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Vox ex Vinculis.

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QUEEN OF THE LOBBY

AN INCIDENT IN ONE ACT.

BY CLAIR DUBOIS.

NEW YORK, 1896.



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Gift
Bertram Smith
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QUEEN OF THE LOBBY.

Characters Represented.

GUY DEVLIN, a Millionaire.

MR. EUSTACE, of California.

THIMBLE,

STRADDLE,

BUNCUM,

DODO,

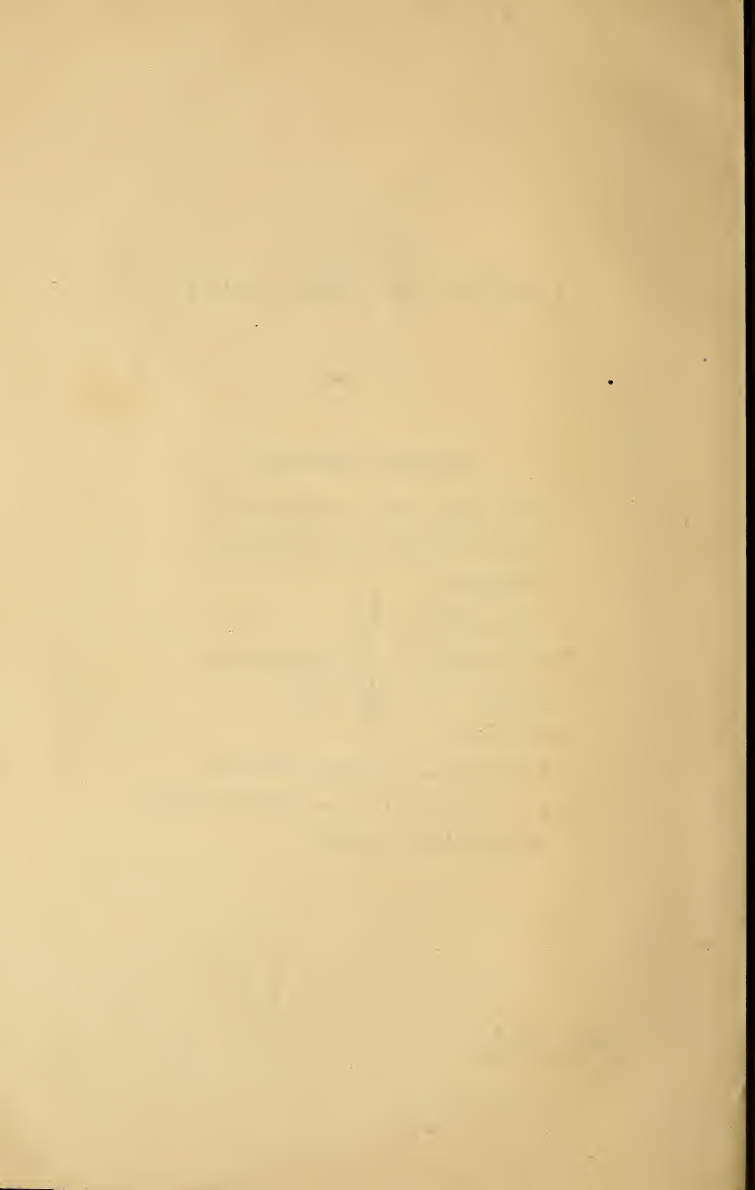
SULLEN,

} Congressmen.

DOMINGO, a Colored Servant.

LA BARONNE de la MUSCADINE.

MARCELLE, a Maid.



QUEEN OF THE LOBBY.

Scene: An elegant room in a Washington Hotel. Rear door gives on to a hall; door to L. leads to a private room; second door to L. a stairway; door to R. a "Study," or Library; a desk also to R.—between it and the wall a chair, and a screen concealing a safe. Chairs, sofa, etc. As curtain rises, Domingo and Marcelle enter—the latter reading a letter.

Mar. No mistake, Monsieur Domingo. Here is an ordaire from Madame for you to prepare one grand suppaire in No. 16, after twelve o'clock to-night.

Dom. Twelve o'clock. That means washing the dishes at sunrise. I would like to be able to go to bed before three in the morning for once, just to see how it feels to sleep in the dark.

Mar. Madame indeed do lead everybody one lively "train." I wonder why she have so much "societe."

Dom. Because she is a lady of quality, no doubt.

Mar. *Qualite*—by marriage seulement. She was one ordinary Americaine till she epousait the Baron de la Muscadine, who left her after spending all her "monaie."

Enter Thimble.

Dom. But he couldn't spend her wits, for, thanks to them, she is rich again, and can afford a Duke the next time. Moses--

Thim. I hope I don't intrude, but may I ask if this is the apartment of the Baronness de la Muscadine?

Dom. It is, but the lady is out at present.

Thim. How unfortunate—you won't mind if I remain till she comes in. I'll make myself perfectly comfortable in this easy-chair—looking over the pictures in these albums. Don't be uneasy—the furniture will be safe.

Mar. Vat a drole man.

Dom. That's not a man, but a Congressman.

Mar. Vat is a Congressman?

Dom. An individual who may have been a man before he got to Congress. For all he says, you keep an eye on this room whilst I am getting up that supper.

Mar. I vill, and a cat's eye at zat. [*Exeunt.*]

Thim. [*Rising spryly--Kissing a note.*] A note--delightfully perfumed—and the words, "come and see me to-night, after the Opera." It has but one meaning—I have made a mash on the brightest woman in Washington. Pitiful, but not strange—I have always been a regular cyclone among the ladies.

Enter Straddle—[*Radiant, and as fantastically dressed.*]

Strad. [*Reading a note.*] "Meet me this evening, after" [*Dances in delight.*] Hurrah! De-

licious! I saw it coming for some time, however—when I got up to speak yesterday in the House she sniggered. Why should she snigger? To conceal the tumult I excited in her soul. Oh, Straddle, Straddle, you are a primrose. By all that's hideous—

Thim. Straddle!

Strad. Thimble!

Thim. This is a surprise.

Strad. Not altogether a pleasant one.

Thim. I agree with you.

Strad. What are you doing here?

Thim. That is the very question I was going to ask you.

Strad. Come now, I hope you'll listen to reason. I have business with the Baronness.

Thim. So have I.

Strad. Mine's important.

Thim. Mine is more so.

Strad. It could not be. I do not wish to argue, but I've evidence that when her ladyship arrives your presence will be an impertinence. [*Shows note.*] What do you say to that?

Thim. [*Aside.*] A note, perfumed—word for word with my own—

Strad. This closes the debate, doesn't it?

Thim. I must own I am at a loss—to—

Strad. Why, it is as clear as moonshine—the Baronness is quite susceptible, and as her opinion of me is that of my looking-glass—

Enter Buncum.

Bun. [*Gleefully.*] "From the icy minarets of

Alaska to the emerald everglades of Florida"—
[Dances against Straddle and Thimble.] Perdition!

Thim. We re-echo the sentiment.

Bun. Excuse me—I did not expect to find any-
 one here.

Strad. And we did not expect to be inter-
 rupted.

Bun. Sorry—but the interruption is none of my
 creating.

Thim. You would have some difficulty to prove
 it.

Bun. I think not—a lady is generally mistress
 in her own house.

Strad. I fail to see the connection.

Bun. As mistress in her own house, she has a
 right to select her own guests.

Thim. That is self-evident.

Bun. Well, in this instance it happens I am a
 selected guest—in fact, *the* selected guest. When
 I show you my credentials, I hope an appeal to
 your delicacy will be a sufficient intimation I con-
 sider you in the way. *[Shows his note.]*

Strad. *[Furious.]* Well, I'll be—

Thim. *[Aside.]* Worse and worse.

Strad. What can this signify?

Bun. I can't say, really. All I know is, the
 lady has continental ideas, and as I have always
 been a perfect torpedo where the sex is con-
 cerned—

Enter Marcelle.

Mar. Madame la Barone. *[Exit.]*

Bun. *[Very airy.]* Ah! Ah! *[Straddle and*

Thimble go to one side discomfited and sympathize with one another. Enter the Baronness—in opera costume—reading a telegram. She is absorbed, and sees no one.]

Bar. “Accident—delay—will not be able to reach Washington before midnight—Guy Devlin.” How provoking. Matters critical, and I so need his assistance—*[Glances at the clock.]* One hour to wait—Ah! the tenderloins are here—let me put that hour to good use. *[Courtesies.]* Gentlemen.

Bun. Your servants, Baronness.

Bar. I am sorry I did not see you before. You received the notes?

Bun. Yes, I received *the* note. Here it is. *[Aside to the others]* Excuse yourselves and go. Can’t you take a hint?

Bar. And you two?

Strad. Here is mine. *[Buncum staggers.]*

Thim. And mine. *[Straddle reels.]*

Bar. This is well. Now, if the others were here—

Bun. Others!

Bar. Yes, I expect Sullen and Dodo yet. It is unfortunate they should delay. We cannot proceed without them. However, you won’t object waiting till they come. You will find newspapers and games to amuse you, there in my study.

Thim. Have you any idea when Sullen and Dodo will be here?

Bar. *[Carelessly.]* Oh, yes, some time between now and morning.

Thim. I’ll be blessed—

Strad. For cheek unvarnished—

Bun. Oh, these women, these women—

[*All three exeunt into the study in great rage.*]

Bar. A good pen for the cattle. Now let me see—let me see.—I declare, I believe that window is open—[*Goes and looks out.*] How grand the Capitol looks in the distance. Grand, indeed—once the temple, but fast becoming the Mausoleum of the Republic. And the stars—how brightly they are shining. Perhaps my little Natalie, in her convent home, is looking up at them now, and wondering who—who her mother is. [*Closes window, comes away—takes off her bonnet, cloak, etc.*] My Natalie. I have no right to think of you—for I have ceased to have a heart.—*Marcelle!*

Enter Marcelle.

Mar. Madame!

Bar. Take these wraps and put them away. [*Exit Marcelle, but returns in a short while. Baroness looks over visiting cards on the table.*] I notice here one card—Mr. Eustace, of California. When did he call?

Mar. About an hour after Madame left for ze “Theatre.”

Bar. Did he leave any word?

Mar. Yes, Madame—that he would call again.

Bar. When?

Mar. To-night.

Bar. [*Aside.*] Oh, this Puritan! I wonder what his business is. I gravely suspect it relates to the Grinding Bill. Steps? *Marcelle.*

Mar. It is one more, Monsieur—

Enter Sullen.

Bar. Ah!—that will do for the present. [*Exit Marcelle, with more wraps.*] Mr. Sullen, this is a pleasure.

Sul. [*He is thin, white, angular, with a dark, long, fierce moustache.*] You can play your part to perfection.

Bar. Sour humor to-day.

Sul. Good reason.

Bar. Why?

Sul. I don't like bad treatment.

Bar. Neither should I.

Sul. Then why do you inflict it?

Bar. Sullen!

Sul. I got your note.

Bar. It made you mad?

Sul. It threw me into raptures. I kissed it—I hugged it—I danced about the room. But suddenly the floor of my heaven gave way—a knock came to the door. Who do you think it was?

Bar. No idea.

Sul. Dodo.

Bar. I sympathize with you.

Sul. Now if there's anybody I despise, it is Dodo.

Bar. That shows your good sense.

Sul. That was bad enough.

Bar. It could hardly be worse.

Sul. But judge of my horror—when he began to racket about as I had been doing, and ended up by showing me—

Bar. What?

Sul. Also a note from you.

Bar. Oh! he got his then—I am so glad.

Sul. [*Frenzied.*] Glad!

Bar. Yes! I hope you brought him along.

Sul. No, he came along.

Bar. Where is he?

Sul. Down stairs—in the bar-room.

Bar. I might have known that—I'll send for him.

Sul. No you won't—[*Preventing her*].—Not at least till I know what you meant by—

Bar. The letters—the explanation is simple. I notified five eminent Congressmen to come here this evening and consult with me on an important bit of legislation. Dodo and yourself were of the number—that is all.

Sul. So others are expected here too!

Bar. They are here already.

Sul. You meant nothing of a more tender nature—you did not intend to convey the fact—I had impressed you—that you were ready to welcome my attentions—that you—you—

Bar. [*Haughtily.*] Sir!

Sul. No use to pose like that—you deceitful woman—pretend to say you never encouraged me—that you never smiled when I passed—never squeezed my hand when we met—never kicked my foot under the table? I can bring witnesses to prove what I say. Everybody has remarked your leaning towards me—my friends have been chaffing me about it, even—much as I have been able to do to keep it out of the newspapers.

Bar. Silly man! There must be 2,000 fools in Washington this minute, who imagine they have the same complaint to make as yourself.

Sul. Yes, but I am one of the fools who have taken you seriously, and I don't propose—

Bar. [*Tapping him with a fan.*] Poor fellow! do you love me, then?

Sul. [*Falling on one knee.*] Oh! Baronness.

Bar. I must forbid this—carpets are expensive. Besides, there is another objection to my listening to any advances of this kind.

Sul. Which is—

Bar. You are a married man.

Sul. What difference should that make?

Bar. Thank you for your nice opinion of me. A great deal of difference. I have been a pretty black sheep, and have broken all the commandments, I confess, except—

Sul. What?

Bar. The one in the middle.

Sul. If that be all that divides us—

Bar. Oh, but there is another obstacle, still.

Sul. For example—

Bar. You could never support a fifty-thousand dollar woman on a five thousand dollar salary.

Sul. How do you know I couldn't?

Bar. Because you can hardly support yourself on it. Let us see—you owe \$60.17 to your laundress, \$133.05 to your tailor, two months' rent at the Arlington—and to cap the climax, you have just put a four thousand dollar mortgage on the only property you possess in the world—your farm at home.

Sul. Are you the devil, or what?

Bar. No—only Mr. Dun or Mr. Bradstreet, in a Court-train.

Sul. And after breaking my heart, you mean to avail yourself of the knowledge you have gained of my private affairs, to humiliate me.

Bar. Tut, tut, tut—no such stuff in my thoughts—I only wanted to show you the depth to which you have sunk, that you may better appreciate the height to which you may rise. I intend, my friend, to make you a large sum of money.

Sul. [*Grasping her hand eagerly.*] Money?

Bar. Here is Marcelle—no agitation—Well?

Enter Marcelle.

Mar. Mr. Eustass—de la Californie—

Bar. Admit him at once—and, Marcelle, you may tell the gentlemen in the study I am now at their service. [*Exit Marcelle.*]

Sul. You are incomprehensible.

Bar. You shall soon understand all—be patient. [*Moves up, and for awhile disappears.*]

Sul. I suppose I must submit—but, plague take it—I feel like a barrel of dynamite that is itching to blow up and destroy everybody and everything in sight.

Enter from the Study, Thimble, Straddle, and Buncum.

Thim. Here we are again.

Strad. Here we are—and there is Sullen.

Bun. And yonder comes Dodo.

Thim. Followed by Eustace.

Strad. The plot begins to thicken.

Enter Dodo—then Eustace.

Do. How do you do, friends—how do you do, everybody. Evidently there will be a quorum to-night. Mrs. Baronness—Madame La Baronne, I should say—

Bar. Mr. Dodo—

Do. I couldn't wait for Sullen any longer. He was to come first and let me know the purport of the notes, but as he didn't return—

Sul. True—I had forgotten about you, Dodo.

Bar. We understand, Mr. Dodo, you did right to come up without ceremony—you will be greatly needed here this evening. [*Turning and holding out her hand.*] Mr. Eustace, your pardon for not being here earlier in the evening to receive you.

Eust. And yours, Baronness, for calling at so unreasonable an hour the second time. If I had known you were going to have friends here—

Bar. Is your business anything you would hesitate to state before these gentlemen?

Eust. On the contrary—it relates to a public matter about to come before the House, in which they, as well as the whole country, are interested.

Bar. Then I am sure we would all be pleased—[*All say yes, yes*]—but first let us make ourselves more at home. [*Motions each to an appropriate seat.*]

Do. [*Showing a cigar.*] Will you permit me, Baronness?

Bar. With pleasure—I like the smoke of a good cigar. Wait—allow me to give you a light.

Bun. Humph! Wish I had a cigar.

Bar. [*Settling herself in a conspicuous chair.*] Now, Mr. Eustace, we are at your orders.

Eust. To be brief, Baronness, I come to you as a supplicant. Everyone is aware of the vast influence you wield at Washington, and it is that influence I wish to interest against the most merciless and fiendish scheme of robbery that ever—ever—

Bar. [*Frigidly.*] Mr. Eustace, I regret your remarks have taken this turn. I tell you frankly, and without circumlocution, your appeal to me will be in vain. I am already engaged to promote, not to oppose, the passage of the "Grinding Bill."

Eust. How did you know—

Sul. [*Aside.*] Humph! What don't she know?

Bar. From the moment you opened your lips I knew what was to follow. It is a pity a man of your lights and attainments should take the side of the mob on this great question.

Eust. Do you know, Madame, what the "Grinding Bill" means?

Bar. Simply this—a troop of banditti have been gutting all the country between the Missouri River and your State for twenty-five years, and the purpose of the bill is to enable them to continue their depredations for a hundred more.

Eust. And do you think they should be armed with so atrocious a privilege?

Bar. I am not dealing in abstractions this evening.

Eust. Twenty-five hundred thousand men once rose to free four million colored slaves in the South—and are we now to vainly beg for a few

niggardly votes to deliver ten million white men in the North and West?

Bar. Oh, Eustace, you are beginning to tire me. All you say is good sentiment, but poor politics.

Eust. And I answer, the politics that justify the plundering of the people—the polluting of Courts, the debauching of newspapers, and the corrupting of Legislatures, is something that could have come only from the infernal pit—and will one day be washed from the face of the earth in torrents of guilty blood—

Bar. I have no such doleful apprehensions.

Eust. People did not believe in the deluge till they were drowned in its waters.

Bar. Deluges, my dear man, are obsolete. I have something in this receptacle will prove my case better than words. [*She has trouble in moving the screen. Sullen steps forward to assist.*]

Sul. Will you permit me? [*He moves it.*]

Bar. [*Taking a check-book out of the safe—before the door is closed, Sullen gets a peep into the safe.*] Now I have what I want.

Sul. [*Aside, gasping.*] Bank-notes by the armful.

Bar. Do you know what this is?

Eust. A check-book.

Bar. The aegis that makes us invulnerable to all the horrors your morbid imagination conjures up. Gentlemen, Mr. Eustace has precipitated the issue. It is time to throw off the mask, and to declare the motives I had in bringing you here. I require your assistance to pass the “Grinding Bill,” and I want to know if I may depend upon it?

Thim. The question is rather abrupt.

Do. Not at all. I don't see how it could have been put otherwise.

Strad. You have had the best of the argument, "Madame."

Do. By far.

Thim. But the trouble is—you have been hardly explicit enough.

Do. [*Protesting.*] My dear sir—

Bar. If I signed a million to every one of these leaves I would need a new check-book to reach the millions still in reserve behind me.

Thim. That may all be—but what does it avail a man perishing of thirst on the desert to be told there is an ocean of fresh water in Lake Superior?

Bar. Well, if each of you that may be now perishing of thirst will bring his pitcher to this table—

Do. You will fill it with water—?

Bar. Fresh from Lake Superior.

Do. At how much a pitcher?

Bar. [*Always in a business manner.*] Two thousand dollars. [*All protest.*]

Thim. Madame!

Strad. You are frank to brutality.

Do. Even I am disgusted.

Sul. Is this the windfall you promised me?

Bun. Two thousand dollars.

Do. It wouldn't keep a statesman in tooth-picks.

Strad. The offer is an insult.

Bar. [*Always writing with her eyes intent on her work.*] I am ready to apologize by raising the figure to five thousand.

Thim. The figure—I mean the apology—is insufficient.

Strad. Grossly inadequate.

Do. I don't know about that.

Bun. Five thousand is a neat sum.

Do. I never did believe in being a hog.

Bun. I am certain the Baronness wants to do what is fair.

Bar. So fair—that as I see some of you are dissatisfied, I am ready to go as high as \$7,500.

Sul. Where is my hat?

Thim. We are beyond temptation.

Do. Now, gentlemen—

Sul. Let us go—

Strad. [*Heroically.*] Yes, let us go.

Thim. [*Weakening.*] We are going.

Strad. Yes—that is—if we have heard the last you have to say—

Bar. Well, I don't believe in straining at a gnat—Call it 10,000—and have done.

Sul. Ten thousand peanuts.

Do. Surely, Mr. Sullen.

Strad. My seat cost me that—

Thim. The terms are preposterous.

Do. and Bun. [*Pleading*] Now, Mr. Thimble—
Mr. Thimble.

Thim. [*Impatiently.*] Don't claw me, please—I know a thing or two, I tell you. Here is a railway—its managers are taking in fifty millions a year—five thousand millions in a hundred years, of which a third will be profit—and they want me to assist them in getting all that for \$10,000.

Strad. Outrageous! Don't you think so, Mr. Eustace?

Eust. I certainly do. If I were in this sort of business I would consider my vote worth as much to me as to the railroad.

Bar. [*Carelessly.*] Well, gentlemen, it is growing late, and as we can't come to any agreement—

Thim. We understand you—

Sul. If nobody is ever going to come—

Do. Don't be so hasty.

Bun. No, don't; haste is the most destructive of all vices. But for haste, a man might not have slipped on a banana peel and broken his leg; but for haste to make the acquaintance of the foundry cat, the dog might not have lost his tail on a buzz-saw; but for haste—

Bar. [*Rings*] Marcelle!

Enter Marcelle.

Mar. Oui, Madame.

Bar. See that Domingo delivers these five notes the first thing in the morning to Congressmen Parsnip, Onion, Pumpkin, Squash, and Carrot.

Mar. I will, Madame. [*Exit.*]

Do. See what you have done.

Thim. What have we done?

Do. Compelled her to throw us over—

Bun. She can get Parsnip for five hundred.

Do. Onion, Pumpkin, and Squash, for three.

Bun. And Carrot for one.

Strad. Cheap men are dear at any price.

Do. Mr. Thimble!

Thim. I am bronze—

Do. It is well enough for you to be bronze—

this is your first term—unfortunately my constituents have found me out—and it is to be my last.

Bun. You'll never have such another chance.

Thim. Neither will the railroad.

Sul. Come, it is time to cross the Rubicon.

Thim. But to show our defiance of Madame we won't leave the hotel.

Strad. No, we'll merely go downstairs.

Thim. And play billiards—Ha! Ha!

Strad. And wait developments.

Thim. Yes, till to-morrow morning.

[*This speech to Thimble.*]

Bun. [*Imploringly.*] For the last time—Gentlemen, gentlemen—

Thim. [*Grandly.*] I am a reader of Spartan history.

Strad. And I am an actor of it.

Do. [*Dolefully.*] But we don't want to be Spartans.

Bun. No, no, we don't want to be Spartans. [*Thimble and Straddle purposely leave an overcoat and cane behind—then exeunt all. Sullen defiantly, Dodo and Bunceum reluctantly and whimpering.*]

Bar. [*Finishing writing.*] Well, Mr. Eustace, I hope you are not going—won't you stop and chat a while?

Eust. I must be excused.

Bar. Why?

Eust. I could sustain no part of the conversation—I have just heard and seen enough to make me dumb for the rest of my life.

Bar. You are foolish.

Eust. I have been foolish to believe in my fel-

low-man, perhaps. So this is all Bunker Hill and the Declaration of Independence signify in the end—is it? Poor, poor humanity, forever grasping at the stars, and forever clutching dead ashes.

Bar. You are sad.

Eust. Yes, I am sad to find the glorious divinity I have worshipped is but a wooden idol, that may be pierced through and through, or broken into splinters by a few nasty spit-balls of dirt and of gold.

Bar. I see you are in no mood to be entertained—therefore I will not detain you. Let us hope on some other occasion—dear, dear—the porter has lowered the gas in the hall, so you can hardly see your way out. Stop—I will hold the lamp for you till you reach the top of the stairs.

[*She does so.*]

Eust. You are very kind.

Bar. Also—you may have forgotten—midway down the hall there are three abrupt steps. Please take care.

Eust. [*Bowing sadly.*] I will remember.

Bar. [*Holds the lamp up for a while, then comes forward—sets it on the table, and then sits down—remains preoccupied a few seconds. Music.*]

Bar. Oh, that I had met such a man in my young day. My Natalie would not then be ashamed to own she was my child. [*Guy Devlin, during this scene, has entered—after pausing a few moments, comes forward and taps her with a glove; she rises.*] Guy! Mr. Devlin!

Guy D. Did I startle you—What is the matter—Sleepy? Why, there are tears in your eyes.

Bar. Nonsense—you are late.

Guy D. You got my telegram?

Bar. Yes; what was the cause of the delay?

Guy D. Train ran off the track; and hour before I could get a special. What a pity we cannot re-establish the whipping-post—these careless train men cause such accidents, and accidents mean damages.

Bar. You work your men too hard.

Guy D. Only fifteen hours a day—

Bar. That's enough to kill anybody.

Guy D. Yet for one that's killed at that gait, I notice a hundred step forward only too willing to be killed in his place.

Bar. Yet there are grave, grave complaints against you.

Guy D. All from the one quarter—Trades Unions, Knights of Labor, and similar abominations. The country will never know true prosperity till they are extirpated, root and branch. Deprived of such disturbing influences, the common classes will gradually sink down to their normal and natural condition of subjection to their betters, and all will be lovely.

Bar. And the passing of the "Grinding Bill" will be a long step in this happy direction, I suppose?

Guy D. It will, undoubtedly. What progress are you making?

[*Enter Thimble and Straddle, on tiptoe, as looking for cloak and cane.*]

Bar. The last batch you sent me I have had

here all evening—but they proved very intractable.

Guy D. How high did you go?

Bar. To ten thousand.

Guy D. Apiece?

Bar. Yes.

Guy D. The deuce—the rascals must think they have got me in a hole.

Bar. Is it not true?

Guy D. Well, I admit—it is a matter of several millions annually to the company for a hundred years, and practically a clean sweep of two hundred millions more from the government then.

Bar. What an insignificant sum.

Guy D. It is at least worth fighting for.

Thim. [*Advancing.*] And paying for, too.

Bar. [*Rising.*] Gentlemen—

Strad. Happy to make your acquaintance, Mr. Guy Devlin. Never met you before, except in a photographer's show case.

Guy D. Do you know these persons?

Bar. Intimately. [*Aside.*] They are two of the votes we are after.

Guy D. Oh! It is a pity, gentlemen, we could not have been introduced to one another in a more formal manner.

Thim. It was hardly possible. We had about finished a game of billiards, and were going home, when I found I had lost my cane.

Strad. And I my overcoat.

Bar. And as this room was the last place you had frequented—?

Thim. Precisely.

Guy D. We understand perfectly—I am candid enough to own the language you have just heard has put me somewhat at a disadvantage.

Strad. For which I am profoundly grateful to my overcoat—

Thim. And I to my cane.

Bar. [*Aside.*] Beware—these are the two most dangerous of the lot. Let me manage them. Gentlemen, there is no call to be sarcastic—Mr. Devlin well knows how to accept a situation.

Thim. We are glad to hear it.

Bar. Now, if you will promise to secure him the votes of your three associates, on the terms already proffered, and pledge yourselves to secrecy in the matter, he is ready to pay you twenty thousand each—just double what the others are to get.

Thim. Twenty thou—

Strad. I'd sell my soul for that.

Guy D. Don't you think the devil would get the worst of the bargain?

Strad. [*Gayly.*] The devil would have to take chances in the premises.

Bar. It is agreed, then. All that remains for me to say, is, the sooner we have the votes the sooner you get your money.

Strad. In ten minutes we engage to deliver you the goods. Come, Thimble.

Thim. Yes, Straddle. [*Exeunt joyously.*]

Guy D. Well for a pair of rascallions; but, Barouness, you are a genius. I thought it was going to be a case of blackmail, but you not only saved me from that annoyance, but ended by get-

ting me three rebellious votes besides. Hail to the Queen of the Lobby!

Bar. We will postpone compliments till some other time, if you please. They are returning.

[*Squabbling heard in the hall.*]

Guy D. Already?

Bar. It would be hardly wise for you to figure personally in an affair like this.

Guy D. Quite so. In case of an expose, I might find it difficult to prove an alibi.

Bar. This passage will take you to the street.

Guy D. But I wish to go over the accounts, write a dozen letters, and put some important papers into the safe there.

Bar. Then slip into my study till they depart.

Guy D. Don't let them keep me a prisoner long.

[*Exit.*]

Bar. I will not, never fear. Now to make out the checks, and wind up the most troublesome job I have had on my hands in twenty years. [*Muttering to herself as she writes.*] Thimble, Straddle, and Dodo—

Enter Thimble, Straddle, Buncum, and Dodo, contending and remonstrating with Sullen.

Sevral. Oh, come now, come now, Sullen.

Sul. I tell you I don't like it—it looks suspicious.

Thim. What looks suspicious?

Sul. Your sudden conversion.

Strad. There was no other course to pursue.

Do. How could there be?

Thim. We found Parsnip & Co. were no bluff; she really meant to substitute them. It was ten thousand in U. S. notes or nothing.

Strad. We really thought, under the circumstances, we had better yield.

Do. I would have done so from the first.

Sul. No doubt; you are an antique at the game. Your old paunch is even now so stuffed with plunder, that, like your extinct patronymic, you can hardly waddle about with it.

Do. Mr. Sullen!

Bun. When I reflect that from the icy minarets of Alaska to the persimmon groves of Opelousas—

Bar. Well, gentlemen, have you come to an understanding?

Do. Yes, Madame, I—I mean everybody.

Bar. Mr. Sullen?

Sul. [*Reluctantly and growling.*] I don't like to surrender, but I guess there is no use bucking against the majority. [*All give a comical sigh of relief. Dodo and Buncum embrace.*]

Bar. Very well, then—there is your envelope. [*Sullen takes it.*] Mr. Thimble and Mr. Straddle, yours—Mr. Buncum and Mr. Dodo—

Do. Ah, Madame, these are the kind of love notes I like to receive. [*Puts his into a note-book.*] In remembrance of you, I will carry it next to my heart.

Bun. I'll sleep with mine under my pillow.

Sul. [*Looking at watch.*] Speaking of pillows and sleep, is it not getting rather late?

Thim. Yes; we must be really going. So, Madame, with billions of thanks, regards and blessings—

Bar. Fie, fie, do you think I am going to let

you off like this—[*Rings; Domingo appears.*]—after the exciting evening we have had? Before leaving you must partake of a little supper I have prepared for you in No. 16. When you are through you will find carriages at the hotel door to take you home. See to everything, Domingo.

Dom. Yes, my lady.

Do. Baronness, you are a trump.

Strad. You are going to join us?

Bar. I have not had three hours' rest in a week. If you would be so good as to excuse me—

Thim. I suppose we shall have to submit.

Dom. All is ready, gentlemen.

Bar. As a parting favor, I hope you will not spare the champagne.

Thim. No danger! And the first bottle shall be a bumper to the "Queen of the Lobby."

All. To the Queen of the Lobby! [*Exeunt cheering—Dodo throws her a kiss. She stands in the hall waving her hand. The Study door opens, and Guy Derlin enters as she comes down.*]

Guy D. The coast is clear?

Bar. Yes—how relieved you ought to feel. I am sure I do. The majority is small.

Guy D. It will be greater—the Dunderheads are to come yet. These are a class of people who are never bought, because they have not brains enough to sell themselves; but they always take to bad legislation instead of good by a sort of instinct, on the same principle that a pig prefers a mud-wallow to a plum orchard. All such will vote for us from conviction.

Bar. I am glad to find you so sanguine. There is nothing further for us to confer about to-night?

Guy D. No; and you look tired. Allow me to conduct you to—

Bar. You are going to remain?

Guy D. Yes; I have much to do, and I never work so well as in this cosy little nook of yours.

Bar. There's the key, then—you may have occasion to open the safe.

Guy D. True.

Bar. When you go, don't forget the catch on the hall door. [*Pointing to the rear door.*]

Guy D. No; I won't. [*Laughter, merriment, and the popping of champagne corks heard.*]

Bar. The patriots are having quite a "Fourth of July."

Guy D. Yes, dang'm; and it is I who am paying for the fire-crackers.

Bar. Bon soir, Mr. Devlin!

Guy D. [*Bowing.*] Ah!—yes—Madame la Baronne—Bon sewer. [*Repeats.*] Bon sewer. [*The Baronness passes into her room, and closes the door. Devlin pauses, then leaves the door and takes the center.*] Wonderful woman, that—wonderful! Had she been born a man she would have become a Richelieu or a Bismarck. [*Rubbing his hands.*] It is getting chilly—let me put a stick of wood on the fire. [*Does so; then takes his seat behind the desk, and begins to work—assorting, reading, signing documents, all the while soliloquizing with himself. Sullen appears at the end.*] Wonder if I shall ever be used for a stick of wood? The preachers say some hard things of the fate reserved for sinners. But, pshaw! I'm no sinner—never knew what it was to do a dishonest action—not since I was

born. I have always found, in fact, honesty is the best policy. It has ever been a mystery to me how some unfortunates could be so stupid to take chances of the penitentiary by stealing a second-hand coat or robbing a melon patch. We cannot all be constituted alike, I suppose. It is not every man that is born with the judgment or the conscience of Guy Dev— [*Sees Sullen.*] Sir—

Sul. Don't be alarmed.

Guy D. What does this mean?

Sul. Nothing—except I came here to see the Baronness. I find you in her place—so much the better.

Guy D. I do not wish to be disturbed.

Sul. And I propose taking measures that will prevent such an annoyance, sir. [*Goes to rear—shuts—locks the door—puts key into his pocket, and comes forward.*]

Guy D. Your methods are very singular.

Sul. They will be thoroughly understood before I leave here.

Guy D. Might I be so bold as to ask who and what you are?

Sul. Certainly—there is no secret about either fact. My name is Wilder T. Sullen, and I am a member of the present Lower House.

Guy D. A new member, I presume?

Sul. Yes—this is my first term.

Guy D. That accounts for my not recognizing your name.

Sul. Strange—I've been told you knew the names of all the members of both Houses by heart.

Guy D. So I generally do—at the end of a session. Well, now, Willard T. Sullen, member of the present Lower House, what can I do for you?

Sul. A great deal, sir—I come to see you in reference to the little affair the Baronness has just been conducting for you.

Guy D. [*Feigning not to understand.*] What little affair?

Sul. You know very well—that relating to the purchase of five important votes in the interest of your “Grinding Bill.”

Guy D. Really—you seem to know more about the circumstances that I do.

Sul. I ought to, in any event.

Guy D. How so?

Sul. I am one of the votes in question.

Guy D. Oh, you are—that puts another face on the matter. [*Aside*] What a load off my nerves—I don’t see there is anything further to discuss on that head, Mr. Sullen.

Sul. I do, Mr. Devlin.

Guy D. Did you not agree to accept of a certain sum in return for your vote?

Sul. I did.

Guy D. Has not that sum been paid you?

Sul. It has.

Guy D. Are you not satisfied?

Sul. No, I am not satisfied.

Guy D. What is the trouble?

Sul. The trouble is cheating, fraud, and gross deception.

Guy D. Sullen!

Sul. You have been catechising me—allow me

now to catechise you. You bid for the support of five certain Representatives, did you not?

Guy D. Well—

Sul. And you were to pay each one of them exactly the same sum?

Guy D. Granted—

Sul. Then, why in the teeth of such a compact have you paid two of our members double the amount received by the rest of us?

Guy D. You do not know I have done this.

Sul. I do know it—on the very best of authority. One of your beneficiaries told us the whole story, but now at the supper table. Having taken too much champagne, he lost all control over his tongue—yes, went so far in his drunken, triumphant glee, as to flaunt your check in our very faces.

Guy D. [*Aside.*] The cur—the cur—there is no trusting one of them. Well, Sullen, what is done is done. You must regard the incident as closed.

Sul. Not by a thousand miles.

Guy D. What do you expect?

Sul. I expect—nay, demand, that now, upon this spot—without delay—before I leave this room, you pay me the ten thousand still due to me upon our contract.

Guy D. You are joking.

Sul. Ho! Ho! my man, I was never more serious or earnest in my life. My whole being revolts and sickens me at what I have consented to do—Vote for the “Grinding Bill”—The wretch guilty of such a deed is no better than the accomplice

who shares with the outlaw the fruits of his crime on the highway—Vote for the “Grinding Bill?” The man who so degrades himself shall stand forever accurst—Living—his wife will blush to receive his kiss—his children to bear his name—his friends to own his fellowship. Dead—spittle not tears shall rain upon his tomb; the very worms will avoid his carcass lest they be poisoned by eating of his infected flesh. For him no place on fame’s eternal scroll—but imprecations—and maledictions deep from the well-fonts of every noble, honor-loving heart. Men with horror in their faces will hurry by the spot where he rests, and when little children ask them why, they shall be told for answer, in that disreputable grave lies one who in the distant past voted for the “Grinding Bill.”

Guy D. Sullen! Sullen!

Sul. Such, such, I say, is my future—such, such the fate I embrace to serve you—and your fiendish purposes of pillage and greed—and therefore, Guy Devlin, I give you due warning I mean to have the full recompense of my infamy.

Guy D. [*Slowly.*] Well, Sullen—if you were not so excited, I—don’t know, but we might—

Sul. [*Covering Devlin quickly with a revolver.*] Stop!

Guy D. Hein!—

Sul. Back to your place! I know why you were edging over in that direction—you wanted to give the alarm to your minions to come and take me into custody. Now, I advise you to be careful—the moment you dare put a finger on

that bell, I will send a bullet crashing through your brain.

Guy D. You know what the consequences would be—

Sul. A broomstick for the consequences. Before coming here I regulated all my affairs and made my will. Let men sentence me to the rope—and Heaven condemn me to Hell—I will always have the satisfaction of knowing you arrived there several months before me.

Guy D. You are a curious fellow, Sullen—you lose your balance—fly off at a tangent before you know whether you are striking at a real grievance or a windmill. How do you know I am not ready to do you justice? I am always open to conviction, and in this instance I have been thoroughly convinced—both argument and reason are entirely on your side. Sit down, then, like a good child, and be quiet whilst I write you out a check.

Sul. No check for me—

Guy D. No?

Sul. It will be six hours before your bank opens—what is there to prevent your notifying the officials in the meanwhile against cashing that check on the ground it was extorted from you by violence?

Guy D. What am I to do, then? No man, however rich, is in the habit of carrying ten thousand dollars about with him in his pocket book.

Sul. You have the money convenient, all the same.

Guy D. Have I—where?

Sul. In a safe behind that screen.

Guy D. You know of that, too?

Sul. As I know of many other things—

Guy D. Well, Sullen, I'd like to oblige you, but this safe belongs to the Baronness; it would not be proper for me to open it without her permission, and as for touching her money—

Sul. None of that poppy-cock, Devlin. The money belongs to you; it is only deposited here to enable your agent, the Baronness, to make all payments in her own name, and so divert suspicion from yourself.

Guy D. [*Rising and smiling.*] Decidedly, Sullen; you will be a success in Congress.

Sul. Why?

Guy D. Because you have a knack of overruling the chair. [*Opens the safe.*]

Sul. I am happy to learn you have become cognizant of the fact.

Guy D. [*Muttering to himself, with a package of bills in his hand.*] Let me see, now. I must make no mistake—one—two—three, four, five—six, seven—eight— [*Pause.*] — nine — ten — correct. There you are, my lad—ten notes of a thousand dollars each.

Sul. [*Puts pistol on a chair, and counts the bills.*] All right—I believe this about ends the business—I assure you the matter will never go any further. [*Thrusts notes into his pocket, after that the pistol—takes out key—opens the rear door, and is about passing out.*]

Guy D. [*He has come forward in a languid, assured way.*] I say, Sullen—

Sul. [*Returning.*] Did you call?

Guy D. Haven't you forgotten something?

Sul. Not that I know of.

Guy D. Yes, you have.

Sul. What?

Guy D. Why, to shake hands, old boy.

[*They shake hands.*]

Sul. Well, you're a good one.

Guy D. And you're a better—Ha! Ha! [*Conducts Sullen to the door, patting him on the back. As he does this the Baronness slowly enters in a negligee.*]

Bar. Mr. Devlin—

Guy D. You? Baronness?

Bar. I was awakened from my sleep—by some disturbance. I thought you were being threatened. Springing out of my bed, I hurried—

Guy D. All for nothing, you see.

Bar. I am sure I heard voices.

Guy D. Yes, I was talking to myself.

Bar. What were you saying?

Guy D. That the "Grinding Bill" would pass.

END.



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