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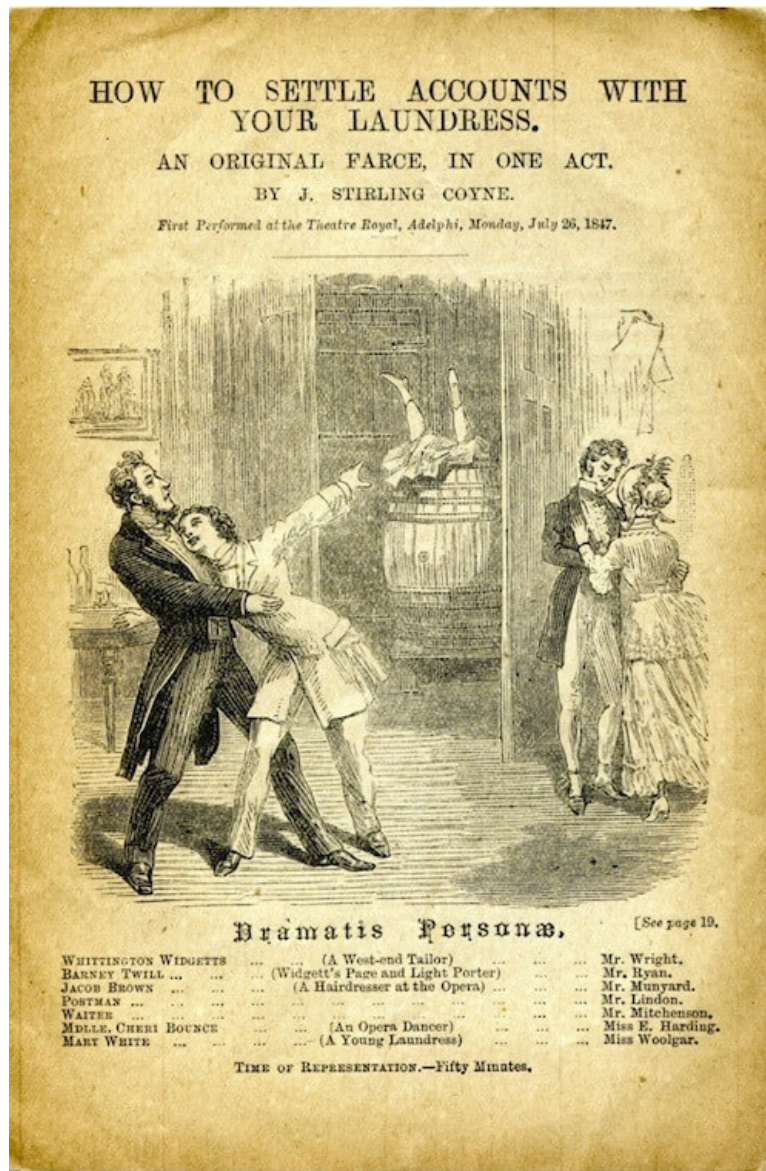
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HOW TO SETTLE ACCOUNTS WITH YOUR LAUNDRESS: AN ORIGINAL FARCE, IN ONE ACT ***



HOW TO SETTLE ACCOUNTS WITH YOUR LAUNDRESS.

AN ORIGINAL FARCE, IN ONE ACT.

BY J. STIRLING COYNE.

First performed at the Theatre Royal, Adelphi, Monday, July 26, 1847.

Dramatis Personæ

WHITTINGTON WIDGETTS	(A West-end Tailor)	Mr. Wright.
BARNEY TWILL	(Widgett's Page and Light Porter)	Mr. Ryan.
JACOB BROWN	(A Hairdresser at the Opera)	Mr. Munyard.
POSTMAN		Mr. Lindon.
WAITER		Mr. Mitchenson.
MDLLE. CHERI BOUNCE	(An Opera Dancer)	Miss E. Harding.
MARY WHITE	(A Young Laundress)	Miss Woolgar.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—Fifty minutes.

WHITTINGTON WIDGETTS.—*First dress:* Blue coat; white vest; gray plaid trousers. *Second dress:* Green coat; pink vest. *Third dress:* Black coat.

BARNEY TWILL.—Green page's suit.

JACOB BROWN.—Puce frock coat; blue vest; nankeen trousers.

MDLLE. CHERI BOUNCE.—Fashionable silk dress; blue satin visite, trimmed with lace; pink bonnet.

MARY WHITE.—*First dress:* Pink print dress; green shawl; and straw bonnet. *Second dress:* Blue blouse; drab leggings; red cravat; and fancy cap. *Third dress:* Drab paletot; white vest; and trousers.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

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

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

R. RC. C. LC. L.

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

HOW TO SETTLE ACCOUNTS WITH YOUR LAUNDRESS.

SCENE.—*A Tailor's Show-room, Jermyn-street, handsomely fitted up with cheval glass, large round table in centre, fashionable chairs, &c. A dummy figure, dressed in the extreme mode, near window. Articles of gentlemen's attire exhibited in window, L. U. E. Door of entrance to street, L. S. E. Fireplace and chimney-glass, R. E. Door to Widgetts' chamber, R. S. E. Large pair of folding-doors, C. F., opening towards the stage; beyond these doors, a passage to the kitchen, in which stands a stillion, with a water-butt standing on it. At the end of this passage, the door of the kitchen. A round table, C., with writing materials and lighted candle upon it. A print of the fashions and tailor's patterns cut in brown paper on the wall. Table at back, L., on which is a table lamp. Another table at back, R., on which is a bottle of brandy and glasses. TWILL discovered brushing the coat on the dummy figure, and singing a verse of an Irish song. A postman's knock at door, L.*

Twill. Whist! I'll bet a pinny that's the post.

(Runs to door and opens it.)

POSTMAN *appears.*

Post. Mr. Widgetts!

(Gives letter to Twill.)

Twill. Thank you, sir. Maybe you've got a bit of a letter for me, from my poor mother in Ireland? I'm not particular—the first that comes to hand in the bundle will do.

Post. No, I haven't one for you.

Twill. Thank you, sir. Maybe you'd have one the next time. Good-bye, sir.

[Postman goes away. Twill, reading the address on the letter.

"Whittington Widgetts, Esquire." Ow wow! Esquire! the devil a ha'porth less. "Whittington Widgetts, Esquire, Hierokosma, Jarmyn Street." Hierokosma! That's French for a tailor's shop. By the Attorney-General 'twould give a man a headache in his elbow to write such a cramp word. *(Smells the letter.)* Why then it smells elegant intirely. *(Goes to door, R., and enters while speaking.)* Mr. Widgetts, here's a letter for you, sir.

(Returns immediately from the room, re-commences his song, and begins to brush the figure again. A church clock in the neighbourhood strikes eight.)

Wid. Twill!

(*Speaking from the door of chamber, R.*)

Twill. There, listen to that row. That master of mine will persist in calling me Twill, though he knows my name is Barney Toole, because Twill, he says, is genteeler.

Wid. What o'clock is that, Twill?

Twill. Eight o'clock, sir.

Wid. Put up the shutters.

Twill. What the devil can he mean? We never shut until nine o'clock.

Enter WIDGETTS from chamber, R., kissing a note which he holds.

Wid. Well, don't you hear me? Put up the shutters and close the establishment, directly.

Twill. Of course, sir. Never say it twice.

(*Twill runs out by door, L., and is seen putting up the window shutters outside.*)

Wid. This night I devote to the tender union of love and lobsters. The adorable Ma'amselle Cheri Bounce, the ballet dancer, at last consents to partake a little quiet supper with me here this evening. I must read her charming note once more. (*Reads.*) "Ma'amselle Cheri Bounce presents compliments to Mr. Whittington Widgetts, will feel happy to sup with Mr. W. W. this evening. Ma'amselle C. B. fears that female notions don't correspond with supping with a single gent, but lobsters is stronger than prudence, therefore trusts to indulgence; at nine o'clock precise. P.S.—I'll come in my blue visite and my native innocence, and hopes you'll treat them with proper delicacy." Glorious! Angelic creature! (*Kisses the letter and puts it in his waistcoat pocket.*) Oh! Widgetts, you lucky rascal, to have the happiness of a private and confidential supper with that magnificent girl, whose image has never left my mind since the evening I danced with her at the Casino. (*Calls.*) Twill!

Twill. (*entering from door, L.*) Sir?

Wid. You must run directly to the tavern, over the way, and order them to send a roast fowl and lobster, in the shell, here, at nine o'clock.

Twill. Roast fowl, sir?

Wid. And lobster. He—hem! I expect a particular party to sup with me.

Twill. Coorse you'll want cigars, sir?

Wid. No. The party, Twill, is a lady and don't smoke.

Twill. A lady! Tare my agers, sir. Does the lady bring the lady's maid with her?

Wid. Don't be impertinent, Twill, but listen to me. The party I expect is Ma'amselle Cheri Bounce, a splendid creature, who dances on a limited income, with the strictest regard to propriety, at the Opera House, and gives lessons to private pupils in the *pokar* and the waltz *ah do tong*s.

Twill. Whoo! She must be a switcher. (*Going.*) I'll run directly, sir.

Wid. Stay! I must make myself attractive for the interesting occasion. Give me the coat that has just been finished for Sir Chippin Porrage, and the waistcoat that's to be sent home to-morrow morning for the Honourable Cecil Harrowgate's wedding. (*Twill hands a dress coat and waistcoat from the table, L.*) I'll give them an air of gentility by wearing them this evening. That will do. There, be off now.

Twill. Ha, ha! By the powers o' war, when you get them on your back, sir, you'll be like Mulligan's dog, your own father wouldn't know you.

Widgetts carries the coat and waistcoat into his bed-room, R., Twill is going towards door, L., when MARY WHITE, the laundress, enters, carrying a basket of clothes under her arm.

Mary. Here, Twill, take my basket, good chap. Is master at home?

Twill. (*Takes basket.*) Yes, he *is* at home. (*Aside.*) Take my basket, good chap. Well, there's no bearing the impudence of the lower orders. (*Sets down basket, R., and calls at door, R.*) Please, sir, here's the laundress come for your clothes. (*Crosses to door, L. Aside.*) Good chap!

[*Exit, R.*

Wid. (*entering, R., aside.*) She always comes at an awkward crisis. (*Mary takes off her shawl and sits, L.*) Mary, my dear, you're rather late this evening.

Mary. Oh dear, yes! I've been half over the town for my customers' washing, and I'm almost tired to death, but I left yours for last, that we might have a comfortable

chat together. Stop a minute though till I take off my clogs.

[*She goes into the kitchen passing through the folding-doors.*

Wid. (Apart.) The poor creature loves me to distraction, but she's painfully familiar; she forgets that our positions are materially altered since I was a journeyman tailor in a two pair back, struggling to make love and trousers for the small remuneration of fifteen shillings a week. Mary White is an uncommon nice girl—as a laundress, but my sentiments is changed respecting her as a wife.

MARY WHITE *re-enters and comes down, L.*

Mary. Now, Widgy, dear— Oh, good gracious, what a love of a waistcoat you've on! Let me look at it, do? Well, it's a real beauty.

Wid. Stylish, eh? The last Paris touch.

Mary. You used not to wear such waistcoats as that when you lived in Fuller's Rents.

Wid. Oh, no, no! Ha, ha! (*Aside.*) I wish she'd cut Fuller's Rents.

Mary. Do you know, Widgy, I don't think you're at all improved since you fell in for that fortune, by a legacy you never expected. When you lived in Fuller's Rents you used to walk out with me on a Sunday. You never walk with me at all now.

Wid. Walking's vulgar, my dear.

Mary. And you sometimes used to take me at half-price to the theatres.

Wid. Theatres is low, my dear.

Mary. And you remember how we used to go together to Greenwich, with a paper of ham sandwiches in my basket, and sit under the trees in the park, and talk, and laugh—law! how we used to laugh to be sure!—and then you used to talk of love and constancy and connubial felicitude in a little back parlour, and a heap of beautiful things.

Wid. (Aside.) A heap of rubbish.

Mary. And you know, Widgy, dear, when we enter that happy state—

Wid. What state do you allude to, Miss White?

Mary. The marriage state, of course.

Wid. Oh, indeed. Ah!

Mary. You don't forget, I hope, that I have your promissory note on the back of twenty-nine unpaid washing bills to make me your lawful wife. (*Produces several papers.*) There they are—and there's the last of them. (*Reads.*) "Six months after date I promise to marry Miss Mary White." There, sir, you're due next Monday.

Wid. Am I! Then I'm afraid I sha'n't be prepared to take myself up. I'll let myself be protested.

Mary. No, you sha'n't; you've been protested often enough. I can't be put off any longer, and understand me, Mr. Widgetts, I *won't* neither.

Wid. (Aside.) There's a savage hymeneal look in her eye that makes me shiver in my Alberts. I must soothe her a little or I shall have a scene. Why, Mary, my dear, now don't be angry, you know it's one of my jokes.

Mary. Well, you'd better not try any more of them, for I don't like them. No woman does.

Wid. No, of course, no woman does. Ha, ha, ha! Quite proper too, my dear.

Mary. Well, now that matter's settled, I'll go and collect your soiled things, for it's getting late.

Wid. Do so, Mary; you'll find them in my room as usual. (*Sits at table, L. C.*) I'll make out the list as you call them out. (*Mary White enters room, R., and Widgetts prepares to write.*) She's resolved to make me her victim and I don't know how to get rid of her. I'd give—

Mary. (Inside.) Four shirts.

Wid. (Writes.) Four shirts. She's a perfect treasure at shirt buttons; but what is shirt buttons to a bosom that beats for another.

Mary. (Inside.) One false front.

Wid. (Writes.) One false front. She'd make a comfortable little wife if she only had

—

Mary. (Inside.) A pair of white trousers.

Wid. (Writes.) A pair of white trousers. Ah! I wore those ducks at the Casino last Wednesday, and Ma'amselle Cheri Bounce observed, while I was handing her a glass of champagne— Ecod, 'tis well I recollected it—I've forgotten to order champagne

for my supper. I must run over to the tavern myself and tell them to send some.

[*Snatches up his hat and exit, L.*]

Mary. (*Entering with the white waistcoat worn by Widgetts at first, and a note in her hand.*) Well, you're a pretty careless fellow, to leave your letters in your waistcoat pocket. Where is he gone to? (*Examines the note curiously. Reads.*) "Whittington Widgetts, Esq." It's a woman's hand. I've a good mind to read it. I've no secrets from him and he has none from me—or, at least he oughtn't to—so it can be no harm. (*Opens note and reads hastily.*) "Ma'amselle Cheri Bounce"—Ah!—"compliments—happy to sup with Mr. W. W. this evening—female notions—single gent—lobsters is stronger than prudence—therefore trusts to indulgence, at nine o'clock precise." Oh, the minx! (*Reads.*) "P.S.—I'll come in my blue visite and my native innocence." Oh, Widgetts, the false deceitful wretch, to deceive me and wash out all his promises; to wring my heart and mangle my affections like that. (*Sobbing.*) But I—I—don't care not a pin's point; no, I despise him and hate him worse than poison, and I'll—I'll—I'll—tell him so. (*Sobbing.*) I'll—I'll—

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Enter JACOB BROWN, *L. door.*

Brown. (*Angrily.*) Where's Widgetts! I want to see Widgetts.

Mary. Then you want to see a good-for-nothing fellow.

Brown. Exactly, and I shouldn't mind adding that I consider him an numbug.

Mary. A wretch!

Brown. Most decidedly.

Mary. A puppy!

Brown. Not a doubt of it. You see we're unanimous in our verdict. That man, ma'am, has been a *reptile* in my path, a *wiper* to all *my* hopes, and an *adder* to all my woes; he has lacerated my heart and singed the tender buds of young affection here.

(*Lays his hands on his bosom.*)

Mary. Ah! What has he done?

Brown. He has *done me*, ma'am—*me*, Brown; that's what he's done. Cut me out with Ma'amselle Cheri Bounce.

Mary. Cheri Bounce! Ah! (*Aside.*) She that's to sup to-night with Widgetts.

Brown. I'm an 'airdresser, ma'am, my name's Brown, and I've a professional engagement at the Opera House, where I cultivate romance and ringlets amongst the ladies of the ballet. There I first beheld the lovely Cheri Bounce, the very image of the wax Wenus in my shop window. I loved her, not for her foreign grace, but for her native hair. Oh, she had such a head of real hair; and, oh, the showers of tears and the bottles of Macassar oil that I've poured upon it nobody would believe! Well, I toasted her for two years regularly, and at length she consented to become *Brown*. Well, we were to have been married, I had bought my wedding suit, when this fellow Widgetts, came to take the curl out of my happiness. We quarrelled about him last Saturday, and grew so warm that we've been cool ever since. But that's not all. This very day, I heard that she had accepted an invitation to sup with him to-night; but I'll prevent *that*; he shall fight me—one of us must fall—let him choose his own weapons—curling irons if he likes.

Mary. Don't be rash, Brown. Widgetts has deceived *me* and wronged *you*; we must take a better way of being revenged on him.

Brown. How? What way? Tell me! I'll do anything to be down on Widgetts.

Mary. Then you must assist me in a scheme I've just thought of. Here, carry this stuffed gentleman into the kitchen there.

(*Pointing to dummy figure.*)

Brown. This chap! Come along, old fellow. (*Takes him up.*) Why he's a regular railway speculator—nothing but a man of straw.

Mary. (*Taking a gown and other articles of female attire out of her basket.*) Aye, here's a gown, petticoat, and stockings—(*takes a pair of green boots out of her pocket*)—and a pair of green boots. Now, Brown, you must dress the figure in these clothes.

(*Gives him clothes.*)

Brown. Dress him in these! Why, bless you, I don't know how. I'm not a lady's maid.

Mary. Oh, never mind; you'll manage very well! There, make haste, and do as I tell you.

Brown. Well, I'm only made to order, so I'll try and do my best.

[Exit through the folding-doors into the passage, and then through the door beyond into kitchen.

Mary. (*Sits at table, R. C.*) Now to write to Widgetts and tell him of my melancholy end. (*Writes and reads.*) "Base man,—I have discovered the truth of your falsity, and know all about the lobsters and the cretur that's to sup with you to-night. Oh, Widgetts, once, you swore to love none but Mary *White*; but now, your vows is *blew* to the winds. I sha'n't trouble you no more with my *mangled* feelings, for I'm going to drown myself in the water-butt in your kitchen; where you'll find me. Adieu, Widgetts! I forgive you; but I know that my ghost and them lobsters will sit heavy on your stomach to-night. So no more at present from your departed—MARY WHITE."

Brown. (*Coming into the passage from the kitchen and showing the figure dressed in the clothes given him by Mary.*) Here she is. Will she do?

Mary. Oh! beautifully! Ha, ha, ha, ha! I can't help laughing at the droll figure I cut. (*Folds and directs the letter.*) There lies the train that's to blow up Widgetts. (*Rises.*) Now, Brown, we must pop her head downwards into the water-butt.

Brown. Well, that's easily done.

Mary. (*Widgetts heard singing in the street.*) Hark! I hear Widgetts coming. Quick, we must get out by the back door quietly.

[Mary White exits into the passage, and closes the folding-doors after her.

Enter WIDGETTS by street door, L.

Wid. I've ordered the champagne—these opera girls all drink champagne, when they can get it. I wonder is *she* here still. (*Looks into chamber, R.*) Ah, bravo! She's gone. (*Sees the letter on table, C.*) Ah, a letter—for me? (*Opens it carelessly, starts, and reads to himself.*) Oh, oh, oh! What? (*Reads.*) "Mary White—I'm going to drown myself in the water-butt, where you'll find me." Gracious powers! "Adieu, Widgetts, I forgive you." Poor dear soul. "But my ghost, and them lobsters will sit heavy on your stomach to-night." Horrible idea! It can't be true—she'd never go to commit such a catastrophe in my establishment. Make a coroner's inquest of herself in my private water-butt, when the Thames is open to all! No, she's only said so to frighten me. (*Throws letter on the floor and goes to folding-doors.*) Why Mary, Mary, my dear, don't be foolish! Ha, ha, ha, ha! I know it's one of your jokes. Ha, ha! Little rogue! Ha! ha! Ha! ha! (*Throws open folding-doors and discovers the dummy figure, which has been dressed in female garments, with the legs and part of the dress sticking out of the water-butt, a pair of women's green boots on the feet of the figure. Widgetts totters back, horrified at the sight.*) Oh, oh, oh! She done it. She's there, with her legs sticking out of the water-butt, and her green Sunday boots on her feet—and the vital spark extinct. Oh, it's too dreadful a sight for human feelings them legs, and them green boots. (*Returns, and closes the folding-doors.*) What an awful sensation 'twill make when it's found out; they'll have my *head* in all the print shops, and my *tale* in all the newspapers—I shall be brought out at half the theatres too. They'll make *three* shocking acts of one fatal act at the Victoria, and they'll have the real water and water-butt at the Surrey. (*Rises.*) What's to be done? I'm in a desperate state of mind, and feel as if I could take my own measure for an unmade coffin.

Twill. (*Who has entered at the last words.*) I've ordered it, sir, for nine precisely.

Wid. (*Starts.*) Ordered it? What?

Twill. The fowl and the lobster in the shell.

Wid. Oh, ha! I was thinking of another *shell*. Ha, ha, ha, ha! Light the lamp, Twill. (*With forced gaiety.*) We'll have a jolly night. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

"Old King Cole was a jolly old soul, and a jolly old soul was he;
He called for his pipe, and he called for his bowl,
And he called for his fiddlers three."

Twill. Ay, master, that's the way to drown old care.

Wid. Drown who, sir? Do you mean, sir, that anyone is drowned in this establishment?

Twill. Me, sir, not I, sir—I only—

Wid. Go and lay the table for supper. (*Twill picks up Mary White's letter from the floor, twists it into an allumette, and lighting it at the candle, lights with it the lamp on table at back. Widgetts walking about in a state of agitation and endeavouring to sing.*) It's an awful business; but at all events, they can't charge me with the deed. I have her letter to prove she made away with herself; *that* will clear me. (*Searches his pockets hastily.*) Where is it? What have I done with it? (*Looking about the floor.*) Eh, no, no! Twill, Twill, have you seen a letter lying about here?

Twill. Letter! I found a piece of crumpled paper on the floor, that I've lighted the lamp with; there's a bit of it left though.

(Gives him a fragment of the burnt letter)

Wid. (Glances hastily at it.) Oh, heivings, you've lighted the lamp, and snuffed out the candle of my precious existence!

Twill. Why, what's the matter, Mr. Widgetts? You are going to faint. Stop, till I'll fetch you a glass of water from the water-butt.

Wid. (Interposing to prevent Twill going to the kitchen.) Water! Forbear!

Twill. Bless me, how dreadful you look.

Wid. Do I? Ah, very likely! I've been seized with a sudden swimming in the water-butt—the head—the head, I mean.

Twill. By my sowl, I see how it is—the murder's out.

Wid. (Collaring him.) Murder—what murder do you allude to? Who's done it, sir? Speak!

Twill. Asy, Mr. Widgetts—asy, sir—sure I know you've been taking a drop too much.

Wid. A drop! (Aside.) The word puts me in a cold perspiration. Oh, ay! Ha, ha, ha! You may go, Twill; I sha'n't want you any longer. Stop! You haven't had any enjoyment lately; there's an order for the Adelphi; go there, my boy, and be happy. (Gives him a card.)

Twill. Oh, thank you, sir. May be I'm not a lucky boy.

[Exit Twill hastily, L.]

Wid. Now he's gone, I can reflect upon my terrible situation. *She* must be removed. But how? That's the point.

He stands, buried in thought, as MARY WHITE, disguised as a boy, wearing an old blouse, enters.

Mary. Aei—aei—yoo—

Wid. Eh! Who are you? What do you want?

Mary. E-eh? You must speak up, I'm rather hard of hearing.

Wid. (Bawling.) I say, what do you want?

Mary. I'm Mary White, the laundress's, young man, and I'm come to carry home her basket of clothes.

Wid. The devil! (Speaking very loud.) She's gone, my good fellow—she's been gone these two hours.

Mary. Two hours! Well, I'm in no hurry, I can stop. But I may as well eat my supper while I'm waiting. I've got a plummy slice of ham in my pocket—(pulls a crust of bread and a slice of ham wrapped in a play-bill, from her pocket)—and a play-bill too, for a table-cloth. (Spreading bill on table.) I think that's coming it rather genteel. (Takes a clasp knife out of her pocket.) Fond of ham, old fellow?

Wid. (At the opposite side of table.) Why, you impudent young vagabond, you don't mean to say you're agoing to sup here? Be off, and be damn'd to you.

Mary. Well, you *are* a regular brick, and I don't mind if I do take some of your pickles.

Wid. (Bawls.) Zounds! I say, you mustn't sup here.

Mary. Mustn't sup here. (Rises.) Why didn't you say so at once? Never mind, I'll go into the kitchen, and take it there. (Going.)

Wid. (Alarmed.) To the kitchen! (Holds her.) Not for the world. You quite misunderstood me. Don't disturb yourself. Sit down, do. (Pushes her again into the chair. Aside.) What's to become of me? I'd pitch him into the street, only I'm afraid of making a disturbance. There's no making him hear. Ecod! I know what I'll do; I'll run and borrow the speaking-trumpet that I saw this morning hanging at Smith, the broker's, door, and speak to him through *that*. (Going, returns.) Stay! The devil might tempt him to peep into the kitchen, I'll lock the door.

[Locks the folding-door, goes through pantomime, expressive of sorrow for his victim in the water-butt, and exit, L.]

Mary. (Jumping up and laughing.) Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho, ho! Oh, dear, never was anything managed so cleverly. Ha, ha, ha, ha! (Throwing off cap and neckerchief.) To think that he didn't know me; and what a rage he was in. Well, now I'm ready for him in another character. (Takes off her leggings and blouse, and appears dressed as a young man of fashion. Surveys herself in the cheval-glass.) Yes, it will do—it will do—a very smart little fellow, not extensive, but uncommonly well got up. These were the clothes that poor Brown got to be married in; they fit me to a nicety. (Knock at door, L.) Come in.

Enter two WAITERS, L., carrying tray with supper, covered dishes, plates, bottles, &c.

Wai. Supper, sir, ordered by Mr. Widgetts.

Mary. Supper! Oh, yes! All right. Mr. Widgetts is out, but he'll be back presently; leave it on this table if you please. (*Waiter places tray on table, R., back.*) There, that will do! Plates, knives, and forks. All right! You need not wait, young man.

Wai. Thank you, sir. Anything else, sir?

Mary. No; everything is beautiful, thank you.

Wai. Thank you, sir. Good night, sir.

Mary. Good night.

[*Exit Waiters, L. Mary looks under the covers.*]

Lobsters, roast fowl, kidneys. Ah, the ungrateful wretch never asked me to such a supper; but never mind. Hark, I hear him returning.

[*She throws the blouse, hat, and gaiters, into the clothes-basket and carries all into the chamber, R.*]

Wid. (*Entering, L., and shouting through speaking-trumpet.*) Now, young fell—low, I sa—a—ay! Hey, he's gone and the coast's clear! (*Sees supper-tray.*) Oh! What! They've sent the supper from the tavern. I quite forgot it. Dear me, this dreadful affair has so upset me and given me such a turn that I doubt I'll never come straight again. What will Ma'amselle Cheri Bounce think of me? I dare say she's been here and gone? Everybody's gone but my interesting victim. Ah, she's still there, standing, with all her imperfections, on her head in the water-butt! Well, I suppose everyone has his lot, but mine's a lot I don't know how to dispose of. I must remove the body from the establishment at all events, and I'll do it now, while the house is still. (*Goes to folding-doors and puts key in the lock.*) I haven't strength to open the door with them green boots kicking at my conscience! Courage, Widgetts—courage! Be a man—though you are but a tailor. Stay! I'll take a thimbleful of brandy first. (*Takes bottle from table and pours out a glass, which he drinks.*) Ah, that's a reviver. (*Drinks and comes down.*) Betts has raised the standard of British spirit in my heart. (*Drinks.*) Well, we all want comfort in this miserable world. (*Drinks.*) There's poor Mary White gone on a weeping and wailing voyage to that bourne from whence no traveller gets a return ticket. (*Mary laughs in room, R.*) Ah, what's that? A laugh. It had a hollow and inhuman sound. Could it be *she*? (*Points to folding-doors.*) Mary—a—a—a—how do I know—she may have been turned into something horrible. The fiend of the water butt, perhaps. She may come to me at night—she said she would. Oh, Lord! The idea of the ghost of a damp laundress at your back. (*Shudders.*) W—h—h—h—hew! (*Mary laughs.*) There, it is again, that demoniac laugh. I wish I could peep into the kitchen! But I daren't, lest I should see her glaring at me with one eye through the bung-hole of the water-butt. Bless me, how my knees keep giving double knocks upon each other. (*Mary sings in room.*) Ah, surely that's singing! (*Listens.*) Ghosts haven't got a singing license. Hark! 'Tis somebody committing vocal violence in my bedroom. (*Goes to door of bed-chamber, R., and looks in.*) Hey, there's a young fellow making himself quite at home in my establishment. I am not aware I ever saw him before. What had I better do? Go in and ask him what he wants? No; that might be dangerous. 'Twill be safer in my present peculiar position to appear as a stranger. Let me see. I have it—capital idea—the waiter from the tavern with the supper—I think I could *do* a waiter. It's only, "Coming, sir, in *one* minute—coming; two brandies and water, coming, sir." (*He ties one of the supper napkins round his neck for a white cravat, changes his coat for an old black one that hangs on the back of a chair, while doing so he looks into the room now and again.*) There goes my Macassar oil and my Circassian cream. There, my eau de cologne too, that cost me half-a-guinea a bottle. An impudent rascal! D—n me, if he's not rummaging my drawers! That's free and easy at all events. Come, I think I'm pretty well disguised now. (*Looks at himself in the cheval-glass.*) No; confound it, this face of mine will never do—it might be known. I want a pair of whiskers to hide it. Ecod, I've hit it again. This chair—(*takes knife from table and cuts open the stuffed seat of the chair*)—there's enough hair in it to whisker a regiment of Turks.

[*Pulls a handful of the hair out of the chair-seat, goes to the chimney-glass and arranges it round his chin so as to look like a pair of large whiskers.*]

Enter from room, R., MARY WHITE, still dressed as a young man, and drying her hands with a towel.

Mary. (*Aside and laughing.*) Heavens, what a figure.

Wid. Hem! A—I beg your pardon—but you seem—a—eh—

Mary. Exactly. And who are you?

Wid. Me—I—a—ah—I'm—a—the waiter—from the tavern.

Mary. Perhaps, then, you can tell me where I can find Mr. Widgetts?

Wid. Not exactly. You've particular business with him?

Mary. Rather. In fact—I don't mind telling you—I'm one of the detective police.

Wid. (*Alarmed.*) You!—a gentleman?

Mary. Oh, yes, we go about in all manner of disguises, when we want to pick up a shy bird. Now, I'm looking for Widgetts, and I shouldn't mind giving five pounds if you could tell me where to lay my hand upon him.

(*Lays her hand on Widgetts' shoulder, who starts.*)

Wid. Ah! Ha, ha, ha! Five pounds! Is it a—very serious business, eh?

Mary. Merely a hanging matter.

Wid. Nothing more? (*Aside.*) The dreadful deed's discovered. I'll be off. Hem, well, I'll go and look after Mr. Widgetts.

Mary. No, no; you must stop here. I've no doubt I shall want you presently.

Enter MADEMOISELLE CHERI BOUNCE, L.

Cheri. I beg pardon.

Wid. (*Aside.*) Zounds! Ma'amselle Cheri Bounce.

Cheri. I expected to meet a gent—Mr. Widgetts.

Mary. Who invited you to supper?

(*Crosses to L.*)

Wid. (*Aside.*) How did the fellow know that?

Mary. My friend, Widgetts, has been obliged to leave home rather suddenly, but he has left me here to perform the agreeable for him. Supper, you see, is waiting, Ma'amselle.

Wid. (*Coming forward.*) Allow me to observe—

Mary. Lay the table.

Wid. (*Aside.*) The rascal's not going to eat my supper!

(*Lays the table, c.*)

Cheri. (*Aside.*) Really a very nice young man.

Mary. My name is Spraggs—Spraggs, ma'amselle. Like my friend, Widgetts, I'm dotingly fond of the girls—aw—paws'itive fact—can't help it, never could, and don't think I ever shall. Let me take your shawl. (*Takes off Cheri Bounce's shawl.*) A divine figure—demme!

Wid. (*Coming between them.*) Allow me to observe—

Mary. Lay the table, waiter.

Wid. (*Aside.*) D—n the table. (*Lays the plates and dishes and places the chairs. Mary White gallants Mdlle. Cheri Bounce, apart. Widgetts, c., polishing a plate, furiously.*) Here's a pleasant situation, waiter at my own supper, and afraid to open my mouth. The rascal's making love to her, and she likes it! Hang 'em, I wish I could strangle them.

(*Mary White and Mdlle. Cheri Bounce laughing.*)

Cheri. Oh, you droll wretch, you're ten times funnier than that stupid Widgetts.

Mary. Hang Widgetts.

Wid. (*Coming between them.*) I beg your pardon.

Mary. What d'ye want? Is the table laid?

Wid. (*Aside.*) D—n the table. (*Returns to table, and bawls out.*) Supper's ready!

Mary. Ah! (*To Cheri Bounce.*) Come, my dear.

(*Widgetts seats himself at table.*)

Mary. What!

Wid. (*Jumps up.*) Beg pardon—I vacate.

(*Mary White, R., and Cheri Bounce, L., seat themselves at table.*)

Mary. Now, my dear ma'amselle, here are fowl, and lobster, and kidneys.

Wid. (*Aside.*) I wish they were sticking in his gizzard.

Mary. Now then, waiter, be alive, and take your tin.

(*Claps one of the dish covers on Widgetts' head, who snatches it off, and flings*

it away in a rage.)

Wid. Allow me to observe—

Mary. There's no bread, my good fellow.

Wid. Coming. (*Aside.*) D—n the bread.

(Goes to a table at back, on which is a loaf of bread and rolls.)

Mary. What part of the fowl shall I send you, ma'amselle?

Cheri. The funny idea, Mr. Spraggs, if you please.

Mary. The funny idea! Well, I never!

Cheri. The merry thought, you know.

Mary. Oh, to be sure! Yes, the funny idea.

(Cutting the fowl.)

Wid. Bread.

(Claps the loaf of bread on the dish before Mary White, who throws it at him.)

Mary. Roll, stupid. Plates, waiter. (*Widgetts puts the roll under his arm, and hands plates to Mary White.*) Allow me to add a kidney. They look beautiful.

Cheri. Thank you.

(Mary White puts some fowl and a sausage on the plate, which she gives to Widgetts for Mdlle. Cheri Bounce, and then helps herself.)

Wid. (*Comes down with the plate in his hand.*) How uncommon savoury it smells. He's not looking.

(Takes the kidney off the plate, and puts it in his pocket.)

Mary. Waiter. (*Widgetts lays the plate before Mdlle. Cheri Bounce.*) Open that champagne, waiter.

Wid. (*Aside.*) My champagne, too!

(Opening a bottle of champagne.)

Mary. (*Helps Mdlle. Cheri Bounce.*) I hope you liked your kidney.

Cheri. What kidney, Mr. Spraggs?

Wid. (*Snatching the kidney out of his pocket, and putting it, unperceived, on Mdlle. Cheri Bounce's plate.*) Why, that kidney.

Cheri. Dear me, I didn't perceive it before.

(Widgetts places champagne on the table.)

Mary. Celery, waiter. (*Widgetts goes to table at back for celery. Mary White fills two glasses of champagne, and drinks with Mdlle. Cheri Bounce. Widgetts returns with stalks of celery in his coat pocket, and, without being perceived, takes the champagne bottle, fills a glass for himself, comes down and drinks, R.*) I say, Ma'amselle, this is rare fun.

Cheri. Glorious!

Mary. I'll give you, the absent Widgetts.

Cheri. I've no objection to drink poor Widgetts' health, but I don't at all wish for his company. He's such a particularly conceited fool.

Wid. (*Aside, and scarcely able to restrain himself.*) Do I look like a fool? (*They drink. Widgetts comes to the table.*) As the sole surviving friend of Mr. Widgetts, will you allow me to say—

(Presses the plate to his breast. Knock at door, L.)

Mary. Hold your tongue and open the door.

(Mary White and Ma'amselle Cheri Bounce rise.)

Cheri. Perhaps 'tis Widgetts.

Wid. No, it isn't. Widgetts is—elsewhere.

(Knocking at door, L.)

Brown. (*Outside door.*) Open the door. I must come in.

Cheri. Heavens! That's Brown's voice. If he finds me here I shall be ruined.

(Alarmed.)

Wid. Don't let him in.

(Runs to door, L.)

Cheri. Where on earth can I conceal myself? Ah, here! (*Throws open folding doors. Widgetts stands transfixed with terror; Mdlle. Cheri Bounce screams in a state of dreadful alarm.*) Oh, oh, oh! There's a woman drowned in the water-butt.

Mary. 'Tis Mary White, the laundress. Widgetts murdered her.

Wid. I'll be d—d if he did!

Mary. Never mind, he'll be hanged for it all the same.

[*Exit through folding-doors which she closes after her.*]

Wid. Widgetts hanged! You might as well hang me.

Cheri. Good heavens! What a horrid place I've got into. (*Knocking at door, L., Brown outside calling "Let me in! Open the door."*) Oh, that Brown will make another victim of me!

[Pg 19]

(*Runs into chamber, R.*)

Enter BROWN, L.

Brown. Where is she? Where's Mademoiselle Cheri Bounce? I know she's here.

Wid. I beg your pardon, she left here half an hour ago! I called the cab for her myself—a patent hansom, No. 749.

Brown. Where's Widgetts, then? Where's the villain Widgetts, the destroyer of my happiness?

Wid. My good fellow, don't be outrageous! Mr. Widgetts is unfortunately absent—he's gone to close the eyes of a dying uncle, and won't be back to-night.

Enter TWILL, L.

Twill. Oh, please, sir, they wouldn't admit the order at the Adelphi! (*Sees Widgetts and bursts into a fit of laughter.*) Ha, ha, ha, ha! Why surely this ain't Guy Faux day, Mr. Widgetts?

Brown. Widgetts!

Cheri. (*At door, R.*) Widgetts?

(*Retires.*)

Twill. Of course! That's Mr. Widgetts, my master; I'll never deny him.

Wid. (*Aside.*) Then I've nothing for it but a bolt—out of my bedroom window.

(*Rushes into chamber, R.; Mdlle. Cheri Bounce screams inside. Widgetts rushes out again followed by Mdlle. Cheri Bounce beating him with her umbrella.*)

Cheri. Stop him! Don't let him escape! He has murdered a woman.

Twill. Murdered a woman? Oh, the dirty blackguard, what a taste he had.

(*Brown attempts to seize him, but Widgetts strikes his hat over his eyes, runs round the table, and runs to door, L., against which Twill has placed his back.*)

Twill. (*In a boxing attitude.*) No, you don't.

(*Brown now collars him, and Cheri Bounce beats him with her umbrella.*)

Brown. Ha, have I got you at last—(*shaking him*)—villain!

Wid. Help! Murder! Police! Help!

Twill. (*Dancing at door, L.*) Police! Here's an illigant row. Go it, little one—fire away, umbrella! She don't lay it into him at all.

Wid. Stop, stop, stop! Spare the remnant of an injured tailor's life. You think I cut off Mary White's thread; but I didn't! The horrid act was her own deed. She got jealous of me, and mixed her proud spirit with too much water. She'd tell you so herself, poor soul, if she could.

Mary. (*Speaking inside folding doors in a solemn voice.*) No, she wouldn't.

Wid. Angels and bannisters support me. (*Drops on his knees. Mdlle. Cheri Bounce throws herself into the arms of Brown. General consternation.*) 'Tis her voice—her ghost is come back to walk the earth in them green boots. Injured shade, speak for me, if ghosts have parts of speech, and tell them I'm innocent.

Mary. (*Inside.*) You caused my death by your falsity.

Wid. O-oh! I know it; but sooner than you should have made an object of yourself, I'd have married you ten times over.

Mary. (*Inside.*) And would you marry me now, if I was living?

Wid. I would—to-morrow morning.

Mary. (*Runs out.*) Then, Whittington, I'm your loving Mary again.

Wid. (*Jumps up and tries to avoid her, she follows him.*) Hollo! No—keep off. (*She embraces him.*) Hey! Bless me, you're neither damp or dead; on the contrary you're remarkably warm and lively. But, are you sure you're not a water nymph, and that you have not got private apartments in the Thames or the New River?

Mary. No, Widgy; don't be afraid, 'twas only a trick of mine, to plague you for your inconstancy. (*Pointing to water butt.*) She's not *me*, but the dummy figure, dressed up in some of my clothes.

Wid. Ah, I've been finely hoaxed! And where's the detective policeman, that eat my lobster, and drank my wine?

Mary. Why, of course, he's here.

(*Points to herself.*)

Wid. Oh, you villain! But what's to be done with Brown?

(*Brown and Mdlle. Cheri Bounce, who have been conversing at the back, during the later part of the dialogue, come down.*)

Brown. Ask Ma'amselle here, for she's consented to be Mrs. Brown, next Monday, and as for this little affair of the supper I was in the plot with Mary.

Wid. I hope you were not in the water-butt with her; but, never mind, I don't want any further explanation. I've had my lesson—(*to Audience*)—and I hope you have all profited by it. Now, if there's any single, good-looking young fellow here, wants a bit of advice. Eh—there's my friend, Smith. Smith, my dear boy, when you invite a female friend to a quiet bit of supper, mind there's no water-butt on the premises; and I mention this confidentially to all you bachelors, if your laundress is young and pretty, you had better pay your washing bills regularly; and don't, like me, get yourself into a scrape, by not knowing "How to Settle Accounts with Your Laundress."

Disposition of the Characters at the Fall of the Curtain.

CHERI BOUNCE. BROWN. MARY W. WIDGETTS. TWILL.
R. L.

Transcriber's Note

This transcription is based on pp. 11-19 of Dicks' Standard Plays No. 1006. The images used in this transcription have been posted on the Internet Archive at:

archive.org/details/CoyneLaundress

In addition, a microform copy of the same edition, which was made available by the University of California, Davis, was used as a secondary source.

In general, this transcription attempts to retain the formatting, punctuation and spelling of the source text. In a few cases where the quality of the printing made a word or a punctuation mark hard to read, the obvious reading was considered the correct reading without comment. A few changes were made to smooth out some of the inconsistent editing of the source text.

The following changes were made:

- p. 11: (Widgett's Page and Light Porter)—Changed "Widgett's" to "Widgetts".
- p. 13: since the evening I danced with her at the Casino. (*Calls*,) Twill!—Changed the comma after "*Calls*" to a period.
- p. 14: *Mary*. And your remember how we used to go together to Greenwich—Change "your" to "you".
- p. 14: law! how we use to laugh to be sure!—Changed "use" to "used".
- p. 14: and a heap of beautiful thing.—Changed "thing" to "things".
- p. 15: to wring my heart and mangle my affections like that, (*Sobbing*).—Changed the comma after "that" to a period.
- p. 15: (*Lays his hands on his bosom*.—Added a closing parenthesis for consistency.
- p. 16: you don't mean to say your agoing to sup here?—Changed "your" to "you're".
- p. 16: (*Pushes her again into the chair*. (*Aside*).—Deleted the opening parenthesis before "*Aside*".
- p. 17: Enter two WAITERS, L, carrying tray with supper, covered dishes, plates, bottles, &c.—Inserted a period after "L".
- p. 17: Its only, "Coming, sir, in *one* minute..."—Changed "Its" to "It's".
- p. 17: Pulls a handful of the hair out of the chair-seat, goes to to the chimney-glass—Deleted the second "to" after "goes".
- p. 17: You've particular business with him.—Changed the period to a question mark.
- p. 18: *Cheri*. Oh, you droll wretch, you've ten times funnier—Changed "you've" to

“you’re”.

- p. 18: *Mary*. There’s no bread, my good fellow—Added a period to the end of the sentence.
- p. 18: *Mary (Helps Mdlle. Cheri Bounce.)*—Inserted a period after the character title “*Mary*”.
- p. 18: *Marg*. Celery, waiter.—Changed “*Marg.*” to “*Mary.*”

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HOW TO SETTLE ACCOUNTS
WITH YOUR LAUNDRESS: AN ORIGINAL FARCE, IN ONE ACT ***

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