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A C O M E D I E T T A ,

In One Act.

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CHARACTERS, COSTUMES, SCENE AND PROPERTY PLOTS, RELATIVE
POSITIONS OF THE DRAMATIS PERSONÆ, SIDES
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A COUSIN TO THEM ALL!

—:O:—

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SAMSON STUFFER, *A Policeman.*

BELINDA BUNKUM, *A Cook.*

—
Time of Representation.—Twenty-Five Minutes.

COSTUMES.

Samson Stuffer.—Blue uniform, long stuffed white gloves, absurd beard, helmet, and truncheon.

Belinda Bunkum.—Smart domestic dress, cap, &c.

PROPERTIES.

Kitchen articles for Scene. Very ugly doll in long clothes. Feeding bottle. Packet of letters. Broomstick. Clothes-horse with blanket. Dresser. Kitchen chairs.

EXPLANATION OF THE STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R., means first entrance right, and right. L., first entrance left, and left. S.E.R., second entrance right. S.E.L., second entrance left. T.E.R., third entrance right. T.E.L., third entrance left. F.E.R., fourth entrance right. F.E.L., fourth entrance left. U.E.R., upper entrance right. U.E.L., upper entrance left. R.F., right flat, L.F., left flat. R.C., right of centre. L.C., left of centre. C., centre. C.D., centre doors. C.R., centre towards right. C.L., centre towards left. Observing you are supposed to face the audience.

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A COUSIN TO THEM ALL!

SCENE.—*A Kitchen. Centre door. Doors R. and L. Dresser L. Clothes-horse, with blanket, R. Kitchen utensils about.*

Enter BELINDA BUNKUM, C. door, with plates; she turns round to listen.

Female Voice. (At the wing, and pitched in a high key.) No policemen, mind!

Male Voice. (Very deep and loud.) No policemen, mind!

Belinda. (With impatience.) No, no! Havn't I said so over and over again? Thank goodness, they've gone at last, and I wish my new master and missus a pleasant walk. *(Comes down.)* What funny people! No wonder as no servant stops 'ere long, and that 'Arriet, the last cook, left yesterday, all of a sudden, without giving warnin'. What a precious nuisance they are with their everlastin' *(imitating the female voice)* "no policemen, mind," *(imitating the male voice)* "no policemen, mind." The hidea. *Me,* Belinda Bunkum, with a three years' written character from Mrs. Whilelumina Snobbington, Melinda Villa, to 'ave followers among policemen. Policemen, indeed! Why, I hate the sight of 'em, 'specially after havin' been deceived as I was five years ago by one of them aristocratic members of the force. Lor', to 'ave seen that young man's 'andsome, innercent face, and 'is tall, manly figur', as he waited for me in the evenin' when I went to fetch the supper beer, and to 'ave 'eard his soft, lovely voice as 'e said we should be married as soon as I'd saved twenty pounds, why, you'd 'ave thought 'im an angel. Oh,

and he looked so beautiful in the photograph 'e gave me, standin' up in full uniform, with 'is truncheon in 'is 'and. Well, I 'ad the twenty pounds in a savin's bank, and I was fool enough to let 'im 'ave it, and I never clapped eyes on 'im from that day to this. Catch me believe in peelers after that. Not if I know it. 'Tender-hearted cooks need not believe that young men are good because they have good looks. Better take warning by me, and avoid those men in blue uniforms who prowl about areas and gaze fondly on the cook. 'Tis not she they're thinking about, but the cold roast meat. (*A baby is heard crying.*) Drat that baby, it's cryin' again. A nice nice place this, indeed. It strikes me I sha'n't be here very long. (*Exit R., and shortly afterwards re-enters with a baby.*) Bye, bye! It's rather a pretty baby. Bye, bye! You're a fortunate youngster. Your father ain't in the force. Bye, bye! It's gone to sleep again, and I'll pop it into bed, and go and finish my work up-stairs.

(*Exit R.,*

Enter SAMSON STUFFER, L. door; he advances slowly.

Samson. No one 'ere! All right! I s'pose the guv'ners are out, and I aven't forgotten that 'Arriet promised to have a nice warm supper ready, with a bottle of the old gentleman's beer. I found the area gate unlocked and the kitchen door ajar, so I s'pose she's kept 'er word and prepared a jolly good feed. Allow me to introduce myself. I'm Samson Stuffer, three hundred and two, known in the force as the "irresistible," and adored by the fair sex. Besides which, I've discovered a particular dodge to increase the 'andsome salary which a liberal government allows me. I enjoy a very remunerative sinecure. I'm hereditary "*cousin*" to the servants of this establishment. Fair or dark, young or old, pretty or ugly; English, Irish, or Swedish, I'm bound to be their *cousin*; and as long as they remain 'ere I sticks to 'em, for the grub in this 'ouse is really first-class. Now, I owes these numerous successes entirely to my fascinatin' manner and appearance. Why, there 'aven't been as many fines under the new Licensin' Act, as I've captivated 'earts by the simple winkin' of this 'ere expressive heye. (*He winks.*) Oh, pots and pans, (*gazing at them ecstatically.*) mute witnesses of past happiness, your shining presence brings back fond memories indeed. There 'was blue-eyed, sentimental Eliza—ah, what mutton broth she made! Her leaving was an awful pity. And Jane Ann—sturdy and broad-shouldered—with bright black eyes. Such meat pie as that woman made! Then Mary—no chicken, to be sure, and I have seen them prettier, but what a famous hand at fowls and fish. Then Charlotte—gentle as a turtle dove—how handy she was with the guv'ner's bottled beer; we pledged our mutual love in it! And Jemima—worthy woman! For supper, Sunday nights, she always had mutton chops with tomato sauce. But the most remarkable thing about it all, was that although I was consin to every one of

them, not one of them was my relation! But I don't see 'Arriet, and I don't even hear the baby cry. I wonder if she's gone out. What a confounded nuisance!

Re-enter BELINDA BUNKUM, R., examining a bundle of letters, which she hastily conceals in her pocket on perceiving SAMSON.

Belinda. (With amazement.) Ah!

Samson. (Greatly surprised.) Oh!

Belinda. Eh?

Samson. What?

Belinda. Where did he spring from?

Samson. It isn't 'Arriet.

Belinda. A bobby! What can he want 'ere?

Samson. My dear, I havn't the pleasure of knowing you, but, no matter, I'll soon make your acquaintance. (*Aside, winking.*) She already feels the fascination.

Belinda. I'll tell you what it is, policeman, you've come down the wrong area, so just do me the favor to skedaddle.

Samson. My dear, you are in horror, I am here from information I received, and I've an appointment with 'Arriet.

Belinda. 'Arriet left yesterday, and I took her place this mornin', so you'd better go.

Samson. Oh, it doesn't matter, my dear, you'll do quite as well. (*Aside, winking.*) She's nearly fascinated.

Belinda. What do you mean about me doing quite as well? You have a cheek, and no mistake!

Samson. Yes, my love. I am the hereditary "cousin" of all the servants of this establishment. I am attached to them with the fidelity of a blind man's dog, and never, in the memory of man, did any other member of the force revel in these sumptuous 'alls.

Belinda. I say, policeman, what do you mean? What do you take me for?

Samson. Why, for myself, to be sure, and you are the nineteenth cook who 'as had the honor of providing for my inner man in this kitchen.

Belinda. Ain't you ashamed to talk to me like that, you disreputable peeler?

Samson. My dear, butterflies travel from flower to flower. Now I'm a butterfly, neat and not gaudy, as travels from joint to joint. Only yesterday I hovered over that bunch of sweetly smelling violets, combined with mutton, called 'Arriet; to-day I wish to rest on the lovely rose which bears your name, although what that may be I've not yet the pleasure of knowin'.

Belinda. Well, I can't help sayin' that if you were born tonguetied, you've been well operated on since. What a gift of the gab!

Samson. (*Aside, winking.*) She's entirely fascinated.

Belinda. I say, policeman, do you understand English.

Samson. Of course I does.

Belinda. Then how is it you're still here?

Samson. I'd sooner die than give up my sign-a-cure.

Belinda. Sign what?

Samson. Cure. It's a Greek word, and it means an occupation which consists in doing nothing.

Belinda. You must mean a situation under government. Wait a moment. I'll give you a hoccupation. Are you going, yes or no?

Samson. Never!

Belinda. Well, if I can't persuade you to go, we shall see what effect a broomstick will have.

Samson. (*Aside, while BELINDA fetches the broom from the corner of the kitchen.*) I think she's in earnest, and p'raps I'd better go. But I'll come back.

Belinda. Come now, you're accustomed to military drill. Shoulder arms. Quick. March. (*She follows him to the door, L.*)

Samson. Well, good-bye for the present, my dear, but don't be alarmed if you see me back soon.

(*He goes out, and she shuts the door after him.*)

Belinda. Well, that's the cheekiest bobby I ever came across; he sticks to one like a leech; but I don't think he'll come 'ere any more. If he does, let him look out for the broom. But let me see, I wonder what these papers are I found in the dresser drawer. (*She takes the bundle from her pocket and carefully examines it.*) Letters! "Dear Eliza"—"Darling Julia"—"Sweet Mary Ann." Why, it's that wretch's correspondence as just went out of 'ere. Oh, the rascal! The false deceiver! How many poor 'earts must he have broken. But I'll serve him out. He's got to deal with a young lady who won't stand any nonsense, and who'll avenge the poor unfortunate creatures 'e's so basely deserted. His winning wiles won't work with me. I'll quell his ardor with this broomstick! (*Exit L.*)

SAMSON STUFFER cautiously opens door L., and enters.

Samson. No one 'ere, I'll risk one foot. Everything's quiet. I'll risk the other one. Confound it, that woman's a perfect dragon, a tigress, with the biceps of a prize-fighter. But no matter. I mustn't forget that I'm surnamed the irresistible, and that I might have planted the British flag on the walls of Sebastopol, had I been there at the time. (*The baby is heard crying.*) Hulloo, the baby's crying—poor thing. I'm certain that heartless woman neglects it. Ah, when I was received 'ere almost like one of the family, I used to be a second mother to it. I dote on children. They remind me of my innercent childhood. (*The baby cries.*) Helpless creature! If it costs me a thrashing, I'll supply it with the nourishment it requires. (*Exit L., and shortly returning with baby and a feeding bottle.*) Bye, bye! (*He feeds it with the bottle.*) 'There, isn't that nice! I've no doubt I look like a tender guzzle feeding its young. (*He takes a drink from the bottle.*) My young friend, you want a pocket-handker-

chief. (*He blows its nose.*) Now, my youthful swell, to send you to sleep I'll sing you a lay composed by myself. (*Sings.*)

Sleep, sleep, baby sleep,
 Baby soon will go to sleep;
 Sleep, sleep, baby sleep,
 Baby soon will go to sleep.

'Ere's a picture of innocence sleeping in the arms of beauty!

Enter BELINDA BUNKUM, c. door.

Belinda. Why, there's that policeman again! So you won't take no for an answer, eh! Well, then, I'll use more harguments. There, there, take that, and that! (*She attacks him with the broom.*)

Samson. 'Ere, I say, 'old 'ard, 'old 'ard, Mrs. Broomstick! Stop, I say! (*He puts the baby under his arm and runs out, R.*)

Belinda. (*Pursuing him, and striking hard with the broom.*) Ah, you villain! You rascal! (*She exits R. door.*)

Re-enter SAMSON STUFFER, c. door. *He has dropped the baby in his flight, and has lost his helmet and his belt.*

Samson. Catch me in 'ere again. What a woman!
 (*He disappears R.*)

Re-enter BELINDA BUNKUM, c. door, pursuing him.

Belinda. I'll make mincemeat of him! (*Exit R.*)

Re-enter SAMSON STUFFER, c. door.

Samson. She's a perfect fiend!
 (*He rapidly hides himself behind the clothes-horse.*)

Re-enter BELINDA BUNKUM, c. door, carrying the baby, and holding the helmet, belt, and broom.

Belinda. I'm dead beat. (*She throws herself in a chair.*) I wonder where that wretch has gone to? I can't find 'im anywhere, but I've got 'is traps, and I'll keep 'em. Let me see, what shall I do with all this rubbish? I'll hide 'em, at any rate, in case missus should see them. Eh? What? (*The clothes-horse moves about—She dodges and eventually discovers SAMSON.*) Ah, here he is!
 (*She drops everything and drags him from behind clothes-horse.*)

Samson. It's all right, Mrs. Broomstick, it's only me!

Belinda. Only you, wretch! How dare you?

Samson. My dear, my intentions are pure. I offer you my 'and and 'eart, which is true blue.

Belinda. 'And and 'eart, indeed. No fear. Not to-day, baker.

Samson. Come, my little woman, what's the matter? You must 'ave a particular aversion to policemen. Now, tell me, what 'ave they done to you?

Belinda. Done to me? Why, I was deceived, robbed, and de-

served some years ago by a smooth-faced villain who wore *that* precious uniform. He promised to marry me, he borrowed all my savin's, and I 'aven't seen 'im from that day to this.

Samson. (*Who for a few moments has examined her attentively.*) Good heavens! Yes! No! (*Aside.*) She's dyed her hair, she was dark before. (*Aloud.*) Why surely, Belinda, it can't be you! (*With exaggerated expression.*) Tell me, my hown, my hadored one, do I dream, or is it the same sweet smell of Macassar hoil which my hallfactory nerves once more absorbs.

Belinda. (*Who for some moments has attentively examined him.*) Gracious goodness, can it be! What, you, Samson! Purloiner of my 'eart and savin's, do I once more behold you. (*She seizes both his hands, and draws him down.*) But, lor' a mercy, I should never 'ave known you with them magnificent whiskers. 'Ow splendid and limposin' they are!

Samson. Yes, my darling, I allows nature to take his course, and you sees the majestical result.

Belinda. Yes, Samson, that's all very well. But now, I 'ope you'll keep your promise, and that we shall soon be married.

Samson. (*Aside.*) I wonder whether she has got any more savin's.

Belinda. Besides, you know, you borrowed my twenty pounds and then deserted me in a most shameful way. (*The baby cries.*)

Samson. Don't regret the twenty quid, my love. I sent 'em to a government fund for the discovery of the sources of the Nile.

Belinda. Oh, shocking! Worse and worse, What a waste of money. My poor savin's.

Samson. But tell me, what are your wages, 'ere?

Belinda. I gets twelve pounds and the perkisites and kitchen stuff. Then I've the two silver spoons and the baby's coral rattle which were lost last week, besides some sheets and a blanket which never come 'owm from the wash when missus was away. And then there's the five-pound-note master gave me for a Christmas-box.

Samson. Tell me no more, I love you. Ever since the night we swore eternal haffection over the crackers and rum shrub, I've ever dreamt of you and the delightful feeds we've 'ad together. Did you say a fiver, two spoons, sheets, a blanket, and kitchen stuff—all right, my darling. I can't sell out, but I'll retire from the force, and stick up the bans next week.

Belinda. Oh, darling Samson, 'ow 'appy I feel. But, remember! No more flirting or love-letters, or mind—the broom.

Samson. Never fear, I sha'n't forget it. My affection for you shall be as true as the blue of the huniform I so nobly wear when exercising my public duties.

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