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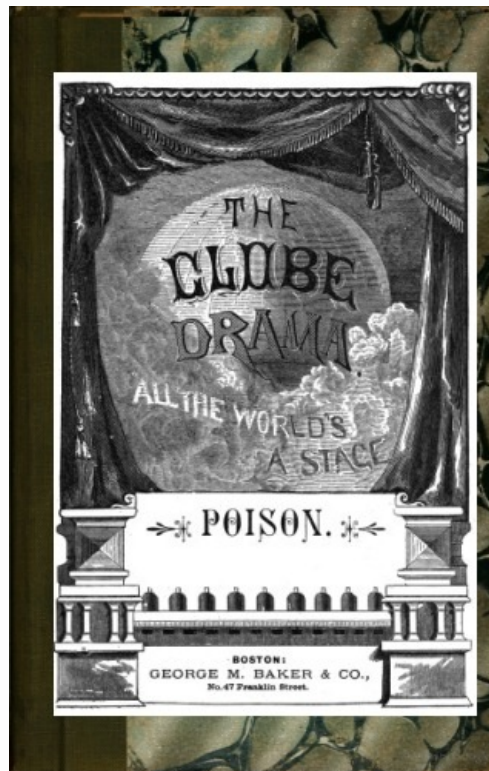
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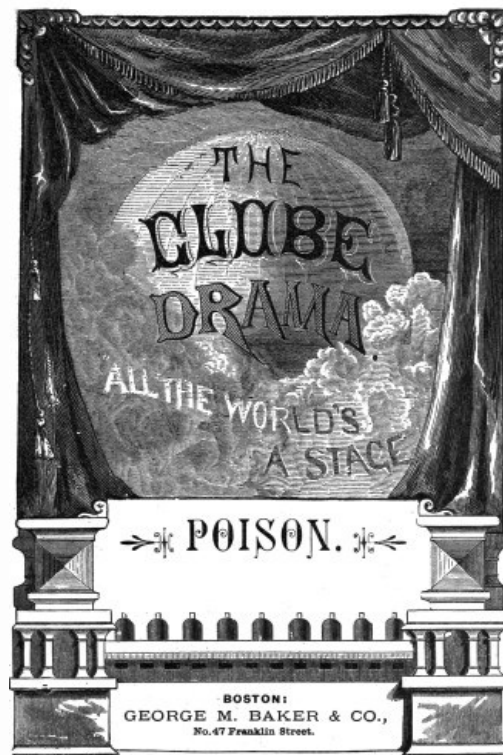
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## **POISON.**

A Farce.

**AS PERFORMED**

By "THE HASTY PUDDING CLUB"

**OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY.**

BOSTON:  
 GEORGE M. BAKER AND COMPANY.  
 1882.

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## **POISON.**

## CHARACTERS:

MR. THEOPHILUS TWITTERS, <i>a retired sugar merchant</i>	E. J. WENDELL.
GOTTLIEB HUNKER, <i>honorary secretary of the society for the prevention of capital</i>	J. E. WEBB.
DR. CHARLES SQUILLCOX, <i>an apothecary in love with Clara</i>	F. C. WOODBURY.
CLARA TWITTERS	H. C. FRENCH.
THE MOTHER OF THE LATE MRS. TWITTERS	A. MATTHEWS.
MARY JANE	R. T. BABSON.
OFFICER OF THE LAW	H. M. HUBBARD.

SCENE.—*Breakfast-room of the suburban villa of Mr. Twitters. The mother of the late Mrs. Twitters and Mary Jane are discovered.*

MARY JANE. But I tell you this is Mr. Twitters' breakfast, mum. There's no telling what he'll do if he don't catch the train this morning. He's ordered the horse ready since seven o'clock.

MOTHER (*breaking an egg*). In the midst of life we are in death. I have left my humble lodgings this morning to attend the interment of the remains of our late pastor, the Rev. Dr. Elijah Paddy—a hot muffin, Mary Jane!

MARY JANE. What will master say, mum? There won't be no breakfast left. He has the alarm-clock set in his hat-bath to wake him at seven, and it made such a noise, mum, that he flung it out the window and went to sleep again. And he's been rampaging round and ordering breakfast on the table for the last hour.

MOTHER. The carriage will serve me in my sad errand. I have a floral tribute in this box to place upon the grave of the dear departed,—a little more hot toast, Mary Jane,—an anchor, expressive of hope and Christian resignation. It will be but a trifle among the many offerings. The Rev. Mr. Paddy never knew how many friends he had until he was dead (*breaking another egg*).

MARY JANE. You're eating the last egg, mum.

MOTHER. I grieve that there is no other egg, but this will suffice to support me through the trying ceremony. He was an eminent Christian,—he had three wives. (*Bell rings.*)

TWITTERS (*without, calling*). Has that thundering shoemaker sent my new boots?

MARY JANE (*calling at door*). Just come, sir.

MOTHER. Cease this unseemly noise, girl (*rising*), summon the equipage.

MARY JANE. The equipage, mum? I didn't see you come in no carriage.

MOTHER. My limited earthly resources do not permit me to provide myself with such luxuries. I shall use one of your master's. My poor, dear, departed daughter, did not survive to enjoy his prosperity. I do.

MARY JANE. But he wants the carriage to go to the train, mum.

MOTHER. Trains go hourly. (*Takes up a box. Exit.*)

MARY JANE (*standing at window*). Well, if the late Mrs. Twitters was like this mother of hers, it ain't no wonder that master's kind of fidgety like. There,—she's got hold of John, now, and she's stepping into the carriage that was going to take master to the train. And she's druv off! Oh, deary me. What vicious things elderly women can be. (*Enter Twitters hastily.*)

TWITTERS (*Looking at watch*). I shall have a close shave for the 9-20 train, but I think I can manage it. Breakfast's ready of course, of course?

MARY JANE. It was ready sir.

TWITTERS (*approaching table*). Why, what on earth does this mean?

MARY JANE. The mother of the late Mrs. Twitters—

TWITTERS. The devil!

MARY JANE. No, sir, the mother of—

TWITTERS. Is she here? (*With feeling.*)

MARY JANE. No, sir, she's gone.

TWITTERS. Something ghoulish is going on somewhere, then, or she would have stayed. That women is a perfect vulture. If anything horrible happens to anybody, she comes pouncing down to gloat over it. I'm becoming a fiend, myself; I rejoice in the news of any misfortune, for it means temporary deliverance for me from her—has she eaten everything?

MARY JANE. All there was, sir.

TWITTERS. How soon can you get some more?

MARY JANE. It'll be ten minutes, sir.

TWITTERS. I shall have to breakfast in town, then. I must be off. John's here, of course?

MARY JANE. No, sir, he's took.

TWITTERS. Good heavens! A fit?

MARY JANE. No, sir; the mother of the late Mrs. Twitters.

TWITTERS. Where has she taken him?

MARY JANE. To the funeral obelisk of an Irish gentleman, sir.

TWITTERS. To Parson Paddy's funeral?

MARY JANE. That's just it, sir.

TWITTERS. I hated that man, but his death caused me deep sorrow. Her cap was set at him. I must run for the train. Where are my boots? Ah, here! (*Opening a box and producing a funeral wreath*) what in the name of nature is this?

MARY JANE. It's her's, sir; she's been and gone and took the boots to the burying, and she's left nothing behind but Christian resignation.

TWITTERS. Damn Christian resignation. (*Pitches box across stage; a letter falls out; he picks it up and opens it during speech.*) Call Miss Clara and tell her I'll breakfast with her. I can't get to town till eleven, now. And get something uncommonly good to eat, mind you. A bad temper needs good food.

MARY JANE. Yes, sir; I noticed, sir, how the old lady had a fine appetite.

TWITTERS (*severely*). Speak civilly of members of my family, if you expect to keep your place. (*Glancing at paper, which he has taken from envelope.*) Why, the damned old harridan.

MARY JANE. Yes, sir. (*Exit.*)

TWITTERS (*reading*). "Theophilus Twitters, Esq., to Grimsby & Weeper, florists. Funeral orders attended with despatch in the latest and tastiest styles. To one Christian resignation, roses, immortelles, etc., \$15. A prompt payment is requested." Then in pencil: "For the sake of our departed Sarah you will please meet this little account." This is the last straw. I'm a strong camel but my back breaks at this. I'll give orders that she shan't be let into the house. And as for this bill, here goes (*goes to table and writes*): "Grimsby & Weeper; sirs: I won't pay this rascally, swindling bill, or any other. T. Twitters." (*Rings bell, then sealing letter.*) That will settle Christian resignation, I reckon. (*Enter CHARLES.*)

CHARLES (*standing in door with handful of letters, timidly*). Mr. T-Twitters—

TWITTERS (*not looking up*). Come here.

CHARLES (*approaching timidly*). Yes, Mr. T-Twitters.

TWITTERS. Take this to the post and look sharp.

CHARLES. But I've just come from the post, sir.

TWITTERS. What's that to me? (*Looking up.*) Dear me, Charles, I thought you were my man. Seen the paper?

CHARLES. I've brought it in, sir.

TWITTERS (*seizing it*). How's Harshaw this morning?

CHARLES. Why, I never thought of looking, sir. If it had occurred to me that you'd have liked to know—

TWITTERS. 38 7-8! Three per cent. rise! I'm six thousand in pocket! (*With a sigh.*) You're a lucky dog, Charles; you don't tremble whenever you look at a stock-list.

CHARLES. No, sir; I don't seem to look at one, often. (*Nervous.*) You're surprised to see me at this hour, I suppose?

TWITTERS. Hadn't been—but now you mention it, I am.

CHARLES. You see, I happened in at the post-office, and I saw your mail, and I thought that you might like to have me leave it at your house on my way home.

TWITTERS (*laughing*). You're a sly dog, Charles. What time do I go to town?

CHARLES. Why, 9-20 I 'spose, sir.

TWITTERS (*pointing to watch*). At this moment it's 9-25, you young rascal, and you have the impudence to say that you came to see me. (*Enter MARY JANE.*)

MARY JANE. Did you ring, sir?

TWITTERS. Yes. Take this letter to the post, and look sharp (*handing letter which he has written*); and, I say, tell Miss Clara that there's a gentleman here that wants to see her. (*Exit MARY JANE.*)

CHARLES. Here are your letters, Mr. Twitters. I assure you—

TWITTERS. I like your little game, Charles, I like it. Perhaps Clara'll like it, too, you young Machiavelli. Now don't pretend you didn't come to see her. Six thousand in, by Jove. I must sell out Harshaw as soon as I get to town. Bottom's sure to fall out of it. (*Enter CLARA with watering pot.*)

CLARA. Good morning, papa dear, (*kisses him.*) Why, Dr. Squillcox, are you here?

TWITTERS. As if you didn't expect him.

CLARA. How can you say such things, papa?

CHARLES. Yes, Mr. Twitters, it's most unjust—

CLARA. If I had expected anybody, should I have brought in this great, heavy watering-pot?

CHARLES. Can't I hold it Miss Clara? (*takes it.*)

CLARA. I was going to water my flowers in the garden.

TWITTERS. Go along, my dear: and go along with her, you rascal. (*Laughs. Exeunt CHARLES and CLARA laughing.*)

TWITTERS (*rubbing his hands*). There they go. It does my heart good to think that my little Clara has such a good fellow to look after her; and that I can act as the ways and means committee. I'll take care that their love shan't fly out of the window. (*Opens letter.*) Here's the plumber's bill. Old Faucet will be rolling in his carriage soon. If Charles gets tired of medicine I'll set him up as a plumber. (*Opens another letter.*) Clara's milliner's bill. Egad! how Charles' eyes would open, if they tried love in a cottage on his professional outcome. Hollo! What's this? Shabby looking letter addressed in a shabby hand. Another bill, I suppose. No. What's this? (*Reads.*) "Theophilus Twitters, Bloated Bondholder. I am a foe to capital and the Grand-master of a secret society organized to cripple said capital, to muzzle monopolists, and to elevate the horny-handed son of toil." You have a good-sized contract, my friend. "When the copartnership of Tollgate & Twitters engaged in their corner in sugar, and robbed the poor of the luxuries of a free breakfast-table, our society determined to foil you. As their agent, I secretly entered the warehouse in which your hoard of sugar was stored, and secreted in various spots amidst the innocent condiment no less than twelve pounds of arsenic. After having done this, I notified your partner, the aforesaid diabolical Tollgate, of my action, and apprised him that all the sugar must be destroyed,—else poison would be thrown broadcast upon the world. You, as his partner, are affected with notice of this. (As a foe to capital, I have incidentally been trained as a lawyer.) The aforesaid diabolical Tollgate, with your connivance,"—Damn law words. I hate 'em—"With your connivance sold the sugar. Through secret channels the deadly grains of arsenic are distilled into the veins of society. The blushing damsel, receiving taffy from her lover, curls up and dies. The fond mother, pouring out her children's cambric tea, gives them the black wine of death. Candy-shops are charnel-houses! Society gatherings are volcanos! Ice-cream leads to the grave! And all through you, most miserable of mortals, who lie soft and count your ill-gotten wealth."

(Enter MARY JANE with coffee. He starts to drink.) "But even you are not exempt from the insidious enemy. The very cup of coffee that you may now be raising to your lips may call you to judgment." (*Drops coffee cup.*) What sinful nonsense. I shouldn't give it a thought if it didn't charge my poor dead partner with such villany. And Tollgate was a Sunday-school superintendent. (Enter MARY JANE with breakfast.)

MARY JANE. The letter's mailed, sir.

TWITTERS. Letter? What do you know about the letter?

MARY JANE. Sure, you gave it to me, sir.

TWITTERS. No such thing. Ah, to be sure! How absurd to be so discomposed. So breakfast's ready?

MARY JANE (*arranging table*). Yes, sir.

TWITTERS (*after a short pause, during which he has fidgeted*). By the way, Mary Jane, you haven't happened to hear much illness about of late. Have you?

MARY JANE. Why, sir, there has been folks go off sudden.

TWITTERS. You don't say so? Who?

MARY JANE. Well, sir; there was poor Mr. Tollgate.

TWITTERS. Apoplexy—apoplexy, beyond all doubt. Caused by the success of our corner.

MARY JANE. Then, sir, there was my grandmother, only last week, sir.

TWITTERS. Yes, I remember. But I've remarked that that melancholy event has happened twenty-seven times in the course of the year. I infer that your grandfather was a Mormon.

MARY JANE. Which I consider that remark most unfeeling, sir. And what with waiting on the mother of the late Mrs. Twitters, sir, and getting two breakfasts for you, and having my own grandfather abused, sir, I cannot submit to it, sir.

TWITTERS. Leave the room, girl.

MARY JANE. Which I shall take pleasure in leaving, sir, this day week, sir. (*Exit.*)

TWITTERS (*playing with breakfast things*). All right. It's absurd to think of this matter. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred an anonymous letter is a lie, but if this should turn out to be the hundredth I should be a Borgia. Heavens. What a situation. Why, even my poor daughter would be blighted. I could never permit her to marry and to perpetuate a crime-stained race. I wonder what the effect of arsenic is. Happy thought. I'll look it up in my encyclopædia. Glad to put the thing to some use. (*Takes down the volume.*) A-r-t—a-r-s-e-n-i-c. That's it. (*Reads.*) "Arsenic is one of the most violent of the acrid poisons. Its use in medicine and toxicological properties are treated under medical jurisprudence." Damn it. Just my luck. (*Looks at bookcase again.*) My set stops at "Lam." Pooh! Pooh! Why, even if the whole thing were true, twelve pounds. (*Looks at letter.*) Yes, he says twelve pounds—in a whole warehouse full of sugar wouldn't do more than improve the complexion of the public. I should be a benefactor. (*Enter Charles and Clara.*)

CLARA. Is breakfast all ready, papa, dear? I'm dreadfully hungry.

TWITTERS. Quite ready, dear.

CHARLES. Where shall I put this? It's very heavy.

TWITTERS. Heavy?

CHARLES. Yes, you see it is quite full of water. I'm afraid of wetting the carpet, you see.

CLARA. Why! Sure enough! We forgot to water the flowers!

TWITTERS. Forgot it, eh? Young people have queer memories, nowadays. Put that confounded thing in the hall, Charles. You are a medical man. How do you account for the curious prevalence of sudden death?

CHARLES (*returning from hall door*). Why, I haven't thought much about it.

TWITTERS. The newspapers talk about arsenic in wall papers. Nonsense, don't you think so?

CHARLES (*soaring to professional fluency*). Not a bit of it. Arsenic is the most deadly of drugs.

TWITTERS. Oh, you don't say so?

CLARA. What a disagreeable subject! Come to breakfast, papa dear. (*At table.*)

TWITTERS. Stop, Clara, we are not ready for food; I am interested in this matter. How deadly is arsenic—how much would kill?

CHARLES. Well, in wall-papers it's one thing; in the stomach, it is another.

TWITTERS. Take stomachs. I'm interested.

CHARLES. It's only common prudence to have your wall-paper tested (*looking at paper*); I don't like that green.

TWITTERS. Confound it, sir; I'm talking about stomachs.

CLARA. Papa dear, aren't you ready?

TWITTERS. Don't interrupt us. Charles—how much arsenic will kill?

CHARLES. A deadly dose for an adult is five grains.

TWITTERS. How do you weigh it? How many grains to the pound?

CHARLES. Twenty grains make a scruple—there are three scruples in a dram—that's sixty grains—in an ounce there are eight drams—that makes four hundred and eighty—and in a pound there are twelve ounces—twelve times four hundred and eighty are five thousand seven hundred and sixty.

TWITTERS. Then a pound will kill—?

CHARLES. Five into five once—into seven, once and two over—into twenty-six, five times and one over—and into ten twice. A pound would kill about eleven hundred and fifty-two able-bodied men.

TWITTERS (*to himself*). Twelve times eleven hundred and—good heavens. (*Sinks into chair.*)

CLARA. Charles is going to breakfast with us, papa dear.

TWITTERS. Charles! What do you mean by speaking of Dr. Squillcox by his Christian name?

CLARA. Why—you do, papa dear.

TWITTERS. Yes; but I'm not a marriageable young woman.

CLARA (*to Charles*). You had better speak, dear.

CHARLES. Mr. Twitters—the fact is—

CLARA. Yes, papa; the fact is—

TWITTERS. The fact is, young man, that you have come here before cock-crow, pretending to bring the mail to me—gauzy pretext—

CHARLES. I assure you, Mr. Twitters, I did nothing of the sort.

CLARA. By no means, papa dear. He came to see me; and he is going to ask you—

TWITTERS. I see what he's at. I consider your behavior surreptitious, sir. What have you to recommend you?

CLARA. He has my love, papa dear. That's all *you* have but a little money. Now be a dear, good, sweet papa.

TWITTERS. Sweet! Oh—42,000 grains—I have your love, then?

CLARA. Why, yes, papa.

TWITTERS. Very good. I don't choose to share it. Your conduct is little better than robbery, sir. You ought to blush redder than the bottles that conceal the poverty of your stock in trade.

CHARLES. My calling is respectable, sir.

TWITTERS. Then follow its example in your conduct, sir.

CHARLES. I shall, sir. (*Going.*)

CLARA. Charles, are you going away?

CHARLES. Naturally.

TWITTERS. And naturally, sir, you won't expect to return?

CHARLES. Naturally not, sir. (*Exit.*)

TWITTERS (*aside*). There he goes; worthy young fellow. But while this arsenic is hanging over my head there must be no thought of love or marriage in this fated home. Clara, dear, don't let this trouble you.

CLARA. O, papa, I don't know which of you troubles me most. You are so harsh and Charles was so—so—

TWITTERS. Pusillanimous, Clara. A single rebuff was enough for him.

CLARA (*crying*). O, dear! O, dear!

TWITTERS (*patting her shoulder*). There, dear, there! Remember, as long as I live you have some one to love you.

CLARA. But it isn't the same thing.

TWITTERS. No, the honest love of a father is lasting—come to breakfast.

CLARA (*going to table sobbing*). T-two lumps in your coffee, papa?

TWITTERS (*with emphasis*). Great Heavens! No! (*Recovering himself.*) That has been my usual dose.

CLARA. Dose! (*Sobbing again.*) O dear! Poor Charles!

TWITTERS (*aside*). A deadly dose for an adult is five grains—twelve times eleven hundred and fifty-two—enough to kill twenty-five thousand women and children. The board of water commissioners are a choir of white-robed angels beside my partner if this is true. Why will you put so much sugar in your coffee, dear? You make it a perfect liqueur!

CLARA. I always had a sweet tooth.

TWITTERS. A sweet tooth leads through a heap of dentist's bills to a set of false ones. I can't have you eating these horrid sweet things, candies, sweet-meats, ices, and jams. Your dentist's bills ruin—(*he has pulled her coffee cup towards him, and put salt into it*).

CLARA. What are you doing with my coffee, papa?

TWITTERS. Putting salt in it; it's not coffee that hurts you, it's the mixture of coffee and sugar. I read somewhere that coffee and sugar together make leather.

CLARA. No, papa; tea and milk.

TWITTERS. Coffee and sugar! (*Aside.*) Of course the letter's a hoax. It doesn't disconcert me. But to think of my partner having a monument detailing his Christian virtues! He always passed the contribution box, and, now I think of it, he used to have a great deal of loose change of a Monday. Read me the paper, dear.

CLARA. I don't like reading aloud. The newspapers are so full of politics and murders and business and accidents.

TWITTERS. I regard the daily paper as a necessary part of every young girl's education. Here it is.

CLARA (*reading*). "Double hanging in Atlanta! Pernicious poisoning. A diabolical crime."

TWITTERS (*starting*). Eh!

CLARA (*reading*). "A man poisoned by lemonade administered by his wife. The post-mortem reveals distinct traces of arsenic in the stomach."

TWITTERS. Clara! Where was it?

CLARA. O, in Kalamazoo, or some such horrid western place.

TWITTERS. Kalamazoo! Great heavens!

CLARA. How can a horrid man in Kalamazoo concern us?

TWITTERS. In no way my dear. (*Aside.*) I must dissemble—go on.

CLARA (*reading*). "The unfortunate couple were well known in the highest social circles. The married life of the twain had been unmarred by a cloud. It seems most strange that a train of circumstantial evidence is wound around the unhappy wife, which points"—(*stops*). Papa, dear, how can a chain point.

TWITTERS. Continue your reading, flippant girl.

CLARA (*reading*). "Which points at her as the murderess. It seems that, with a noteworthy economy, she alone of the household had access to the sugar barrel." (*Turns and refolds paper.*)

TWITTERS (*aside*). The sugar barrel! In far-off Kalamazoo! That letter bears the stamp of truth.

CLARA (*having folded paper, reads*). "The lemonade was prepared with her own hands. Traces of arsenic were found in the glass from which the victim drank his last drink; and in the barrel of sugar, which had but just arrived from the highly respectable store of Spicer & Co., not less than half an ounce has already been discovered—" What

stupid stuff! Why, papa! What is the matter?

TWITTERS (*with his head on his hands, in agony*). Nothing, my dear nothing. It is so terrible to think of all that suffering (*Enter Hunker*).

HUNKER. Mr. Twitters, I believe.

TWITTERS. Yes, what do you want? (*Seizing and pocketing paper*.)

HUNKER. Your servant was not disposed to introduce me, so I take the liberty of introducing myself.

TWITTERS. I'm not well this morning, sir.

HUNKER (*sitting down*). Naturally enough. The morning news doesn't agree with you, I presume.

TWITTERS (*nervous*). I don't understand you.

HUNKER. I have a little business with you—rather private nature. You might prefer to have our young friend here leave the room.

CLARA (*rising with dignity*). I am going, papa.

HUNKER. Good day—Miss Twitters, I reckon—pleased to have met you. Hope to see more of you. (*Exit CLARA*.)

TWITTERS. And now, sir, who are you?

HUNKER. "A foe to capital, and the grand master of a society organized to cripple said capital, muzzle monopolists and elevate the horny-handed son of toil"—at your service, sir.

TWITTERS. Ah, you wrote me a letter this morning?

HUNKER. I did.

TWITTERS. The writers of anonymous letters are dealt with according to the law.

HUNKER. So are venders of poisoned food.

TWITTERS. I don't believe a word of your story.

HUNKER (*calmly and deliberately producing papers, which he turns over*). I have proofs that arsenic was in the sugar, that the sugar was sold by the copartnership of Tollgate & Twitters, that one if not both of said firm knew of this rather unpleasant adulteration. (*Twitters grabs at papers*.) Don't lose your self-control, Twitters, I never do. There are copies.

TWITTERS. Granting your proofs, then,—supposing the whole thing true, you, the poisoner, will suffer more than I, the victim.

HUNKER (*calmly*). I shall turn State's evidence.

TWITTERS (*sinking back in chair*). Good heavens!

HUNKER. See here, Twitters. I'm a fair minded man. In practically maintaining sound economic principles, I've concocted a scrape. We're both in it. We must back each other up.

TWITTERS. What do you want me to do?

HUNKER. Well, I ain't comfortable.

TWITTERS. Neither am I.

HUNKER. Naturally; you don't like the prospect of hanging, and I don't like the prospect of continuing to breakfast from early morning milk-cans, and to bone newspapers to keep me in tobacco. Now, you make me comfortable and I'll guarantee you shan't swing.

TWITTERS. Well, well, how much do you want?

HUNKER. I aint mean in money matters. Let's see—By Jove, Twitters, I like the looks of this box of yours. I'll make you a visit.

TWITTERS. I'm not joking, sir.

HUNKER. No more am I,—I have proofs; first, that arsenic was in the sugar; second—

TWITTERS. I must yield.

HUNKER. All right, Twitters. You're more intelligent than you look.

TWITTERS. I have a good back room.

HUNKER. I prefer a front one.

TWITTERS. The front one is mine.

HUNKER. Sorry to inconvenience you, I'm sure, but I can't put up with a back one.

TWITTERS (*aside*). Crimes do come home to roost with a vengeance! (*Aloud*.) Where is your trunk?

HUNKER. Would you believe it, Twitters, I've shoved up every thundering rag that ain't on my back. I'll borrow of you.

TWITTERS. This passes patience.

HUNKER. It's hard to bear; but your clothes are good, if they aint handsome. I aint proud. But proud or not, I want a bath. If you'll believe it, Twitters, I've not bathed since—but we won't be unpleasant and vulgar, will we?

TWITTERS. The servant will show you to the bath-room.

HUNKER. You'd better do it yourself, Twitters; I don't like to lose sight of you—not that you're so awful handsome to look at, but—you twig? Thanks, I'll sample your strong waters (*pouring brandy from decanter to goblet and drinking*). Where's the bath-room?

TWITTERS. This way.

HUNKER. All right. Now you treat me fair, and I'll treat you fair. (*Smacking his lips*.) I'm square. That's prime tippie. (*Exeunt*.)

CHARLES (*appearing at window*). Nobody's here. I must see Clara! (*Door opens*.) I wouldn't be seen. Twitters is capable of setting dogs on me. (*Dodges down. Enter CLARA*.)

CLARA. Papa! Is that horrid man gone? Papa?

CHARLES (*appearing again*). Hush!

CLARA (*starting and turning*). Oh!—It's you, and crawling through the window. Dr. Squillcox.



CHARLES. "Dr. Squillcox." O, Clara—come here.

CLARA (*approaching window*). I hate you. If you had really loved me you would have shown more courage with papa.

CHARLES. It was insane of me to ask a man for his daughter's hand before he had eaten his breakfast. (*Takes her hand.*) But it's all serene, little girl. I'll make it well. (*Kisses her.*)

CLARA. It doesn't make it well at all.

CHARLES. I have such an immense plan. You must be taken very ill, this afternoon. Your father will forget his dyspepsia in worrying over you. All remedies they give you must fail. Old Dr. Parkinson is away, and—

CLARA (*clapping her hands*). And papa will have to send for you. At your first powder—you mustn't give me pills—I can't take them—I'll get well immediately.

CHARLES. And your papa, delighted at my skill, will give your hand to your preserver.

CLARA. How clever you are, Charles! (*Noise without.*) Go away. Somebody's coming. (*Charles disappears.*)

(*Enter TWITTERS.*)

TWITTERS (*advancing thoughtfully, aside*). I wonder if the brand of Cain is perceptible upon my brow. To think that I should be the cause of all this suffering! That no day may pass without a death which proper investigation might lay at my door! That all my life must be passed with this terrible man. I cannot endure it! (*Sits down.*)

CLARA (*approaching him*). Why, papa, you look ill.

TWITTERS. Ill! Yes, this is a wicked world, Clara. I meant to strew your path with roses, to hide from you the villainy—

HUNKER (*without, shouting*). Towels, Twitters.

CLARA. O, dear! What is that?

TWITTERS (*rising*). It is the voice of fate. (*Calling.*) Coming, sir.

CLARA. What *do* you mean?

HUNKER (*without*). Found 'em! No matter!

TWITTERS. A gentleman is come to stay with me, dear; and while he is here, we shall have so much business together that I have been thinking that it might be well for you to visit your kind grandmother.

CLARA. But I don't want to. Grandma has horrid things to eat. Who is this gentleman?

TWITTERS. You saw him here, this morning.

CLARA. That horrid, dirty man!

TWITTERS. An old friend of my boyhood, Clara—a worthy man, whom the world has dog's-eared by hard usage. I am superior to prejudice, but I cannot expect you to be.

CLARA. I should hope not.

TWITTERS. So you had better go at once, dear. I'll send your things. He is rough, I know, but he has a gentle, kind heart—

HUNKER (*without*). I say, Twitters! Where are you? Damn you!

TWITTERS (*calling*). Here, sir. (*To Clara.*) Go away, dear, quickly.

(*Clara goes toward door. As she reaches it, Hunker appears and meets her, face to face. He is showily dressed in clothes of Twitters', somewhat too small.*)

HUNKER (*bowing*). Much obliged, miss; you were coming to show me the way, I 'spose. I've found it, you see. I heard your lovely voice.

TWITTERS. My daughter was going out, Mr. Hunker.

HUNKER. I guess she'd better not. It ain't a nice day out.

CLARA. I beg your pardon, sir.

HUNKER. Twitters, this young woman mustn't go out. Do you twig?

CLARA. Good-bye, papa.

TWITTERS. You had better stay, dear. (*Clara stops, amazed.*)

HUNKER. So I think. (*Drawing long breath.*) I feel like a new man, and I'm going to give the new man a drink. (*Pouring out brandy again.*) What's her name, Twitters?

TWITTERS. My daughter is named Clara, sir.

HUNKER. Lovely name. Here's to Clara (*drinking*). Sit down; we'll soon be pals.

TWITTERS. Sit down, dear. (*Clara sits amazed.*)

HUNKER. Two young people like us can't be thrown together in a house without liking each other pretty well?

CLARA (*to Twitters*). I cannot submit to this, papa.

TWITTERS (*to Clara*). We should never take offence when none is meant, dear.

HUNKER. I'm an adventurous cuss, Miss Clara—just on from Arizona to float a gold mine on the eastern market. Going to let Twitters in at bed-rock prices—eh, Twitters?

TWITTERS. Yes, yes, of course.

HUNKER. We had hard old sledding on the plains, at times, Miss Clara.

CLARA. Indeed, sir!

HUNKER. Chased by Indians twenty miles, riding with Custer—you know Custer? Seventeen of them miles I had a bullet in my leg (*starting to pull up his trouser leg*)—want to see the scar?

CLARA (*with terror*). No! No!

HUNKER (*pleased with himself*). O, we're kindred spirits; we'll soon be friends. I like your New England country. As Lady Franklin said to me, when we was taking supper together on the Oregon steamer. She was goin' to hunt up John's bones in Sitka, where I kept a hotel—"Beans is a benevolent institution, Mr. Hunker," says she. "You're right, Lady F.," says I. Now speak up, if you're talked to death, Miss Clara.

CLARA. I have nothing to say.

HUNKER. All right. I can talk right along,—keep it up forever. By George, it would be funny if you and I should conclude to keep it up forever—eh, Clara?

CLARA. I don't understand this man, papa.

TWITTERS. He is a rough diamond, dear.

CLARA. Then he ought to be "cut."

HUNKER. Why, make a match of it.

CLARA (*aside*). O dear. I shall be ill, really. I must send for Charles. (*Aloud*.) Papa, I don't feel well.

TWITTERS (*starting*). Eh, my dear! What's the matter?

CLARA. I have a head-ache.—

HUNKER. Have you been eating sugar?

TWITTERS (*agonized*). I fear so.

HUNKER. Does your throat burn?

CLARA (*faintly*). Yes, yes, I want to lie down (*they lead her to sofa*).

HUNKER. My God! It's the symptoms—see what you've done!

TWITTERS. I, you miserable man! Behold your work!

HUNKER. No time for fooling, Twitters. I know the antidote. I'll run to the nearest apothecary—it's too bad, I vow! Here, give me sixty cents. (*Exit*.)

TWITTERS. There you are, my poor child! (*Gets towel, which he wets with cologne and puts to her head*.) Does that help you?

CLARA. O papa. It doesn't make me any better! Send for the doctor!

TWITTERS. Yes, yes. (*Aside*.) If the doctor should discover poisoning! If it should be traced to me!

CLARA (*faintly*). Dr. Squillcox—the other one's away.

MOTHER (*without*). Where is Twitters? I will see him. (*Enter Mother*.)

MOTHER. You are here—I entered the hushed chamber where all that was mortal of the sainted Elijah Paddy was lying—

TWITTERS. Don't talk of death.

MOTHER. Overcome by emotion, I averted my head, and blindly removing the brown paper wrapping, I placed upon the heart of the departed what I thought to be a floral tribute—a lovely anchor, expressive of hope and christian resignation—

TWITTERS. Can't you see that poor Clara is ill? Be still, woman.

MOTHER. Who insults me by calling me woman? I stood with averted face. A stir of excitement thrilled the hushed and weeping assembly as my offering was seen. Touched by this appreciation of my tribute, I turned to take a last view of all that was earthly of the departed—there, amid a heap of roses and camellias lay those odious *boots*. (*Pulling them from under her cloak, holding them at arm's length and throwing them down*.) Without a word I fled. I am undone forever.

TWITTERS. Say no more of boots. Look at my suffering child and hold your peace.

MOTHER. I need no word from you to succor my departed Sarah's child (*walking towards the couch. She snatches at TWITTERS' hand*). Your allopathic doses are killing her (*producing phial*). These pellets will cure her (*starts to give CLARA pills*).

TWITTERS. No sugar pills! For heaven's sake, no sugar!

MOTHER (*severely*). These are rendered efficacious by an infinitesimal reduction of arsenic.

TWITTERS (*in agony*). Give them to me. (*Struggling with her*.)

MOTHER. Prejudiced monster. Like cures like. (*They struggle for the phial. Twitters wrenches it away and flings it into the fire-place. Mother stands panting with rage*.)

(*Enter an Officer of the Law*.)

OFFICER. Theophilus Twitters?

TWITTERS (*excited*). Yes, what is it?

OFFICER. I arrest you, in the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

TWITTERS (*agonized*). The blow is fallen!

MOTHER (*between horror and joy*). O that I should have lived to see this day! (*Crossing to CLARA*.) My poor child, your mother's mother will care for you, while your sinful parent expiates his crimes!

CLARA (*aside*). Why doesn't Charles come?

TWITTERS (*imploring*). Officer, a few moments with my suffering child.

OFFICER. Couldn't think of it. Get your hat.

(*Enter HUNKER, hastily, followed by CHARLES*.)

HUNKER (*recognizing OFFICER, aside*). Thunder. There's a copp. (*Aloud, with tremor*.) What's wanted?

OFFICER (*sententiously*). Twitters.

CHARLES (*coming forward*). And this man, too—

HUNKER (*imploring*). Shut up! I'll fix things!

CHARLES. A few weeks ago he came to me and offered me a large sum for twelve pounds of arsenic—to kill rats, he said, but—

CLARA (*who has risen in her excitement*). But, what?

TWITTERS (*trembling with excitement*). But what, Charles?

CHARLES. But that he might not go elsewhere—for I saw that his end was crime—I sold him *powdered sugar*!

TWITTERS. Powdered sugar! A mountain has rolled off my breast! You're an angel, Charles!

HUNKER (*enraged*). You're a damned mean apothecary!

TWITTERS. Officer, you don't want me now?  
 OFFICER. I don't see how all this makes any difference in the suit of Grimsby *et al. v. Twitters*,—criminal libel.  
 TWITTERS. Grimsby & Weeper!  
 OFFICER. Them's the people. You called them rascally swindlers.  
 MOTHER. The makers of my tribute.  
 TWITTERS. They didn't like my letter?  
 OFFICER. That's so. But you're a stampy old duffer. This gentleman (*pointing to CHARLES*) will go surety on your bond?  
 HUNKER. Good day, gents and ladies (*starts to go. To CLARA*). Now our match is off, you've got well putty quick.  
 Good day.  
 OFFICER. See here (*touching his shoulder*).  
 HUNKER. I aint libelled nobody.  
 OFFICER. Dry up! Come along with me. I want your phiz in the rogues' gallery.  
 HUNKER (*putting hat on one side*). I guess I can screw it up so as you won't know it again. I say, Twitters, I've made a suit of clothes out of this, anyhow. (*Exeunt.*)  
 TWITTERS (*to CLARA*). Ah, you sly puss! Charles was the medicine you needed! Here, Charles, she's your's and half my fortune with her. Thank heaven, I'm not a blear-eyed Borgia, chumming with a prison-bird.  
 CLARA. I don't understand you, papa.  
 TWITTERS. No reason you should, my dear. Everything is bright and happy, excepting that I shall lose my little girl and be left all alone.  
 MOTHER (*embracing him*). I will take her place, Theophilus. The past shall be forgotten. I will never desert the lonely husband of my departed Sarah.  
 TWITTERS (*shaking her off. To himself*). I shall have to send for Hunker.

*Curtain.*

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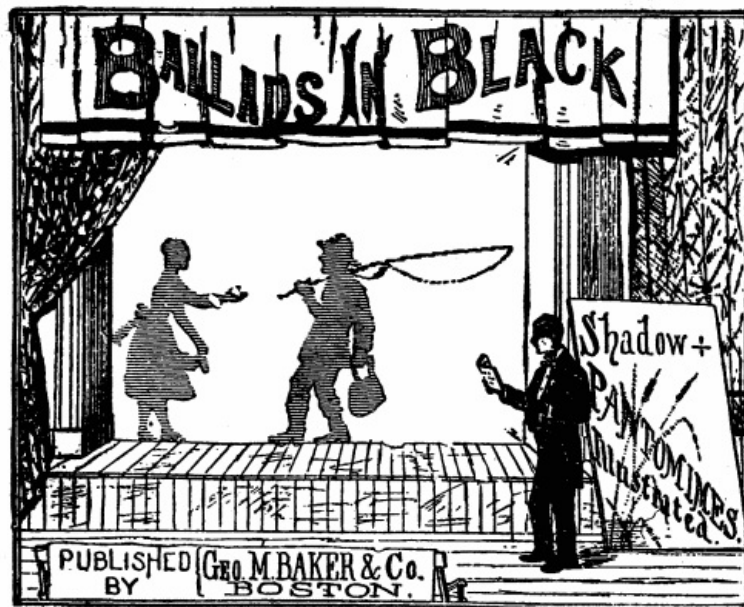
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