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"THE CANARY WAISTCOAT"

A FARCICAL COMEDY IN ONE ACT

BY

HARRY TIGHE

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CHARACTERS

<u>MRS. DAVIDS.</u>	...	A Widow
<u>MRS. SIMMONS.</u>	...	A Widow who takes in lodgers.
<u>ZEDEKIAH TWOPENNY.</u>	...	A village dry-goods shopkeeper.
<u>SELINA.</u>	...	A fluffy young lady of 25.

"THE CANARY WAISTCOAT"

SCENE: The top of a hill. Ordinary outdoor scene with a tree in centre stage, and a tree trunk for the women to sit on.

TIME: In afternoon in August.

Battens and Floats full up for brilliant sunshine.

(MR. TWOPENNY reclines flat on his back smoking a pipe. One leg is bent so that the foot is on the ground, the knee high in the air — over it is crossed the other leg with the foot wagging contentedly. He is a thin man about forty, of the Jonathan type. He is dressed in black frock coat, with a large flower in buttonhole. Light trousers and a waistcoat of a bright canary colour — across it is a thick gold chain with a large gold anchor hanging to it. He wears brown boots, and a green hat lies by his side.)

TWOPENNY looks at his watch, displaying particularly the gold anchor. Puts watch in pocket. He sits up, wipes brow with a large coloured handkerchief, puts hat on his head and rises. He looks off R. evidently disturbed. He looks off L. is more disturbed.)

TWOPENNY

Bless my hat! (Looks off L.) Mrs. Davids. (Looks R.) Mrs. Simmons. (Looks at audience and chuckles.) Not together — thanks kindly.

(TWOPENNY looks round, sees tree and goes to it, climbing leisurely and with some difficulty into its branches, where he settles himself.)

(Enter MRS. DAVIDS L. She is a fat woman, rather, short, with a strange looking left eye. She is dressed in semi-widow's weeds, black skirt, coloured bodice and widow's bonnet. She is breathing heavily, carrying a big basket which she puts under tree and sits down. At that moment enter MRS. SIMMONS R. She is thin and rather taller than MRS. DAVIDS. She is dressed in deep widow's weeds. She takes out handkerchief and wipes face.)

MRS. SIMMONS Afternoon, Mrs. Davids.

MRS. DAVIDS Good afternoon to you, Mrs. Simmons.

MRS. SIMMONS Summer's well on us.

MRS. DAVIDS Considering it's August it ought to be — if hever it is to be.

MRS. SIMMONS (Sitting down) You didn't get to 'Itchombe to May 'Ipsley's weddin' yesterday.

MRS. DAVIDS I didn't. Bessie's away at 'er father's death-bed. Funeral was 'aft-past two today.

MRS. SIMMONS May's mother's a grand 'and at festivities.

MRS. DAVIDS That she is. As to weddings — she's 'ad three in four years, so 'er 'and is in. There's been two deaths. She done them well — not a 'itch anywhere.

MRS. SIMMONS No more there was yesterday.

MRS. DAVIDS She's a good girl is May.

MRS. SIMMONS (Sighs) Yesterday took me back to me own wedding. It's twenty year ago last Whitsun.

MRS. DAVIDS I shouldn't 'ave thought thinking of y' own wedding could give you much satisfaction — considering what Abraham turned out. You can't say as 'ow the Lord didn't do the best 'e could for you — calling Abraham.

MRS. SIMMONS I ain't complainin' of the Lord's doing. But I do say folks was 'ard on Abraham after 'e was took.

MRS. DAVIDS There wasn't much difference to afore 'e was laid to rest.

MRS. SIMMONS Mrs. Davids, I'm God fearin' enough to know 'e 'ad 'is faults. But when the Lord thinks fit to take a person to 'is bosom, I say it's our bounden duty to 'arbour no bad thoughts. They never brought anyone to no good, as I ever see.

MRS. DAVIDS You can't say as 'ow you ain't better off since Abraham WAS took, five year ago come Michaelmas.

MRS. SIMMONS I don't argue that. But I do say as 'ow I think kind and gentle of 'im.

MRS. DAVIDS You always was a forgivin' nature. I never cease to thank Providence I refused Abraham. 'E asked me more nor once — 'e did.

MRS. SIMMONS If Providence took you under 'is wing I wonder as 'ow it let you marry that scatter-brained Heven Davids. Goin' off with Letitia under your very nose as 'e did — and you 's lawful wife!

MRS. DAVIDS I was reared religious. As there is a seventh command — there is — and there y' are, Mrs. Simmons. When Heven chose to go off with me own blood-cousin, Letitia, as I give a 'ome to, I never did nothing — never said nothing. I just went on as though nothing 'ad 'appened. And when 'e died, I never went near the corpse, I let Letitia 'ave it all to 'erself — I did. And as you know I only wore 'arf weeds which I thought more fitting nor

- MRS. SIMMONS You was weak, Mrs. Davids.
- MRS. DAVIDS Mrs. Simmons, since the Lord made a tenth command - it's hup to me to take hobservance. 'Thous shalt not covet they neighbour's 'ouse, no, nor his wife, nor yet his servant, maid, ox, OR ass.' None of 'em seems quite to place Letitia.
- MRS. SIMMONS To my way of thinkin' you was wrong.
- MRS. DAVIDS We can only reason accordin' to our lights. Some's bright lamps, others dim dips.
- MRS. SIMMONS I'm not blamin' of you — far be it from throwing stones at me next door neighbour — 'houses as join — and sharing the wash-house as we do.
- MRS. DAVIDS I am as I was made, Mrs. Simmons, I don't complain. After all's said, the Lord knows best.
- MRS. SIMMONS The ways of the righteous hare not hour ways. They is past hunderstandin'.
- (They both sigh deeply)
- MRS. DAVIDS (Rising) I must be gettin' along now I've got me wind. The hill do pump me cruel.
- MRS. SIMMONS All of us 'as our blessings in disguise.
- MRS. DAVIDS Eh, well! It ain't for us to complain — lone widders as we are.
- MRS. SIMMONS Life's very deceiving, ain't it now? Tomorrow we might be dying — or getting married.
- MRS. DAVIDS (Dreamily) Getting married! (Turns to Mrs. Simmons.) Getting married did you say?
- MRS. SIMMONS The unexpected do 'appen, don't it?
- MRS. DAVIDS Are you sitting there and telling me you're thinking of taking a second?
- MRS. SIMMONS Since you mention it — it ain't hexactly unlikely.
- MRS. DAVIDS You fair take the wind out of me, you do. You as 'as a grown daughter. It 'ud be different with me. I never 'ad no child.
- MRS. SIMMONS Delia's walking out with Farmer Crow's son. It's a lonely life we lead.
- MRS. DAVIDS It is. It is. (She sits) I tell you — confidential — marriage 'as been 'anging before me like — like — a anchor of 'ope.

MRS. SIMMONS Well, I never did! You real surprise me, you do indeed, thinking such things — after what you wnet through with Heven Davids.

MRS. DAVIDS One bad hegg don't make the whole clutch rotten, do it? (MRS. DAVIDS and MRS. SIMMONS move closer together.) It's neighbourly we are, Mrs. Simmons. Do 'E live in these parts?

MRS. SIMMONS You're not far wrang.

MRS. DAVIDS A widder-man?

MRS. SIMMONS That's what touched me 'eart. 'E's that lonesome you can't think.

MRS. DAVIDS I always do say — take a second as knows all about it.

MRS. SIMMONS Th_hem's my sentiments. My dear, is—is 'e a widderer?

MRS. DAVIDS Didn't I say — take a 'second' as knows all about it?

MRS. SIMMONS Sure you did. (Moves closer) It ain't curious I am — far be it from me — we, living as you might say almost in the same 'ouse — 'E comes from about 'ere, do 'e?

MRS. DAVIDS I do_n't say yes — and it might be a lie to say no. (Pause) I see, more nor once, that look in 'is eye as speaks like a book.

MRS. SIMMONS 'Ow our women's 'earts do beat for men as we hadores!

MRS. DAVIDS I'd never demean myself to throw me haderation at any man — never — wild 'orses wouldn't make me — it's pearls and swine to my way o' thinking.

MRS. SIMMONS 'E sets me all of a jelly when 'e talks to me.

MRS. DAVIDS About the wedding?

MRS. SIMMONS Well — not hexactly. IE's not one at pushing things... 'E mostly feels 'is way — genteel like.

MRS. DAVIDS YoU're certain sure of 'is hintentions?

MRS. SIMMONS Mrs. Davids, 'ow can you doubt me — or 'im neither?

MRS. DAVIDS Men 'as slippery ways. Ever since Hadam said Heve made 'im eat the happple in the Garden of Heden. I'm of hopinion Hadam made Heve pick them happples when no one was looking. (Pause) I s'ppose 'e's give you to understand 'is hintentions?

- MRS. SIMMONS When a heligible brings food to the 'ouse — ain't that hindications henough?
- MRS. DAVIDS I can't deny it. 'E brought me the first leaks out of 'is garden.
- MRS. SIMMONS A compliment to your deceased, I suppose. 'E's real delicate 'e is.
- MRS. DAVIDS It' ain't sarcastic y'are, Mrs. Simmons?
- MRS. SIMMONS 'Ow can you say it? — Living in 'ouses as join and sharing the wash'ouse as we do.
- MRS. DAVIDS No hoffence. I tell you confidential, my late lamented — bless 'im fer a hangel — ain't so much as once been mentioned.
- MRS. SIMMONS Arabella — you don't mind being neighbourly, do you, dear?
- MRS. DAVIDS Very 'appy, Amanda.
- MRS. SIMMONS Arabella — 'e brought me the first of 'is broad beans — tasty with a bit o' bacon.
- (TWOPENNY who is listening — amused — drops a small twig.)
- MRS. DAVIDS Bless me! Them birds get real tiresome this time o' year.
- MRS. SIMMONS One of them sky-larkers I s'ppose.
- MRS. DAVIDS (Resettling) I allus say — when a widder-man takes to wearing them fancy waistcoats — there's something strange in 'is wind. Ain't that reasonable?
- MRS. SIMMONS Fancy waistcoat did you say?
- MRS. DAVIDS I did. Beautiful. Yaller as a canary bird — a colour I allus 'ad a fancy for.
- MRS. SIMMONS (Scornfully) You always was a romancier.
- MRS. DAVIDS I tell you 'e does wear a canary waistcoat.
- MRS. SIMMONS I didn't deny it, did I? I 'ear they is all the go in 'Ereford. There's more nor one widder-man — I knows of — as wears a canary waistcoat.
- MRS. DAVIDS 'Ereford is a mighty big place.
- MRS. SIMMONS I didn't say 'e lives IN 'Ereford, did I? (Moves closer) I don't want to be inquisitive, I don't —

- MRS. DAVIDS You never was — was you, dear?
- MRS. SIMMONS No hinsinuations, Arabella Davids!
- MRS. DAVIDS Then don't try to ferret out things of me 'eart as lie
'idden in me bosom. It's like you to try your wormy ways.
- MRS. SIMMONS Ain't you hendeavouring to put your bonnet on me 'ead.
It won't never go on, not heven if you was to use a
shoe 'orn.
- MRS. DAVIDS You've been trying to catch a second for years and
years, I know y' 'ave — spreading nets afore your
hinnocent lodgers, shameful it is.
- MRS. SIMMONS You hinsinuate something cruel.
- MRS. DAVIDS You want looking after, you do.
- MRS. SIMMONS What about y'self?
- MRS. DAVIDS I ain't boastful. The Lord keep me 'umble. I 'appen
to know where my respectful haffection is not misplaced.
- MRS. SIMMONS It ain't self-righteous y' are, is it, dear? I do_n't
seem to see as you've much to go on.
- MRS. DAVIDS I don't mind telling you - confidential - I met Jim
- casual - Monday, when I was buying tappy-ochre.
'E says to me, "Mrs. Davids, you've the hartistic
heye. I'd like your hopinion of me new wall paper."
"Very 'appy", I says, friendly like. It was real
lovely -pink, yaller, blue and red — just like
that — all in stripes. "Ain't that fit for a
bride?" 'e says — 'esitating — as you'd hexpect.
'E looked at me with them eyes of 'is as speak
like a book. I went colour of beet-root. I
couldn't 'elp myself no more nor chaff in the
wind. It was so sudden. But, lor bless you, it's
'is catching way as fair fetches me.
- MRS. SIMMONS Last Tuesday I was asked in from the street — the
street mind you — and was took in to see a new
stove, as I couldn't 'elp admirin', since I've
a passion for stoves. "I knew it'd please you,"
'e says, "you're such a cook." 'E did add as
'ow 'e wouldn't be surprised to 'ear the late
lamented Mr. Simmons died of hover feeding.
- MRS. DAVIDS Friendly like, but it ain't got enough bottom to it
for a promise case!

MRS. SIMMONS Not so 'asty, Arabella Davids. 'E said 'e was going to 'Ereford on particular business, but 'e 'oped 'e'd see me soon as 'e came back. I hexpect 'e'll drop in for a cup of tea one of these days.

MRS. DAVIDS P'r'aps he will — p'r'aps he won't. If he's a-deceiving of yer, come to me, dear, and I'll talk to 'im. I'll be sorry for ye — real 'earty.

MRS. SIMMONS It's kind y'are, since it costs nothing to feel sorry like. You 'aven't got a ring — 'ave yer?

MRS. DAVIDS 'E's gone to 'Ereford. I daresay —

MRS. SIMMONS Gone to —? Did y's ay, GONE to 'Ereford?

MRS. DAVIDS 'Ave you hobjections to 'is going to 'Ereford?

MRS. SIMMONS When did 'e go?

MRS. DAVIDS Wednesday, or it might 'have been Tuesday. 'E wore 'is canary waistcoat and a gold chain with the anchor of 'ope 'anging on it.

MRS. SIMMONS Oh! Oh! (Wipes eyes and rocks to and fro)

MRS. DAVIDS What's come over you?

MRS. SIMMONS Oh! Oh! You're trying to 'oodwink me with y' deceitful tongue.

MRS. DAVIDS 'Old yourself together, Amanda — there ain't much of you.

MRS. SIMMONS You're alluding suspicions, something cruel.

MRS. DAVIDS 'Ave yer gone clean daft?

MRS. SIMMONS You're slandering a man as ain't 'ere to rectify 'imself.

MRS. DAVIDS I never so much as breathed hany name, leastwise 'is. You're talking in the dark.

MRS. SIMMONS It's the canary wajstcoat with the 'anging hanchor of 'ope as tells meto me face it's 'im as I — I —

MRS. DAVIDS You — you don't say?

MRS. SIMMONS I do say — waht's more —

MRS. DAVIDS (Interrupts) You — you mean it was 'e give you beans?

MRS. SIMMONS I do. What's more $\frac{3}{8}$

MRS. DAVIDS (Magnanimously) I ain't angry, my dear — I pity you for being so easy of deceiving of y'self.

MRS. SIMMONS It's you as is deceiving yourself — and what's more, you knows it.

MRS. DAVIDS (Rises) Look 'ere, Amanda Simmons — I ain't easy roused — but I do say as there hars some hinsinuations as I won't stand. Bridle thy tongue —

MRS. SIMMONS Pit you ain't learned to do it — Chapel woman!

MRS. DAVIDS Going to Rome y'are — with your church and candles and 'orrid smelling nonsense as fair chokes you.

MRS. SIMMONS 'Ow dare you! You scandaliser!

MRS. DAVIDS Mrs. Simmons, if I 'adn't learned to be a lady in respectable service, I'd tell you what I think of you.

MRS. SIMMONS Would you now! I ain't going to be put upon by you. I'll tell 'im, I will, what Heven Davids said about you afore 'e went off with Letitia. 'E call you a 'oly 'error!

MRS. DAVIDS Since I never mentioned no names ~~3~~

MRS. SIMMONS It ain't necessary. It's only Zedekiah Twopenny, who keeps the dry good store, as wears a canary waistcoat with an anchor of 'ope 'anging on it. And I tell you, Arabella Davids, if you go trying to steal 'im from me, I ain't a-going to sit with me 'ands folded, not me. I'll fight tooth and nail afore I let 'im be sacrificed to you. 'E'd soon be a-calling of y' "The 'Oly 'Error", same as Heven Davids. I'll tell 'im a few 'ome truths about you as is public property.

MRS. DAVIDS Be careful you ain't bit with your own tongue.

MRS. SIMMONS I'll make 'im shame y' to y' face.

MRS. DAVIDS You'll 'ave to catch 'im first.

MRS. SIMMONS It it comes to hactions, I'll fight for 'im all I know.

MRS. DAVIDS Indeed!

MRS. SIMMONS I can 'ardly keep me 'ands off you.

MRS. DAVIDS I wond't soil 'em if I was you. 'E wouldn't like it.

MRS. SIMMONS Perfidious woman's what y'are.

MRS. DAVIDS (Choking with rage) You - you - call me names - you - you -

 (TWOPENNY moves in tree and falls into MRS. DAVIDS' basket.)

MRS. DAVIDS Look 'ere - heggs is gone up a penny at the farm and it don't do 'em no good to 'ave you sitting on 'em as if you was a broody 'en.

MRS. SIMMONS 'E's got a canary waistcoat and the anchor of 'ope.

TWOPENNY (Looks up, a twinkle in his eye, and takes off his hat.) It's quite a pleasant afternoon we're 'aving. (Pause) I 'ope I'm not 'de trop'. Oh, no - not arf! Zedekiah Twopenny is always welcome in widows' houses. (Holds out hat) Mrs. Davids, you've got the hartistic eye. Bobby, ain't it? 4/11½ in 'Ereford. Latest London style for bridgrooms. (Puts hat on jauntily.) I'm a toff I am.

MRS. DAVIDS Off them heggs.

TWOPENNY Very 'appy to oblige. (Rises) Did I 'ear you say I 'ad a damp seat? No, of course not, my dear. Spare me blushes. (Bends over basket.) 'Ow many 'ave I broke?

MRS. DAVIDS Leave them heggs alone. Turn round.

TWOPENNY (Turning round - back to audience.) Most 'appy to oblige.

MRS. SIMMONS Oh, my! You 'ave sat down. (Begins to brush his coat) You 'aven't 'urt yourself, 'ave you, Mr. Twopenny?

 (TWOPENNY turns fact to audience.)

TWOPENNY (Suddenly becomes shaky) Since you mention it, I do feel a bit 'ipped - not to say damaged - sort of reduced to 'arf price - Mr. One Penny - Oh, I'm a wag, I am!

MRS. SIMMONS You'd better rest a bit, 'adn't you?

MRS. DAVIDS I'll give you an arm.

MRS. SIMMONS (Quickly takes TWOPENNY'S arm) Don't put y'self hout, my dear, I'll manage all right.

MRS. DAVIDS No bother. I'd be real 'appy to 'elp such a - a friend as Mr. Twopenny.

TWOPENNY Mrs. Davids, I accept your kind hintentions, I do feel a bit lopsided. (TWOPENNY takes MRS. DAVIDS' arm. They move to tree trunk.) Gently, dears. (The three sit down tree trunk.) Now we shan't be 'ome till we 'ear the wedding bells a-ringing.

MRS. DAVIDS 'Ow you do talk to be sure, I can't 'elp laughing.

(The two women make movement to rise. TWOPENNY holds them with an arm round each.)

TWOPENNY 'Old 'ard, I ain't strong enough yet to do without support.

MRS. SIMMONS Very pleased to go on being a support, Mr. Twopenny.

MRS. DAVIDS Whatever for was you up a tree? You came down so sudden. I 'ad a plumber cousin who fell like that — 'e killed 'isself dead on the spot.

TWOPENNY Yes. The mighty do come croppers!

MRS. DAVIDS You - you didn't 'appen to fall, by any chance, in your sleep, did you, Mr. Twopenny?

MRS. SIMMONS (Relieved) You was asleep?

TWOPENNY Like a hinnocent bird.

MRS. DAVIDS Thank the Lord — I — I mean them as is in drink —

TWOPENNY Ain't you casting aspersions something cruel on me sober 'ead?

MRS. DAVIDS I never meant no 'arm. I say them in drink or sleep never do 'urt theirselves. Me cousin who fell was temperance.

MRS. SIMMONS It ain't fitting for you, a pillar of the Baptists, to climb trees.

TWOPENNY I'm always finding meself up a tree where women is concerned — I'm a fair nob at it.

MRS. DAVIDS Why ever was you up one this afternoon?

TWOPENNY It was like this. I came 'ere 'cause I knew I would meet someone - as - as I'm real took up with. 'Er voice, Mrs. Simmons, sets me all of a jelly. Hold me tight, girls — I'm up a tree - fair snared.

MRS. DAVIDS No, you ain't, you're sitting comfortably on terry-cotta. If you was to meet someone, why did you go up a tree?

TWOPENNY Well, you see, I was early. It's a lovely afternoon, ain't it now? The birds is birding in the 'igh Blue 'eavens, sun is sunning — bees is beeing, and flies is flying — so I kind of wandered up the tree and went to sleep.

MRS. DAVIDS No one was ever like you for 'aving your little joke.

TWOPENNY Spare the old bird!

MRS. DAVIDS I believe you'd die with fun on your lips, I do indeed!

TWOPENNY I'd rather live with kisses kissing and squeezes squeezing.

(TWOPENNY, an arm round each woman, squeezes both.)

MRS. DAVIDS I can't deny as kisses is comforting to the fatherless - and widders.

MRS. SIMMONS Squeezing is supporting to lonely 'earts.

TWOPENNY By gum, I'm sailing on the crimson wings of passion all serene. I'm a breaker of women's tender sentiments. I oughtn't to be let loose considering 'ow dangerous I am to society. I'm a red hot Socialist at taking what ain't mine to 'ave — ain't I now?

MRS. DAVIDS You're a disguised blessing with your 'appy, bright, seducing ways.

MRS. SIMMONS You 'aven't broke my sentiments.

TWOPENNY Not broke! Oh, you're a peach if ever I see one.

MRS. SIMMONS I'm most lovable - not 'asty like some we knows.

MRS. DAVIDS Sharp, biting tongues is deceiving.

TWOPENNY What if I, Zedekiah Twopenny was deceiving the 'ole wide world!

MRS. DAVIDS You couldn't do it. You're like a hopen book as I can read without me spectacles.

TWOPENNY I'm a Twopenny dreadful with a lurid past! Oh, girls, I tremble for you — sitting so close!

MRS. SIMMONS Whatever if we was to be seen!

TWOPENNY Seen? Who cares for the dastard rabble?

MRS. SIMMONS I feel like a rebel. What's come over me I can't think.

TWOPENNY (Bends to her) It's me as 'as come all over you. I tell you I'm a fair Teaser - I am. It's comy 'ere, eh, girls? (Squeezes both.)

MRS. DAVIDS I ain't nothing much to complain about. This tree trunk may be a bit over-crowded.

MRS. SIMMONS I could stay 'ere for hever and hever. I thinks it's 'eavenly. (Pulls TWOPENNY to her side.) There is some people as never knows when they's not wanted.

MRS. DAVIDS Amanda, you ought to be 'shamed, you as 'as a grown daughter, going on as y' are.

MRS. SIMMONS Hactions speak truer nor words.

(MRS. DAVIDS tries to get TWOPENNY to turn her way.)

MRS. DAVIDS She's been trying to 'ook a second for years and years. Ask 'er lodgers, past hand present.

MRS. SIMMONS If you 'adn't been asleep you'd 'ave 'eard 'er casting aspersions something cruel. She stole me bar o' soap — and 'er 'usband called 'er a 'oly 'error.

MRS. DAVIDS It's a lie. I'll 'ave you to court, I will, defamating me character.

TWOPENNY 'Ush, 'ush! Put the 'alter on thy tongue.

MRS. SIMMONS I can't abide 'er insinuations.

TWOPENNY Be matey, sharing the wash-house as you do —

MRS. DAVIDS I ain't angry with 'er, I pity 'er. I tell 'er to 'er face she was deceiving of 'erself.

TWOPENNY 'Old 'ard! Let us bide a wee, girls. I'm a canary bird, I am, in me yaller waistcoat. A singing bird up a tree.

MRS. DAVIDS(Calling for a mate!

TWOPENNY Calling, calling and cuddling — that's my line. (Squeezes the two women.)

MRS. DAVIDS 'Ow you do squeeze. If I was an horange I'd 'ave burst afore now, I would. (Pause) I don't hobject to a little squeezing, Zedekiah Twopenny, I really don't.

(TWOPENNY squeezes hard. MRS. DAVIDS smiling, yet she is nearly winded. Enter SELINA R. She is fluffy and fair, about 25.)

TWOPENNY (Winking at her) Oh, now I've squeezed the orange I'm going to slip on the peel. °

SELINA I should say so. Up to your old games and me a —

TWOPENNY

Break it gently.

SELINA

Can't you leave those women go?

TWOPENNY

(Rises) 'Appy to oblige, my love. My blossom, (Runs to SELINA) you was a long time at your Aunt's at Addiscombe, and you know, giving way to temptation is me besetting vice. These girls came. I couldn't run away, love, 'cause I was to wait 'ere for you. And — well, there I was among the girls.

SELINA

So it seems. Are these women the —

MRS. DAVIDS)
MRS. SIMMONS)

Women! Women!

TWOPENNY

'Ush! 'ush, my dear girls!

MRS. DAVIDS

A little less of dear, and drop the girls if you please, Mr. Twopenny. Who is that woman? (Points to SELINA) If it ain't asking indiscreet?

TWOPENNY

My dear er — er — lady. Forgive my remoteness. (Points to SELINA.) My bride as I sacrificed at the halter of matrimony on Thursday in 'Ereford.

MRS. DAVIDS

Bride — did you say bride? I can't, I don't, oh, I won't —

TWOPENNY

Count six and it won't choke you.

SELINA

Who are these women, Zeddy?

TWOPENNY

(Points to MRS. SIMMONS) Behold me great-aunt, Amanda Simmons, as dotes on 'er great-nephew. (Points to MRS. DAVIDS) This is dear trod-on grandmother. Our proportions ain't equal, but the family haverage is normal.

MRS. DAVIDS

I'll grandmother you. (TO SELINA) I Don't know you and I don't want to. But I'll trouble you not to call me a woman — nor me friend, Mrs. Simmons, neither. I tell you, we're respectable widders of long standing — as the whole parish of 'Uxted will tell you.

SELINA

Making up to my husband is respectable, is it?

MRS. DAVIDS

(Interrupts) Making up? Did I 'ear a-right?

SELINA

A man can't marry his gandmother, when he happens to be my husband.

MRS. DAVIDS 'E took advantage of our weeds 'e did.
MRS. SIMMONS (Catching his arm R.) You come to the 'ouse with food.
MRS. DAVIDS (Taking arm L.) You give me to understand — then you give me leeks.

MRS. SIMMONS You give me beans —
TWO PENNY I'm sharing the beans this do.
MRS. DAVIDS You showed me the wall-paper — fit for a bride.
TWO PENNY Selina says it is.
MRS. SIMMONS You asked me in from the street — the street — oh, oh, I never was so put on — never — never —

MRS. DAVIDS I'll tell the whole country-side, 'ow you deceived us.
TWO PENNY I don't think!
MRS. DAVIDS I'll shout it from the 'ouse-tops.

SELINA That you were running after my husband? Come along, Zeddy, leave them to their beans and leeks. I can't waste me time with scarecrows.

TWO PENNY Afternoon, girls. Catch yer bird next time afore ye try to wring 'is neck.
SELINA There's no fools like the old widows of 'Uxted.
(SELINA exit with TWO PENNY, laughing)

MRS. DAVIDS (Shouts after them) Old fools did you say — old fools!
(Turns to MRS. SIMMONS) Did you 'ear 'er?

MRS. SIMMONS It's a houtrange — it's — it's —

MRS. DAVIDS My dear, don't try to say it — leave that to me.
(Kneels by basket) She's a 'ussy she is! I wonder who 'er Aunt is in Addiscombe! (Looks in basket)
'E smashed four heggs — one 'ad a chicken in it!

MRS. SIMMONS Me sister what's dead, always did say — never pin faith on a man as 'as curly 'air.

MRS. DAVIDS Amanda, if you're passing my way it 'ud be real neighbourly if you was to look in and put the kettle on the 'ob. (Pause) I — I don't think we'll talk about —

MRS. SIMMONS I never did 'old to gossiping.
MRS. DAVIDS I've come over so queer — me legs is all a-wobble.
MRS. SIMMONS (Helps her to rise) It's a cup o' tea as we both wants.

MRS. DAVIDS

(They both look at each other) Well, just a wee drop in it wouldn't go amiss -- considering -- a wee drop, Amanda, dear. I always keeps a bottle in the 'ouse in case of haccidents. It's been a haccidental afternoon. A wee drop, Amanda.

CURTAIN.