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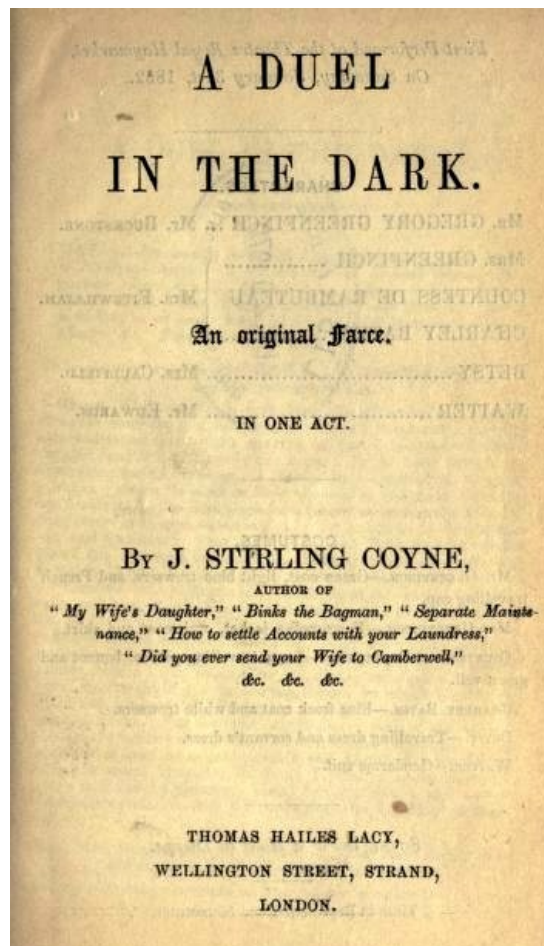
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A DUEL IN THE DARK: AN ORIGINAL FARCE, IN ONE ACT ***



A DUEL IN THE DARK.

An original Farce,

IN ONE ACT.

BY J. STIRLING COYNE,

AUTHOR OF

*"My Wife's Daughter," "Binks the Bagman," "Separate Maintenance," "How to settle
Accounts with your Laundress," "Did you ever send your Wife to Camberwell,"
&c. &c. &c.*

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
WELLINGTON STREET, STRAND,
LONDON.

*First Performed at the Theatre Royal Haymarket,
On Saturday, January 31st, 1852.*

CHARACTERS.

MR. GREGORY GREENFINCH	Mr. BUCKSTONE.
MRS. GREENFINCH	} Mrs. FITZWILLIAM.
COUNTESS DE RAMBUTEAU	
CHARLEY BATES	
BETSY	Mrs. CAULFIELD.
WAITER	Mr. EDWARDS.

COSTUMES.

Mr. GREENFINCH.—Green coat, light blue trowsers, and French travelling cap.
 Mrs. GREENFINCH.—Fawn polka jacket, waistcoat and skirt.
 COUNTESS DE RAMBUTEAU.—Loose travelling pelisse, bonnet and green veil.
 CHARLEY BATES.—Blue frock coat and white trowsers.
 BETSY.—Travelling dress and servant's dress.
 WAITER.—Gendarme suit.

SCENE lies at a Hotel at Dieppe.

Time in Representation, 50 minutes.

A DUEL IN THE DARK!

SCENE.—*A handsomely furnished Apartment on the ground floor of a Hotel at Dieppe. A French window at back opening on a garden. Door, 2 E. L. Door, 3 E. L. A large stove, L. between the two doors. Door, 2 E. R. Easy chair near door, R. Tables, R. and L. C. at back; bottle of brandy with glasses on table, L. Chairs, &c. Two lighted candles on.*

Enter GREENFINCH, carrying bandbox, large travelling cloak, carpet bag and umbrella, L. 3 E.

GREEN. Well now this is something like an adventure. (*putting down the umbrella and bandbox, R.*) There's a romantic mystery attached to me that I can't unravel, in fact I feel myself like a tangled penn'orth of thread; the more I try to clear myself the more complicated I become. Let me calmly consider my singular position. (*throws the cloak on the easy chair, R. and places the carpet bag beside it*) In the first place here I have arrived at the Hotel d' Angleterre in Dieppe accompanied by the Countess de Rambuteau—a real Countess! Poor Mrs. Greenfinch little dreams what a rake I am—but for a long time I've been dying for an aristocratic flirtation—I have looked at lovely women in the private boxes at the theatres—and have run after carriages in the park—but all in vain, and now, startling as the fact may seem, I have been for the last thirty hours the travelling companion of a French Countess, and have shared her post-chaise from Paris: when I say shared, I mean the Countess and her maid took the inside and left me the outside, where I was exalted to the dicky amongst a miscellaneous assortment of trunks and bandboxes, by which I have been jolted and jammed till I haven't a bone in my body without its particular ache. But the most extraordinary part of the affair is that I have never yet seen the Countess's face, for she has always concealed it from me beneath a thick veil. However that's nothing, there's a secret sympathy by which I think I could discover a pretty face under a piecrust. Hah! here she comes, and now for the tender revelation—the soft confession—the blushing avowal—the—

Enter MRS. GREENFINCH, 2 E. R., in a travelling dress closely veiled, she carries in her hand a lady's walking basket.

Ah, my charming Countess, at length after a painful—I mean a delightful journey—we have arrived in Dieppe, and now permit me to gaze on those lovely features.

MRS. G. (*retires as he approaches*) No, no, *je ne permettez pas*; nevare, not at all, Monsieur Grinfeench.

GREEN. Dear, Countess, take pity on me. (*aside*) What delightful accents! She told me she could speak English fluently, and she does. Am I never to see your face, dear Countess? Oh! have pity on me.

MRS. G. *Oui*, you shall ordere diner *toute de suite*.

GREEN. Dinner? certainly, Countess.

Exit 3 E. L.

BETSY. (*peeping in at door, R.*) Is he gone, mum?

MRS. G. Yes, Betsy, you may come in. (*lays the basket she carries on table, L. and puts up her veil*)

BETSY. (*enters by door, R.*) Well, mum, does he suspect nothing yet?

MRS. G. Nothing. He has not yet seen my face—but if he had, I think this red wig, these spectacles, and this cravat would completely prevent his recognizing me.

BETSY. He little thinks, mum, 'tis his own lawful wife he's running away with instead of a fine foreign Countess.

MRS. G. Oh, Betsy, when I think of that, I could tear his eyes out. A man, Betsy, that I thought the most faithful creature woman ever was blessed with, to deceive me so. A working model of a husband that I may say I made out of nothing.

BETSY. Ah, mum, I know what husbands is made of! I was once accidentally married myself for three weeks to a sea cap'n, who took me, mum, as his mate—but I diskivered I was only his second mate, for he'd got another wife alive, mum—and so he slipped hisself through the wedding ring that way. Oh! mum, husbands isn't to be trusted no ways.

MRS. G. 'Twas your experience and advice, Betsy, that put me upon this plan of trying Mr. Greenfinch's fidelity. Before he went to Paris about that legacy left him by his aunt, there wasn't a more dutiful little husband in Peckham Rye.

BETSY. No, more there wasn't, mum. But after he'd been a month in Paris, he wrote to say he'd got into the hands of the French lawyers, and couldn't return so soon as he expected.

MRS. G. Upon which I resolved to run over to Paris, if 'twas only for a day—for I thought he must be miserable without his wife.

BETSY. A very popular delusion amongst women, mum.

MRS. G. And so as you know, Betsy, I took you with me and crossed to Boulogne. What I suffered from the roughness of the waves and the custom-house officers I need not repeat. I didn't however think of anything but the joyful surprise it would be to Mr. Greenfinch when I should drop suddenly like a lump of sugar out of heaven into his solitary tea.

BETSY. Yes, mum, but you know I had my suspicions that it wasn't the lawyers kept master in Paris—so I persuaded you to take lodgings opposite the hotel where he was stopping, and keep a watchful eye on his proceedings from the window, with your veil down.

MRS. G. Yes, Betsy, that was certainly your plan,—and what has been the consequence? The very first day my gentleman kissed his hand to me—the second day he performed a love pantomime at his window for my diversion—and the third day he sent me a daguerreotype portrait of himself backed by a Westphalia ham.

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BETSY. And before the week was out you had induced him to run away with you.

MRS. G. I'll never forgive him that.

BETSY. Of course you won't—you've too much spirit to forgive any man, much less a husband. Now, mum, if you'll help me in a little plan I've hit upon, I think we'll torment him to that degree that he'll never hear a Countess mentioned without trembling.

MRS. G. I'll do anything, Betsy, to make the little wretch miserable.

BETSY. Well then, mum, this is my plan.

GREENFINCH *speaks outside, L. 3 E.*

MRS. G. Hist, I hear him returning; run into my room and I'll come to you presently. (*draws down her veil*)

Exit BETSY, 2 E. R.

GREEN. I've ordered dinner at five; and now, my charming Countess—mysterious being, whom I have loved distractedly for three long weeks through that envious veil—permit me. (*about to remove her veil, she motions him to desist*) Well I won't; delicacy forbids intrusion. However, I hope I may not be considered particularly inquisitive, if I beg to be informed why you and I should be here in Dieppe under such mysterious circumstances.

MRS. G. Oh, *certainment*, Monsieur Grinfeench, I sall confess to you dat I vas *frappè* vis your mug—dat is your superbe countenance in de vindere of your hotel.

GREEN. (*aside*) Struck by my superb countenance! a clear case of fascination. My dear Countess, it is no less extraordinary that whenever you were sitting in your balcony, I generally found myself flattening my nose against the centre pane of my window.

MRS. G. *Oui, oui*, I did regard your flat nose vare mosh, *en attendant*, it happen I did find myself in a position *tres embarrassant*—a situation of danger; I was in want of a friend—*un ami*.

GREEN. And you thought of me.

MRS. G. *Oui*, you were at de top of my mind—dat is, uppermost in my thoughts.

GREEN. Tender confession! and then you wrote to me this dear little note. (*produces a note and kisses it*) Imagine the indescribable emotion I experienced in my interior when I opened it and read these lines. (*reads*) "Interesting stranger, I am not insense to your merits, but circumstances demand secresy. I shall be wait for you this evening at nine o'clock in a post carriage outside the Barriere d'Enfer.—PAULINE, Countess de Rambuteau." I hastened accordingly to the barrier at the hour named.

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MRS. G. Vare I did attend, as vas appoint.

GREEN. Yes, but instead of inviting me to take a seat beside you, I was lifted by two fellows, whose muscular developments forbade any opposition on my part, into the dickey of the carriage—the postillion cracked his whip, away we started—and that is all I know about the affair.

MRS. G. Ha, ha! I fear I have trespass on your complaisance, your vat you call spooney disposition—dat is, your good nature.

GREEN. Countess, my good nature is public property like Kennington Common—you can't trespass on it. Is there any other way I can be serviceable to you?

MRS. G. *Oui*, dere is one oder little ting; vil you permit me, vile in dis *maison*, to be *apellez* your *femme*, your best half of de vorst—to be called Madame Grinfeench?

GREEN. Madame:—in English that means Missus—Mrs. Greenfinch!

MRS. G. *Oui*. I have particulere reason for my request.

GREEN. Hem! hem! Perhaps, Countess, you are not aware that there's a previous Mrs. Greenfinch at this moment on the British shores; a splendid woman, though I say it, who sits like a pensive dove mourning for her absent mate at Peckham Rye.

MRS. G. (*aside*) There's some good in him still. Oh dat is no obelisk in de vay. I go to-morrow in de packey bote, and sall only be your little rib for a little time.

GREEN. Why if I thought it was only for a little time I might. (*aside*) She's a lovely creature no doubt, and as Mrs. G. can never know anything of my delinquency—pooh! what's there to be afraid of? (*to her*) Well, Countess, I can refuse nothing to your sex—consider yourself as the temporary Mrs. Greenfinch.

MRS. G. *Merci, mon ami*. (*aside*) The atrocious wretch!

GREEN. Now that point's settled, may I not in the profane language of poetic fiction be permitted to feast these longing eyes on those heavenly features?

MRS. G. Ah! you persuade me what you like you leetle rascal.

GREEN. Gracious condescension! So from the face of heaven the cloud withdraws and (*she has raised her veil; seeing her face he starts*) and—ahem! the face of heaven. (*aside*) The Countess's face don't improve upon close inspection. I never liked red hair, and I hate green spectacles.

MRS. G. You like my pheezog?—it is your taste? Ah! *oui*, now I sall leave you to change my toilette—*restez vous ici*, and *n'oubliez pas*—don't forget I am Madame Grinfeench.

Exit R.

GREEN. Shall I ever forget it? never! Hem! The Countess adores me that's clear, and if she hadn't red hair, she'd be a remarkably fine woman. But she may dye her hair:—Gad, so she may; its only dying for love after all.

MRS. G. (*returning*) Ah! I did forget—you must *prenez garde*—be vide awake, and

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take care of our secret, for de most little cause of suspect vill *coupez* both our neck at one slice.

Exit R.

GREEN. What does she mean? I feel I'm up to the ears in some terrible mystery. I don't know whether 'tis conscience or cowardice, but my sympathy for the Countess is evaporating very rapidly, in fact I'm beginning to feel dreadfully uncomfortable here—why should she want to pass as my wife? Why does she want to escape from France? Eh? Echo returns no answer to its correspondent! (*sees the basket on the table, L.*) Hah! here's her basket she has forgotten, perhaps it may contain something to clear up this mystery. (*takes basket off table*) Bless me, 'tis very heavy for its size, what can she have in it? (*feeling the basket*) 'Tis not a smelling bottle, nor it can't be a case of razors—Countesses don't usually shave. I shouldn't wonder if it was—no, no, it's—eh? what is it then? (*draws a pistol from the basket*) Ha—a—oh! A p-p-pistol! Oh, dear! there's more in this than meets the eye!—Why does she travel with these deadly weapons? Hah! A horrid thought flashes across my tortured brain—perhaps she's Abd el Kader in disguise, or more horrible still she maybe a female bandit intending to make me her unsuspecting victim; murder me perhaps in my sleep; she looks as if she could do it. (MRS. G. *appears watching at door, R.*) Oh, lord! I'll go this moment and inform the police.

MRS. G. (*entering and intercepting him*) *Arrétez!* Stop!

GREEN. (*starting*) Ah!

MRS. G. I have *entendez vous*.

GREEN. Oh, ha—I—I—I merely—ha, ha! You perceive I was—

MRS. G. You vas go to betray me; *mais* you perceive dis little machine? (*produces a pistol from her pocket*)

GREEN. Oh, oh!—distinctly, Countess.

MRS. G. Madame Grinfeench!

GREEN. I beg pardon, Madame Grinfeench. Pray oblige me by pointing the other end of that article this way. I've an uncommonly weak head, and couldn't stand anything from that quarter.

MRS. G. *Prenez garde*, then how you betray de *confiance* I have put into you?

GREEN. What confidence? I haven't the most distant idea of the object for which I have been brought here.

MRS. G. Den I sall vispare at your ear dat you are flying from justice with a denounced leader of a secret club.

GREEN. Me!—a Greenfinch flying from justice!—good gracious! what do you mean?

MRS. G. *Ecoutez donc!* de police break in on our meeting—de officier seize me to take me to quod.

GREEN. And what did you do?

MRS. G. Bang! shoot him through the nob—den one, two, tree jump out of de vindère.

GREEN. Shot a police officer! (*aside*) I'm paralysed!

MRS. G. Dey have offer large reward for my take; but if I voyager as your *femme*, I may *échappér*—bolt away! But if ve are catch, ve vill die nobly—*oui*, mon Grinfeench, on de same scaffold—togedder ve vill hop de twig! (*clasps him in her arms*)

GREEN. Her English is not very elegant, but it's very expressive. (*faintly*) I feel the guillotine hanging over me; I shall be sent back to Peckham Rye a head shorter than I left it.

MRS. G. *Entendez bien* that your safety as well as mine depends on your *taisez vous*. Remember dat from my chamber dere I can watch, and *écoutez* all dat sall pass here—den, if you go to spleet, I sall sew you up—bang! *Comprenez vous?*

(*shewing pistol, and exit, R.*)

GREEN. Yes, I *comprenez vous*—my safety depends on my *taisez vous*. What a dreadful situation is mine! If this is having an aristocratic flirtation, I don't care how soon I get democratic in my *penchants* again. This terrible Countess is a perfect masked battery; I shouldn't wonder if she had a Colt's revolver inside her parasol, and that a cartouche box did duty for a certain popular appendix to the female figure. I declare I feel quite nervous and agitated—I'll go and smoke a cigar in the garden. (*takes a cigar from his case*) Hah! I wish they may ever catch me running away with a Countess again.

Exit through window at back, to garden, and disappears.

BETSY *looks from room R., and then enters, carrying a small brown trunk with an address card on the top.*

BETSY. (*speaking to MRS. G. inside*) All's clear, mum!

Enter MRS. G. from room R.

He's smoking his cigar in the garden. Now here I lays the trap that's to catch him—your trunk, with your address upon it. (*puts trunk in centre of room*)

MRS. G. So that when he sees it, he may be aware that I am here in my proper person.

BETSY. Exactly, mum; and as there's a way by a passage at the back of the hotel from your room there, (*pointing R.*) to this apartment on the other side. (*points to door 2 E. L.*) Nothing can be easier than to come out of that door as the Countess, and out of that door as Mrs. Greenfinch, according as your game goes.

MRS. G. I understand perfectly—but I see him returning. Let's get away. (*they return into room R.*)

Enter GREENFINCH, C., from garden, smoking a cigar.

GREEN. Poo-ah! There's nothing like a cigar for puffing away fear—poo-ah! I feel a deal more composed now—poo-ah!—cooler and more determined—poo-ah! I've been bracing up my courage by repeating that heroic maxim—"The brave man dies many times—a coward never dies at all." Stay—I don't believe I've got it right—but it don't matter. (*stumbles over the trunk*) What's here? umph! a trunk! Bless me! surely I know it: that brown leather is familiar to me. Hah! here's the owner's address on a card. (*drops on his knees to examine it, and reads in a tone of intense alarm*) "Mrs. Greenfinch, Passenger." O—a—ah! That's her writing—and she's here!

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Enter MRS. GREENFINCH, R.; GREENFINCH'S head sinks on the trunk.

MRS. G. *Que faites vous ici, mon cher Grinfeench?*

GREEN. Oh! Countess, we're lost.

MRS. G. Ha! *perdu!* Ave de poliss come?

GREEN. No, but my wife has. See here! (*reads address on trunk*) "Mrs. Greenfinch, Passenger to Paris." That's her writing after six lessons. (*in a suppressed voice*) I know she's somewhere in the vicinity of this brown leather trunk.

MRS. G. (*coolly*) *Eh bien!* you know that a man can have but one wife at one time.

GREEN. The law in its wisdom and great mercy says so.

MRS. G. *Justement*—I am it.

GREEN. *You?* Oh, yes, Countess—I beg pardon, Mrs. Greenfinch *pro tempore*; but as the original Mrs. G. has turned up unexpectedly, what am I to do?

MRS. G. (*aside*) Now I'll prove him. Say that you did nevere see her.

GREEN. How! disown Mrs. G., and turn my back upon my marriage certificate? (*aside*) She's a Mephistopheles in petticoats.

MRS. G. It but want de courage.

GREEN. But I've no courage; one look from Mrs. G. would dissolve me into my own wellingtons.

MRS. G. If you *tombè*, I sall be close to prop you up. Den stand firm on your *epingles*—your pins; courage—*entendez; ne funkez pas!*

Exit, R. door, showing pistol.

GREEN. This is what I call a tremendous situation. Deny my wife, and such a wife as Mrs. G.: a woman that won't be denied. How shall I ever attempt it? And if I don't, there's the Countess prepared to shoot me through the head! Oh, dear! I must have some brandy to screw up my nerves. (*goes to a side table, pours brandy into a glass, and drinks*) Hah! that revives me and brings back my courage, which was sneaking away in spite of me. (*drinks*) There! nothing like brandy. (MRS. G. *is heard singing in room, L.*) Hah! that's her voice—the voice of my wife—that's her high G, and that's her shake. I can't be mistaken in her shake, for it makes me shiver all over. Brandy! (*drinks*) Hah! I must be stern and resolved—the Countess has her eye upon me, and my wife's coming. Never mind, I'm prepared for the worst. More brandy! (*drinks*) I feel myself growing desperately profligate—I'm becoming a brick. (*drinks*) I don't care a straw for the world in general, nor for Mrs. G. in particular. Here she comes!

Enter BETSY, 2 E. L.

No, it's only her maid Betsy.

BETSY. La! it surely never can be my master! Why, Mr. Greenfinch, sir—bless me! who could have thought of meeting you? Well, this will be a surprise to missus! (*runs to L. 2 E., and speaks in*) Oh, mum, make haste, please! here's master—here he is, mum—he is, indeed—quite nat'ral, mum.

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Enter MRS. GREENFINCH, 2 E. L., *in her own attire, hastily.*

MRS. G. Who? Your master, my dear Gregory? Ah! 'tis he, indeed! (*rushing to embrace him*)

GREEN. He—hem! (*aside, and turning away*) She has me.

MRS. G. (L.) Good heavens, Gregory! Why, Gregory! Mister Greenfinch, don't you know me?

GREEN. (C.) A—a—hum! I haven't the pleasure of your acquaintance, ma'am.

MRS. G. What, sir? Don't know me?

BETSY. (L.) Nor me, sir?

GREEN. I never saw either of you before in my life.

BETSY. Well, if that's not audacious!

GREEN. Don't be impertinent, young woman.

BETSY. Oh, mum, he calls me a young woman!

GREEN. (*aside*) More brandy. (*goes to table and drinks*)

MRS. G. (*apart to BETSY*) Oh! Betsy, he's more depraved than I could have imagined. I know I shan't be able to keep my temper.

GREEN. (*drinks, and aside*) I'm firmer now.

MRS. G. (*confronting him*) Mr. Greenfinch! Sir! Will you look at me and repeat you don't know me?

GREEN. (*uneasily*) Hem! ah! (*aside*) I feel the Countess has her eye upon me—I'm a dead man if I give way. (*to MRS. G.*) I tell you I haven't the slightest knowledge of you. (*goes to table*)

MRS. G. (*aside to BETSY*) This is going beyond a joke, Betsy—the man's quite serious—looks in my face and denies me.

BETSY. Yes, mum; and means to stick to it.

MRS. G. (*aside to BETSY*) Does he? Mr. Greenfinch! (*taking hold of him*) you'd better mind what you are doing—I'm not a woman to be trifled with.

GREEN. (*aside*) I'm well aware of that; but now that I have the Countess at my back, I don't mind aggravating her. (*sings*) Toll, loll, de roll, loll, &c.

MRS. G. Mister Greenfinch!

GREEN. That's my name, madam.

MRS. G. Answer me one question, sir, plainly and distinctly—am I, or am I not, your wife?

GREEN. Plainly and distinctly, then—No! (*dances to the table and sings*) Toll, loll, de roll, loll, doll, lay! (*fills a glass of brandy*) Ha, ha, ha, ha! I'll give you a toast. Here's "Lovely woman all over the world!" (*drinks*)

MRS. G. (*apart to BETSY*) Oh! he's delirious! We've frightened him out of his senses. Look at his eye, Betsy—there's madness in that eye.

BETSY. (*apart*) There's brandy in it, mum; not madness.

MRS. G. (*apart to BETSY*) It won't do to irritate him now. (*to GREENFINCH*) My dear Gregory, of course 'tis all a joke. (*coaxingly*) You remember me—your dotey little wife—your lovey dovey? Why don't you speak to your own pidgey-widgey, and give her a toosey-woosey kiss?

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GREEN. (*aside, and turning away*) Oh! this is too much for a husband's feelings! (*to MRS. G.*) Don't please—don't talk that way; you don't know me; I'm a domestic fiend—doomed for a certain time to walk this earth in patent leather boots. Farewell, farewell for ever! (*he rushes into the garden through window at back*)

MRS. G. Gregory, stop! I must follow him, Betsy, or he'll do himself an injury.

BETSY. La! mum, he's not mad enough for that yet. Don't think of following him, or you'll spoil all we've done; he's not half punished yet.

MRS. G. Well, if you think so, 'tis my duty as a wife not to spare him.

BETSY. 'Course it is, mum. I've the plan all cut out in my head. You've got a suit of master's clothes in that trunk, ma'am? (*points to trunk on floor, c.*)

MRS. G. Yes, Betsy; his new suit that he forgot to take with him to Paris. I meant to surprise him with it.

BETSY. And so you shall, mum. (*takes the trunk*) Come with me, and I'll show you how.

Exeunt MRS. G. and BETSY, L. 2 E.; *the latter carries the trunk.*

Enter GREENFINCH, C.

GREEN. Where is she? Gone! I should not wonder if I had killed her; I know my brutal conduct has broken her fragile heart; she could never survive my base desertion—never! She has perished like a tender flower, and I—wretch!—I've assassinated an angel. Ha! where's my tempter? Where's the Countess—the destroyer of my happiness? She must instantly release me from this horrible compact. I can bear a great deal, but my constitution is sinking rapidly under two wives. (*goes into room R., calls inside*) Countess! I beg your pardon—hey, Countess! Where can she be? Countess! She's gone. (*re-enter from room*) She's certainly not there. Now, if I could take advantage of her absence, to speak a few words to the original Mrs. G., if the poor thing still survives. That's her room—I'll venture at all hazards. (*goes to door L., taps and calls in a suppressed voice*) Maria Jane! Maria Jane! hist! (*taps*) Mrs. G., my dear—eh? 'Tis me, my dear—your loving Greenfinch. (*taps*) Hist! Maria Jane! She don't hear me, or she won't answer. (*taps*) Mrs. G.! Maria Jane! 'Tis your unfortunate Greenfinch.

Enter BETSY, *from room*, L. 2 E.

BETSY. Well, sir, what may you want?

GREEN. Hush! don't speak so loud. Is your mistress in her room?

BETSY. I'm not sure—can't be certain till I ask her.

GREEN. I must speak with her instantly.

BETSY. What name shall I say?

GREEN. Name? Is the woman mad? Go and tell her I'm come to explain all.

BETSY. All what, sir?

GREEN. All, all—she knows—you know.

BETSY. Can't say I do, sir—I'm sure I never set eyes on your face before.

GREEN. Pooh, pooh! don't be stupid—let me pass—I must speak with my wife.

BETSY. Your wife! (*opposing him*) A pretty imperent fellow you are! Your wife, indeed! Keep your distance—I don't allow these liberties.

GREEN. But, my Betsy.

BETSY. Your Betsy! Come, I like that. I'd have you to know, sir, my name's Elizabeth.

GREEN. Never mind your name—I must go in.

BETSY. Oh, very well; if you must, you must; but, mind, I tell you, my mistress is not alone.

GREEN. Hey? What do you say? Not alone? Who has she with her?

BETSY. Who should she have, but a gentleman?

GREEN. Stop, stop—my wife—a gentleman!—in her room—there—and I her husband—here—what does it mean? Hah! a horrid suspicion fills my mind—o—oh! my head!

BETSY. I thought so. I see you're dreadfully intoxicated; you'd better go to bed—do! You'll be ashamed of yourself in the morning. I never see a gentleman so drunk in my life—never! Go to bed, I advise you.

GREEN. Go to the devil! I'll penetrate this horrid mystery, and know the worst at once.

BETSY. Then you may depend on having your bones broken.

GREEN. Bones! I have no bones. I'm all iron—adamant. I'll find this villain—this unknown destroyer of my peace. Who is he? what is he?

BETSY. Here he is, sir, to answer for himself.

GREEN. Hoh!

Enter MRS. GREENFINCH, L. 2 E., *dressed in fashionable male attire.*

MRS. G. What's the demmed row here? Who is this person who has been exciting

himself so enormously?

BETSY. I'm sure I don't know, sir; but he seems to be a gent who has been putting himself in the way that gentlemen wish to be who love their wine.

GREEN. (*aside*) I'll be calm, but infernally severe. He-hem! Sir, I beg your pardon, but—ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha! it strikes me that you've been in my wife's room. (*points to room*).

MRS. G. Your wife's?—ha, ha, ha!

GREEN. I repeat, my wife's—that lady in there is my wife.

MRS. G. }
BETSY. } Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

GREEN. Allow me, sir, to inform you, it's my deliberate opinion you're a scoundrel, a miscreant, and a vagabond.

MRS. G. (*strutting fiercely to him*) Demme, sir!—aw—did you make use of the word "scoundrel?"

[Pg 13]

GREEN. Scoundrel was the word, sir.

MRS. G. And "miscreant," sir?

GREEN. Miscreant, emphatically.

MRS. G. And "vagabond," sir?

GREEN. Vagabond, in its strongest sense, sir.

MRS. G. And do you mean to apply these terms to me offensively?

GREEN. Most offensively, sir.

MRS. G. Oh, very well; that's enough. (*takes a card from her pocket, and gives it to GREENFINCH*) There's my card, sir.

GREEN. And there's mine, sir. (*gives MRS. G. a card*)

GREEN. { *both read cards at the* } "Gregory Greenfinch—The Turtle Dovey,
MRS. G. { *same time* } Peckham Rye." Oh!

GREEN. Hey?—why, this is *my* card—*my* name and address. I'm Gregory Greenfinch, of the Turtle Dovey.

MRS. G. Excuse me, my good fellow, but—ha, ha, ha, ha! your impudence is highly amusing—ha, ha, ha!

GREEN. What! do you mean to tell me that I am not Greenfinch? That I'm not the husband of my own wife?

MRS. G. Oh, no; I simply say, I'm Greenfinch.

GREEN. You? Then who the devil am I?

MRS. G. 'Pon my life, I haven't an idea.

GREEN. No! Bless me, that's very extraordinary. Why, it can't be possible! I've a strong moral conviction that I am Greenfinch; I feel that I can't be anybody else, and that anybody else who presumes to be me is an impostor.

MRS. G. For all that, *I'm* Gregory Greenfinch.

BETSY. The poor man's certainly mad, sir.

GREEN. What does she say? Mad—ah! (*aside*) Horrible suggestion! If I should be mad! If I should be labouring under a pleasing delusion, and mistake myself for some other individual! What if he should be me, and me he—no, he me, and me he—no, that's not it—what, if I'm he—and me—I mean if I—that's me—no—he and I are neither he nor me. Oh, dear! what am I saying?

MRS. G. Well, Mister What's-your-name, if you have any desire to be shot in a gentlemanly and artistic manner—there's a nice quiet spot at the back of the hotel, fit for the business. Just let me know when you've made up your mind, and I'll be ready in five minutes to operate.

GREEN. Stop! destroyer of my peace, and confounder of my identity—stop, and hear me! Young woman retire.

Exit BETSY into room, L. 2 E., with one candle.

Hem! now, sir, I shall ask you one momentous question—Do you mean to stick to it that you're Greenfinch?

MRS. G. Stick to it?—oh! aw—like demned wax.

GREEN. (*solemnly*) The world's a cage, not wide enough for two Greenfinches like us; one of us must hop the perch.

MRS. G. Exactly, my good fellow; I shall dispose of you immediately—my pistols are in the next room. (*going*)

GREEN. Stop! We must fight in this apartment.

MRS. G. Here? oh, very well. If you prefer being shot on the premises—I can have no objection.

GREEN. One word more! the sight of a pistol affects my nerves—we must fight in the dark!

MRS. G. In the dark! Who ever heard of a duel in the dark? why we may fight till morning and I may never be able to hit you.

GREEN. That's precisely what I wish; if we fight it must be in the dark.

MRS. G. Well, if you make it a point, I shan't dispute it with you, as I dare say I shall be able to pick you out somehow—I'll step in for my pistols.

Exit into room, 2 E. L.

GREEN. Hah! bravo! I've caught him. Stratagems are all fair in love and fighting, and as this fellow means to shoot me, it's my business to prevent him if I can; so I'll get behind the stove there, and then he may blaze away as long as he likes. I'll shut the windows and be ready for him. (*goes to window at back; closes the shutters; draws the curtains, and blows out the remaining candle; stage dark; while he is doing so, enter, 2 E. L., MRS. G. with BETSY, who carries a brace of pistols*)

BETSY. (*apart to MRS. G.*) Here are the pistols, ma'am. (*gives them to MRS. G.*)

MRS. G. (*apart to BETSY*) You're quite sure they can do no harm?

BETSY. (*apart*) You needn't be afraid, mum, there's nothing but powder in them.

MRS. G. (*apart*) Well, you know what you have to do. (*BETSY goes into room, L.*) He-hem!

GREEN. Oh, you're come?

MRS. G. Yes, miserable man, I've come that you may go—I've got the popguns!

GREEN. Have you? then mind how you point them this way. Where are you? (*crosses to L.*)

MRS. G. Here—here—make haste!

GREEN. What a devil of a hurry you're in! (*in groping about he touches one of the pistols, which MRS. G. holds with extended arm, and starts back*) Oh! you shouldn't do that—not that I'm afraid—but the sensation is far from pleasant.

MRS. G. Come, sir, you shall take one and leave me the other.

GREEN. Thank you. (*feels the pistol; aside*) The touch of them throws me into a cold perspiration! I wish I knew which was the mildest of the pair.

MRS. G. Well, have you made your choice?

GREEN. No—yes—there—this will do! (*takes one of the pistols, MRS. G keeps the other. Apart*) Oh, lord, my heart's in my wellingtons!

MRS. G. Are you ready now?

GREEN. No—no—no—not yet! let's take our time! do you think a human being should be shot with as little ceremony as a sack of coals?

MRS. G. Haw! Shall we fire at the first word?

GREEN. Kill a fellow creature at the first word! Rash young man, we must have two words to that! Let the signal be "*Death and Glory*;" you shall take "*Death*" and I'll have "*Glory*."

MRS. G. And then fire? Very well, now mind your eye. "*Death!*"

GREEN. (*dodging about in great alarm*) Hollo! stop! stop! what are you about? My glory is not ready for death!—let's deliberate a little! (*GREENFINCH is now behind the stove*)

MRS. G. Oh, nonsense! I never deliberate—are you ready?

GREEN. Yes—I'm ready now!

MRS. G. Very well, then—look sharp! (*GREENFINCH ducks behind the stove*) *Death!*

GREEN. *Glory!* (*both fire; MRS. G. drops her pistol and falls into chair, R.C., with a groan*) Hallo! What's that? Have I hit you?

MRS. G. Hit me? yes; the ball has penetrated my side—here—close to the heart! I feel—I'm dying—give—give me your hand old fellow!

GREEN. Where are you?

MRS. G. Here—here! (*GREENFINCH stumbles against her*)

GREEN. Ha! he *is* floored! What shall I do?—shall I call for help?—run for the doctor? (*crosses to R.*)

MRS. G. No—'tis no use! (*faintly*) Assist me to my room—will you? (GREENFINCH *assists her*) Ah, you're a dead shot, Greenfinch!

GREEN. Ha! then I *am* Greenfinch—you confess it?

MRS. G. Yes, you're the real original Greenfinch. Good bye, my boy, I forgive you; but you'll be hanged for my murder if you're caught!

GREEN. Hanged for your murder! You don't mean that?

MRS. G. Yes, I do; we fought in the dark you know—that's murder—and you'll be hanged for it—but you don't mind it.

GREEN. Don't I though! My good friend, you musn't think of dying—consider the fatal consequence to *me*!

MRS. G. Can't help it—it's all over with me—good bye—your wife's an angel—and I—I am—oh!— (*drops her head on his shoulder and feigns to die*)

GREEN. Good gracious! What do you mean? Hallo! (*shaking her*) there's not a stir in him—he's dead—dead as the twelve Cæsars. Unfortunate youth! he's gone to settle his long account, and has left a heavy balance in my hands. What's to be done now? I know:—I'll conceal him in the bedroom here (*moving towards door R., a scream is heard in room L.*) Bless me! what's that? Something dreadful, I'm sure! Oh, lord, my knees are sinking under me—I havn't strength to move a step further! (*staggers against the easy chair*) Ha! this chair—providential thought—I'll cover him up in it. (*he places MRS. G. in the chair, and throws the travelling cloak, which hangs on the back of the chair over her, so as to completely conceal her*) Now I'll make a coroner's inquest of myself and sit upon the victim's body! (*sits*) Hah! what a dreadful position is mine! (*another scream in room, L.*) There again!

Enter BETSY, with lighted candle, from room, 2 E. L.; stage light.

BETSY. Oh, sir! Mr. Greenfinch are you there?

GREEN. (*aside*) Which Greenfinch does she mean? him (*pointing to MRS. G. behind him*) or me? Yes, Betsy, I'm here.

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BETSY. Oh, sir! oh, sir! my poor mistress—my poor dear mistress!—

GREEN. What of her, Betsy?

BKTSY. It's a shocking story, sir, but there's no use concealing it—the young gentleman you quarrelled with was my mistress's cousin—little Charley Bates that you've often heard her speak of.

GREEN. Her cousin! (GREENFINCH *jumps up*; MRS. G. *then slips from under the cloak, places the carpet bag in the chair, covers it with the cloak, and enters the room, R. on tip toe*) Little Charley?—no-o?

BETSY. Yes, indeed, sir, when you sent me out of the room, I made bold to listen; and hearing you both agree to fight a duel, I ran and told my mistress.

GREEN. Proceed, Betsy, proceed!

BETSY. Well, sir, though you had behaved shocking to her, she tried to prevent mischief; but, la, sir, she had only reached that door (*points to door, 2 E. L.*) and was trying to see what was going forward between you, when bang bang goes two pistols, and a bullet went right through the keyhole into my mistress's eye.

GREEN. Betsy, support me! (*leans on her*) Her eye!

BETSY. With her last breath she sent you her blessing, sir, and the key of the tea caddy. (*gives him a small key*)

GREEN. Sweet, careful martyr!

BETSY. What a shock this will be to poor Master Charley, sir.

GREEN. Hush, Betsy, nothing can shock him now; I confide the secret to your faithful bosom—he's dead!

BETSY. Dead! you havn't gone and shot him too—poor fellow!

GREEN. (*solemnly*) Betsy, we have all our destinies! it's my fate to be an involuntary monster. I'm pursued by a female demon! (MRS. G. *assuming the voice of the Countess, and speaking inside, R.*)

MRS. G. (*inside*) Grinfeench! Grinfeench!

GREEN. Ha! she's there again—the Countess—the demon—she calls me! (*crosses to door, R., and locks it*) Ah! I've locked her in, and now to bolt to the antipodes! (*a loud knocking at door, 3 E. L.*) What's that?

OFFICER. (*outside*) Open in the name of the law!

GREEN. The law! Then it's all over with me!—open the door, Betsy! (BETSY *opens the door*, 3 E. L.)

Enter a GENDARME, 3 E. L.

OFF. Your name is Greenfinch?

GREEN. Gregory Greenfinch is my name, England is my nation—

OFF. Silence! I am in pursuit of—

GREEN. The Countess de Rambuteau?

OFF. Right! I see you know her. I arrest you as her accomplice!

BETSY. And I charge him with being the murderer of his innocent wife and her cousin.

GREEN. Under extenuating circumstances. I protest—

OFF. Silence, criminal! Let search be made for his victims. (*points to door*, R.)

GREEN. Stop!—she's there—the demon—don't— (BETSY *opens the door*, R., and MRS. G. *comes out in her proper dress*; GREENFINCH *drops his head on the GENDARME'S shoulder*) My last moment is come!

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MRS. G. (*in the assumed voice of the Countess*) Hem! vat is all dis, my dear Grinfeench? you can answer for me that I'm your wife. Am I not your wife?

GREEN. (*without looking at her*) No! I'll be damm'd if you are! I'll stand it no longer—I don't know you!

MRS. G. Don't know me? (*in her natural voice*) Don't know your own Maria Jane?

GREEN. My Mari— (*in amazement as he turns and sees his wife*) Hah, my wife! Why, you're not shot—you havn't got a bullet in your eye?

MRS. G. No, my dear, I've nothing in my eye but a foolish little husband, whom I followed to Paris, and under the disguise of a Countess—

GREEN. Inveigled to Dieppe! I understand; you wanted to prove my constancy, and I've come out of the fire—like a brick!

MRS. G. Hem!

GREEN. Why, do you think I could ever have been attracted to you if there had not been a mysterious affinity between us? Never! My heart told me privately you were my Maria Jane. I knew you by sympathy!

MRS. G. And my cousin, Charley, too?

GREEN. Oh, don't mention him! he lies there (*points to chair*) a gory corpse beneath that cloak! (*he snatches cloak off the chair*) Hah! Am I dreaming? He's not there!

MRS. G. No, because he's here! Ha, ha, ha! (*imitating*) Dem'me, if you want to be shot in a gentlemanly and artistic manner, I'm your man! Hey! *Death* and *Glory*, old fellow! You're a dead shot, Greenfinch!

GREEN. What! you're cousin Charley yourself!

MRS. G. Of course I am! It was a plan of Betsy's and mine to punish you—the pistols were loaded with powder—the Gendarme is only the waiter, (WAITER *bows and exit*, 3 E. L.) and as no harm has been done—

BETSY. I hope, sir, you'll forgive me?

GREEN. Forgive you! I'm so happy I'll forgive the whole world!
(*to the Audience*) Pity the failings of a poor young man,
Whose trembling tongue—

MRS. G. Pray hold it—if you can!

They don't want pathos, try to make them smile,
I'll do it for you—something in this style:—
(*to the Audience*) Confiding wives with husbands prone to roam,
Still hold the check string when they stray from home,
Forbid the latch-key, and if wanting aid—

BETSY. Be sure to be attended by your maid.

GREEN. And, husbands, when you follow lovely creatures,
Avoid all sympathy with hidden features.
And warned by how the present matter stands,
I leave my case completely in your hands.

R. BETSY. GREENFINCH. MRS. GREENFINCH. L.

Curtain.

Transcriber's Note

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archive.org/details/duelindarkanorig00coynuoft

In general, this transcription attempts to retain the punctuation and spelling of the source text, including variant spellings such as "havn't" and "musn't." In a few cases where the quality of the images made a word or a punctuation mark hard to read, the obvious reading was considered the correct reading without comment.

The following changes were made:

- p. 2: Green coat, light blue trowsers, and French travelling cap,—Changed comma at end of costume note to a period.
- p. 3: *Door*, 2 E. L. *Door*. 3 E. L.—Changed period between "*Door*" and "3" to a comma.
- p. 5: the second day he performed a love pantomine at his window—Changed "pantomine" to "pantomime".
- p. 5: GREEN. I've ordered dinner at five; aud now—Changed "aud" to "and".
- p. 6: vil you permit me, vile in dis maison, to be apellez your *femme*—Italicized "maison" and "apellez" for consistency.
- p. 8: from your room there, ((*pointing R.*)—Deleted one parenthesis before "*pointing*".
- p. 9: MRS. G. *Que faites vous ici, mon cher* Grinfeench.—Changed period after "Grinfeench" to a question mark.
- p. 9: I know she's somewhere in the vicinity of this brown leather trunk—Inserted a period after "trunk".
- p. 11: Maria Jane! hist! (*taps*) MRS. G., my dear—eh?—Changed "MRS." to "Mrs."
- p. 12: in the way that gentlemen wish to to be who love their wine.—Deleted the second "to".
- p. 13: MRS. G. Well, Mister What's-your name—Inserted a hyphen between "your" and "name".
- p. 13: stop, and hear me! Young woman retire—Added a period after "retire".
- p. 14: my pistols are in the next room (*going*)—Added a period after "room".
- p. 14: I can have no objection,—Changed comma after "objection" to a period.
- p. 14: BETSY. (*apart to* MRS. G.) Here are the pistols, ma'am—Added a period after "ma'am".
- p. 15: Very well, now mind your eye "*Death!*"—Inserted a period after "eye".
- p. 15: MRS. G. Very well, then—look sharp! (GREEN *ducks behind the stove*)—Changed "GREEN" to "GREENFINCH".
- p. 15: MRS. G. Here—here! (GREEN. *stumbles against her*)—Changed "GREEN." to "GREENFINCH".
- p. 15: Assist me to my room—will you (GREEN *assists her*)—Inserted a question mark after "you" and changed "GREEN" to "GREENFINCH".
- p. 17: GREEN. *drops his head on the* GENDARME'S *shoulder*—Changed "GREEN." to "GREENFINCH".

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A DUEL IN THE DARK: AN ORIGINAL FARCE, IN ONE ACT ***

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