*looks over the brink with a cry of horror—then starts back from the precipice. The sky darkens, the lightning quickens; the thunder and the wind grow louder. The bells of the convent are heard faintly in the far distance.*) Lost! lost! and I with him!

(*He falls senseless on the snow. At the same moment, the dogs from the convent, and a MONK, appear at the top of the path, on the right. They are followed by MARGUERITE and JOEY LADLE, and by other MONKS, who carry ropes. The MONK and MARGUERITE look over into the abyss. MARGUERITE rushes down to the track, and crouches on the brink of the precipice.*)

*Marguerite.* George! I see him! The ropes! the ropes!

(*As the MONKS hurry to her with the ropes, the curtain falls.*)

THE END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

## ACT V.

SCENE.—*A room in the mountain convent. Time, evening. Entrances in the flat scene, and on the left. Also, in the flat scene, a practicable door representing solid oak, studded with large nails. Neither lock nor handle to the door. Invisible means of opening it from inside. Table and two chairs. Lamp, and writing materials near it. A second table and chair. Enter a MONK, showing in BINTREY, followed by JOEY LADLE. The MONK goes out.*

*Bintrey.* Well, Master Joey! What next, I wonder? Here's a revolution produced in my professional life. I am discharged by a railway into a wilderness, I am taken up a mountain by a mule, and I am shown into a convent by a monk. All because Miss Marguerite chose to go to Switzerland after George Vendale, with you for a courier.

*Joey.* How do you make that out, Mr. Bintrey?

*Bintrey.* Why, what brings me here? A letter from Miss Marguerite, informing me that a dreadful accident has happened to George Vendale, and imploring me to come out to her. Would she have written that if she hadn't followed him?—and would she ever have followed him, if it hadn't been for you?

*Joey.* If you come to *that*, Mr. Bintrey, Master George would never have been alive but for me. I came out here with Miss Margaret—and Miss Margaret saved him. The ropes were too weak to bear the men. *She* was lowered down—and *she* preserved his life.

*Bintrey.* Does Mr. Obenreizer happen to be mixed up in this business at all?

*Joey.* We found him lying in the snow by the side of the precipice, if you call that being mixed up in it.

*Bintrey.* Dead?

*Joey.* In a dead faint, sir.

*Bintrey.* Curious, to say the least of it. When Vendale was brought to the surface, did you remark——

*Joey.* I remarked all wrong, sir. I thought Master George was dead, for the reason that I couldn't feel nothing when I put my hand on him. But my fingers was pinched with the cold, and my senses was all in a scare; and when I felt for his heart, it's as likely as not I felt on the wrong side.

*Bintrey.* Yes! yes! You don't see what I am driving at. Let us get back to Mr. Vendale. Is he well enough to travel yet?

*Joey.* He's reported well enough to travel, sir, to-morrow morning.

*Bintrey.* And Miss Marguerite?

*Joey.* Miss Margaret's ready to travel, sir, when Master George is ready to travel, not before.

*Bintrey.* Ay, ay! the end of their journey will be at the nearest church. It's all plain enough so far; but I'm not so clear about the rest of it. Where is Mr. Obenreizer now?

*Joey.* Mr. Openrazor's been here in the convent, sir, all the time.

*Bintrey.* The devil he has! In company with the other two?

*Joey.* No, sir, the other two are kept apart from him. The women and the men don't get together here. As for Master George, they wouldn't let Mr. Openrazor see him, on account of his health.

*Bintrey.* On account of his health, eh? Not on account of Obenreizer having been his travelling-companion, I suppose?

*Joey.* I understand you now, sir. My opinion of Mr. Openrazor ain't no better than yours, but it's all pure guess-work—there's nothing can be brought against him. He was carried back here as helpless as his friend; and he has stopped here for his friend's sake ever since.

*Bintrey.* Has Mr. Vendale said anything out of the common to you, Joey, since his recovery?

*Joey.* No, sir, he hasn't.

*Bintrey.* Has he written any message, or sent you with any message, to Miss Marguerite?

*Joey.* No, sir; but, according to my opinion, he seems to have something on his mind.

*Bintrey. (aside).* George Vendale has something to say which can only be said to his lawyer. There's the secret of my being sent for. (*Aloud.*) If Mr. Vendale wishes it, I am ready to see him at once.

*Joey.* I'll go and inquire, sir. But might I make so bold as to ask you a question first? When you left London, Mr. Bintrey, how did you leave that precious woman, Miss Goldstraw?

*Bintrey.* How did I leave her? I didn't leave her at all. I've got a surprise for you! Miss Goldstraw was most humanely anxiously about Miss Marguerite's position in this

strange place. She has come out here with me to offer her services to the young lady; and it's my private opinion, Master Joey, that you're at the bottom of it.

*Joey.* There ain't a doubt of that, Mr. Bintrey!

*Bintrey.* Why, hang the fellow! he isn't surprised! He looks as if he had expected the woman all along!

*Joey.* Of course I did! If I didn't go back to *her*, I knowed she'd come out to *me*.

*Bintrey.* Oh, that's your experience of women, is it?

*Joey.* It's my experience of Miss Goldstraw. You couldn't have travelled out here, sir, in company of that precious woman, without noticing that she uses beautiful language. Very good! I've gone a step further than that; I've fixed her language in my mind. What was the words she said to me the last time I saw her at Cripple Corner? The words was these: "The separation of a man and a woman is a very serious thing, and the sooner they come together again, the better for all parties." There's language! And what follows on it? I can't go to Miss Goldstraw; all right! Miss Goldstraw comes to *me*.

*Enter SALLY.*

*Bintrey.* The gift of prophecy again, Master Joey!

*Sally.* Has he been prophesying that I was coming here, sir? If he has, I'll go away again directly!

*Bintrey.* Allow me to offer you my arm.

*Joey.* I should wish to say a word, Mr. Bintrey, before you walk her off.

*Bintrey.* What is it?

*Joey.* When we get to the first Christian town, we shall end in a Christian marriage of two couples. Master George will marry Miss Margaret. Who's a-going to marry Miss Goldstraw?

*Sally.* Don't be inquisitive, Mr. Joey!

*Joey.* Who's a-going to marry Miss Goldstraw?

*Bintrey.* You are, I am afraid.

*Joey.* Then why are you a-walking off with Miss Goldstraw instead of me?

*Sally.* Wait a little, Mr. Joey, and you'll be walking off with me for the rest of your life!

*Bintrey.* You're not to monopolise your wife before she *is* your wife. It's quite bad enough to monopolise a nice woman afterwards.

*Sally.* And what's more, Mr. Joey, you're to remember this. A man had better not give a woman the chance, or it may end in her leaving him at the church door.

*Joey.* Thank you, Miss, I'm quite satisfied. Do you hear that, Mr. Bintrey? There's language! Fix it in your mind after me—and walk in the same all the days of your life. (*Trying to repeat the words.*) "A woman had better not give a man the chance, or it may end in his leaving her at the church door." Lord, how true!

*Obenreizer.* (*speaking outside*). In this room, father? All right!

*Joey.* Here's Mr. Openrazor to speak for himself. (*Enter the FIRST MONK and OBENREIZER.* *The MONK carries a large book.* OBENREIZER carries a heavy bag of money, which he places on the table. JOEY conducts SALLY to the exit in the flat.) There! there! go to Miss Margaret. (SALLY goes out. JOEY remains. BINTREY addresses OBENREIZER.)

*Bintrey.* What! Mr. Obenreizer turned treasurer!

*Obenreizer.* Charmed to see you again. I heard you were here, Mr. Bintrey. So glad. Have you come to see Vendale? Make your mind easy about your friend. He will soon be as good a man as ever. You are here on business, no doubt?

*Bintrey. (dryly).* Impossible to say, until I have seen Mr. Vendale.

*Obenreizer.* Ah! not so easy a matter! I, his fellow-traveller, who shared his danger, have not been admitted to see him yet.

*Monk (to OBENREIZER).* Having shared his danger, my son, you remind him of his danger. For that reason we have hesitated to let you see him first. (*To BINTREY.*) You, sir, will only remind him of his associations with home, and you may see him at once. Prepare Mr. Vendale for meeting his other friend (*indicating OBENREIZER*), and then bring Mr. Vendale with you here. (*BINTREY bows.*)

*Joey.* I'll show you the way, sir, if you like.

*Bintrey.* All right, Master Joey, I'll follow you.

(JOEY and BINTREY go out.)

*Obenreizer. (watching BINTREY'S exit).* What can he want here? Who has sent for him?

*Monk.* My son, you have waited long to take the hand of your friend.

*Obenreizer. (aside).* I have waited long to take the receipt.

*Monk.* Your patience will soon be rewarded. You will see him to-night. In the mean time, you must content yourself with my company, as you have kindly done hitherto.

*Obenreizer.* I can wish for no kinder companion; I can be in no company that is more edifying than yours. (*Looking round at the door in the wall.*) Pardon me! where does that door lead to?

*Monk.* Why do you ask?

*Obenreizer.* That door puzzles me every time I look at it. I see no handle, no bolt, no key, and no keyhole. And when I go near, and listen, I hear a sound inside like the ticking of a clock.

*Monk.* You have heard right. There is a clock in that room.

*Obenreizer.* A room there?

*Monk.* The strong-room of the convent. That door opens by clockwork. One of our brethren here conceived the idea, and wrought it out with his own hand. Nobody can open the door until the time comes when the clock inside, set beforehand, opens the lock of itself. The safest strong-room in the world is in this convent.

*Obenreizer.* Where a strong-room is least wanted! If you were jewellers or bankers——

*Monk.* Are we not the bankers of the poor? and has not that money to be safely secured? Besides, we keep things in our strong-room which can never be replaced.

*Obenreizer.* Your relics of the saints, for instance?

*Monk.* Hush! hush! my son! I speak seriously. When travellers perish on this mountain, the papers found on their bodies are kept there till their relations claim them.

*Obenreizer.* What a collection of waste paper you must have!

*Monk.* Sooner or later the papers are all reclaimed.

*Obenreizer.* By foreigners as well as Swiss?

*Monk.* Yes, we have nothing belonging to a foreigner there now, except the Vendale papers.

*Obenreizer. (aside).* The Vendale papers!

*Monk.* And there is no knowing how soon they may be claimed.

*Obenreizer. (aside).* The forged receipt is there!

*Enter the LAY BROTHER.*

*Brother.* Father, the young English lady desires to speak with you.

*Monk.* Presently. I can only come to her after six o'clock.

(*Exit LAY BROTHER.*)

*Obenreizer. After six. (Looks at his watch.)* Why, it wants but one minute to the hour!

*Monk.* In one minute you will see the door open. I am waiting to put by the register and the money. (*Points to the bag on the table.*) The clock is set at six. We rarely alter the hour at which the door opens. Our habits are regular. We have few extraordinary occasions for opening the door here.

*Obenreizer. (watch in hand).* Six o'clock!

(*The bell of convent clock outside strikes six. At the last stroke, the MONK points to the strong door; it opens silently back of itself. To its inner side is attached a wooden case. In the centre of the case is a large white clock-dial. It has only one large hand, and is without the usual glass-case. The light from a lamp suspended from the ceiling of room falls on the dial, and shows the interior of the strong-room, containing many antique books, and here and there a few papers on the shelves.*)

*Obenreizer.* Wonderful!

*Monk (explaining the clock).* And so simple in its action! That hand travels round the dial. As we set it, so the clock opens the door, at any hour, or part of an hour, that may be desired. Once shut the door, and nobody can open it till the time comes, and it opens again of itself. Let us put these away.

(*As he goes to the table to take the money-bag, OBENREIZER moves the hand of the clock five minutes; then hurries to the MONK, and takes the bag from his hands.*)

*Obenreizer.* Don't exert yourself. I'll put it away.

(*He puts the bag into the strong-room.*)

*Monk (taking the book).* I'd better alter the hand on the dial. Something may be wanted to-morrow, before the departure of—— (*OBENREIZER closes the door suddenly.*) What have you done?

*Obenreizer.* Pardon me! My clumsiness is inexcusable. I was leaning against the door, and——

*Monk.* And my book is left out, and the hand had to be changed, and the door will not open till six to-morrow evening!

*Obenreizer. (aside).* It will open in five minutes.

*Monk.* It can't be helped now. (*Touching OBENREIZER'S forehead.*) Ah! you rattlepate! Now for the young lady. Take care of the book. The book will keep; but the papers—the papers!

(*Exit.*)

*Obenreizer.* The papers! Ay! Not a doubt of what they are. (*Looking at his watch.*) Only a minute to spare! The forged receipt and the correspondence with Defresnier are there. (*Looks towards the strong-room.*) Now! now! (*The door opens again. He enters again, and comes out with the papers.*) I have got them! What's this? That's not it! (*Looking again.*) "The Vendale papers"—No letters from the Swiss firm! I know the paper well. None of the wretched correspondence—no trace of the receipt! (*Looks through the other papers.*) "Ten years ago—three years ago"—nothing later than that. (*He is about to throw the papers aside in a fury of disappointment, when one of them catches his eye.*) An endorsement of a date—Eighteen hundred and—What!—five-and-twenty-years ago? What on earth is this? "Husband and wife! Certificate of death!" I've got him! (*Looks closer; examines the other papers. Voices are heard outside. He hides the papers in his pocket, and instantly closes the door.*) Vendale! I am prepared to meet you now!

*Enter VENDALE and BINTREY, left. MARGUERITE enters by the door in the flat.*

*Vendale.* Marguerite!

*Marguerite.* George! Safe at last. (*Rushes to his arms.*)

*Obenreizer.* Marguerite! have you no word for me?

*Vendale.* (*stepping between OBENREIZER and MARGUERITE, who makes a movement towards OBENREIZER.*) One moment, Marguerite! Mr. Obenreizer, I understand you have asked repeatedly to see me. With to-morrow morning our stay in this hospitable place ends. I have come to you, and I have requested your ward to meet us here, because I have a certain object in view.

*Obenreizer.* May I ask what it is?

*Vendale.* The question of my marriage with Mademoiselle Marguerite has been already discussed between us in London. In now returning to the subject, I must request you to take your mind back to what has passed since. My object here is to bring all further negotiation between us to an end. Mr. Bintrey represents me, and will tell you what I propose.

*Obenreizer.* Marguerite, I am not quite sure, from Mr. Vendale's tone, whether I am meeting an enemy or a friend. May I ask whether your former feeling of regard for me has undergone any change?

*Marguerite.* My former feeling of regard——

*Vendale.* (*stopping her.*) Wait, Marguerite.

*Obenreizer.* Sir!

*Bintrey.* Mr. Obenreizer, when you are ready, I am.

*Obenreizer.* (*observing VENDALE and MARGUERITE.*) No. He has not seen her. He has had no time to tell her yet.

*Bintrey.* (*produces a sheet of paper, and places it before OBENREIZER*). All we ask of you is your signature to that document. You will find, if you read it, that it relates to your authority over your niece, and that it explains itself.

*Obenreizer.* (*handing the paper back unread*). Mr. Bintrey, your professional enthusiasm is misleading you. No document of any sort is required in this matter. Mr. Vendale and I understand each other. On that former occasion to which Mr. Vendale has referred (*to VENDALE*), it was agreed between us that he was to marry my ward when he had doubled his income. Has he doubled it?

*Vendale.* No.

*Obenreizer.* Then there can be no question of this marriage between us. Mr. Bintrey, you may put your sheet of paper in your pocket again.

*Bintrey.* (*aside*). My sheet of paper will get the better of you yet!

*Vendale.* Mr. Obenreizer, I am here, if you force me, to insist on the marriage.

*Obenreizer.* "Insist" is an ugly word, Mr. Vendale; I advise you to withdraw it. (*To MARGUERITE*.) I leave this place to-morrow, and you, Marguerite, leave it under my care.

*Vendale.* No!

*Obenreizer.* No? (*Controlling himself*) Marguerite! you have not forgotten what I said to you the last time we spoke of your marriage?

*Marguerite.* I have not forgotten it.

*Obenreizer.* "If I tell you to wait, whatever Mr. Vendale may say, you will wait my time."

*Marguerite.* He had not been in peril of his life then, and I had not shared that peril with him. Now——

*Obenreizer.* Now?

*Vendale.* She refuses.

*Obenreizer.* She breaks her promise?

*Vendale.* A promise which was extorted from her.

*Obenreizer.* She sets my lawful authority at defiance——

*Bintrey.* (*interposing*). Mr. Obenreizer——

*Obenreizer.* There can be but one motive for such conduct.

*Marguerite.* There is but one motive. I love him.

*Obenreizer.* You love him? Ah! Marguerite, you said that once before. It was needless to sting me a second time by repeating it. All further restraint on my part is at an end. Do you know the man whom you love? That man is an impostor. (*Takes the Vendale papers from his pocket*.)

*Vendale.* (*starting up*). What do you mean?

*Obenreizer.* Yes, Marguerite! An impostor, in the disguise of a gentleman.

*Vendale.* What?

*Obenreizer.* I will not allow my ward to throw herself away on such a man as you! Until she comes of age she is under my care, and she must obey my will. Mr. Bintrey, you are fond of documents. There are the documents to prove what I say. Look at them!

(*Hands him the papers*.)

*Bintrey.* (*looking at them, and starting to his feet*). What! Impossible!

*Obenreizer.* Three years since, an English gentleman perished on this mountain; the papers taken from his body were preserved here.

*Vendale.* How do you come by those papers?

*Bintrey.* (*looking the papers over*). Quite needless to inquire. Go on.

*Obenreizer.* The oldest of those papers is dated five-and-twenty years since. It is written by an Englishwoman settled in Switzerland. She is a childless widow. She adopts a child from the Foundling in England, and she brings that child out to Switzerland.

*Marguerite.* Is George concerned in this?

*Obenreizer.* Shortly after, the widow marries again. Her husband, interested in the adopted child, desires to give the boy the position of his son. The boy is never to be humiliated by knowing his real origin. He is to believe himself the child of the husband and wife who have adopted him. (*To BINTREY.*) Am I right, Mr. Bintrey?

*Bintrey.* Entirely.

*Marguerite.* (*to BINTREY*). What has George to fear in all this?

*Obenreizer.* (*to BINTREY*). Are you composed enough to answer another professional question? What is legally necessary to complete this case?

*Bintrey.* Evidence to prove whether the husband and wife are dead or living.

*Obenreizer.* (*pushing over more papers*). There is the evidence that they are both dead. What is necessary next?

*Bintrey.* The names and addresses of witnesses who can speak to the question of identity.

*Obenreizer.* There they are.

*Bintrey.* Complete. (*To VENDALE.*) George, prepare yourself for a great shock.

*Vendale.* The name!—the name of the widow who brought the child to Switzerland.

*Obenreizer.* Mrs. Miller!

*Vendale.* (*to BINTREY*). The name we found on the Foundling books when you and I looked at the register!

*Bintrey.* Quite right! We have found the missing man!

*Marguerite.* Oh! George! George! what is it?

*Vendale.* Nothing, love, that I have not suspected already! (*To OBENREIZER.*) You are the lost Walter Wilding. You are the missing man.

*Obenreizer.* (*with an ironical bow*). Pardon me! Mr. Vendale, I have not that honour. YOU are the missing man. (*All rise.*)

*Vendale.* Is he mad?

*Bintrey.* It's true!

*Obenreizer.* The man you love, Marguerite, has no station in life, no name of his own.

*Vendale.* Marguerite!

*Obenreizer.* He is a bastard, brought up by public charity.

*Marguerite.* (*throwing herself into VENDALE'S arms*). George! I never loved you as I love you now!

*Bintrey.* He is one thing besides, Mr. Obenreizer. He is a man whose income you have just doubled. Mr. Vendale inherits the whole of the late Mr. Wilding's fortune, thanks entirely to your exertions.

*Obenreizer.* What!!

*Bintrey.* Respect your engagement. Remember your promise! His income is doubled, and he claims his wife! Will you sign?

*Obenreizer.* Never! Marguerite is here, in my power. I am still her guardian, and——(*advances to take her*).

*Marguerite.* George!

*Vendale.* (*placing himself between her and OBENREIZER.*) Don't fear, love! Wait till the first bitterness of his defeat has passed away.

*Bintrey.* Mr. Obenreizer will listen to reason directly.

*Obenreizer.* Will he!

*Vendale.* Don't compel me to force you to sign.

*Obenreizer.* Force me? (*VENDALE takes the forged receipt from his pocket and silently shows it to him. In a whisper.*) The forged receipt!

*Vendale.* (*In a whisper*). What becomes of your authority over her now?

*Bintrey.* (*producing the document*). Will you sign this?

*Obenreizer.* (*to VENDALE*). Does she know?

*Vendale.* She does not know.

*Obenreizer.* She will never know if I sign?

*Vendale.* Never!

(*VENDALE passes to the table, and burns the receipt in the candle as OBENREIZER signs the paper.*)

*Bintrey.* (*aside, taking the signed document*). My sheet of paper has got the best of you after all!

*Obenreizer.* (*standing apart from the rest*). So ends the dream of my life! (*He takes the phial of laudanum from his breast-pocket, and secretly drinks the poison. JOEY and SALLY appear at the back.*)

*Marguerite.* (*to VENDALE*). What does it mean?

*Obenreizer.* It means, Marguerite, that you are free.

*Marguerite.* (*to VENDALE*). Free?

*Vendale.* Yes.

*Marguerite.* Look at him, George. Is the feeling wrong which tells me to forget the past? (*VENDALE withdraws a little, and motions her to speak to OBENREIZER. She approaches him; they look at each other for a few moments in silence. MARGUERITE gently addresses him.*) I am going to begin a new life, and a happy life. I wish to say something more than farewell. If I ever wronged you even in thought, forgive me! If you ever wronged me—for George's sake, I forgive you. (*OBENREIZER looks at her in silence.*) Why are you silent?

*Obenreizer.* I once frightened you in the past time. Do I frighten you now?

*Marguerite.* (*giving her hand*). You are looking at me very strangely.

*Obenreizer.* I am looking at you for the last time. (*His strength fails him, he staggers, VENDALE and BINTREY advance to support him. To VENDALE.*) Don't touch me! (*Recovers himself. To BINTREY.*) Thank you! Farewell! (*As he crosses the threshold of the door, the curtain falls.*)

THE END.

LONDON:

### Afterword I

As promised, below are additional recollections about the play's opening night, from the pen of Wilkie Collins. After telling how he came to write the dramatized version of *No Thoroughfare* (see Foreword), Collins went on to describe preparations for the play, its first appearance, and some of Fechter's ideas about story-telling. (Reprinted below from Field, 163-66.)

The play written,—a far harder task than I had anticipated, requiring such new presentation of some of the persons of the story as almost involved the re-creating of them,—Fechter at once assumed the character of *Obenreizer* in private life. When he entered his study or mine, it was an entrance on the stage. He ate and drank “in character” when he dined with me or I dined with him. The play was in his hands all day and at his bedside all night. At rehearsal he was quite ready to perform every other character in the drama, by way of an example which might brighten and improve the business on the stage. Once or twice the overwhelming nervous excitement that possessed him showed itself in a curiously suggestive way; his English speech betrayed, for the first time in my experience, that he was thinking in French.

When the memorable day arrived, and a few hours only interposed between us and the ordeal of the first night, that terrible form of nervous prostration called stage fright—from which all good actors suffer, more or less, at their first appearance in a new part—began its attack on Fechter at breakfast time.

He could eat nothing, not even the French garlic sausage which offered the one attainable refuge to his stomach on other occasions. Pale, silent, subdued, he sat in a corner of the room, and looked like a man waiting the appearance of the sheriff to conduct him to the scaffold. I handed him his pipe; he was not even able to smoke. “Are you going in front to see your play?” he asked, with a look of blank despair. I could honestly answer that my nerves were never strong enough to endure that trial on the first night. “You will be behind the scenes, then?” “Yes.” “For God’s sake, come to my room!”

Before the performance began, I went accordingly to Fechter’s room.

Dressed, as to the lower part of him only, for the character of *Obenreizer*, he sat helplessly staring into a white basin, held before him by his attendant in the attitude of a sailor on a channel steamer comforting a suffering lady. “Here’s Mr. Fechter sick, sir,” said the man, “and nothing in him to bring up.” (The reader will, I hope, pardon this literal report in consideration of its absolute fidelity to the truth.) I said a comforting word, and proposed a few drops of laudanum. Unable to speak, Fechter answered by putting out his tongue. The color of it had turned, under the nervous terror that possessed him, to the metallic blackness of the tongue of a parrot. When the overture began,—easily audible in the dressing-room,—another attack made the basin necessary.

In the interval that followed, *Obenreizer*’s upper garments were put on, and the last touches were added to his head and face. The next sound that reached us was the well deserved applause which greeted the appearance of that admirable actor and worthy kind-hearted man, Benjamin Webster, in the character of *Joey Ladle*. Fechter gave me one

expressive look, and turned to the basin again. His colleague's entrance on the stage preceded his own entrance by no very long space of time. Soon the knock was heard at the door, and the dreadful voice of the call-boy summoned Mr. Fechter to be ready. He took my arm to descend the stairs which led from his room to the stage. Our procession of two was completed by the attendant with his basin ready,—and, what is more, wanted, at the critical moment when we stood behind the door through which *Obenreizer* was to make his appearance. Some one near me whispered, "Good heavens, he will be taken ill before the audience!" I whispered back, "Wait and see." In another minute the words were spoken which gave him the cue.

"Ask Mr. Obenreizer to step this way." The door was briskly opened; the glare of the footlights shone on the favorite of the public; the round of applause at the sight of him rang out all over the crowded theatre. In an instant the moral courage, which had deserted him behind the scenes, rallied its forces in the presence of the audience. Fechter's first words proved him to be in full possession of all his resources. The stranger who had predicted such terrible results lifted his eyebrows in mute amazement. The attendant and the basin vanished together.

"No Thoroughfare" had a run of two hundred nights. We were not so fortunate in making our next joint appeal to the public, in the drama called "Black and White."

Fechter's lively mind was, to use his own expression, "full of plots." He undertook to tell me stories enough for all the future novels and plays that I could possibly live to write. His power of invention was unquestionably remarkable; but his method of narration was so confused that it was not easy to follow him, and his respect for those terrible obstacles in the way of free imagination known as probabilities was, to say the least of it, in some need of improvement.

#### Afterword II

Below is the first review of *No Thoroughfare* Dickens saw, while still on his second trip to America. He was quite pleased, and quoted from this notice in his letters. It is reprinted here just as it appeared in the London *Times* (27 Dec 1867, 7.6):

#### ADELPHI.

A dramatization of *No Thoroughfare*, by Mr. Charles Dickens and Mr. Wilkie Collins, was produced at this theatre with one of the strongest casts which any work of the kind has had the advantage of receiving for many years. The play, though excessive in length, so that it was nearly 1 o'clock before the curtain fell, kept the audience intensely interested until the very last, notwithstanding that the climax of the plot is reached at the end of the fourth act. The story divides itself into two parts, one turning upon the rivalry in love of Obenreizer and Vendale, and the other and more absorbing portion resting upon the forgery committed by the Swiss and the subsequent crimes to which it gives rise. The difficulty of balancing this divided interest, as well as of placing before the eye of the spectator those intricate complications which require some care to unravel even in the study, has been managed with great ingenuity by the authors. The play is, indeed, encumbered at several points by long and needless explanations, and too little confidence has been placed in the intelligence of the audience. Some of the characters are always recalling incidents which are sufficiently intelligible without such

help, and the fifth act is nearly made tedious by the attempt to throw light upon a portion of the plot which everyone already understands. But the drama as a whole cannot but prove unusually attractive, and at some stages of it the interest becomes even of an exciting kind.

The “overture” introduces us to the exterior of the Foundling Hospital, where the “veiled lady” endeavours to ascertain from the nurse the name of her forsaken child. Mrs. Billington represent the unknown mother with so much feeling as to cause some regret at her early disappearance from the play. The interior of the Foundling Hospital, with the children at dinner, and the nurse, Sally Goldstraw (Mrs. Mellon), is next displayed, and Walter Wilding is pointed out to the mother. After this an interval of 12 years is supposed to elapse. We see Mr. Walter Wilding, now a prosperous wine merchant, seated outside his office, with his lawyer (Mr. Bintrey). The entrance from a vault of the cellarman, Joey Ladle (Mr. Webster) was the signal for loud and prolonged applause, and the character was invested with so much humour and originality by the actor that it promises to become one of the most famous of his impersonations. Joey’s muddled way of moralizing, his intense affection for Sally Goldstraw, his admiration of her “beautiful language,” and his ludicrous attempts to commit her sayings to memory relieve the somewhat sombre tone of the drama throughout, and make the honest cellarman a personage of much greater importance than he appears in the published story.

Among the many variations between the tale and the dramatic version is one which could scarcely be avoided—namely, the disclosure to the audience from the first of Obenreizer’s embezzlement of 500*l.*, and his forgery of the receipt for the money. It is also shown at the outset that he is in love with Marguerite (Miss Carlotta Leclercq), and Mr. Fechter has seldom had a better opportunity for the exercise of his peculiar talent, or made a greater use of his opportunity, than in delineating the passions and the vain struggles against an adverse fate of the unfortunate Swiss. We say unfortunate, for although he is a great criminal, the sympathies of the audience undoubtedly follow him throughout, and at the end, when he bids Marguerite and her accepted lover farewell, we have but little doubt that could the audience have settled the marriage, Obenreizer, in spite of all theories of justice or dramatic propriety, would have received the hand of his ward. When George Vendale (Mr. Neville) first declares his love for Marguerite, Obenreizer’s anger leads to a very fine scene, and the pity which he excites is doubtless to be ascribed in a great measure to the careful way in which it is made to appear that he misappropriates the 500*l.* solely to promote the comfort and happiness of Marguerite. But it is when Marguerite avows her love for Vendale that his rage and despair burst forth in a storm which renders the spectator indifferent to the rest of the characters. When all is over—when he has tried to drug Vendale and failed, and failed likewise in the attempt to murder him—he evinced so much genuine pathos that again the rest of the action was made insignificant. For all practical purposes, Mr. Fechter was alone on the stage.

The great scene is, of course, that in which Obenreizer betrays his rival, Vendale, into the Alpine pass, and there endeavours to make away with him, and to gain possession of the forged receipt which threatens him with total ruin. The scene itself was a masterpiece of stage art, and the painter (Mr. T. Grieve) was called forward to receive the deserved plaudits of the audience. The intensity and picturesqueness of Mr. Fechter’s performance prevented Mr. Neville from coming into great prominence; but the act—chiefly played by these two gentlemen—was one of singular vividness and power.

Another striking scene was that in which Obenreizer attempts to steal the fatal receipt from Vendale in the Swiss inn. The clock-lock is placed in the monastery of St. Bernard, instead of in the house of a notary, as in the tale, the precious store of papers being supposed to consist of documents found on the bodies of lost travellers. Obenreizer manages to seize these papers, but only to find Vendale and Marguerite more inseparable than ever. Joey Ladle accompanies the young lady to Switzerland; and, indeed, it is owing to his superior powers of prophecy that the danger to Vendale is foreseen. Joey's eccentric love for Sally Goldstraw is properly rewarded, and his mode of paying his addresses was as irresistible to the audience as to the object of his devotions. Obenreizer alone comes to a bad end.

There are several minor parts which do not call for more than a passing notice. Madame Dor fulfilled her province in life of showing her back and cleaning gloves, but she was not otherwise remarkable. The lawyer Bintrey was capitally played by Mr. Belmore. The play in some parts departs from the story so widely as to be entitled to rank as an entirely original production.

The theatre was densely crowded, and the overture and five acts did not prove too much for the patience of the audience, although some judicious excision will doubtless be shown in future representations. All the performers were repeatedly summoned before the curtain, and the manager has every reason to be thoroughly satisfied with his success.

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#### Textual Notes

This is the first widely-available version of the correct text ever produced. The text has been prepared from the rare privately-printed 1867 first edition of the play, through the courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. The Stanford copy bears all the identification points of the first edition noted in Eckel. The first edition is well-edited, and almost no changes have been necessary. The most significant change: in line labels, the characters' names, where abbreviated, have been expanded into full names. In seven places, right-justified stage directions to exit, flush with the preceding dialogue, have been broken out into a separate line. This is necessary due to the limitations of HTML, the internet browser language. Some typographical errors have been corrected, as noted:

Original	Above
<i>The Lady</i> , Stop!	<i>The Lady</i> . Stop!
And its another thing to be charged yourself	And it's another thing to be charged yourself
JOEY ( <i>to WILDING</i> ). A gentleman has stopped at the door	Joey ( <i>to WILDING</i> ). A gentleman has stopped at the door
JOEY. A stranger, sir.	Joey. A stranger, sir.
Charmed with Mr. Obenriezer's sentiments	Charmed with Mr. Obenreizer's sentiments
I hav'n't humoured my client!	I haven't humoured my client!
Send to Mr. Obenriezer's, Sally	Send to Mr. Obenreizer's, Sally
Joey. Take a look at it's colour first!	Joey. Take a look at its colour first!
Not a star to be seen in the heaven!	Not a star to be seen in the heavens!
OPENREIZER carries a heavy bag of money	OBENREIZER carries a heavy bag of money

The cast photo is from Fawcett, opp. 19. The text of Collins's recollections is from Field, with no changes whatsoever. Field's American spelling has been preserved. In the *Times* review, a few

typographical errors have been silently corrected.

- Beppe Sabatini, Editor  
Version 1.6