

**BOX AND COX  
COMPLETE!**

*Two acts of romance of modern life comprising  
Box And Cox by John Maddison Morton, Esq.  
and  
Box And Cox, Married And Settled by J. Stirling Coyne*

## **DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

JOHN BOX, a Journeyman Printer  
JAMES COX, a Journeyman Hatter  
MRS. BOUNCER, their landlady

*Plus, in the second act,:*  
MRS. FANNY COX (née Hawes)  
MRS. SOPHY BOX (née Dawes)

A gentleman in the street

## NOTES

**Box And Cox** was first performed at the Lyceum Theatre, London, on 1 November 1847. The cast was: James Cox – John Pritt Harley; John Box – John Baldwin Buckstone; Mrs Bouncer – Mrs (Frances) Macnamara. John Maddison Morton (3 January 1811 – 19 December 1891) was an English playwright who specialised in one-act farces. His most famous farce was *Box and Cox* (1847). He also wrote comic dramas, pantomimes and other theatrical pieces.

Reviewing the first performance, *The Standard* said, "The piece is neatly and smartly written, but it is not difficult to guess that it owes its salvation solely to the felicitous whimsicalities of the two actors upon whom it chiefly devolves. The grotesque gentility of Harley, the hatter, is drolly matched by the cockney vulgarity of Buckstone, the printer, and both have ample room for the exhibition of their own peculiar conceits of method – those never-failing helps to mirth. *Box and Cox*, in short, are a pair of pleasant varlets, and promise to be long in the good graces of the public." [5] The theatrical newspaper *The Era* said, "A more 'laughable farce' has not been produced for many a day."

**Box And Cox, Married And Settled**, first performance The Haymarket 15 October 1852, with Buckstone as Box, Robert Keeley as Cox, Mr Coe as "an anonymous gent," Mrs Caulfield as Mrs Box, Mrs L. S. Buckingham as Mrs Cox, and Mrs Selby as Mrs Bouncer. Joseph Stirling Coyne (1803–1868) was a humorist and satirist in the tradition of Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope. One of the most prolific British playwrights [1] of the mid-nineteenth century, he wrote more than sixty plays; his twenty-seven farces are surpassed in number only by John Maddison Morton's ninety-one and T. J. Williams's thirty. Coyne brought to the stage accomplished comedic interchanges, puns, irony, exaggerated character traits, ludicrous plot situations, and surprising outcomes. His plays reveal a deft ear for dialogue and an ability to create characters suited to the talents of specific actors. As a journalist Coyne contributed humorous pieces to many widely circulated journals and newspapers. His first farce, *The Phrenologist*, appeared at The Theatre Royal in Dublin in June 1835 and was revived two years later at what later became The Abbey Theatre.

**BOX AND COX**  
**COMPLETE!**

*ACT I.*

*SCENE I - A Room, decently furnished. At C., a bed with curtains closed, at L. C., a door, at L. 3d E., a door, at L. S. E., a chest of drawers, at back, R., a window, at R. 3d. E., a door, at RE., a fireplace with mantle-piece, table and chairs, a few common ornaments on the chimney-piece. COX, dressed with the exception of his coat, is looking at himself in a small looking-glass, which is in his hand.*

COX: *(His hair is very short.)* I've half a mind to register an oath that I'll never have my hair cut again! I look as if I had just been cropped for the militia! And I told the hair-dresser only to cut the ends off. He must have thought I meant the other ends! Never mind – I shan't meet anybody to care about so early. Eight o'clock, I declare! I haven't a moment to lose. Fate has placed me with the most punctual, particular and peremptory of hatters, and I must fulfil my destiny. *(Knock at L. D.)* Open locks, whoever knocks!

*(Enter MRS. BOUNCER, L.)*

MRS BOUNCER: Good morning, Mr. Cox. I hope you slept comfortably, Mr. Cox?

COX: I can't say I did, Mrs. B. I should feel obliged to you, if you could accommodate me with a more protuberant bolster, Mrs. B. The one I have seems to me to have about a handful and a half of feathers at each end, and nothing whatever in the middle.

MRS BOUNCER: Anything to accommodate you, Mr. Cox.

COX: Thank you. Then, perhaps, you'll be good enough to hold this glass, while I finish my toilet.

MRS BOUNCER: Certainly. *(Holding glass before COX, who ties his cravat.)* Why, I do declare, you've had your hair cut.

COX: Cut? It strikes me I've had it mowed! It's very kind of you to mention it, but I'm sufficiently conscious of the absurdity of my personal appearance already. *(Puts his coat on.)* Now for my hat. *(Puts on his hat, which comes over his eyes.)* That's the effect of having one's hair cut. This hat fitted me quite tight before. Luckily I've got two or three more. *(Goes in at L., and returns with three hats of different shapes, and puts them on, one after the other - all of which are far too big for him.)* This is pleasant! Never mind. This one appears to me to wobble about rather less than the others – *(Puts on hat.)* – and now I'm off! By the bye, Mrs. Bouncer, I wish to call your attention a fact that has been evident to me for some time past – and that is, that my coals go remarkably fast –

MRS BOUNCER: Lor, Mr. Cox!

COX: It is not the case only with the coals, Mrs. Bouncer, but I've lately observed a gradual and steady increase of evaporation among my candles, wood, sugar and lucifer matches.

MRS BOUNCER: Lor, Mr. Cox! you surely don't suspect me!

COX: I don't say I do, Mrs. B.; only I wish you distinctly to understand, that I don't believe it's the cat.

MRS BOUNCER: Is there anything else you've got to grumble about, sir?

COX: Grumble! Mrs. Bouncer, do you possess such a thing as a dictionary?

MRS BOUNCER: No, sir.

COX: Then I'll lend you one – and if you turn to the letter G. you'll find "Grumble, verb neuter – to complain without a cause." Now that's not my case, Mrs. B., and, now that we are upon the subject, I wish to know how it is that I frequently find my apartment full of smoke?

MRS BOUNCER: Why – I suppose the chimney –

COX: The chimney doesn't smoke tobacco. I'm speaking of tobacco smoke, Mrs. B. I hope, Mrs. Bouncer, you're not guilty of igniting the vile weed?

MRS BOUNCER: Not I, indeed, Mr. Cox.

COX: Not partial to a pipe?

MRS BOUNCER: No, Sir.

COX: Then, how is that –

MRS BOUNCER: Why – I suppose – yes – that must be it –

COX: At present I am entirely of your opinion – because I haven't the most distant particle of an idea what you mean.

MRS BOUNCER: Why, the gentleman who has got the attics is hardly ever without a pipe in his mouth – and there he sits, with his feet upon the mantel-piece –

COX: The mantel-piece! That strikes me as being a considerable stretch, either of your

imagination, Mrs. B., or the gentleman's legs. I presume you mean the fender or the hob.

MRS BOUNCER: Sometimes one, sometimes t'other. Well, there he sits for hours, and puffs away into the fire-place.

COX: Ah, then you mean to say, that this gentleman's smoke, instead of emulating the example of all other sorts of smoke, and going up the chimney, thinks proper to affect a singularity by taking the contrary direction?

MRS BOUNCER: Why –

COX: Then, I suppose, the gentleman you are speaking of is the individual that I invariably meet coming up the stairs when I am going down and going down the stairs when I am coming up?

MRS BOUNCER: Why – yes – I –

COX: From the appearance of his outward man, I should unhesitatingly set him down as a gentleman connected with the printing interest.

MRS BOUNCER: Yes, sir – and a very nice gentleman he is, sir.

COX: Well, good morning, Mrs. Bouncer!

MRS BOUNCER: You'll be back at your usual time, I suppose, sir?

COX: Yes – nine o'clock. You needn't light my fire in future, Mrs. B – I'll do it myself. Don't forget the bolster!

*(Exit at L.C.)*

MRS BOUNCER: He's gone at last! I declare I was all in a tremble for fear Mr. Box would come in before Mr. Cox went out. Luckily, they've never met yet – and what's more, they're not likely to do so; for Mr. Box is hard at work at a newspaper office all night, and doesn't come home till the morning, and Mr. Cox is busy making hats all day long, and doesn't come home till night; so that I'm getting double rent for my room, and neither of my lodgers is any the wiser for it. It was a capital idea of mine – that it was! But I haven't an instant to lose. First of all, let me put Mr. Cox's things out of Mr. Box's way. *(She takes the three hats, COX's dressing gown and slippers, opens the door at L. and puts them in, then shuts the door and locks it.)* Now, then, to put the key where Mr. Cox always finds it. *(Puts the key on the ledge of the door, L.)* Now, then, to make the bed – and don't let me forget

that what's the head of the bed for Mr. Cox becomes the foot of the bed for Mr. Box – people's tastes do differ so. (*Goes behind the curtains of the bed, and seems to be making it – then appears with a very thin bolster in her hand.*) The idea of Mr. Cox presuming to complain of such a bolster as this! (*She disappears again, behind curtains.*)

BOX: (*Off.*) Pooh – pooh! Why don't you keep your own side of the staircase, sir? (*Enters, dressed as a Printer. Puts his head out at door again, shouting.*) It was as much your fault as mine, sir! I say, sir – it was as much your fault as mine, sir!

MRS BOUNCER: (*Emerging from behind the curtains of the bed.*) Lor, Mr. Box! what is the matter?

BOX: Mind your own business, Bouncer!

MRS BOUNCER: Dear, dear, Mr. Box! what a temper you are in to be sure! I declare you're quite pale in the face!

BOX: What colour would you have a man to be, who has been setting up long leaders for a daily paper all night?

MRS BOUNCER: But, then, you've all the day to yourself.

BOX: (*Looking significantly at MRS. BOUNCER.*) So it seems! Far be it from me, Mrs. Bouncer, to hurry your movements, but I think it right to acquaint you with my immediate intention of divesting myself of my garments and going to bed!

MRS BOUNCER: Oh, Mr. Box! (*Going.*)

BOX: Stop! Can you inform me who the individual is that I invariably encounter going down the stairs when I'm coming up, and coming up the stairs when I'm going down?

MRS BOUNCER: (*Confused.*) Oh – yes – the gentleman in the attic, sir.

BOX: Oh! There's nothing particularly remarkable about him, except his hats. I meet him in all sorts of hats – white hats and black hats – hats with broad brims, and hats with narrow brims, – hats with naps, and hats without naps – in short, I have come to the conclusion that he must be individually and professionally associated with the hatting interest.

MRS BOUNCER: Yes, sir. That's why he took the hat-tics, sir. And by the bye, Mr. Box, he begged me to request you, as a particular favour, that you would not smoke quite so much.

BOX: Did he? Then you may tell the gentle hatter, with my compliments, that if he objects to the effluvia of tobacco, he had better domesticate himself in some adjoining parish.

MRS BOUNCER: *(Pathetically.)* Oh, Mr. Box! You surely wouldn't deprive me of a lodger?

BOX: It would come to precisely the same thing, Mrs. Bouncer, because if I detect the slightest attempt to put my pipe out, I at once give you warning – that I shall give you warning at once!

MRS BOUNCER: Well, Mr. Box – do you want anything more of me?

BOX: On the contrary – I've had quite enough of you!

MRS BOUNCER: Well, if ever!

*(Goes out at L.C., slamming door after her.)*

BOX: It's quite extraordinary, the trouble I always have to get rid of that venerable female! She knows I'm up all night, and yet she seems to set her face against my indulging in a horizontal position by day. Now, let me see – shall I take my nap before I swallow my breakfast, or shall I take my breakfast before I swallow my nap – I mean, shall I swallow my nap before – no – never mind! I've got a rasher of bacon somewhere – *(Feeling in his pockets.)* – I've the most distinct and vivid recollection of having purchased a rasher of bacon – Oh, here it is – *(Produces it, wrapped in paper, and places it on table.)* – and a penny roll. The next thing is to light the fire. Where are my lucifers? *(Looking on mantle-piece R., and taking box, opens it.)* Now, 'pon my life, this is too bad of Mrs. Bouncer – this is, by several degrees, too bad! I had a whole box full, three days ago, and now there's only one! I'm perfectly aware that she purloins my coals and my candles and my sugar – but I did think – oh, yes, I did think that my lucifers would be sacred! *(Lights the fire – takes down the gridiron, which is hanging over the fireplace, R.)* Mrs. Bouncer has been using my gridiron! The last article of consumption that I cooked upon it was a pork chop, and now it is powerfully impregnated with the odour of red herrings! *(Places gridiron on fire, and then, with fork, lays rasher of bacon on the gridiron.)* How sleepy I am, to be sure! I'd indulge myself with a nap, if there was anybody here to superintend the turning of my bacon. *(Yawning again.)* Perhaps it will turn itself. I must lie down – so, here goes. *(Lies on the bed, closing the curtains round him – after a short pause:)*

*(Enter COX, hurriedly, L.C.)*

COX: Well, wonders will never cease! Conscious of being eleven minutes and a half behind time, I was sneaking into the shop, in a state of considerable excitement,



when my venerable employer, with a smile of extreme benevolence on his aged countenance, said to me –“Mister Cox, you'll oblige me if you will take this as your holiday.” Thoughts of "Gravesend and back – One Shilling" or "Greenwich for Fourpence!" instantly suggested themselves. But then come the Twopenny Omnibuses, and the Halfpenny boats – in short, I'm quite bewildered! However, I must have my breakfast – that'll give me time to reflect. I've bought a mutton chop, so I shan't want any dinner. *(Puts chop on table.)* Good gracious! I forgot the bread. Holloa! what's this? A roll, I declare! Come that's lucky! Now, then, to light the fire. Holloa – *(Seeing the lucifer-box on table.)* – who presumes to touch my box of lucifers? Why, it's empty! I left one in it – I'll take my oath I did. Hey-dey! Why, the fire is lighted! Where's the gridiron? On the fire, I declare! And what's that on it? Bacon? Bacon it is! Well, now, 'pon my life, there's a quiet coolness about Mrs. Bouncer's proceedings that's almost amusing. She takes my last lucifer – my coals, and my gridiron to cook her breakfast by! No, no – I can't stand this! Come out of that! *(Pokes fork into bacon and puts it on a plate on the table, then places his chop on the gridiron, which he puts on the fire.)* Now, then, for my breakfast things. *(Taking key hung up, L. opens door L. and goes out, slamming the door after him, with a loud noise.)*

BOX: *(Suddenly showing his head from behind the curtains.)* Come in! If it's you Mrs. Bouncer, you needn't be afraid. I wonder how long I've been asleep? *(Suddenly recollecting.)* Goodness gracious – my bacon! *(Leaps off bed and runs to fireplace.)* Holloa! what's this? A mutton chop! Whose mutton chop? Mrs. Bouncer's, I'll be bound! She thought to cook her breakfast while I was asleep – with my coals, too – and my gridiron! Ha, ha! But where's my bacon? *(Seeing it on table.)* Here it is. Well, 'pon my life, Bouncer's going it! And shall I curb my indignation? Shall I falter in my vengeance? No! *(Digs the fork into the chop, opens window, throws the chop out.)*

VOICE OUTSIDE: What do you think you're doing up there?

BOX: I'm sorry, sir, it was an accident. *(Shuts window again.)* So much for Bouncer's breakfast, and now for my own! *(With the fork he puts the bacon on the gridiron again.)* I may as well lay my breakfast things. – *(Goes to mantle piece at R., takes key out of one of the ornaments, opens door at R. and exit, slamming door after him.)*

COX: *(Putting his head in quickly at L.)* Come in – come in! *(Opens door L. C. Enters with a small tray on which are tea things, &c., which he places on drawers, L. and suddenly recollects.)* Oh, goodness! my chop! *(Running to fireplace.)* Holloa – what's this? The bacon again! Oh – pooh! Zounds – confound it – dash it – damn it – I can't stand this! *(Pokes fork into bacon, opens window, and flings it out.)*

VOICE OUTSIDE: That's that second time you've done that!

COX: You'll excuse me, sir, that is not the second time I've done anything! *(Shuts window again, returns to drawers for tea things, and encounters BOX coming from his cupboard with his tea things. They walk down C. of stage together.)* Who are you, sir?

BOX: If you come to that – who are you, sir?

COX: What do you want here, sir?

BOX: If you come to that – what do you want, sir?

COX: *(Aside.)* It's the printer! *(Puts tea things on the drawers.)*

BOX: *(Aside.)* It's the hatter! *(Puts tea things on table.)*

COX: Go to your attic, sir –

BOX: *My* attic, sir? *Your* attic, sir!

COX: Printer, I shall do you a frightful injury, if you don't instantly leave my apartment.

BOX: *Your* apartment? You mean *my* apartment, you contemptible hatter, you.

COX: *Your* apartment? Ha! ha! Come, I like that! Look here, sir – *(Produces a paper out of his pocket.)* Mrs. Bouncer's receipt for the last week's rent, sir!

BOX: *(Produces a paper, and holds it close to COX's face.)* Ditto, sir!

COX: *(Suddenly shouting.)* Thieves!

BOX: Murder!

BOTH: Mrs. Bouncer! *(Each runs to the door, L. C., calling.)*

*(MRS. BOUNCER runs in at door L. C.)*

MRS BOUNCER: What is the matter?

*(COX and BOX seize MRS. BOUNCER by the arm, and drag her forward.)*

BOX: Instantly remove that hatter!

COX: Immediately turn out that printer!

MRS BOUNCER: Well – but, gentlemen –

COX: Explain! (*Pulling her round to him.*)

BOX: Explain! (*Pulling her round to him.*) Whose room is this?

COX: Yes, woman – whose room is this?

BOX: Doesn't it belong to me?

MRS BOUNCER: No!

COX: There! You hear, sir – it belongs to me!

MRS BOUNCER: No! (*Sobbing.*) It belongs to both of you!

BOTH: Both of us?

MRS BOUNCER: Oh, dear gentlemen, don't be angry, but you see, this gentleman – (*Pointing to BOX.*) – only being at home in the day time, and that gentleman – (*Pointing to COX.*) – at night, I thought I might venture, until my little back second floor room was ready –

BOTH: (*Eagerly.*) When will your little back second floor room be ready?

MRS BOUNCER: Why, to-morrow –

COX: I'll take it!

BOX: So will I!

MRS BOUNCER: Excuse me – but if you both take it, you may just as well stop where you are.

BOTH: True.

COX: I spoke first, sir.

BOX: With all my heart, sir. The little back second floor room is yours, sir. Now, go!

COX: Go? Pooh!

MRS BOUNCER: Now, don't quarrel, gentlemen. You see, there used to be a partition here –

BOTH: Then, put it back up!

MRS BOUNCER: Nay, I'll see if I can't get the other room ready this very day. Now do keep your tempers.

*(Exit, L.)*

COX: What a disgusting position! *(Walking rapidly round stage.)*

BOX: *(Sitting down on chair, at one side of table, and following COX's movements.)* Will you allow me to observe, if you have not had any exercise to-day, you'd better go out and take it.

COX: I shall do nothing of the sort, sir. *(Seating himself at the table opposite BOX.)*

BOX: Very well, sir!

COX: Very well, sir! However, don't let me prevent you from going out.

BOX: Don't flatter yourself, sir. *(COX is about to break a piece of the roll off.)* Holloa! that's my roll, sir! *(Snatches it away, puts a pipe in his mouth.)*

COX: Holloa! What are you about, sir?

BOX: What am I about? I'm about to smoke.

COX: Wheugh! *(Goes and opens window at BOX's back.)*

BOX: Hollo! *(Turns round.)* Put down that window, sir!

COX: Then put down your pipe, sir!

BOX: There! *(Puts pipe on table.)*

COX: There! *(Slams down window, and re-seats himself.)*

BOX: I shall retire to my pillow. *(Goes up, takes off his jacket, then goes towards the bed, and sits down upon it, L. C.)*

COX: *(Jumps up, goes to bed, and sits down R. of BOX.)* I beg your pardon, sir – I cannot allow anyone to rumple my bed. *(Both rising.)*

BOX: *Your* bed? Hark ye, sir, can you fight?

COX: No, sir.

BOX: No? Then come on!

COX: Sit down, sir – or I'll instantly vociferate "Police!"

BOX: *(Seats himself. COX does the same.)* I say, sir –

COX: Well, sir?

BOX: Although we are doomed to share the same room for a few hours longer, I don't see any necessity for our cutting each other's throats, sir.

COX: Not at all. It's an operation that I should decidedly object to.

BOX: And, after all, I've no violent animosity to you, sir.

COX: Nor have I any rooted antipathy to you, sir.

BOX: Besides, it was all Mrs. Bouncer's fault, sir.

COX: Entirely, sir. *(Gradually approaching chairs.)*

BOX: Very well, sir!

COX: Very well, sir! *(Pause.)*

BOX: Take a bit of roll, sir?

COX: Thank ye, sir. *(Breaking a bit off. Pause.)*

BOX: Do you sing, sir?

COX: No, sir – my wife doesn't let me.

BOX: Your wife!

COX: That is – my intended wife.

BOX: Well, that's the same thing! I congratulate you. *(Shaking hands.)*

COX: *(With a deep sigh.)* Thank ye. *(Seeing BOX about to get up.)* You needn't disturb yourself, sir. She won't come here.

BOX: Oh, I understand. You've got a snug little establishment of your own here – on the sly. Cunning dog! (*Nudging COX.*)

COX: (*Drawing himself up.*) No such thing, sir! My wife – I mean, my intended wife – happens to be the proprietor of a considerable number of bathing machines –

BOX: (*Suddenly.*) Ha! Where? (*Grasping COX's arm.*)

COX: At a favourite watering-place. How curious you are!

BOX: Not at all. Well?

COX: Consequently, in the bathing season – which luckily is rather a long one – we see but little of each other; but as that is now over, I am daily indulging in the expectation of being blessed with the sight of my beloved. (*Very seriously.*) Are you married?

BOX: Why, not exactly.

COX: Ah! A happy bachelor!

BOX: Why, not precisely.

COX: Oh! A widower?

BOX: No, not absolutely!

COX: You'll excuse me, sir, but I don't exactly understand how you can help being one of the three. Not you, nor any other man alive!

BOX: Ah that may be – but I'm not alive!

COX: (*Pushing back his chair.*) You'll excuse me, sir, but I don't like joking upon such subjects.

BOX: But I'm perfectly serious, sir. I've been dead for the last three years!

COX: (*Rising and shouting.*) Will you be quiet, sir?

BOX: If you won't believe me, I'll refer you to a very large, numerous, and respectable circle of disconsolate friends.

COX: My dear sir – my very dear sir – if there does exist any ingenious contrivance whereby a man on the eve of committing matrimony can leave this world, and yet

stop in it, I shouldn't be sorry to know it.

BOX: Oh! then I presume I'm not to set you down as being frantically attached to your intended?

COX: Why, not exactly; and yet, at present, I'm only aware of one obstacle to doting upon her, and that is, that I can't abide her!

BOX: Well, then, do as I did.

COX: *(Eagerly.)* I will! What was it?

BOX: Go drown yourself!

COX: *(Rising and shouting.)* Will you be quiet, sir?

BOX: Listen to me. Three years ago it was my misfortune to captivate the affections of a still blooming, though somewhat middle-aged widow, at Ramsgate.

COX: Singular enough! Just my case three months ago at Margate.

BOX: Well, sir, to escape her importunities, I came to the determination of enlisting in the Blues, or Life Guards.

COX: So did I. How very odd!

BOX: But they wouldn't have me – they actually had the effrontery to say that I was too short –

COX: And I wasn't tall enough!

BOX: So I was obliged to content myself with a marching regiment. I enlisted!

COX: So did I. Singular coincidence!

BOX: I'd no sooner done so, than I was sorry for it.

COX: So was I.

BOX: My infatuated widow offered to purchase my discharge, on condition that I'd lead her to the altar.

COX: Just my case!

BOX: I hesitated – at last I consented.

COX: I consented at once!

BOX: Well, sir, the day fixed for the happy ceremony at length drew near – in fact, too near to be pleasant – so I suddenly discovered that I wasn't worthy to possess her, and I told her so. Instead of being flattered by the compliment, she flew upon me like a tiger of the female gender. I rejoined – when suddenly something whizzed past me, within an inch of my ear, and shivered into a thousand fragments against the mantle-piece – it was the slop-basin. I retaliated with a tea cup. We parted, and the next morning I was served with a notice of action for breach of promise.

COX: Well, sir?

BOX: Well, sir, ruin stared me in the face. I took a desperate resolution. I left my home early one morning, with one suit of clothes on my back, and another tied up in a bundle, under my arm. I arrived on the cliffs, opened my bundle, deposited the suit of clothes on the very verge of the precipice, took one look into the yawning gulf beneath me and – walked off in the opposite direction.

COX: Dear me! I think I begin to have some slight perception of your meaning. Ingenious creature! You disappeared – the suit of clothes was found –

BOX: Exactly! And in one of the pockets of the coat, or the waistcoat, or the pantaloons – I forget which – there was also found a piece of paper, with these affecting farewell words: "This is thy work, oh, Penelope Ann!"

COX: Penelope Ann! *(Starts up, takes BOX by the arm, and leads him slowly to front of stage.)* Penelope Ann?

BOX: Penelope Ann!

COX: Originally widow of William Wiggins?

BOX: Originally widow of William Wiggins!

COX: Proprietor of bathing machines?

BOX: Proprietor of bathing machines!

COX: At Margate?

BOX: And Ramsgate!



COX: It must be she! And you, sir – you are Box – the lamented, long lost Box!

BOX: I am!

COX: And I was about to marry the interesting creature you so cruelly deceived.

BOX: Ha! Then you are Cox?

COX: I am!

BOX: I heard of you. I congratulate you. I give you joy! And now, I think I'll go and take a stroll. *(Going.)*

COX: No, you don't! *(Seizing him by the seat of the pants.)* I'll not lose sight of you till I've restored you to the arms of your intended.

BOX: *My* intended? You mean *your* intended!

COX: No, sir – yours!

BOX: How can she be my intended, now that I'm drowned?

COX: *(Shouting)* Will you be quiet, sir! *(Calmly)* You're no such thing, sir. Permit me, then, to follow the generous impulse of my nature – I give her up to you.

BOX: Benevolent being! I wouldn't rob you for the world! *(Going.)* Good morning, sir!

COX: *(Seizing him by the seat of the pants.)* Stop!

BOX: Unhand me, hatter, or I shall cast off the lamb and assume the lion!

COX: Pooh! *(Snapping his fingers close to BOX's face.)*

BOX: An insult! To my very face – under my very nose! *(Rubbing it.)* You know the consequences, sir! Instant satisfaction, sir!

COX: With all my heart, sir! *(They go to the fire-place, R., and begin ringing bells.)*

BOTH: Mrs. Bouncer! Mrs. Bouncer!

*(MRS. BOUNCER runs in, L. C.)*

MRS BOUNCER: What is it, gentlemen?

BOX: Pistols for two!

MRS BOUNCER: Yes, sir. *(Going.)*

COX: Stop! You don't mean to say, thoughtless and imprudent woman, that you keep loaded fire-arms in the house?

MRS BOUNCER: Oh, no! They're not loaded

COX: Then produce the murderous weapons instantly!

*(Exit MRS. BOUNCER, L. C.)*

BOX: I say, sir!

COX: Well, sir?

BOX: What's your opinion of duelling, sir?

COX: I think it's a barbarous practice, sir.

BOX: So do I, sir. To be sure, I don't so much object to it when the pistols are not loaded.

COX: No: I dare say that does make a difference.

BOX: And yet, sir – on the other hand – doesn't it strike you as rather a waste of time, for two people to keep firing pistols at another, with nothing in 'em?

COX: No, sir. No more than any other harmless recreation.

BOX: Hark ye! Why do you object to marry Penelope Ann?

COX: Because, as I've observed already, I can't abide her. You'll be happy with her.

BOX: With the consciousness that I have deprived you of such a treasure? No, no, Cox!

COX: Don't think of me, Box – I shall be sufficiently rewarded by the knowledge of my Box's happiness.

BOX: Don't be absurd, sir!

COX: Then don't you be ridiculous, sir!

BOX: I won't have her!

COX: I won't have her!

BOX: I – ! – have it! Suppose we draw lots for the lady.

COX: That's fair enough Mr. Box.

BOX: Or, what say you to dice?

COX: *(Eagerly.)* With all my heart! Dice, by all means.

BOX: *(Aside.)* That's lucky! Mrs. Bouncer's nephew left a pair here yesterday. He sometimes persuades me to have a throw for a trifle, and as he always throws sixes, I suspect they are good ones. *(Goes to the cupboard at R., and brings out the dice-box.)*

COX: *(Aside.)* I've no objection at all to dice. I lost one pound, seventeen and sixpence, at last Barnet Races, to a man who had a most peculiar knack of throwing sixes; I suspected they were loaded, so I gave him another half-crown, and he gave me the dice. *(Takes dice out of his pocket – uses lucifer box as substitute for dice-box, which is on table.)*

BOX: Now then, sir!

COX: I'm ready, sir! *(They seat themselves at opposite sides of the table.)* Will you lead off, sir?

BOX: As you please, sir. The lowest throw, of course, wins Penelope Ann?

COX: Of course, sir.

BOX: Very well, sir!

COX: Very well, sir!

BOX: *(Rattling dice and throwing.)* Sixes!

COX: That's not a bad throw of yours, sir. *(Rattling dice – throws.)* Sixes!

BOX: That's a pretty good one of yours, sir. *(Throws.)* Sixes!

COX: *(Throws.)* Sixes!

BOX: Sixes!

COX: Sixes!

BOX: Sixes!

COX: Sixes!

BOX: Those are not bad dice of yours, sir.

COX: Yours seem pretty good ones, sir.

BOX: Suppose we change?

COX: Very well, sir. *(They change dice.)*

BOX: *(Throwing.)* Sixes!

COX: Sixes!

BOX: Sixes!

COX: Sixes!

BOX: *(Flings down the dice.)* Pooh! It's perfectly absurd, your going on throwing sixes in this sort of way, sir!

COX: I shall go on till my luck changes, sir!

BOX: Let's try something else. I have it! Suppose we toss for Penelope Ann?

COX: The very thing I was going to propose!

*(They each turn aside and take out a handful of money.)*

BOX: *(Aside, examining money.)* Where's my tossing shilling? Here it is!

COX: *(Aside, examining money.)* Where's my lucky sixpence? I've got it!

BOX: Now then, sir, heads win?

COX: Or tails lose, whichever you prefer.

BOX: It's the same to me, sir.

COX: Very well, sir. Heads, I win, tails, you lose.

BOX: Yes – *(Suddenly.)* – no! Heads win, sir!

COX: Very well – go on!

*(They are standing opposite each other.)*

BOX: *(Tossing.)* Heads!

COX: *(Tossing.)* Heads!

BOX: *(Tossing.)* Heads!

COX: *(Tossing.)* Heads!

BOX: Ain't you rather tired of turning up heads, sir?

COX: Couldn't you turn up an occasional tail, sir?

BOX: *(Tossing.)* Heads!

COX: *(Tossing.)* Heads!

BOX: Heads? Stop, sir! Will you permit me – *(Taking COX's sixpence.)* Holloa! Your sixpence has got no tail, sir!

COX: *(Seizing BOX's shilling.)* And your shilling has got two heads, sir!

BOX: Cheat!

COX: Swindler! *(They are about to rush upon each other, then retreat to some distance, and commence sparring, and striking fiercely at one another from a distance.)*

*(Enter MRS. BOUNCER L. H. C.)*

BOTH: Is the little back second floor room ready?

MRS BOUNCER: Not quite, gentlemen. I can't find the pistols, but I have bought you a letter. It came by the General Post yesterday. I'm sure I don't know how I forgot it, for I put it carefully in my pocket.

COX: And you've kept it carefully in your pocket ever since?

MRS BOUNCER: Yes, sir. I hope you'll forgive me, sir. By the bye, I paid twopence for it.

- COX: Did you? Then I do forgive you. (*Exit MRS. BOUNCER. Looking at letter.*)  
"Margate." The post-mark decidedly says "Margate."
- BOX: Oh, doubtless a tender epistle from Penelope Ann.
- COX: Then read it, sir. (*Handing letter to BOX.*)
- BOX: Me, sir?
- COX: Of course. You don't suppose I'm going to read a letter from your intended?
- BOX: *My* intended? Pooh! It's addressed to you – Cox.
- COX: Do you think that's a C? It looks like a B!
- BOX: Nonsense! Fracture the seal!
- COX: (*Opens letter – starts.*) Goodness gracious!
- BOX: (*Snatches letter – starts.*) Gracious, goodness!
- COX: (*Taking letter again.*) "Margate, May the 4th. Sir, I hasten to convey to you the intelligence of a melancholy accident, which has bereft you of your intended wife. He means *your* intended!
- BOX: No, *yours*! However, it's perfectly immaterial. Don't let us begin again. Go on.
- COX: (*Resuming letter.*) "Poor Mrs. Wiggins went out for a short excursion in a sailing boat. A sudden and violent squall soon after took place, which it is supposed, upset her, as she was found, two days afterwards, floating keel upwards."
- BOX: Poor woman!
- COX: The boat, sir! (*Reading.*) "As her man of business, I immediately proceeded to examine her papers, amongst which I soon discovered her will; the following extract from which will, I have no doubt, be satisfactory to you. 'I hereby bequeath my entire property to my intended husband.'" Excellent, but unhappy creature! (*Affected.*)
- BOX: Generous, ill-fated being! (*Affected.*)
- COX: And to think that I tossed up for such a woman!
- BOX: When I remember that I staked such a treasure on the hazard of a die!

COX: I'm sure, Mr. Box, I can't sufficiently thank you for your sympathy.

BOX: And I'm sure, Mr. Cox, you couldn't feel more, if she had been your own intended!

COX: If she'd been my own intended? She *was* my own intended!

BOX: *Your* intended? Come, I like that! Didn't you very properly observe just now, sir, that I proposed to her first?

COX: To which you very sensibly replied that you'd come to an untimely end.

BOX: I deny it!

COX: I say you have!

BOX: The fortune's mine!

COX: Mine!

BOX: I'll have it!

COX: So will I!

BOX: I'll go to law!

COX: So will I!

BOX: Stop! A thought strikes me. Instead of going to law, suppose we divide it?

COX: Equally?

BOX: Equally. I'll take two thirds.

COX: That's fair enough. I'll take three fourths.

BOX: That won't do. Half and half!

COX: Agreed! There's my hand upon it –

BOX: And mine. (*About to shake hands when a Postman's knock heard.*)

COX: Holloa! Postman again!

BOX: Postman yesterday – postman today.

*(Enter MRS. BOUNCER.)*

MRS BOUNCER: Another letter, Mr. Cox – twopence more!

COX: *(Pushing her out and slamming the door.)* I forgive you again! *(Taking letter.)*  
Another trifle from Margate. *(Opens the letter – starts.)* Goodness gracious!

BOX: *(Snatching letter – starts.)* Gracious goodness!

COX: *(Snatching letter again – reads.)* "Happy to inform you – false alarm"-

BOX: *(Overlooking.)* "Sudden squall – boat upset – Mrs. Wiggins your intended – "

COX: "Picked up by a steamboat – "

BOX: "Carried into Boulogne – "

COX: "Returned here this morning – "

BOX: "Will start by early train, to-morrow – "

COX: "And be with you at ten o'clock, exact."

*(Both simultaneously pull out their watches.)*

BOX: Cox, I congratulate you!

COX: Box, I give you joy!

BOX: I'm sorry that most important business at the Colonial Office will prevent my witnessing the truly happy meeting between you and your intended. Good morning!  
*(Going.)*

COX: *(Grabbing him by the seat of the pants.)* It's obviously for me to retire! Not for worlds would I disturb the rapturous meeting between you and your intended. Good morning!

BOX: *(Grabbing him by the seat of the pants.)* You'll excuse me, sir, but our last arrangement was, that she was your intended.

COX: No, yours!

BOX: Yours!



BOTH: Yours!

*(COX grabs BOX, picks him up and runs toward the window with intended to throw him out. Ten o'clock strikes – noise of an omnibus.)*

BOX: *(Head out window.)* Ha! What's that? A cab's drawn up at the door! No! It's a twopenny omnibus!

COX: *(Putting BOX down and leaning over his shoulder.)* A lady's got out –

BOX: There's no mistaking that majestic person – it's –

BOTH: Penelope Ann!

COX: Your intended!

BOX: Yours!

BOHT: Yours! *(Both run to door, open it and eagerly listen.)*

BOX: Hark! She's coming up stairs!

COX: Shut the door!

*(They slam it and lean up against it with their backs.)*

MRS BOUNCER: *(Off, and knocking.)* Mr. Cox! Mr. Cox!

COX: *(Shouting.)* I've just stepped out!

BOX: So have I!

MRS BOUNCER: *(Pushing at the door.)* Mr. Cox. *(COX and BOX redouble their efforts to keep the door shut.)* Open the door. It's only me! Mrs. Bouncer!

COX: Only you? Then where's the lady?

MRS BOUNCER: Gone!

COX: Upon your honour?

BOX: As a gentleman?

MRS BOUNCER: Yes, and she's left a note for Mr. Cox.

COX: Give it to me!

MRS BOUNCER: Then open the door!

COX: Put it under! *(Letter is put under the door; COX picks up the letter and opens it.)*  
Goodness gracious!

BOX: *(Snatching letter.)* Gracious goodness! *(COX snatches the letter, and runs forward, followed by BOX.)*

COX: *(Reading.)* "Dear Mr. Cox, pardon my candour – "

BOX: *(Looking over and reading.)* "But being convinced that our feelings, like our ages, do not reciprocate – "

COX: "I hasten to apprise you of my immediate union – "

BOX: "With Mr. Knox."

COX: Huzza!

BOX: Three cheers for Knox! Ha, ha, ha!

*(Tosses letter in the air, and they take hands and dance.)*

MRS BOUNCER: *(Putting her head in at door.)* The little second floor back room is ready!

COX: I don't want it!

BOX: No more do I!

COX: What shall part us?

BOX: What shall tear us asunder?

COX: Box!

BOX: Cox! *(About to embrace – BOX stops, seizes COX's hand, and looks eagerly in his face.)* You'll excuse the apparent insanity of the remark, but the more I gaze on your features, the more I'm convinced that you're my long lost brother.

COX: The very observation I was going to make to you!

BOX: Ah, tell me, have you such a thing as a strawberry mark on your left arm?

COX: *(Clapping his hand over his left bicep.)* No!

BOX: Then it is he! *(They rush into each other's arms.)*

COX: Of course, we stop where we are!

BOX: Of course!

COX: For, between you and me, I'm rather partial to this house.

BOX: So am I. I begin to feel quite at home in it.

COX: Everything so clean and comfortable –

BOX: And I'm sure the mistress of it, from what I have seen of her, is very anxious to please.

COX: So she is, and I vote, Box, that we stick by her.

BOX: Agreed! There's my hand upon it – join but your's – agree the house is big enough to hold us both. Then Box –

COX: And Cox –

BOTH: Are satisfied!

**END OF ACT ONE**

**BOX AND COX**  
**COMPLETE!**

*ACT II.*

*SCENE—A well-furnished Sitting Room in MRS. BOUNCER'S House; door, 2 E.L., to BOX'S chamber; general entrance door, 3 E.L.; door, 2 E.L., to COX'S chamber; fireplace and chimney glass, 3 E.L.; two practicable windows, looking on street, R. and L. C. flat; a table with cloth, cups and saucers, & c, laid for breakfast; a side table between the doors on L.*

*(COX is heard in R. chamber, calling loudly.)*

COX: Mrs. Bouncer! Mrs. Bouncer!

*(Enter Cox, 3 E. L.—he is without his coat, and is partly shaved; he has a looking-glass in one hand, and razor in the other. )*

COX: No bell in the room, and nobody to answer my energetic vociferations! *(calls)* Mrs. Bouncer!—*(sees a bell on table)* Hah! here's a bell, *(rings, and calls loudly)* Mrs. Bouncer! *(till MRS. BOUNCER enters, 3 E. L.)*

MRS. BOUNCER: Bless me, Mr. Cox, what is the matter ?

COX: Matter, Mrs. Bouncer! Look here, ma'am, and tell me how you expect me to perform the delicate operation of shaving in a glass, whose reflective powers are distorted to such a degree, that I can't be certain whether I'm scraping my chin or cutting off my nose.

MRS. BOUNCER: Dear me! I'm really very sorry—I'll see if I can find you a better one, sir.  
*(Takes glass and exit hastily, 3 E. L.)*

COX: Do so, Mrs. Bouncer—*(retiring towards room, R.)*—by the bye, Mrs. B.—*(perceives that she is gone—rings the bell violently, and calls)* Mrs. Bouncer, Mrs. Bouncer!

MRS. BOUNCER: *(re-entering)* What is it, sir?

COX: I merely wished to ask you if the cabman has brought back my umbrella that I forgot in his cab last night—a brown gingham umbrella—with brass spike, and two broken ribs ?

MRS. BOUNCER: No, sir, I have heard nothing about it.

*(Exit, L. 3 E.)*

COX: Well, that is rather extraordinary. Ah! By-the-bye, here's a glass here that I can finish my shaving by. *(goes to chimney glass, and is shaving when Box enters at door, 2 E. L.—he appears as if risen hastily from bed, and wears a dressing gown, slippers, and night cap.)*

BOX: *(L.)* What ringing and holloaing is this? Do you know, sir, that you have disturbed me out of my first sleep? *(Cox starts and appears as if he had cut himself with razor)*

COX: If it was your last sleep, sir, I should have done just the same—It's nine o'clock, and I've been out of bed these four hours.

BOX: Sir, I believe you capable of any absurdity.

COX: I can't, from habit, sleep in the morning, sir.

BOX: Nor I, from custom, can't sleep at night, sir.

COX: Then, sir, it's my unbiassed opinion – *(turns and recognises BOX)* Good gracious, Box!

BOX: Heavenly powers! Cox!

COX: | My valued friend!

BOX: | My worthy chum!

COX: Don't it strike you, Box, as rather remarkable that we should meet here accidentally, as I may say, in our old lodgings after two years' separation.

BOX: Well, so it does. Are you still implicated in the hat manufacture, Cox ?

COX: Without meaning any disrespect to you, Box—I say, advisedly— damn the hat manufacture. I've retired from business.

BOX: Indeed; how very odd that I should also have seceded from the printing profession.

COX: Listen, Box. When, by a concatenation of small debts, duly recorded in the archives of the Islington County Court, I was compelled to emigrate surreptitiously from Mrs. Bouncer's apartments to the Old Kent Road, you can't imagine my distress.

BOX: *(L. C.)* Yes, I can, by my own.

COX: (R. C.) I tried to forget everything in the world.

BOX: Especially your share of the rent, which I had to pay Mrs. Bouncer.

COX: Generous Box! don't mention it. (*shakes Box's hand*) Well soon after, I was surprised, and I may add delighted, by the death of an old uncle, who left me a comfortable annuity.

BOX: How singular that my aunt of venerable memory should have died about the same time, and left me a pretty little property.

COX: | I congratulate you my dear fellow.  
|

BOX: | I wish you joy of your luck.

COX: Well my next step was to get married.

BOX: Ha! ha! ha! ha! Do you know I've been guilty of the same indiscretion myself?

COX: I was connubialised this day, twelve months.

BOX: The very day that witnessed the loss of my liberty.

COX: But that's not all,—could you believe it, I have a child?

BOX: Give me your hand, Cox. (*he grasps Cox's hand*) I also am a man and a father!

COX: How strangely things come about! Well, I've just returned to town from Margate, where I served my first year—we arrived last night by the steamer.

BOX: And I've come by train from Southampton.

COX: And finding that Mrs. Bouncer had apartments unoccupied, we popped into them.

BOX: Precisely as we did.

COX: Then your wife is here?

BOX: Yes,—she's in there—(*points to door, L.*) And yours?

COX: (*points to door, R.*) In there.

BOX: (*solemnly*) Cox,—the wonderful sympathy that exists between us, convinces me that nature intended us for Siamese twins.

COX: Or Corsican brothers at least. (*embrace*)

BOX: A thought strikes me, Cox, we should consecrate this day to friendship—by breakfasting together.

COX: With the ladies?

BOX: With the ladies, of course.

COX: Agreed. (*rings table bell and calls*) Mrs. Bouncer—Mrs. Bounce-e-e-e-r.—Bouncer don't exhibit her usual alacrity this morning.

*(Enter MRS. BOUNCER, 3.E. L., Carrying a tray with tea, Coffee, & c.)*

Ah! Mrs. Bouncer,—breakfast – for four!

MRS. BOUNCER: There it is sir,—I thought as old friends you'd have it together. (*lays tray on side table, c.*) There it is. Tea, coffee, shrimps, muffins, eggs, fried bacon, mutton-chops, and watercresses. (*puts articles on table c. as she names them*)

BOX: That will do for the present, we'll ring when we require more.

*(Exit MRS. BOUNCER, 3 E.L.)*

MRS. COX: (*calling from room, R.*) Cox! Cox!

COX: There's my wife calling me,—she wants me to hook her. Ah, Box, that's a woman any man might be proud to hook!

*(Exit Cox, R. 2 E.)*

BOX: I've no doubt of it.

*(MRS. BOX comes from 2 E. L., singing an opera air.)*

MRS. BOX: La, la, ra, la, la, &c. Dear me, I'm frightfully out of voice this morning: Is breakfast ready, Box?

BOX: Yes, my dear, we only wait for my old friend, Cox, whom I met accidentally here this moment—you've often heard me speak of him. We once lived together, and now we are going to breakfast together. I'll just go and finish dressing, and be back presently.

*(Exit, 2 E. L.)*

MRS. BOX: Dear me, I wonder how I look. I only dressed for Box, and here's Cox coming.  
*(looks at herself in chimney glass)*

*(Enter MRS. COX, 2 E. R.)*

MRS. COX: *(crosses to L. as she enters)* I'm curious to see this friend of Cox's, *(perceives MRS. BOX)* Why surely it never can be——

MRS. BOX: *(turning)* Hey—bless me—Fanny Hawes!

MRS. COX: Sophy Dawes!

MRS. BOX: Excuse me, Fanny, but I've changed my name. I've taken Dawes out of the corner of my pocket handkerchief, and put Box in.

MRS. COX: I really beg pardon, ma'am: I wasn't aware of the circumstance, as I've been abroad at Margate since my marriage.

MRS. BOX: *(R. C.)* What, are you gone and got married too?

MRS. COX: Well, I hope I'm not infringing the rules of female propriety by saying, I've made Cox the happiest of his sex.

MRS. BOX: What a lark, to think we should have both got off the shelf at last!

MRS. COX: Off the shelf, mem—ha, ha, ha!

MRS. BOX: Ha, ha, ha! *(both laugh, and continue to laugh until Cox and Box re-enter dressed for breakfast)*

BOX: *(to Cox)* There's no need of introducing our wives, Cox—you see, they've affected an amalgamation already.

MRS. BOX: Oh, we're old friends!

MRS. COX: Fondly attached companions! *(apart to Cox)* A forward little chorus singer at the theatres, who, to my knowledge, has been laying traps for every man she met, for the last fifteen years.

MRS. BOX: *(apart to Box, L. C.)* A paltry straw bonnet maker, who was on her last legs when she inveigled this poor stupid Cox.



COX: Well, I vote we go to breakfast.

MRS. COX: Oh, bravo! I've got such an appetite. *(she is going towards the head of the table, when MRS. BOX rushes before her)*

MRS. BOX: Beg pardon, mem, but if there be anything I sticks up for, it's my rank—the printer's lady before the hatter's wife. *(sits at head of table, L. Box sits L. C, COX sits R. C.)*

MRS. COX: Oh, mem, don't flurry yourself—I always give way to age. *(sits at opposite end of table, R.)*

MRS. BOX: Age! why, my dear, when you was a grown young person at the bonnet trade, I was playing with my doll.

MRS. COX: I remember the doll perfectly, Sophy; a remarkably large sized one it was, with red whiskers, and a strong Irish brogue.

COX: *(rising)* Ladies, ladies! Although an advocate in general for freedom of discussion, I'm afraid we're now touching on delicate ground.

BOX: Bravo! bravo!

COX: I therefore move the previous question, and request my friend Box to pass the muffins this way. *(MRS. BOX and MRS. COX tap their tea spoons on the table, and cry "Bravo! bravo!" BOX hands the plate of muffins to COX)*

BOX: Where are the eggs? oh! *(takes an egg from a plate)* Well now, I dare say Mrs. Bouncer calls that an egg! I call it a humbug— a contemptible humbug! and I maintain that the principles of Free Trade are not carried out unless we are to have a large egg with our big loaf. I dare say that egg has been laid to order by some distressed hen, at twenty to the dozen.

COX: And here's a mutton chop *(holding a chop on his fork)* that has been curiously adapted to a stomach of the meanest capacity.

MRS. BOX: Where's the porter?

BOX: *(rings bell and runs to door)* Porter—porter! Mrs. Bouncer.

MRS. COX: Do you indulge in porter, Mrs. Box ?

MRS. BOX: Yes, mem—I—hem!—hem!—I take it for my organ: the organ requires nourishment. Malibran took porter, mem, for her organ—didn't she, Box?

BOX:           *(reseating himself)* Extensively, my dear, in the pewter.

*(Enter MRS. BOUNCER with a pot of porter, 3 E. L.)*

MRS. BOUNCER:   The porter, Mr. Box. *(puts it down and is going off)*

BOX:           By-the-bye, Mrs. Bouncer, has that cabman brought home my umbrella yet,—a brown gingham umbrella, with brass spike and two broken ribs?

MRS. BOUNCER:   No, sir; I've heard nothing about it. *(goes off L. 3. E.)*

COX:           Very extraordinary, indeed!

MRS. BOX:       Can't we have a few hiseters, Box?

MRS. COX:       Hiseters ?

MRS. BOX:       I hope hiseters don't offend?

MRS. COX:       You mean oysters, my dear—vide Walker.

MRS. BOX:       If he's of your acquaintance, Fanny, I mean to avide him.

BOX:           Tempora mutantur—let's have no temper on the matter. Allow me to propose an egg, Mrs. Cox.

MRS. COX:       You're very kind. *(Box hands her an egg)*

BOX:           Salt, Mrs. Cox! *(hands her the salt)* And allow me to recommend you some of these watercresses. *(puts water cresses on her plate)*

MRS. COX:       Oh, thank you.

BOX:           What is the next article, Mrs. Cox?

MRS. COX:       Nothing more at present.

COX:           Well, this is downright jolly—just the thing I like—a comfortable little family party, where we can enjoy the society of our partners, without—without –

BOX:           Mustard! *(reaches for it)*

COX:           I didn't say without mustard, Box—far from it.

BOX:           *(eating)* How deuced hot it is!

COX:           But this I will say—that when we reflect upon our happiness as husbands –

BOX:           It draws tears from my eyes.

MRS. BOX:    Box!

BOX:           The mustard, my love—nothing but the mustard.

MRS. BOX:    I should hope not, Box.

COX:           I have one observation to make: it is that we should devote this day to harmless conviviality, and as we have breakfasted, we should dine together.

LADIES:       *(tapping the table)* Hear, hear! Bravo! Encore!

BOX:           I know a first-rate establishment in the Old Kent Road, where we can have a splendid dinner—all the delicacies of the season—beer included—for eighteen-pence a-head.

MRS. BOX:    No:—Greenwich is my weakness— shrimps and tea a shilling.

MRS. COX:    I objects to Greenwich in totum; my feeling is for Rosherville.

MRS. BOX:    I hate Rosherville.

MRS. COX:    And I abominate Greenwich ; so I shall stop at home.

MRS. BOX:    Your absence shall not spoil our appetite, I promise you. *(rises)*

MRS. COX:    But it may your temper. *(rises)*

MRS. BOX:    *(L.)* My temper?—Ha, ha, ha! insignificant creature.

MRS. COX:    *(R.)* You're angry, dear.

MRS. BOX:    No, mem, I'm not!

MRS. COX:    Yes, you are, love.

MRS. BOX:    I tell you I ain't!

MRS. COX:    Yes, darling, you are. *(Box and Cox rise and come down)*

MRS. BOX: Box! pack up our trunks this moment and call a cab! I'll not remain another moment under this roof. *(taking Box by the arm)*

COX: *(interposing)* Ladies, ladies, don't get warm. Come here! *(Cox comes forward to c, the two LADIES come on either side of him)* You *(to MRS. BOX)* stand for Greenwich, there—and you, my dear, *(to MRS. Cox)* for Rosherville, there. Now, as we can't dine conveniently at both places, I propose an intermediate banquet at Blackwall, here. *(touching his breast)*

MRS. BOX: Oh! I don't presume to dictate—anywhere but Rosherville.

MRS. COX: I've no voice in the matter—I only object to Greenwich.

BOX: *(L. C.)* Well, that matter's settled. How shall we go down ?

MRS. BOX: *(L.)* What does Mrs. Cox say?

MRS. COX: *(R. C.)* I say nothing—I leave it to you, Sophy—you always oppose everybody.

MRS. BOX: I deny that! It is you, Fanny, that'll never give up a point. But you can't help it, dear—you never could; and I've often said if ever there was ever a dear aggravating creature in the world, it was Fanny Hawes. *(MRS. COX laughs contemptuously; both LADIES go up stage)*

BOX: *(aside and agitated)* Fanny Hawes!—good gracious!—that name! If it should be *(aside to Cox)* Cox! was your wife's name Hawes?

COX: *(aside to him)* Of course it was, till we were married, and Cox obliterated Hawes. Come, ladies, let us finish our breakfast. *(sits at table)* Another cup of coffee, Mrs. Box? *(the two LADIES retreat themselves at table)*

BOX: *(apart L.)* Fanny Hawes? Hah! *(takes a white kid glove out of his pocket-book)* It must be the mysterious owner of this little kid glove, that I purloined from an interesting fellow-passenger whom I travelled with in an excursion train from Brighton one evening about eighteen months ago. Hah! what delicious recollections it suggests of a small waist and a very large carpet bag! She evidently don't recollect me—but that's not surprising, as in the dim twilight, and the obscurity of a second-class carriage, neither of us could distinguish the other's features.

MRS. BOX: Box! you haven't breakfasted.

BOX: Oh, yes, I have—don't mind me. *(apart)* She can't however, forget the attentive stranger, who carried her little dog on his knees during our journey—she can't

forget the white kid glove that I've preserved ever since. Here's her name inside: "Fanny Hawes"—and here's a slight memorandum of my feelings written at the time. I wish I could speak a few words to her; I've some mournful intelligence to communicate to her, that I'd rather Mrs. Box shouldn't be aware of—but how to reveal myself?

COX: Muffins all gone?

BOX: (*Apart*) Muffins! happy idea—I'll place her glove under a muffin, and give it to her with a mysterious wink. (*he goes to side table, takes the last muffin on a plate, which he bring down. L.*) This is certainly a most ingenious plan. (*he places the glove under the muffin*) There, she can't miss it.

MRS. BOX: Box, dear, will you fetch me my shawl from the next room?

BOX: Certainly my love. (*aside*) Confound the shawl! (*puts down plate with muffin on side table, and goes hastily into room, 2 R. L.*)

COX: Are there no more muffins? (*rises and sees the muffins Box has left on table, L.*) Oh, here's one left. (*takes the muffin and returns to breakfast table.*) I've a theory about muffins, that they're a curious combination of sponge and wash leather; (*endeavouring to cut the muffin*) and I've strong suspicion that the leather predominates in this particular specimen—there's no cutting through it. Eh! eh! what's this? (*rises and holds up the glove on his fork*) Well really now—Mrs. Bouncer—this is too bad—though I am partial to muffins,—I can't swallow gloves!

(*Box appears at door, 2 E. L.*)

LADIES: Gloves? (*they rise and come, forward*)

COX: Yes,—a lady's kid as I live,—and what is here -something's written inside. (*reads*) "Fanny Hawes."

MRS. COX: My name?

COX: And here on a slip of paper.—"April the 1st 1851,—the happiest day of my life! oh, Fanny Hawes when shall we meet again?—Signed, JOHN BOX, Printer" Hah! (*BOX rushes down, both ladies scream, Mrs. Box falling in a swoon into the arms of Cox, R., and Mrs. Cox into the arms of Box, L.*)

COX: Hah!—Box you're a villain.

BOX: Cox,—you're another.

- COX: Drop my wife this instant, sir ?
- BOX: I shan't, till you relinquish my better half.
- COX: Miserable subterfuge! As the husband of that lady, I demand your card, sir?
- BOX: You'll find it in my left-hand trousers' pocket! Come and take it!
- COX: I regret that the affair I have on hand prevents my availing myself of your polite offer.
- BOX: Nothing but the pressing nature of my present engagement could make me think of putting you to so much trouble.
- COX: Don't mention it,—will you allow me to make one observation?
- BOX: Certainly, Cox, with pleasure.
- COX: Well then; I had no idea that Mrs. Box was so ponderous.
- BOX: And I assure you, I am quite overpowered by the solidarity of Mrs. Cox. (*a child is heard crying in room, R., another in room, L.*) What's that? an infantine cry.
- MRS. COX: (*starting to her feet*) The blessed child!
- MRS. BOX: (*starting to her feet*) The dear baby! (*the LADIES rush into room, R. and L.*)
- COX: Hem! The ladies having retired for the performance of their maternal duties, I presume we are alone.
- BOX: I believe I may venture to say we are.
- COX: Well, then, we must come to an understanding, sir. That glove (*shows the glove*) requires an explanation.
- BOX: (*taking the glove*) This glove—oh, yes! certainly, (*puts the glove into his pocket*) Ha! of course, my dear fellow, sit down.
- COX: I'd rather not.
- BOX: Sit down, I insist—(*pushes him into a chair, R. C.*)—now, we can talk the matter over calmly and dispassionately. (*places chair for himself, L. C. and sits*)
- COX: Proceed, Mr. Box.

BOX: It was a lovely evening towards the close of the fourteenth century.

COX: What the devil have I to do with the fourteenth century, sir?

BOX: *(rises)* If the honourable gentleman on the opposite side requires an explanation, I shall give it in my own way. I repeat, then, it was a lovely evening towards the close of the fourteenth century, when two horsemen, enveloped in ample cloaks, might be seen slowly ascending the winding path that leads to the castle. "By my Holidam!" exclaimed the older swarthy stranger Do you follow me ?

COX: *(rising)* I'll be demmed if I do.

MRS. COX: *(calls in room, R.)* Cox! Cox!

BOX: *(rises)* Hah! there's your wife calling you.

COX: Never mind my wife—the explanation, sir!

BOX: There's your child, Box—your only child—the image of its father—do you hear? Now it screams—inhuman parent, why don't you fly ? *(pushing him)*

MRS COX: *(in room, R.)* Cox! Cox! I want you.

COX: But the explanation—the glove—the—the

BOX: There—your wife—your sweet babe—calls you—you can't resist that appeal. *(pushes him into room, R.)* Whew! I thought I should never have got him away—what's to be done, now—shall I confess all ?—why shouldn't I ? I'll relate the whole story—how Fanny Hawes and I travelled in the same railway carriage—how I purloined her glove—how we got separated by the crowd at the station—how I was left with her lapdog in my arms—how the poor creature got choked the following week—how Fanny Hawes and I never met until this hour. *(MRS. COX enters from room, R.)* Hah! Mysterious being—Fanny, dear—dear Fanny—I beg pardon, Mrs. Cox—forgive the emotion—the confusion—that this unexpected discovery makes in my intellect. *(in a confidential tone)* Where's Cox?

MRS. COX: I left him singing the child to sleep.

BOX: Happy Cox! *(places a chair, R.C.)* Sit down, my dear Mrs. C. I have something particular to say to you. *(sits L. C. beside her-Cox appears at door, R., and MRS. BOX at door, L., listening)* You remember the circumstances under which we parted.

MRS. COX: Perfectly. And I have often thought since of the dear little creature that I left in

your arms when we were rudely separated.

BOX: *(aside)* Her lapdog!—she hasn't forgotten him then. A— you allude to

MRS. COX: My little Charley!

COX: *(apart, at door)* Her little Charley!

BOX: Yes, I wish to speak to you privately about him ; you were greatly attached to the poor fellow ?

MRS. COX: I doted on him: he was such a beauty with his silken hair, like his mother, and his charming long ears.

COX: *(apart)* Like his father I suppose.

MRS. COX: Then he was so playful

BOX: Wonderfully! The very day I took him home, he tore up Mrs. Bouncer's best cap, for which I had to pay.

MRS. COX: I can't tell you how I grieved for him—until I got another

BOX: Then you have got another ?

MRS. COX: Oh, dear, yes. Cox has been very kind—such a little love—you can't think; but I never loved him as I did my pet Charley.

MRS. BOX: *(apart at door)* Oh! her pet Charley!

COX: *(apart at door)* Hoh!

BOX: Of course, first affection is always the strongest. Poor Charley! It quite affects me when I reflect upon his untimely end.

MRS. COX: What—is he dead ?

BOX: That was what I wanted to tell you,—poor dear little Charley is no more.

MRS. COX: Oh! Mr. Box, you do shock me!

BOX: I knew you would be deeply effected; but I've done all I could to keep his dear remains for you.



MRS. COX: His remains ?—how ?

BOX: I've had him beautifully preserved—he looks just as if he was alive. I thought it might be a melancholy consolation to you to drop a tear or so upon the dear departed.

*(MRS. BOX and MR. COX rush down suddenly on each side. It commences raining)*

COX: *(R.)* Hah! so we've discovered you. *(MR. BOX and MRS. COX start up in surprise)*

MRS. BOX: *(L.)* Oh! we've heard all!

COX: About the dear little creature.

MRS. BOX: *(to BOX)* Your darling Charley!

COX: *(to MRS. COX)* The playful little fellow, with his mother's silken hair!

MRS. BOX: *(to BOX)* And his father's long ears!

*(BOX and MRS. COX laughing immoderately, throw themselves into chairs, R. and L.)*

COX: Oh! mighty fine, madam!

MRS. BOX: It's just like you, Mr. Box!

COX: My feelings as a husband have been trampled upon! I'll join the Broken-hearted Club directly—I'll leave you for ever—I'll take the first omnibus to Australia, and bury my sorrows in the Diggings! *(puts on his hat, BOX and MRS. COX continue to laugh)*

MRS. COX: Oh, go by all means—we can spare you!

BOX: Don't stay a moment on our account!

COX: But it rains tremendously! *(calls at door, 3 E. L.)* Mrs. Bouncer, has that cabman brought my umbrella yet ?

MRS. BOUNCER: *(outside)* No—not yet, sir.

COX: Not yet—how very extraordinary.

*(goes to window, L., a CHILD cries in room R.; then another CHILD in room L.)*

MRS. COX: The blessed child.

MRS. BOX: My poppet! *(they run into rooms, R. and L.)*

COX: *(at window)* Hah! why surely that's my umbrella a coming down the street,—brown gingham—brass spike—two broken ribs: I can't be mistaken. *(thrown up window and calls)* Holloa, sir—hey! I beg your pardon, but that umbrella is mine. I say, sir, that umbrella you are carrying is my property.

MAN: *(in street)* No it isn't, I gave a shilling for it this morning on Holborn Hill.

COX: It's quite immaterial what you gave for it, sir, the umbrella is mine—and I expect you'll instantly give it up!

MAN: *(in street)* Do you? then you'd better come and take it.

COX: Oh, very well, only wait there till I come down, and see if I won't have it. *(quitting the window)* An impudent rascal, to refuse to give me up my umbrella, that I've had for twelve years.

*(Exit, 3 E. L.)*

BOX: Holloa! I shouldn't wonder if there was to be a row. Honour calls me to aid my friend, but prudence whispers that I never learnt the noble art of self defence—so I shall look on and see fair play. *(goes to window and looks out)*

COX: *(in the street)* Now, sir, give up my umbrella!

MAN: *(in the street)* I won't!

COX: *(in the street)* You won't?—but I'll have it!

MAN: *(in the street)* Holloa! what do you mean? Police! robbery! murder!

BOX: Oh! there's Cox pitching into the stranger, and the stranger digging away at Cox!

*(while they are fighting, BOYS are heard cheering at intervals; scuffling and voices in the street, some cry, "A ring!" "Make a ring!" "Stand Back!" "Hurray!" "Go it little 'un!")*

COX:           *(outside)* Take that!—hah! *(cheer outside)*

BOX:           Bravo! Cox has given him a topper; hah! there again, oh lord he's got Cox's head in Chancery and is hammering at it with persevering diligence, hah!—there they go, both down together,—Cox uppermost—give it him, Cox,—give it him, my boy,—two to one on Cox! —.Now they're at it again—steady Cox! Hold up your head and fight low. Oh lord, there's a smasher on his nose—never mind it, Cox—go in and win, my boy.— Holloa, foul blow,—*(comes down)*—foul blow, I say,—stop the fight!—help!—murder!—police! *(vehement cheers outside)*

*(MRS. COX and MRS. BOX rush out of their rooms, each carrying a baby)*

MRS. COX: | What's the matter, Mr. Box?

MRS. BOX: | For heaven's sake, what has happened?

BOX:           Oh—oh, poor Cox. He's engaged in a fearful pugilistic combat in the street.

MRS. COX:   Oh! heavens—he'll be murdered—oh pray hold my baby. *(she places the baby in Box's arms)*

MRS. BOX:   Oh! we must protect him—here, Box, take the child— *(she places her baby in his arms—both ladies rush out 3 E. L., crying "Police." Box stands at C. of stage, holding a baby on each arm)*

BOX:           Holloa!—here—gracious goodness! here's a picture! I should like to ask any unprejudiced lady what I am to do with this double responsibility, which has been imposed upon me, I don't feel at all competent to the duty, and it strikes me forcibly that if I had been the happy father of twins, I could not have been placed in a more embarrassing situation, *(a cheer heard in the street)* Hah! that cheer proclaims that a decisive blow has been struck— somebody has had enough of it. *(voices, and steps of persons approaching door, L.)* Hah! here they come!

*(Enter Cox, 3 E. L., followed by MRS. COX, and MRS. Box—he has a bloody nose—his clothes are torn and covered with mud; his hat crushed over his eyes—he brandishes a broken umbrella—the ladies take the children off, R. and L., and re-enter immediately.)*

COX:           *(R. L.)* Victory! Hurray! that last round settled the rascal— and I've recovered my umbrella, though we have both been slightly damaged in the conflict—here it is. I could have sworn to it at any distance—even though “J. C.” for James Cox, had not been engraved on the handle, *(examines the handle of the umbrella)* Eh! bless

me! these are not my initials—and now that I examine it closely, it's not a bit like my umbrella.

MRS. BOX: *(L)* Not like yours ?

COX: Quite an inferior article, Mrs. Box—but, good gracious, what have I done ?—committed highway robbery, with violence, upon the unoffending proprietor of the umbrella—lord! I shall be taken up, and very likely transported for the crime. Dear me, how could I have made such a mistake? Why, instead of the letters "J. C.", here are the initials "J. B." on the handle.

BOX: *(C)* "J. B.!" allow me to inspect them—*(Cox holds the umbrella to his nose)*—let me see.—*(looks at the handle of the umbrella)* Cox, my dear boy, let your mind recover its wonted tranquillity— it's all serene—the umbrella is mine. I lost it twelve mouths ago in a penny omnibus.

COX: Hah! then I've not committed a highway robbery. Embrace me, my preserver—yet—no—stand off—there's still a deadly feud between us.

BOX: About "Little Charley"—eh? I'll explain all that directly.

*(MRS. BOX speaks apart to MR. COX—BOX goes to door, 3 E. L., and calls)*

Mrs. Bouncer, have the goodness to bring up little Charley's remains.

COX: I must tell you, that after what I have heard I'm not to be satisfied with less than a full explanation.

BOX: Don't make yourself ridiculous.

*(Enter MRS. BOUNCER 3 E. L., carrying a stuffed dog fixed to a board, a cloth thrown over it. MRS. BOX and MRS. COX come down on either side)*

BOX: There are the remains of "Little Charley."

COX: A stuffed dog!

MRS. COX: My darling Charley; how beautiful he looks. *(takes the dog and kisses him)*

MRS. BOUNCER: A nasty brute that I've had it on my shelf in the kitchen ever so long.

COX: Hem! ha! I begin to doubt my own extraordinary sagacity—but how was it that

you and my wife appeared not to know each other when you met ?

MRS. BOX: Oh, my dear Cox, I know how that happened. Fanny has explained all to me, and I'm satisfied.

COX: Oh, very well, if you're satisfied. I suppose its my duty to be content, so give me your hand, Box.

BOX: Take it, Cox. (*grasp each others hands, warmly*) Hold! I've an idea of something looming in the future.

COX: Speak, what is it?

BOX: Your child is a girl ?

COX: Yes, of the female sex.

BOX: Mine is a male boy—what if we should unite the houses of Box and Cox by a future marriage between our infant heirs ?

COX: Hah! a family compact—good.

BOX: A contract sociale!

MRS. BOX: How delightful!

MRS. COX: How charming!

COX: Box, my dear fellow, we'll drink the health of the young couple to day, in a glass of champagne.

BOX: So we will, my boy, and let us hope that the popularity which Box and Cox enjoyed in their bachelor state

COX: May not be withdrawn from them when they are –

ALL: Married and settled!

**THE END**