

The Tables Turned eBook

The Tables Turned by William Morris

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Page 1

Transcribed from the 1887 Office of "The Commonweal" edition by David Price, email ccx074@coventry.ac.uk

The Tables turned; or, Nupkins Awakened

[Title page: title.jpg]

A Socialist Interlude
by
William Morris
author of 'the Earthly Paradise.'

As for the first time played at the Hall of the Socialist League on Saturday October 15, 1887

London:
Office of "The commonweal"
13 Farringdon road, E.C.
1887

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ORIGINAL CAST.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE—PART I.

Mr. La-di-da (*found guilty of swindling*) . . . H. Bartlett.

Mr. Justice Nupkins . . . W. Blundell.

Mr. Hungary, Q.C. (*Counsel for the Prosecution*) . . . W. H. Utley.

Sergeant Sticktoit (*Witness for Prosecution*) . . . James Allman.

Constable Potlegoff (*Witness for Prosecution*) . . . H. B. Tarleton.

Constable Strongithoath (*Witness for Prosecution*) . . . J. Flockton.

Mary Pinch (*a labourer's wife, accused of theft*) . . . May Morris.

Foreman of Jury . . . T. Cantwell.

Jack Freeman (*a Socialist, accused of conspiracy, sedition, and obstruction of the highway*) . . . H. H. Sparling.

Archbishop of Canterbury (*Witness for Defence*) . . . W. MORRIS.

Lord Tennyson (*Witness for Defence*) . . . A. BROOKES.

Professor Tyndall (*Witness for Defence*) . . . H. BARTLETT.

William Joyce (*a Socialist Ensign*) . . . H. A. BARKER.

Usher . . . J. LANE.

Clerk of the Court . . . J. TURNER.

Jurymen, Interrupters, Revolutionists, *etc.*, *etc.*

* * * * *

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.—PART II.

Citizen Nupkins (*late Justice*) . . . W. BLUNDELL,

Mary Pinch . . . MAY MORRIS.

William Joyce (*late Socialist Ensign*) . . . H. A. BARKER.

Jack Freeman . . . H. H. SPARLING.

1st Neighbour . . . H. B. TARLETON.

2nd Neighbour . . . J. LANE.

3rd Neighbour . . . H. GRAHAM.

Robert Pinch, and other Neighbours, Men and Women.

PART I.

SCENE.—*A Court of Justice.*

USHER, CLERK OF THE COURT, MR. HUNGARY, Q.C., *and others.* MR. LA-DI-DA, *the prisoner, not in the dock, but seated in a chair before it.* [*Enter* MR. JUSTICE NUPKINS.

Usher. Silence!—silence!

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Mr. Justice Nupkins. Prisoner at the bar, you have been found guilty by a jury, after a very long and careful consideration of your remarkable and strange case, of a very serious offence; an offence which squeamish moralists are apt to call robbing the widow and orphan; a cant phrase also, with which I hesitate to soil my lips, designates this offence as swindling. You will permit me to remark that the very fact that such nauseous and improper words can be used about the conduct of a *gentleman* shows how far you have been led astray from the path traced out for the feet of a respectable member of society. Mr. La-di-da, if you were less self-restrained, less respectful, less refined, less of a gentleman, in short, I might point out to you with more or less severity the disastrous consequences of your conduct; but I cannot doubt, from the manner in which you have borne yourself during the whole of this trial, that you are fully impressed with the seriousness of the occasion. I shall say no more then, but perform the painful duty which devolves on me of passing sentence on you. I am compelled in doing so to award you a term of imprisonment; but I shall take care that you shall not be degraded by contamination with thieves and rioters, and other coarse persons, or share the diet and treatment which is no punishment to persons used to hard living: that would be to inflict a punishment on you not intended by the law, and would cast a stain on your character not easily wiped away. I wish you to return to that society of which you have up to this untoward event formed an ornament without any such stain. You will, therefore, be imprisoned as a first-class misdemeanant for the space of one calendar month; and I trust that during the retirement thus enforced upon you, which to a person of your resources should not be very irksome, you will reflect on the rashness, the incaution, the impropriety, in one word, of your conduct, and that you will never be discovered again appropriating to your personal use money which has been entrusted to your care by your friends and relatives.

Mr. La-di-da. I thank you, my lord, for your kindness and consideration. May I be allowed to ask you to add to your kindness by permitting me to return to my home and make some necessary arrangements before submitting myself to the well-merited chastisement which my imprudence has brought upon me?

Mr. J. N. Certainly. I repeat I do not wish to make your sentence any heavier by forcing a hard construction upon it. I give you a week to make all arrangements necessary for your peace of mind and your bodily comfort.

Mr. L. I thank your lordship. [*Exit.*]

[*The case of MARY PINCH called.*]

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Mr. Hungary, Q.C. I am for the prosecution, my lord, instructed by the Secretary of State for the Home Department. (JUDGE *bites his pen and nods.*) My lord, and gentlemen of the Jury, although this case may seem to some ill-judging persons a trivial one, I think you will be able to see before it is over that it is really important in its bearing on the welfare of society, the welfare of the public; that is, of the respectable public,—of the respectable public, gentlemen. For in these days, when the spirit of discontent is so widespread, all illegal actions have, so to say, a political bearing, my lord, and all illegal actions are wicked, gentlemen of the Jury, since they tend towards the insecurity of society, or in other words, are definitely aimed at the very basis of all morality and religion. Therefore, my lord, I have received instructions from the Home Secretary to prosecute this woman, who, as I shall be able to prove to you, gentlemen of the Jury, by the testimony of three witnesses occupying responsible official positions, has been guilty of a breach at once of the laws of the country and the dictates of morality, and has thereby seriously inconvenienced a very respectable tradesman, nay (*looking at his brief*) three respectable tradesmen. I shall be able to show, gentlemen, that this woman has stolen three loaves of bread: (*impressively*) not one, gentlemen, but three.

A Voice. She's got three children, you palavering blackguard!

[*Confusion.*]

Mr. Justice N. (who has made an elaborate show of composing himself to slumber since the counsel began, here wakes up and cries out) Arrest that man, officer; I will commit him, and give him the heaviest punishment that the law allows of.

[*The USHER dives among the audience amidst great confusion, but comes back empty-handed.*]

J. N. A most dangerous disturbance! A most dangerous disturbance!

Mr. H. Gentlemen of the Jury, in confirmation of my remarks on the spirit that is abroad, I call your attention to the riot which has just taken place, endangering, I doubt not, the life of his lordship, and your own lives, gentlemen, so valuable to—to—to—in short, to yourselves. Need I point out to you at any length, then, the danger of allowing criminals, offenders against the sacred rights of property, to go at large? This incident speaks for me, and I have now nothing to do but let the witnesses speak for themselves. Gentlemen of the Jury, I do not ask you to convict on insufficient evidence; but I *do* ask you not to be swayed by any false sentiment bearing reference to the so-called smallness of the offence, or the poverty of the offender. The law is made for the poor as well as for the rich, for the rich as well as for the poor. The poor man has no more right to shelter himself behind his poverty, than the rich man behind his riches. In short, gentlemen of the Jury, what I ask you in all confidence to do, is to do justice and fear not.—I call Sergeant Sticktoit.

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[SERGEANT STICKTOIT *sworn*.

Mr. H. Well, sergeant, you saw this woman steal the loaves?

Sticktoit. Yes, sir.

Mr. H. All of them?

St. Yes, all.

Mr. H. From different shops, or from one?

St. From three different shops.

Mr. H. Yes, just so. (*Aside:* Then why the devil did he say from one shop when his evidence was taken before?) (*To ST.*) You were an eye-witness of that? You noticed her take all three loaves?

St. (*Aside:* He wants me to say from three different shops; I'm sure I don't know why. Anyhow, I'll say it—and swear it.) (*To the Court*) Yes, I was an eye-witness of the deed; (*pompously*) I followed her, and then I took her.

Mr. H. Yes, then you took her. Please tell the Court how.

St. (*Aside:* Let's see, what did we agree was the likeliest way?) (*To Court*) I saw her take the first loaf and hide it in her shawl; and then the second one; and the second one tumbled down into the mud; and she picked it up again and wiped it with her shawl; and then she took the third; and when she tried to put that with the two others they all three tumbled down; and as she stooped down to pick them up it seemed the best time to take her, as the two constables had come up; so I took her.

Mr. N. Yes; you took her.

St. And she cried.

Mr. H. Ah, she cried. Well, sergeant, that will do; you may go. (*Aside:* The sooner he goes the better. Wouldn't I like to have the cross-examining of him if he was called on the other side!) Constable Potlegoff.

[POTLEGOFF *sworn*.

Mr. H. Well, constable, did you see the woman take the loaves?

Potlegoff. Yes, sir.

Mr. H. How did she take them?



Pot. Off the counter, sir.

Mr. H. Did she go into the shop to take them?

Pot. Yes, sir. (*Aside:* I thought I was to say into three shops.)

Mr. H. One after another?

Pot. Yes, out of one shop one after another. (*Aside:* Now it's right, I hope.)

Mr. H. (*Aside:* Confound him, he's contradicting the other!) (*To POT.*) Yes, just so; one after the other. And did you see the second loaf tumble down?

Pot. Yes, sir.

Mr. H. When was that?

Pot. As she took it off the counter.

Mr. H. Yes, *after* she took it off the counter, in the street?

Pot. No, sir. (*Catching the SERGEANT'S eye.*) I mean yes, sir, and she wiped the mud off them; the sergeant saw her—and I saw her.

A Voice. Off IT, you liar! 'twas the second loaf, the single loaf, the other liar said!

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[Confusion. The judge wakes up and splutters, and tries to say something; the USHER goes through the audience, but finds no one; HUNGARY spreads out his hands to the Jury, appealingly.]

Mr. H. Yes, so it was in the street that you saw the loaves fall down?

Pot. Yes, sir; it was in the street that I saw it tumble down.

A Voice. You mean *them*, you fool! You haven't got the story right yet!

[Confusion again. The JUDGE sits up and stares like a man awaked from a nightmare, then calls out Officer! Officer! very loud. The USHER goes his errand again, and comes back bootless.]

Mr. H. (very blandly). It was in the street that you saw the three loaves fall down?

Pot. Yes, it was in the street that I saw the loaf fall down.

Mr. H. Yes, in the street; just so, in the street. You may go (*Aside: for a damned fool!*). Constable Strongithoath.

[CONSTABLE STRONGITHOATH sworn,

Mr. H. Constable, did you see this robbery?

Strong. I saw it.

Mr. H. Tell us what you saw.

Strong, (very slowly and stolidly, and as if repeating a lesson). I saw her steal them all—all—all from one shop—from three shops—I followed her—I took her. When she took it up—she let it drop—in the shop—and wiped the street mud off it. Then she dropped them all three in the shop—and came out—and I took her—with the help—of the two constables—and she cried.

Mr. H. You may go (*Aside: for a new-caught joskin and a fool!*). I won't ask him any questions.

J. N. (waking up, and languid). Do you call any other witnesses, Mr. Hungary?

Mr. H. No, my lord. (*Aside: Not if I know it, considering the quality of the evidence. Not that it much matters; the Judge is going to get a conviction; the Jury will do as he tells them—always do.*) (*To the Court*): My lord and gentlemen of the Jury, that's my case.

J. N. Well, my good woman, what have you to say to this?



Mary Pinch. Say to it! What's the use of *saying* anything to it? I'd *do* to it, if I could.

J. N. Woman! what do you mean? Violence will not do here. Have you witnesses to call?

M. P. Witnesses! how can I call witnesses to swear that I didn't steal the loaves?

J. N. Well, do you wish to question the witnesses? You have a right to.

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M. P. Much good that would be! Would you listen to me if I did? I didn't steal the loaves; but I wanted them, I can tell you that. But it's all one; you are going to have it so, and I might as well have stolen a diamond necklace for all the justice I shall get here. What's the odds? It's of a piece with the rest of my life for the last three years. My husband was a handsome young countryman once, God help us! He could live on ten shillings a-week before he married me; let alone that he could pick up things here and there. Rabbits and hares some of them, as why should he not? And I could earn a little too; it was not so bad there. And then and for long the place was a pretty place, the little grey cottage among the trees, if the cupboard hadn't been so bare; one can't live on flowers and nightingale's songs. Then the children came brisk, and the wages came slack; and the farmer got the new reaping-machine, and my binding came to an end; and topping turnips for a few days in the foggy November mornings don't bring you in much, even when you haven't just had a baby. And the skim milk was long ago gone, and the leasing, and the sack of tail-wheat, and the cheap cheeses almost for nothing, and the hedge-clippings, and it was just the bare ten shillings a-week. So at last, when we had heard enough of eighteen shillings a-week up in London, and we scarce knew what London meant, though we knew well enough what ten shillings a-week in the country meant, we said we'd go to London and try it there; and it had been a good harvest, quickly saved, which made it bad for us poor folk, as there was the less for us to do; and winter was creeping in on us. So up to London we came; for says Robert: "They'll let us starve here, for aught I can see: they'll do naught for us; let us do something for ourselves." So up we came; and when all's said, we had better have lain down and died in the grey cottage clean and empty. I dream of it yet at whiles: clean, but no longer empty; the crockery on the dresser, the flitch hanging from the rafters, the pot on the fire, the smell of new bread about; and the children fat and ruddy tumbling about in the sun; and my lad coming in at the door stooping his head a little; for our door is low, and he was a tall handsome chap in those days.—But what's the use of talking? I've said enough: I didn't steal the loaves—and if I had a done, where was the harm?

J. N. Enough, woman? Yes, and far more than enough. You are an undefended prisoner. You have not the advantage of counsel, or I would not have allowed you to go on so long. You would have done yourself more good by trying to refute the very serious accusation brought against you, than by rambling into a long statement of your wrongs against society. We all have our troubles to bear, and you must bear your share of them without offending against the laws of your country—the equal laws that are made for rich and poor alike.

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A Voice. You can bear *her* troubles well enough, can't you, old fat guts?

J. N. (scarcely articulate with rage). Officer! officer! arrest that man, or I will arrest you!

[USHER again makes a vain attempt to get hold of some one.

J. N. (puffing and blowing with offended dignity). Woman, woman, have you anything more to say?

M. P. Not a word. Do what you will with me. I don't care.

J. N. (impressively). Gentlemen of Jury, simple as this case seems, it is a most important one under the present condition of discontent which afflicts this country, and of which we have had such grievous manifestations in this Court to-day. This is not a common theft, gentlemen—if indeed a theft has been committed—it is a revolutionary theft, based on the claim on the part of those who happen unfortunately to be starving, to help themselves at the expense of their more fortunate, and probably—I may say certainly—more meritorious countrymen. I do not indeed go so far as to say that this woman is in collusion with those ferocious ruffians who have made these sacred precincts of justice ring with their ribald and threatening scoff's. But the persistence of these riotous interruptions, and the ease with which their perpetrators have evaded arrest, have produced a strange impression in my mind. (*Very impressively.*) However, gentlemen, that impression I do not ask you to share; on the contrary, I warn you against it, just as I warn you against being moved by the false sentiment uttered by this woman, tinged as it was by the most revolutionary—nay, the most bloodthirsty feeling. Dismiss all these non-essentials from your minds, gentlemen, and consider the evidence only; and show this mistaken woman the true majesty of English Law by acquitting her—if you are not satisfied with the abundant, clear, and obviously unbiassed evidence, put before you with that terseness and simplicity of diction which distinguishes our noble civil force. The case is so free from intricacy, gentlemen, that I need not call your attention to any of the details of that evidence. You must either accept it as a whole and bring in a verdict of guilty, or your verdict must be one which would be tantamount to accusing the sergeant and constables of wilful and corrupt perjury; and I may add, wanton perjury; as there could be no possible reason for these officers departing from the strict line of truth. Gentlemen I leave you to your deliberations.

Foreman of Jury. My lord, we have already made up our minds. Your lordship need not leave the Court: we find the woman guilty.

J. N. (gravely nodding his head). It now remains for me to give sentence. Prisoner at the bar, you have been convicted by a jury of your countrymen—

A Voice. That's a lie! You convicted her: you were judge and jury both.

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J. N. (in a fury). Officer, you are a disgrace to your coat! Arrest that man, I say. I would have had the Court cleared long ago, but that I hoped that you would have arrested the ruffian if I gave him a chance of repeating his—his crime.

[The USHER makes his usual promenade.]

J. N. You have been convicted by a jury of your countrymen of stealing three loaves of bread; and I do not see how in the face of the evidence they could have come to any other verdict. Convicted of such a serious offence, this is not the time and place to reproach you with other misconduct; and yet I could almost regret that it is not possible to put you once more in the dock, and try you for conspiracy and incitement to riot; as in my own mind I have no doubt that you are in collusion with the ruffianly revolutionists, who, judging from their accent, are foreigners of a low type, and who, while this case has been proceeding, have been stimulating their bloodstained souls to further horrors by the most indecent verbal violence. And I must here take the opportunity of remarking that such occurrences could not now be occurring, but for the ill-judged leniency of even a Tory Government in permitting that pest of society the unrespectable foreigner to congregate in this metropolis.

A Voice. What do they do with you, you blooming old idiot, when you goes abroad and waddles through the Loover?

J. N. Another of them! another of those scarcely articulate foreigners! This is a most dangerous plot! Officer, arrest everybody present except the officials. I will make an example of everybody: I will commit them all.

Mr. H. (leaning over to JUDGE). I don't see how it can be done, my lord. Let it alone: there's a Socialist prisoner coming next; you can make him pay for all.

J. N. Oh! there is, is there? All right—all right. I'll go and get a bit of lunch (*offering to rise*).

Clerk. Beg pardon, my lord, but you haven't sentenced the prisoner.

J. N. Oh, ah! Yes. Oh, eighteen months' hard labour.

M. P. Six months for each loaf that I didn't steal! Well, God help the poor in a free country! Won't you save all further trouble by hanging me, my lord? Or if you won't hang me, at least hang my children: they'll live to be a nuisance to you else.

J. N. Remove the woman. Call the next case. (*Aside:* And look sharp: I want to get away.)

[Case of JOHN or JACK FREEMAN called.]

Mr. H. I am for the prosecution, my lord.

J. N. Is the prisoner defended?

Jack Freeman. Not I.

J. N. Hold your tongue, sir! I did not ask you. Now, brother Hungary.

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Mr. H. Once more, my lord and gentlemen of the Jury, I rise to address you; and, gentlemen, I must congratulate you on having the honour of assisting on two State trials on one day; for again I am instructed by the Secretary of State for the Home Department to prosecute the prisoner. He is charged with sedition and incitement to riot and murder, and also with obstructing the Queen's Highway. I shall bring forward overwhelming evidence to prove the latter offence—which is, indeed, the easiest of all offences to be proved, since the wisdom of the law has ordained that it can be committed without obstructing anything or anybody. As for the other, and what we may excusably consider the more serious offence, the evidence will, I feel sure, leave no doubt in your minds concerning the guilt of the prisoner. I must now give you a few facts in explanation of this case. You may not know, gentlemen of the Jury, that in the midst of the profound peace which this glorious empire now enjoys; in spite of the liberty which is the proud possession of every Briton, whatever his rank or fortune; in spite of the eager competition and steadily and swiftly rising wages for the services of the workmen of all grades, so that such a thing as want of employment is unheard of amongst us; in spite of the fact that the sick, the infirm, the old, the unfortunate, are well clothed and generously fed and housed in noble buildings, miscalled, I am free to confess, *workhouses*, since the affectionate assiduity of our noble Poor Law takes every care that if the inmates are of no use to themselves they shall at least be of no use to any one else,—in spite of all these and many kindred blessings of civilisation, there are, as you may not know, a set of wicked persons in the country, mostly, it is true, belonging to that class of non-respectable foreigners of whom my lord spoke with such feeling, taste, and judgment, who are plotting, rather with insolent effrontery than crawling secrecy, to overturn the sacred edifice of property, the foundation of our hearths, our homes, and our altars. Gentlemen of the Jury, it might be thought that such madmen might well be left to themselves, that no one would listen to their ravings, and that the glorious machinery of Justice need no more be used against them than a crusader's glittering battle-axe need be brought forward to exterminate the nocturnal pest of our couches. This indeed has been, I must say unfortunately, the view taken by our rulers till quite recently. But times have changed, gentlemen; for need I tell you, who in your character of shrewd and successful men of business understand human nature so well, that in this imperfect world we must not reckon on the wisdom, the good sense of those around us. Therefore you will scarcely be surprised to hear that these monstrous, wicked, and disreputable doctrines are becoming popular; that murder and rapine are eagerly looked forward to under such names as Socialism, revolution, co-operation,

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profit-sharing, and the like; and that the leaders of the sect are dangerous to the last degree. Such a leader you now see before you. Now I must tell you that these Socialist or Co-operationist incendiaries are banded together into three principal societies, and that the prisoner at the bar belongs to one if not two of these, and is striving, hitherto in vain, for admittance into the third and most dangerous. The Federationist League and the International Federation, to one or both of which this man belongs, are dangerous and malevolent associations; but they do not apply so strict a test of membership as the third body, the Fabian Democratic Parliamentary League, which exacts from every applicant a proof of some special deed of ferocity before admission, the most guilty of their champions veiling their crimes under the specious pretexts of vegetarianism, the scientific investigation of supernatural phenomena, vulgarly called ghost-catching, political economy, and other occult and dull studies. But though not yet admitted a neophyte of this body, the prisoner has taken one necessary step towards initiation, in learning the special language spoken at all the meetings of these incendiaries: for this body differs from the other two in using a sort of cant language or thieves' Latin, so as to prevent their deliberations from becoming known outside their unholy brotherhood. Examples of this will be given you by the witnesses, which I will ask you to note carefully as indications of the dangerous and widespread nature of the conspiracy. I call Constable Potlegoff.

[CONSTABLE POTLEGOFF *sworn*.

Mr. H. Have you seen the prisoner before?

Pot. Yes.

Mr. H. Where?

Pot. At Beadon Road, Hammersmith.

Mr. H. What was he doing there?

Pot. He was standing on a stool surrounded by a dense crowd.

Mr. H. What else?

Pot. He was speaking to them in a loud tone of voice.

Mr. H. You say it was a dense crowd: how dense? Would it have been easy for any one to pass through the crowd?

Pot. It would have been impossible. I could not have got anywhere near him without using my truncheon—which I have a right to do.

Mr. H. Is Beadon Road a frequented thoroughfare?

Pot. Very much so, especially on a Sunday morning.

Mr. H. Could you hear what he said?

Pot. I could and I did. I made notes of what he said.

Mr. H. Can you repeat anything he said?

Pot. I can. He urged the crowd to disembowel all the inhabitants of London.
(*Sensation.*)

Mr. H. Can you remember the exact words he used?

Pot. I can. He said, "Those of this capital should have no bowels. You workers must see to having this done."



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J. N. Stop a little; it is important that I should get an accurate note of this (*writing*). Those who live in this metropolis must have their bowels drawn out—is that right?

Pot. This capital, he said, my lord.

J. N. (writing). This capital. Well, well, well! I cannot guess why the prisoner should be so infuriated against this metropolis. Go on, Mr. Hungary.

Mr. H. (to witness). Can you remember any other words he said?

Pot. Yes; later on he said, “I hope to see the last Londoner hung in the guts of the last member of Parliament.”

J. N. Londoner, eh?

Pot. Yes, my lord; that is, he meant Londoner.

J. N. You mustn’t say what he meant, you must say what you heard him say.

Pot. Capital, my lord.

J. N. I see; (*writing*). The last dweller in the metropolis.

Pot. Capital, my lord.

J. N. Yes, exactly; that’s just what I’ve written—this metropolis.

Pot. He said capital, my lord.

Mr. H. Capital, the witness says, my lord.

J. N. Well, doesn’t that mean the same thing? I tell you I’ve got it down accurately.

J. F. (who has been looking from one to the other with an amused smile, now says as if he were thinking aloud:) Well, I *am* damned! what a set of fools!

J. N. What is that you said, sir? Have you no sense of decency, sir? Are you pleading, or are you not pleading? I have a great mind to have you removed.

J. F. (laughing). Oh, by all means remove me! I didn’t ask to be here. Only look here, I could set you right in three minutes if you only let me.

J. N. Do you want to ask the witness anything? If not, sir, hold your tongue, sir. No, sir; don’t speak, sir. I can see that you are meditating bullying me; let me advise you, sir, not to try it.

Mr. H. (to POT.) Was that the only occasion on which you heard him speaking?

Pot. No; I have heard him speaking in Hyde Park and saying much the same thing, and calling Mr. Justice Nupkins a damned old fool!

J. N. (writing). "A damned old fool!" Anything else?

Pot. A blasted old cheat!

J. N. (writing). "A blasted old cheat!" (*Cheerfully*) Go on.

Pot. Another time he was talking in a public-house with two men whom I understood to be members of the Fabian League. He was having words with them, and one of them said, "Ah, but you forget the rent of ability"; and he said, "Damn the rent of ability, I will smash their rents of abilities."

Mr. H. Did you know what that meant?



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Pot. No; not then.

Mr. H. But you do now?

Pot. Yes; for I got into conversation with one of them, who told me that it meant the brain, the skull.

J. N. (writing). "The rent of ability is a cant phrase in use among these people signifying the head."

Mr. H. Well?

Pot. Well, then they laughed and said, Well, as far as he is concerned, smash it when you can catch it.

Mr. H. Did you gather whose head it was that they were speaking of?

Pot. Yes; his lordship's.

Mr. H. (impressively and plaintively). And *why*?

Pot. Because they said he had jugged their comrades like a damned old smoutch!

J. N. Jugged?

Pot. Put them in prison, my lord.

J. N. (Aside: That Norwich affair.) Wait! I must write my self down a smoutch—smoutch? no doubt a foreign word.

Mr. H. What else have you heard the prisoner say.

Pot. I have heard him threaten to make her Majesty the Queen take in washing.

J. N. Plain washing?

Pot. Yes, my lord.

J. N. Not fancy work?

Pot. No, my lord.

A Juryman. Have you heard him suggest any means of doing all this?

Pot. Yes, sir; for I have attended meetings of his association in disguise, when they were plotting means of exciting the populace.



Mr. H. In which he took part?

Pot. In which he took part.

Mr. H. You heard him arranging with others for a rising of the lower orders?

Pot. Yes, sir; and on the occasion, when I met him in the public house, I got into conversation with him, and he told me that his society numbered upwards of two millions. (*J. F. grins.*)

The Juryman (anxiously). Armed?

Pot. He said there were arms in readiness for them.

Mr. H. Did you find out where?

Pot. Yes; at the premises of the Federationist League, 13 Farringdon Road.

Mr. H. Did you search for them there?

Pot. Yes.

Mr. H. Did you find them?

Pot. No; we found nothing but printing-stock and some very shabby furniture, and the office-boy, and three compositors.

Mr. H. Did you arrest them?

Pot. No; we thought it better not to do so.

Mr. H. Did they oppose your search?

Pot. No.

Mr. H. What did they do?

Pot. Well, they took grinders at me and said, "Sold!"

Mr. H. Meaning, doubtless, that they had had an inkling of your search and had sold the arms?

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Pot. So we gathered.

J. N. (writing). “They did not find the arms because they had been sold.”

Mr. H. Well, Constable, that will do.

J. N. Prisoner, do you wish to ask the Constable any questions?

J. F. Well, I don’t know. I strongly suspect that you have made up your mind which way the jury shall make up their minds, so it isn’t much use. However, I will ask him three questions. Constable Potlegoff, at how many do you estimate the dense crowd at Beadon Road, when I obstructed?

Pot. Upwards of a thousand.

J. F. H’m; a good meeting! How many were present at that meeting of the Socialist League where we were plotting to make the Queen take in washing?

Pot. Upwards of two hundred.

J. F. Lastly, when I told you in the public-house that we were two millions strong, were you drunk or sober?

Pot. Sober.

J. F. H’m! It’s a matter of opinion perhaps as to when a man *is* drunk. Was I sober?

Pot. No; drunk.

J. F. H’m! So I should think. That’ll do, Mr. Potlegoff; I won’t muddle your “Rent-of-Ability” any more. Good bye.

[SERGEANT STICKTOIT *called*.

Mr. H. Have you heard the prisoner speaking?

St. Yes.

Mr. H. Where?

St. At Beadon Road amongst other places: that’s where I took him.

Mr. H. What was he doing?

St. Standing on a stool, speaking



Mr. H. Yes; speaking: to how many people?

St. About a thousand.

Mr. H. Could you get near him?

St. Nowhere near.

Mr. H. Well, can you tell me what he was saying?

St. Well, he said that all the rich people and all the shopkeepers (*glancing at the Jury*) should be disemboweled and flayed alive, and that all arrangements had been made for doing it, if only the workingmen would combine. He then went into details as to where various detachments were to meet in order to take the Bank of England and capture the Queen. He also threatened to smash Mr. Justice Nupkins' "Rent-of-Ability," by which I understood him to mean his skull.

J. N. His—my brains, you mean!

St. No, my lord; for he said that you—that he—hadn't any brains.

Mr. H. Did you find any documents or papers on him when he was arrested?

St. Yes; he had a bundle of papers with him.

Mr. H. Like this? (*showing a number of "Commonweal"*)

St. Yes.

J. F. (*Aside: Two quires that I couldn't sell, damn it!*)

Mr. H. We put this paper in, my lord. Your lordship will notice the vileness of the incendiarism contained in it. I specially draw your attention to this article by one Bax, who as you will see, is familiar with the use of dynamite to a fearful extent. (J. N. *reads, muttering "Curse of Civilisation."*) Gentlemen of the Jury that is our case.

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J. N. (looking up from "Commonweal"). Prisoner at the bar, what have you to say? Do you call witnesses?

J. F. Yes, I call witnesses, but I haven't much to say. I am accused of obstruction, but I shan't argue that point, as I know that I should do myself no good by proving that I had not obstructed. I am accused of being a Socialist and a revolutionist. Well, if you, my lord, and you, gentlemen of the Jury, and the classes to which you belong, knew what Socialism means—and I fear you take some pains not to—you would also know what the condition of things is now, and how necessary revolution is. So if it is a crime to be a Socialist and a revolutionist, I have committed that crime; but the charge against me is that I am a criminal fool, which I am not. And my witnesses will show you, gentlemen of the Jury, that the evidence brought against me is a mass of lies of the silliest concoction. That is, they will show it you if you are sensible men and understand your position as jurymen, which I almost fear you do not. Well, it will not be the first time that the judge has usurped the function of the jury, and I would go to prison cheerfully enough if I could hope it would be the last.

[He pauses as if to listen. Confused noises and the sound of the "Marseillaise" a long way off. (Aside: What is it, I wonder?—No; it's nothing.)]

J. N. Prisoner, what is the matter with you? You seem to be intoxicated; and indeed I hope you are, for nothing else could excuse the brutality of your language.

J. F. Oh, don't put yourself out, my lord. You've got the whip-hand of me, you know. I thought I heard an echo; that's all. Well, I will say no more, but call the Archbishop of Canterbury.

[Enter the ARCHBISHOP, who is received with much reverence and attention. He is sworn.]

J. F. Your Grace, were you present at the meeting at Beadon Road where I was arrested?

Arch. Yes—yes, I *was* there. Strange to say, it was on a Sunday morning. I needed some little refreshment from the toils of ecclesiastical office. So I took a cab, I admit under the pretext of paying a visit to my brother of London; and having heard the fame of these Socialist meetings, I betook me to one of them for my instruction and profit: for I hold that in these days even those that are highest in the Church should interest themselves in social matters.

J. F. Well, my lord, were you pleased with what you saw and heard?

Arch. I confess, sir, that I was disappointed.

J. F. Why, my lord?

Arch. Because of the extreme paucity of the audience.

J. F. Were there a thousand persons present?

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Arch. (severely). I must ask you not to jest with me in the sacredly respectable precincts of a Court of Justice. To the best of my remembrance, there were present at the commencement of your discourse but three persons exclusive of yourself. That fact is impressed on my mind from the rude and coarse words which you said when you mounted your stool or rostrum to the friend who accompanied you and had under his arm a bundle of a very reprehensible and ribald print called the *Commonweal*, one of which he, I may say, forced me to purchase.

J. F. Well, what did I say?

Arch. You said, "I say, Bill! damned hard lines to have to speak to a lamp-post, a kid, and an old buffer"—by the latter vulgarity indicating myself, as I understand.

J. F. Yes, my lord, so it is. Now let me ask you, if that matters, is Beadon Road a thronged thoroughfare?

Arch. On the contrary; at least on the morning on which I was there, there was a kind of Sabbath rest about it, scarcely broken by the harangue of yourself, sir.

J. F. You heard what I said, my lord?

Arch. I did, and was much shocked at it.

J. F. Well, did I say anything about bowels?

Arch. I regret to say that you did.

J. F. Do you remember the words I used?

Arch. Only too well. You said, but at great length, and with much embroidery of language more than questionable, that capital had no bowels for the worker, nor owners of capital either; and that since no one else would be kind to them, the workers must be kind to themselves and take the matter into their own hands.

J. N. (making notes). Owners of *the capital*; workman must take the matter—take the matter—into their own hands.

J. F. Well, I have no more questions to ask your Grace.

Mr. H. With many excuses, your Grace, I will ask you a question.

Arch. Certainly, Mr Hungary.

Mr. H. You say that the audience was very small; that was at first; but did it not increase as time went on?

Arch. Yes; an itinerant vendor of ices drew up his stall there, and two policemen—these gentlemen—strolled in, and some ten or more others stood round us before the orator had finished.

Mr. H. (*Aside:* H'm! old beggar will be so very specific. Let's try him as to the sedition.) (*To ARCH.*) My lord, you said that you were shocked at what the prisoner said: what was the nature of his discourse?

Arch. I regret to have to say that it was a mass of the most frightful incendiarism, delivered with an occasional air of jocularly and dry humour that made my flesh creep. Amidst the persistent attacks on property he did not spare other sacred things. He even made an attack on my position, stating (wrongly) the amount of my moderate stipend. Indeed, I think he recognised me, although I was partially disguised.

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J. F. (*Aside:* True for you, old Benson, or else how could I have subpoenaed you?)

Mr. H. I thank your Grace: that will do.

J. F. I now call Lord Tennyson.

[LORD TENNYSON *sworn.*

J. F. My lord, have you been present, in disguise, at a meeting of the Socialist League in 13 Farringdon Road?

Lord T. What's that to you? What do you want to know for? Yes, I have, if it comes to that.

J. F. Who brought you there?

Lord T. A policeman: one Potlegoff. I thought he was a Russian by his name, but it seems he is an Englishman—and a liar. He said it would be exciting: so I went.

J. F. And was it exciting?

Lord T. NO: it was *dull.*

J. F. How many were present?

Lord T. Seventeen: I counted them, because I hadn't got anything else to do.

J. F. Did they plot anything dreadful?

Lord T. Not that I could hear. They sat and smoked; and one fool was in the chair, and another fool read letters; and then they worried till I was sick of it as to where such and such fools should go to spout folly the next week; and now and then an old bald-headed fool and a stumpy little fool in blue made jokes, at which they laughed a good deal; but I couldn't understand the jokes—and I came away.

J. F. Thank you, my lord.

Mr. H. My lord Tennyson, I wish to ask you a question. You say that you couldn't understand their jokes: but could you understand them when they were in earnest?

Lord T. No, I couldn't: I can't say I tried. I don't want to understand Socialism: it doesn't belong to my time. [*Exit.*

J. F. I call Professor Tyndall.

[PROFESSOR TYNDALL *sworn.*



J. F. Professor Tyndall, have you seen me before?

Pro. T. Yes; I have seen you in a public-house, where I went to collect the opinions of the lower orders against Mr. Gladstone.

J. F. Who was I with?

Pro. T. You were with a man whom I was told was a policeman in plain clothes, and with some others that I assume to have been friends of yours, as you winked at them and you and they were laughing together as you talked to the policeman.

J. F. Do you see the policeman in Court?

Pro. T. Yes; there he is.

J. F. Was he drunk or sober?

Pro. T. What, now?

J. F. No—then.

Pro. T. (with decision). Drunk.

J. F. Was I drunk?

Pro. T. What, now?

J. F. No—then; though you may tell me whether I'm drunk or not now, if you like, and define drunkenness scientifically.

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Pro. T. Well, you were so, so.

J. F. Thank you, Professor.

Mr. H. One question, Professor Tyndall. Did you hear what the prisoner was saying to the policeman—who, by the way, was, I suspect, only shamming drunkenness?

J. F. (Aside: He could carry a good deal, then.)

Pro. T. Yes, I heard him. He was boasting of the extent and power of the Socialist organisation.

Mr. H. And did you believe it? did it surprise you?

Pro. T. It did not in the least surprise me: it seemed to me the natural consequences of Gladstone's Home Rule Bill. As to believing it, I knew he was jesting; but I thought that his jesting concealed very serious earnest. He seemed to me a determined, cunning, and most dangerous person.

Mr. H. I thank you, professor. [*Exit PRO. T.*

J. N. Prisoner, do you want to re-examine the witnesses? What's that noise outside? They ought to be arrested.

[*"Marseillaise" again without, and tumult nearer. FREEMAN listens intently, without heeding the JUDGE.*

J. N. Prisoner, why don't you answer? Your insolence won't serve you here, I can tell you.

J. F. I was listening, Judge; I thought I heard that echo again.

J. N. Echo again! What does the fellow mean? It's my belief you're drunk, sir: that you have stimulated your courage by liquor.

A Voice. Look out for *your* courage, old cockywax; you may have something to try it presently!

J. N. Officer, arrest that pernicious foreigner.

[*USHER promenades once more.*

J. N. (Aside: I don't like it: I'm afraid there is something going to happen.) (*To Court*)
Mr. Hungary.



Mr. H. My lord and gentlemen of the Jury, the prisoner's mingled levity and bitterness leaves me little to answer to. I can only say, gentlemen of the Jury, that I am convinced that you will do your duty. As to the evidence, I need make no lengthened comments on it, because I am sure his lordship will save me the trouble. (*Aside:* Trust him!) It is his habit—his laudable habit—to lead juries through the intricacies which beset unprofessional minds in dealing with evidence. For the rest, there is little need to point out the weight of the irrefragible testimony of the sergeant and constable,—men trained to bring forward those portions of the facts which come under their notice which *are* weighty. I will not insult you, my lord, by pointing out to intelligent gentlemen in your presence how the evidence of the distinguished and illustrious personages so vexatiously called by the prisoner, so far from shaking the official evidence, really confirms it. (*Aside:* I wonder what all that row is about? I wish I were out of this and at home.) Gentlemen of the Jury, I repeat that I expect you to do your duty and defend yourselves from the bloodthirsty designs of the dangerous revolutionist now before you. (*Aside:* Well, now I'm off, and the sooner the better; there's a row on somewhere.) [*Exit.*

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J. N. Gentlemen of the Jury, I need not expatiate to you on the importance of the case before you. There are two charges brought against the prisoner, but one so transcends the other in importance—nay, I may say swallows it up—that I imagine your attention will be almost wholly fixed on that—the charge of conspiring and inciting to riot. Besides, on the lesser charge the evidence is so simple and crystal-clear that I need but allude to it. I will only remark on the law of the case, that committing an obstruction is a peculiar offence, since it is committed by everyone who, being in a public thoroughfare, does not walk briskly through the streets from his starting-place to his goal. There is no need to show that some other person is hindered by him in his loitering, since obviously that *might* be the case; and besides, his loitering might hinder another from forming in his mind a legitimate wish to be there, and so might do him a very special and peculiar injury. In fact, gentlemen, it has been doubted whether this grave offence of obstruction is not always being committed by everybody, as a corollary to the well-known axiom in physics that two bodies cannot occupy the same space at one and the same time. So much, gentlemen, for the lesser accusation. As to the far more serious one, I scarcely know in what words to impress upon you the gravity of the accusation. The crime is an attack on the public safety, gentlemen; if it has been committed, gentlemen—if it has been committed. On that point you are bound by your oaths to decide according to the evidence; and I must tell you that the learned counsel was in error when he told you that I should direct your views as to that evidence. It is for you to say whether you believe that the witnesses were speaking what was consonant with truth. But I am bound to point out to you that whereas the evidence for the prosecution was clear, definite, and consecutive, that for the defence had no such pretensions. Indeed, gentlemen, I am at a loss to discover why the prisoner put those illustrious and respectable personages to so much trouble and inconvenience merely to confirm in a remarkable way the evidence of the sergeant and the constable. His Grace the Archbishop said that there were but three persons present when the prisoner *began* speaking; but he has told us very clearly that before the end of the discourse there were ten, or more. You must look at those latter words, *or more*, as a key to reconcile the apparent discrepancy between his Grace's evidence and that of constable Potlegoff. This, however, is a matter of little importance, after what I have told you about the law in the case of obstruction. His Grace's clear remembrance of the horrible language of the prisoner, and the shuddering disgust that it produced on him, is a very different matter. Although his remembrance of the *ipsissima verba* does not quite tally with that of the constable, it is clear that both the Archbishop and the policeman have noted the real significance of what was said: The owners of this capital, said the prisoner—

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J. F. I said nothing of the kind.

J. N. Yes you did, sir. Those were the very words you said: I have got it down in my notes of his Grace's evidence. What is the use of your denying it, when your own witness gives evidence of it? Hold your tongue, sir.—And the workingmen, says the prisoner, must take the matter into their own hands. Take it into *their own hands*, gentlemen, and take *the matter* into their hands. What matter are they to take into their hands? Are we justified in thinking that the prisoner was speaking metaphorically? Gentlemen, I must tell you that the maxim that in weighing evidence you need not go beyond the most direct explanation guides us here; forbids us to think that the prisoner was speaking metaphorically, and compels us to suppose that the *matter* which is to be in the *hands* of the workmen, their very *hands*, gentlemen, is—what? Why, (*in an awe-struck whisper*) the bowels of the owners of the capital, that is of this metropolis—London! Nor, gentlemen, are the means whereby those respectable persons, the owners of house property in London, to be disembowelled left doubtful: the raising of armed men by the million, concealed weapons, and an organisation capable of frustrating the search for them. Nay, an article in the paper which impudently calls itself (*reading the "Commonweal"*) the official journal of the Socialist League, written by one Bax, who ought to be standing in the same dock with the prisoner—an article in which he attacks the sacredness of civilisation—is murky with the word dynamic or dynamite. And you must not forget, gentlemen, that the prisoner accepts his responsibility for all these words and deeds. With the utmost effrontery having pleaded "Not Guilty," he says, "I am a Socialist and a Revolutionist"!—Thus much, gentlemen, my duty compels me to lay before you as to the legal character of the evidence. But you must clearly understand that it rests with you and not with me to decide as to whether the evidence shows this man to be guilty. It is you, gentlemen of the Jury, who are responsible for the verdict, whatever it may be; and I must be permitted to add that letting this man loose upon society will be a very heavy responsibility for you to accept.

[*The Jury consult: the noise outside increases.*]

J. F. (*Aside*; Hilloa! what is going on? I begin to think there's a row up!)

Foreman of the Jury. My lord, we are agreed upon our verdict.

J. N. Do you find the prisoner at the bar "Guilty" or "Not Guilty"?

F. of J. Guilty, my lord.

J. F. Just so.



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J. N. Prisoner at the bar, you have been fairly tried and found guilty by a jury of your fellow-countrymen of two most serious offences—crimes, I should say. If I had not to pronounce sentence upon one whose conscience is seared and case-hardened to an unexampled degree, I might have some words to say to you. (*Aside:* And also if I didn't want to get out of this as quick as I can; for I'm sure there is some row going on.) As it is, I will add no words to my sentence. (*Aside:* I wish I were *off*, but let's give it him hot and heavy!) I sentence you to six years' penal servitude and to pay a fine of 100 pounds.

J. F. Well, its pretty much what I expected of *you*. As to the 100 pounds, don't you wish you may get it; and as to the six years—

[*Great noise; "Marseillaise" sung quite close; hammering on the doors.*]

J. F. Hark! what's that?

J. N. (*in a quavering voice*). Remove the prisoner!

[*Enter a SOCIALIST ensign with a red flag in his hand.*]

S. E. Remove the prisoner! Yes, that's just what I've come to do, my lord. The Tables are Turned now!

J. N. (*rising and prepared to go*). Arrest that man!

S. E. Yes, do—if you can.

J. F. What does it all mean, Bill?

S. E. The very beginning of it, Jack. It seems we have not been sanguine enough. The Revolution we were all looking forward to had been going on all along, and now the last act has begun. The reactionists are fighting, and pretty badly too, for the soldiers are beginning to remember that they too belong to the "lower classes"—the lower classes—hurrah! You must come along at once, Freeman; we shall want you in our quarter. Don't waste another minute with these fools.

J. N. (*screaming*). Help, help! Murder, murder!

S. E. Murder!—murder a louse! Who's hurting you, old gentleman? Don't make such a noise. We'll try and make some use of you when we have time, but we must bustle now. Come on, Jack. Stop a bit, though; where's the Clerk of the Court? Oh, there! Clerk, we shall want this Court-house almost directly to use for a free market for this district. There have been too many people starving and half-starving this long time; and the first thing that we've got to see to is that every one has enough to eat, drink, and wear, and a proper roof over his head.

J. N. Murder! thieves! fire!

S. E. There, there! Don't make such a row, old fellow! Get out of this, and bellow in the fields with the horned cattle, if you must bellow. Perhaps they'll want Courts of Justice now, as we don't. And as for you, good fellows, all give a cheer for the Social Revolution which has Turned the Tables; and so—to work—to work!

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[JUDGE screams and faints, and Curtain falls.]

PART II.

SCENE.—*The Fields near a Country Village; a Copse close by. Time—After the Revolution.*

[Enter CITIZEN (late JUSTICE) NUPKINS. He looks cautiously about to right and left, then sits down on the ground.]

C. N. Now I think I may safely take a little rest: all is quiet here. Yet there are houses in the distance, and wherever there are houses now, there are enemies of law and order. Well, at least, here is a good thick copse for me to hide in in case anybody comes. What am I to do? I shall be hunted down at last. It's true that those last people gave me a good belly-full, and asked me no questions; but they looked at me very hard. One of these times they will bring me before a magistrate, and then it will be all over with me. I shall be charged as a rogue and a vagabond, and made to give an account of myself; and then they will find out who I am, and then I shall be hanged—I shall be hanged—I, Justice Nupkins! Ah, the happy days when I used to sentence people to be hanged! How easy life was then, and now how hard! [*Hides his face in his hands and weeps.*]

[Enter MARY PINCH, prettily dressed.]

M. P. How pleasant it is this morning! These hot late summer mornings, when the first pears are ripening, and the wheat is nearly ready for cutting, and the river is low and weedy, remind me most of the times when I was a little freckle-faced child, when I was happy in spite of everything, though it was hard lines enough sometimes. Well, well, I can think of those times with pleasure now; it's like living the best of the early days over again, now we are so happy, and the children like to grow up straight and comely, and not having their poor little faces all creased into anxious lines. Yes, I am my old self come to life again; it's all like a pretty picture of the past days. They were brave men, and good fellows who helped to bring it about: I feel almost like saying my prayers to them. And yet there were people—yes, and poor people too—who couldn't bear the idea of it. I wonder what they think of it now. I wish, sometimes, I could make people understand how I felt when they came to me in prison, where all things were so miserable that, heaven be praised! I can't remember its misery now, and they brought Robert to me, and he hugged me and kissed me, and said, when he stood away from me a little, "Come, Mary, we are going home, and we're going to be happy; for the rich people are gone, and there's no more starving or stealing." And I didn't know what he meant, but I saw such a look in his eyes and in the eyes of those who were with him, that my feet seemed scarcely on the ground; as if I were going to fly. And how tired out I was with happiness before the day was done! Just to think that my last-born child will



not know what to be poor meant; and nobody will ever be able to make him understand it. [NUPKINS *groans*.] Hilloa! What's the matter? Why, there's a man ill or in trouble; an oldish man, too. Poor old fellow! Citizen, what's the matter? How can I help you?

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C. N. (jumping up with a howl). Ah, they are upon me! That dreadful word “citizen”! (*Looks at M. P. and staggers back*). Oh, Lord! is it? Yes, it *is*—the woman that I sentenced on that horrible morning, the last morning I adorned the judicial bench.

M. P. What is the matter? And how badly you’re dressed; and you seem afraid. What can you be afraid of? If I am not afraid of the cows, I am sure you needn’t be—with your great thick stick, too. (*She looks at him and laughs, and says aside, Why to be sure, if it isn’t that silly, spiteful old man that sentenced me on the last of the bad days before we all got so happy together!*) (*To N.*) Why, Mr. Nupkins—citizen—I remember you; you are an old acquaintance: I’ll go and call my husband.

C. N. Oh, no! no! don’t! *please* don’t!—(*Aside: There, there, I’m done for—can I run away?—No use—perhaps I might soften her. I used to be called eloquent—by the penny-a-liners. I’ve made a jury cry—I think—let me try it. Gentlemen of the Jury, remember the sad change in my client’s position! remember.—Oh, I’m going mad, I think—she remembers me*) (*Kneels before her*) Oh, woman, woman, spare me! Let me crawl into the copse and die quietly there!

M. P. Spare you, citizen? Well, I could have spared you once, well enough, and so could many another poor devil have done. But as to dying in the copse, no, I really can’t let you do that. You must come home to our house, and we’ll see what can be done with you. It’s our old house, but really nice enough, now; all that pretty picture of plenty that I told you about on that day when you were so hard upon me has come to pass, and more.

C. N. Oh, no! I can’t come!

M. P. Oh, yes; you can get as far as that, and we’ll give you something to eat and drink, and then you’ll be stronger. It will really please me, if you’ll come; I’m like a child with a new toy, these days, and want to show new-comers all that’s going on. Come along, and I’ll show you the pretty new hall they are building for our parish; it’s such a pleasure to stand and watch the lads at work there, as merry as grigs. Hark! you may hear their trowels clinking from here. And, Mr. Nupkins, you mustn’t think I stole those loaves; I really didn’t.

C. N. Oh, dear me! Oh, dear me! She wants to get me away and murder me! I won’t go.

M. P. How can you talk such nonsense? Why, on earth, should I murder you?

C. N. (sobbing). Judicially, judicially!

M. P. How silly you are! I really don’t know what you mean. Well, if you won’t come with me, I’m off; but you know where to go when you want your dinner. But if you still

owe me a grudge, which would be very silly of you, any of the people in the houses yonder will give you your food. [*Exit.*

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C. N. There! She's going to fetch some ferocious revolutionaries to make an end of me. It's no use trying to stop her now. I will flee in another direction; perhaps I shan't always meet people I've sentenced.

[As he is going he runs up against WILLIAM JOYCE, once SOCIALIST ENSIGN, entering from the other side.]

William Joyce. Hilloa, citizen! look out! *(looking at him)* But I say, what's the matter with you? You are queerly rigged. Why, I haven't seen a man in such a condition for many a long day. You're like an ancient ruin, a dream of past times. No, really I don't mean to hurt your feelings. Can I do anything to help you?

[C. N. covers his face with his hands and moans.]

W. J. Hilloa! Why, I'm blessed if it isn't the old bird who was on the bench that morning, sentencing comrade Jack! What's *he* been doing, I wonder? I say, don't you remember me, citizen? I'm the character who came in with the red flag that morning when you were playing the last of your queer games up yonder. Cheer up, man! we'll find something for you to do, though you have been so badly educated.

C. N. Spare me, I entreat you! Don't let it be known who I am, pray don't, or I shall certainly be hanged. Don't hang me; give me hard labour for life, but don't hang me! Yes, I confess I was Judge Nupkins; but don't give me up! I'll be your servant, your slave all my life; only don't bring me before a magistrate. They are so unfair, and so hard!

W. J. Well, what do you think of a judge, old fellow?

C. N. That's nearly as bad, but not quite; because sometimes there's a cantankerous blackguard on the jury who won't convict, and insists on letting a man off. But, please, pray think better of it, and let it be a private matter, if you must needs punish me. I won't bring an action against you, whatever you do. Don't make it a judicial matter! Look here, I'll sign a bond to be your servant for ever without wages if you will but feed me. I suffer so from not having my meals regularly. If you only knew how bad it is to be hungry and not to be sure of getting a meal.

W. J. Yes, Nupkins; but you see, I *do* know only too well—but that's all gone by. Yet, if you had only known that some time ago, or let's say, guessed at it, it might have been the better for you now.

C. N. *(aside; Oh, how jeering and hard he looks!)* Oh, spare me, and don't send me to the workhouse! You've no idea how they bully people there. I didn't mean to be a bad or hard man; I didn't indeed.



W. J. Well, I must say if you meant to be anything else, you botched the job! But I suppose, in fact, you didn't mean anything at all.—So much the worse for you. (*Aside:* I must do a little cat and mouse with him).

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C. N. Oh, spare me, spare me! I'll work so hard for you. Keep it dark as to who I am. It will be such an advantage you're having me all to yourself.

W. J. Would it, indeed? Well, I doubt that.

C. N. Oh, I think so. I really am a good lawyer.

W. J. H'm, that would be rather less useful than a dead jackass—unless one came to the conclusion of making cat's meat of you.

C. N. (*aside*, Oh, I'm sick at heart at his hinted threats). Mr. Socialist, don't you see I could put you up to all sorts of dodges by which you could get hold of odds and ends of property—as I suppose you have some sort of property still—and the titles of the land must be very shaky just after a revolution? I tell you I could put you up to things which would make you a person of great importance; as good as what a lord used to be.

W. J. (*aside*, Oh, you old blackguard! What's bred in the bone won't come out of the flesh. I really must frighten the old coward a little; besides, the council *has* got to settle what's to be done with him, or the old idiot will put us to shame by dying on our hands of fright and stupidity.) (*To N.*) Nupkins, I really don't know what to do with you as a slave; I'm afraid that you would corrupt the morals of my children; that you would set them quarrelling and tell them lies. There's nothing for it but you must come before the Council of our Commune: they'll meet presently under yonder tree this fine day.

C. N. No, no, don't! Pray let me go and drag out the remainder of a miserable existence without being brought before a magistrate and sent to prison! You don't know what a dreadful thing it is.

W. J. You're wrong again, Nupkins. I know all about it. The stupid red tape that hinders the Court from getting at the truth; the impossibility of making your stupid judge understand the real state of the case, because he is not thinking of you and your life as a man, but of a set of rules drawn up to allow men to make money of other people's misfortunes; and then to prison with you; and your miserable helplessness in the narrow cell, and the feeling as if you must be stifled; and not even a pencil to write with, or knife to whittle with, or even a pocket to put anything in. I don't say anything about the starvation diet, because other people besides prisoners were starved or half-starved. Oh, Nupkins, Nupkins! it's a pity you couldn't have thought of all this before.

C. N. (*aside*: Oh, what terrible revenge is he devising for me?) (*to W. J.*) Sir, sir, let me slip away before the Court meets. (*Aside*: A pretty Court, out in the open-air! Much they'll know about law!)

W. J. Citizen Nupkins, don't you stir from here! You'll see another old acquaintance presently—Jack Freeman, whom you were sending off to six years of it when the red flag came in that day.—And in good time here he is.

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[Enter JACK FREEMAN, sauntering in dressed in a blouse, smoking, a billycock on his head, and his hands in his pockets.

W. J. There's your judge, Citizen Nupkins! No, Jack, you needn't take your hands out of your pockets to shake hands with me; I know your ways and your manners. But look here! (*pointing to NUPKINS*).

J. F. Why, what next? There's no mistaking him, it's my old acquaintance Mr. Justice Nupkins. Why you seem down on your luck, neighbour. What can I do to help you?

[NUPKINS *moans*.

W. J. (*winking at FREEMAN*). You've got to try him, Jack.

J. F. Why, what has he been doing? (*Aside, I say, old fellow, what game are you up to now?*)

W. J. Doing? why nothing. That's just it; something must be done with him. He must come before the council: but I'm afraid he's not of much use to anyone. (*Aside, I say, Jack, he is a mere jelly of fear: thinks that we are going to kill him and eat him, I believe. I must carry it on a little longer; don't spoil all my fun.*)

J. F. (*Aside, to W. J.*) Well, certainly he deserves it, but take care that he doesn't die of fear on your hands, Bill. (*Aloud*) Well, the council will meet in a minute or two, and then we will take his case.

C. N. (*to J. F.*) Oh, sir, sir, spare me and don't judge me! I'll be servant to you all my life!

W. J. Why Nupkins, what's this? You promised to be a servant to *me*!

J. F. Citizen Nupkins, I really must say thank-you for nothing. What the deuce could I do with a servant? Now don't you trouble yourself; the council will see to your affairs. And in good time here come the neighbours.

[Enter the Neighbours, ROBERT PINCH, MART PINCH, and others.

W. J. Now for it, Nupkins! Bear your own troubles as well as you used to bear other peoples', and then you'll do very well.

JACK FREEMAN *takes his seat on the ground under the tree, the others standing and sitting about him: WILLIAM JOYCE makes a show of guarding NUPKINS, at which the neighbours look rather astonished; but he nods and winks to them, and they see there is some joke toward and say nothing.*



J. F. Well, neighbours, what's the business to-day?

1st Neighbour. I have to report that three loads of that oak for the hall-roof have come to hand; it's well-seasoned good timber, so there need be no hitch in the building now.

2nd Neighbour. Well, chairman, we sent off the wool to the north-country communes last week, and they are quite satisfied with it. Their cloth has come to hand rather better than worse than the old sample.

3rd Neighbour. I have to report that the new wheel at the silk mill is going now, and makes a very great improvement. It gives us quite enough power even when the water is small; so we shan't want a steam-engine after all.

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J. F. When do we begin wheat harvest?

3rd Neighbour. Next Thursday in the ten-acre; the crop is heavy and the weather looks quite settled; so we shall have a jolly time of it.

J. F. Well, I'm glad I know in good time; for I never like to miss seeing the first row of reapers going into the corn. Is there anything else?

W. J. Well, there's one troublesome business, chairman (*looks at C. N., who trembles and moans*). There's that dog we caught, that thief, that useless beast. What is to be done with him?

C. N. (*Aside*, That's me! that's me! To think that a justice should be spoken of in such language! What am I to do? What am I to do?)

2nd Neighbour. Well, chairman, I think we must shoot him. Once a thief always a thief, you see, with that kind of brute. I'm sorry, because he has been so badly brought up; and though he is an ugly dog, he is big and burly; but I must say that I think it must be done, and as soon as possible. He'll be after the girls if we don't do it at once!

C. N. (*Aside*: What! have they got hold of that story, then?)

J. F. Well, neighbours, what's to be said? anybody against it? Is this unpleasant business agreed to?

All. Agreed, agreed.

J. F. Well, then, let the dog be shot. Bill, it's your turn for an ugly job this time: you must do it.

W. J. Well, if it must be, it must. I'll go and get a gun in a minute.

C. N. Oh, God! to think of their disposing of a fellow-man's life with so little ceremony! And probably they will go and eat their dinners afterwards and think nothing of it. (*Throwing himself on his knees before JACK FREEMAN.*) Oh, your Socialist worship! Oh, citizen my lord! spare me, spare me! Send me to prison, load me with chains, but spare my life!

J. F. Why, what ails the man? Chains! we don't use chains for that sort of thing. They're good to fasten up boats with, and for carts, and such like; so why should we waste them by ornamenting you with them? And as to prison, we can't send you to prison, because we haven't got one. How could we have one? who would be the jailer? No, no; we can't be bothered with you in prison. You must learn to behave decently.



C. N. What! have you no punishment but death, then? O! what am I to do? what am I to do?

1st Neighbour. Do? Why, behave decently.

C. N. But how can I behave decently when I'm dead? (*Moans.*)

2nd Neighbour. But, neighbour, you must die some time or another, you know. Make the most of your time while you are alive.

C. N. Have you the heart to say such things to a man whom you are going to shoot in a few minutes? How horrible! Oh, look here! if you haven't got a prison, build one for me! or make one out of a cellar, and lock me up in it; but don't shoot me—don't!

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W. J. Well, old acquaintance, to want a prison all to your own cheek! This is individualism, with a vengeance! It beats Auberon Herbert. But who is going to shoot you?

C. N. Why, you. He said shoot the dog (*weeping*).

W. J. Well, citizen, I must say that either your estimate of yourself is modest, or your conscience is bad, that you must take that title to yourself! No; it *is* a bad business, but not so bad as that. It's not you that we're going to shoot, but a poor devil of a dog—a real dog, with a tail, you know—who has taken to killing sheep. And I'm sorry to say that social ethics have given me the job of shooting him. But come, now, you shall do it for me: you used to be a great upholder of capital punishment.

C. N. But what are you going to do with me, then? How are you going to punish me?

J. F. Punish you? how can we punish you? who do you think is going to do such work as that! People punish others because they like to; and we don't like to. Once more, learn to live decently.

G. N. But how *am* I to live?

J. F. You must work a little.

C. N. But what at, since you object to lawyers?

J. F. Look round you, friend, at the fields all yellowing for harvest,—we will find you work to do.

C. N. (*Aside*: Ah, I see. This means hard labour for life, after all. Well, I must submit. Unhappy Nupkins! *To FREEMAN*) But who is to employ me? You will have to find me a master; and perhaps he won't like to employ me.

J. F. My friend, we no more have masters than we have prisons: the first make the second. You must employ yourself: and you must also employ something else.

C. N. What? I don't understand.

J. F. Mother Earth, and the traditions and devices of all the generations of men whom she has nourished. All that is for you, Nupkins, if you only knew it.

C. N. I still do not comprehend your apologue.

J. F. No? Well, we must put aside abstractions and get to the concrete. What's this, citizen? (*showing a spade.*)



C. N. That is an instrument for effodiation.

J. F. Otherwise called a spade. Well, to use your old jargon, citizen, the sentence of this court is that you do take this instrument of effodiation, commonly called a spade, and that you do effodiate your livelihood therewith; in other words, that you do dig potatoes and other roots and worts during the pleasure of this court. And, to drop jargon, since you are so badly educated our friend Robert Pinch—Mary's husband—will show you how to do it. Is that agreed to, neighbours?

All. Agreed, agreed.

W. J. (*rather surlily*). I don't think he will get on well. Now he knows we are not going to serve him out, he is beginning to look sour on us for being happy. You see, he will be trying some of his old lawyers' tricks again.

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J. F. Well, Bill, it won't much matter. He can't hurt us; so we will hope the best for him.

M. P. Should we hurt his feelings by being a little merry in his presence now?

J. F. Well, I think we may risk it. Let those of you who are not too lazy to dance, as I am, do so to the tune that sprang up at the dawn of freedom in the days of our great-grandfathers.

[*They dance round CITIZEN NUPKINS, singing the following words to the tune of the "Carmagnole":*

*What's this that the days and the days have done?
Man's lordship over man hath gone.*

*How fares it, then, with high and low?
Equal on earth, they thrive and grow.*

*Bright is the sun for everyone;
Dance we, dance we the Carmagnole.*

*How deal ye, then, with pleasure and pain?
Alike we share and bear the twain.*

*And what's the craft whereby ye live?
Earth and man's work to all men give.*

*How crown ye excellence of worth?
With leave to serve all men on earth.*

*What gain that lordship's past and done?
World's wealth for all and every one.*

[FREEMAN and NUPKINS come to the front.

* * * * *

J. F. Well, Nupkins, you see you have got the better of us damned Socialists after all. For in times past you used to bully us and send us to prison and hang us, and we had to put up with it; and now you and yours are no longer masters, there *are* no masters, and there is nobody to bully you. How do you like it, old fellow? (*clapping him on the shoulder.*)

C. N. (*bursting into tears*). A world without lawyers!—oh, dear! oh, dear! To think that I should have to dig potatoes and see everybody happy!



J. F. Well, Nupkins, you must bear it. And for my part, I can't be very sorry that you feel it so keenly. When scoundrels lament that they can no longer be scoundrels for lack of opportunity, it is certain that THE TABLES ARE TURNED.

THE END.

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