

# MOCK TURTLES

## CHARACTERS

MRS. WRANGLEBURY . . . . . Soprano  
MRS. BOUCHER (Mother in law to Mr. W.) . . . . . Contralto  
MR. WRANGLEBURY . . . . . Baritone  
JANE (Servant)

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The Scene represents a room in MR. WRANGLEBURY'S house. At the back are French windows, opening on a pretty garden, in which may be seen rose bushes. Doors R. and L. A couch, with pillows upon it, at R. Table and armchair at L. A breakfast-table laid ready for breakfast, a little at the back of C.

(JANE is discovered laying the table.)

JANE. There, everything is in its place. Whoever gets pepper, it shan't be me! I wonder what they'll find to quarrel about this morning? Always at it; they're snapping and snarling like a couple of strange dogs. And the oddest part of it is that they're pleasant enough, master an' missus it you take 'em by themselves. They're like the blue and white papers in a seidlitz powder — put 'em together an' off they go, fizz! Ah, here comes master.

(Enter MR. WRANGLEBURY, R.)

JANE. Good morning, sir.

W. Your mistress not down yet?

JANE (R.C.) No, sir, missis is not down yet.

W. Humph! (He walks up and down the room.) I wonder what she'll find to quarrel about this morning. For once, now, I'm determined not to gratify her. Dear me, (looking at clock), we're very late this morning — bad habits

this house is getting into. Jane, go and see if your mistress intends to take her breakfast in bed to-day. (Exit JANE, L.) I'm as hungry as ——. (pacing room); it's really too bad of her! I begin to feel quite faint.

(Enter MRS. WRANGLEBURY, L.)

Here you are, my love!

MRS. W. Good morning, my dear. {Aside.} I wonder what he'll find to quarrel about this morning. Well, whatever he says, I'm determined not to take the least notice. [Sits. L.C.]

(A pause.)

W. Ah, at last!

MRS. W. (bristling up slightly). At last, my dear! What do you mean by "at last"?

W. Well, my dear, look at the time — ten minutes past ten! We really must keep better hours.

MRS. W. No wonder, when I'm kept awake into the small hours by a sound like a saw-mill at work.

W. You mean my snoring, I suppose?

MRS. W. I only mean that I never would have married if I had known that it involved sleeping next door to a carpenter's shop.

W. (dropping the subject). Then you admit that you were late, my dear?

MRS. W. I admit nothing of the sort, my love. I think you'll find that both the clock and yourself are a little too fast. (Appear delighted at this trenchant stroke.)

W. On the contrary (smiling), I have always found it keep excellent time. I wish I could say as much for its owner.

MRS. W. It's strange if it does, then, for I know what you gave for it. But, of course, anything will do for the house; if it had been for your darling office, now, it would have been a double-action-chronometer, jewelled in 65 holes.

W. Well, really, my dear, when the bills are so heavy someone must be economical - you can't have it in dress AND furniture, you know.

MRS. W. Bills, Mr. Wranglebury - what bills? (Sits.)

W. Why, here's one from Lewis & Allenby's for £50.

MRS. W. £50! A mere fleabite.

W. A fleabite! That's the reason it irritates me. (Rises.)

MRS. W. Some husbands would take a pride in seeing their wives decently dressed; but, of course, when a man loses half his income at cards——

W. What do you mean, Mrs. Wranglebury?

MRS. W. Oh, never mind what I mean.

W. I insist upon knowing.

MRS. W. No, I shall say no more. I always understood that gambling at clubs was a dangerous game — especially for beginners.

W. (slightly warm). Who told you that I had been playing?

MRS. W. Did I say you had?

W. Who told you, I say?

MRS. W. (with dignity}. My cousin Tom very properly informed me of what was going on.

W. A sneaking, tattling hound! I won't have him about the place.

MRS. W. (rising with dignity). Mr. Wranglebury, insult me, kick me, treat me as a slave, but spare my relations!

W. Oh, bother your relations! (Sits.)

MRS. W. Oh, you didn't say that when poor mamma lent you £2,000 to assist you in your business. Poor dear mamma! (Handkerchief to eyes.) And she thinks we're so happy together — for in not one of my letters, Richard, have I ever exposed you. She thinks we're so happy (bitterly). Ha, ha.

W. So we might be if it was not for your confounded temper and extravagances, and ——

MRS. W. Go on, that's right. Insult me! You say nothing about your extravagances. Oh, poor mamma was right, as she often said.

W. (exploding). Oh, damn your mamma!

MRS. W. (giving a little shriek; and closing her ears with her hands). Ah! (with bitter scorn). And this is a gentleman! He accepted help from a woman and then — why if she only knew you as I do, she'd leave all her money to the Home for Superannuated Parrots, as she has often talked of doing, sooner than you should profit by it.

W. (rises). It's precious lucky that she hasn't paid us that visit she has been threatening — I mean promising — us so long. For what with your continual nagging about one thing or another (breaking off, and in an injured tone) I really am rendered quite unfit for business, I really am. I shall be obliged to go somewhere by myself for a week.

MRS. W. Ah, I know what that means — Paris (warmly). But let me tell you, Mr. Wranglebury, that if you go to Paris I go too this time. I am not going to have you dancing down the Boulevards, dining at Bignon's, and flaunting at Mabilie on your own account.

W. Why I never was inside Mabilie in my life!

MRS. W. Then I daresay you were just as bad somewhere else. But you shan't have all the fun to yourself this time. If you go to Paris I shall accompany you personally, Mr. Wranglebury — personally.

W. It wouldn't be a pleasure trip then, at all events.

MRS. W. No. Anywhere you go without your wife — that's your idea of a pleasure trip. (They sit.) Ah, the tea's as cold as ice!

W. And the eggs are as hard as bullets.

MRS. W. Serve you right. (Rings bell.)

W. Ah, I've no appetite for breakfast after all this. I shall go down to the club.

MRS. W. There's only one club you're fit for.

W. What's that?

MRS. W. The Savage!

W. This sort of thing is playing the very devil with my digestion. (Enter JANE, with cutlet.) Jane.

JANE (taking plate). Yes, sir.

W. Do you see this? (Holding up cutlet).

JANE. Yes, sir. (Defiantly).

W. Then just take it round to the man who is repairing my shooting boots, and tell him to use it for the soles; it's tough enough to last me a lifetime.

MRS. W. Jane, put that cutlet back, and — Jane, leave the room.

JANE (going quickly). Yes, m'm. Well I never!

MRS. W. (rising). I wonder, Mr. Wranglebury, that you should lower yourself by exposing your temper before a servant; Jane is quite forward enough as it is. However, she leaves next month, so it doesn't much matter.

W. (rising). That's always the way with you. As soon as you've got a good servant you're sure to get rid of her.

MRS. W. I daresay you think so. As long as a girl is good-looking and has a good figure, that's quite enough for you.

W. Good gracious, Fanny, how can you be such a fool?

MRS. W. Ah! (Tapping her foot.) Go on, go on.

W. As if I ever looked at the girl's figure or her face either! Really, you are too ridiculous.

MRS. W. (more suppressed excitement). I am, am I?

W. The fact is, it's your tongue and your temper they can't put up with.

MRS. W. (ironically). Ha, ha! (With change of tone, rising.) Ugh, how I detest you!

#### DUET

MRS. W.	Oh, I hate you! I despise you! What can anybody say For a husband who descends To treat his wife in such a way?
MR. W.	Is it right when husband toiling Comes home after business hours, All his comfort to be spoiling By that dreadful tongue of yours?

#### BOTH.

MRS. W.	Oh, pshaw! what's the use of talking To a conscience such as his? Ne'er was wife so sore encumbered By so cruel a spouse as this!
MR. W.	Oh, pshaw! what's the use of talking To a woman so obtuse?

Common sense is driven hence  
And reason's not the smallest use.

[Noises of cab-wheels heard.]

Voice of MRS. BOUCHER (outside). Is this Mr. Wranglebury's, please?

MRS. W. (running to window and looking off R. in sidelong direction).  
Mamma. (aside.) What an awkward time, to be sure!

W. Confound it! It's the old cat, my creditor.

MRS. W. (aside). I should be ashamed for her to know how badly we get  
on together.

W. (aside). If she were to find out how we lived she's quite capable of  
asking for her money. Of course, she's sure to take Fanny's part. (Pause).

MRS. W. Mr. Wranglebury — If you can't be courteous to me, I trust  
you have still sufficient decency to keep up appearances before my mother.

W. And, though I daresay it will be difficult, if you could contrive to keep  
that tongue of yours still for a short time, perhaps it would be better for all  
parties.

MRS. W. Ugh!

W. Pshaw!

Voice of MRS. BOUCHER at door. This way, is it, my good girl?

Enter MRS. BOUCHER.

MRS. B. (C). Well, my dear, and how are you all this time? (Kiss). Good  
day to you, sir. I hope I see you well?

W. Quite well, thank you, Mrs. Boucher.

MRS. B. You must speak a little louder, sir, if you please, I'm just a trifle  
deaf.

W. (loudly). Very well, thank you, Mrs. Boucher.

MRS. B. There's no occasion for you to shout, sir. I can hear perfectly well, when you speak distinctly.

W. Very glad to see you, Mrs. Boucher. (Aside). I wish she was at Jericho.

MRS. W. Sit down, mamma. Dick, dear, give mamma a chair.

W. Certainly, my love. (he sets chair for MRS. B. at L. MRS. W. is sitting on couch R.). I hope you're come to stay with us for a long time, Mrs. Boucher! (in low tone). I wonder when we shall get rid of her!

MRS. B. Well, do you know, it's a strange thing, but it's the first time that I ever was in London. What a place it is! I suppose you're sight-seeing every day of your lives?

MRS. W. Sight-seeing, mamma?

MRS. B. Yes — the Tower of London, now, for instance.

MRS. W. We were never inside it in our lives.

MRS. B. Nor up the Monument?

MRS. W. No

MRS. B. Nor to Madame — what's her name — it sounds like sneezing?

MRS. W. Oh, Madame Tussaud's. No, we have never been there either.

MRS. B. Well, that will be very pleasant. I intend to see all the sights, and you and your good husband there can accompany me.

W. I shall be charmed, Mrs. Boucher. (Aside.) What a delightful prospect.

SONG.

MRS. B. I mean to go about, my dears,  
 Now I have come to town;  
 It's full of strange delights, my dears,  
 And lions of renown.  
 I mean to go to every play  
 And patronise them all—  
 The Palace on a shilling day,  
 The Agricult'ral Hall.  
 I won't omit a single sight  
 That's fit for me to see,  
 I'll go about from morn till night,  
 And you shall go with me.

MR. & MRS. W. I'm sure 'twill give us great delight.  
 Oh, rapture, ecstasy!

MRS. B. I mean to see the Abbey,  
 and St. Paul's, and Hyde Park Gate,  
 The Tower and the Monument,  
 Bow Bells and Billingsgate;  
 The Tunnel underneath the Thames  
 I mean to travel through.

W. Thank heaven, it's closed for passengers,  
 so that she cannot do!

MRS. B. The pictures in the gallery,  
 the lions in the square—  
 Perhaps, from what they say,  
 I'll meet with Mr. Bradlaugh there;  
 I'm going up the Monument,  
 your help shall useful find.

W. Will you give ma your arm, my dear,  
 while I can push behind!

MRS. B. I won't omit a single sight  
 that's fit for me to see,  
 I'll go about from morn till night,  
 and you shall go with me.

MR. & MRS. W. I'm sure 'twill give us great delight.  
 Oh, rapture, ecstasy.

W. (in undertone). This is indeed happiness! (He goes behind sofa, where MRS. W. is sitting.)

MRS. B. Well, my dears, now that you've settled down, I suppose you are as happy together as two turtle-doves?

MRS. W. (taking W.'s hand over her shoulder). Oh, yes, mamma. (To W.) Don't look so awkward for heaven's sake.

W. Well of all the barefaced ——

MRS. B. Your husband doesn't answer for himself, my dear.

MRS. W. Say we're happy and comfortable, can't you? You're not going to spoil everything, I hope?

W. Yes, Mrs. Boucher, we're quite, quite comfortable. (Mrs. W. pinches him.) Ah!

MRS. B. Eh? I didn't quite catch ——

W. (to MRS. W.). I wish you'd keep your fingers to yourself.

MRS. W. Well, speak up, then, when you are spoken to.

MRS. B. Ah, young things, young things, you're eating your white bread now.

MRS. W. (to W.). If you don't look affectionate I'll run a pin into you.

MRS. B. Do you know, Mr. Wranglebury, many a time I've thought of troubling you for that little bit of money you borrowed of me.

W. (rises, gets C.) Oh, pray don't mention it, Mrs. Boucher.

MRS. B. But there, I said to myself, so long as he makes her happy that's the great thing after all.

MRS. W. Yes, mamma. (To W.) Come and sit down, can't you? (He sits by her.)

MRS. B. (delighted). Ah, that's how I like to see you. Bill and coo, my dears — bill and coo.

MRS. W. I've quite forgotten how to coo.

W. Yes; but you can bill to any extent, though.

MRS. W. Mind what you're about, mamma's watching you.

MRS. B. Ah, when I was a young girl we didn't use to sit at such a distance — he, he, he!

MRS. W. Put your arm round my waist. It's only for the time, you know.

W. (doing so awkwardly, and suddenly withdrawing). Ah!

MRS. W. What's the matter?

W. Confound it! (sucking his finger). Is that where you keep your pins? (Ties up his hand with handkerchief, and replaces it.) Lean your head on my shoulder; it isn't for long. (MRS. W. does so.)

MRS. B. (clapping her hands). That's pretty, my dears— that's pretty; quite a picture, I do declare.

W. Ugh! How often have I protested against that horrid Jockey Club?

MRS. W. How fearfully you smell of tobacco!

W. You used to like it at one time.

MRS. W. Yes, at one time.

MRS. B. (delighted). Take her hand, sir; take her hand.

MRS. W. (giving her hand). Here, catch hold!

W. (taking it). It's as bad as sitting for one's photograph.

MRS. W. There, that will do. (She rises and crosses to piano, and stands turning over music on it.)

MRS. B. And have you forgotten all your pretty songs, my dear.

MRS. W. Oh, there's nobody cares about my singing now.

MRS. B. Why isn't there your husband?

MRS. W. Oh, he's heard them all so often.

MRS. B. Well, now, there's that one you used to sing together, while you were courting.

MRS. W. (sitting and touching chord). Was it this one, mamma? (She plays a few notes, then, more gently, to W.) Come along — Richard — let's get it over.

#### DUET.

MRS. W. I love you, so I only fear  
To give and not receive again;  
For should I sell my heart too dear  
The bargain bad would give me pain.  
Sometimes I fancy I have sold  
For silver coin my treasured gold.  
Look in my eyes and tell me true  
Do you love me as I love you—  
As I love you?

W. I know you love me dearly, dear,  
I know you love me tenderly;  
But love grows older year by year,  
And often dies at thirty-three.  
The power and not the will I fear,  
I know you well would love me, dear,  
But hearts with strength to love are few;  
Could you love me as I love you—  
As I love you?

(At conclusion of duet MRS. W. closes piano.)

MRS. B. Thank you, my dear, thank you. I haven't the least idea what it is all about, but it sounded very pleasant, very pleasant indeed. And now, if you allow me, I'll go and take off my bonnet. (MRS. W. strikes bell.) And (ruefully) mind you don't get hugging and kissing while I'm away.

(Enter JANE.)

MRS. W. Show my mother to her room, Jane.

JANE. Yes, m'm. (To MRS. B.) This way, if you please, m'm.

MRS. B. When the cat's away the mice will play. (Exeunt after JANE.)

[The following must be acted with light touches,  
and taken slowly, or it will fall perfectly flat.]

MR. W. is on couch, R.C., at end nearest the audience. MRS. W., who has gone towards door, L., to see MRS. B. out, sits at piano, and plays air of duet piano. (If the actress cannot play the piano, and the management will not have a piano in the orchestra, the band must play the air pianissimo through the following scene.)

MUSIC.

MRS. W. (to herself). Well, now we are at liberty again, somehow I hardly feel inclined to resume the argument.

W. (to himself). After all, what's the use of arguing with a woman?

(A pause — music.)

MRS. W. (timidly). Richard?

W. (leaning on arm). Well!

MRS. W. (slightly embarrassed, speaking slowly). I don't see — any use — in beginning to quarrel before mamma goes — do you?

W. (gently). Oh, no. I daresay we can manage to keep our tongues off each other till then.

MRS. W. (with an effort). Besides — I was wrong about that last dress — it was a great deal too expensive.

W. Oh, it doesn't matter.

MRS. W. Why can't he meet me half-way?

(Slight pause.)

W. (rises). By-the-bye, Fanny, perhaps I have been too much out lately — it runs away with a lot of money. Besides, I daresay you're very lonely here all by yourself.

MRS. W. Oh, never mind, dear; I can always find something to do.

W. Why the deuce can't she meet me half-way ?

MRS. W. (aloud). I fancy I hear mamma coming. (Sweetly). Dick!

W. Well?

MRS. W. Hadn't we better (stops playing) — hadn't we better (coughs) —hem! —get into position ? (She crosses, and sits shyly by him on couch. Slight embarrassment on both sides.)

W. But we (voice shakes) — we're rather out of practice at the business, aren't we?

MRS. W. (putting up her mouth). Suppose we rehearse it?

(Their lips meet. At this moment JANE knocks and enters. They rise.)

W. Jane, leave the room.

MRS. W. Yes, leave the room, Jane.

JANE. Yes, m'm. (Going.) Well, I never! (Exit.)

MRS. W. (going to window). Would you like a rose, Dick?

W. If you pick it for me.

MRS. W. (going out). With pleasure. (Exit at window.)

W. Take care of the thorns, though. (He follows her.)

(Enter at L. MRS. B. and JANE.)

MRS. B. Well, my good girl, and how do you like your place?

JANE. Very well, thank you, m'm, but I'm going to leave next month, m'm.

MRS. B. Going to leave? Why, what have you to complain of? — not your master or your mistress surely?

JANE. No, m'm; master he's all right enough, and missus she's all right enough — when they're by themselves.

MRS. B. Well now — there's half-a-crown for you. Tell me, what sort of a man is your master?

JANE. Well, to tell you the truth, mum, I don't see much of him. He comes down and breakfasts, and then he's off for the day.

MRS. B. But at dinner — surely you see something of him in the evenings?

JANE. Master dines out most days, mum.

MRS. B. What heathen arrangements! Well, well, perhaps it's best for married people not to see too much of each other. It makes them more cordial when they do meet.

JANE. Oh, they ain't never cordial, mum — hanything but that!

MRS. B. What do you mean, girl? Why, they don't quarrel, do they?

JANE. Quarrel, mum? Why they don't do nothing else! I've never knowed a day without words passing between them. Cook said she couldn't stand it no longer. It was like living in a bad harmonium to be in such a house. First one begins, and then the other begins; and at it they goes, 'ammer and tongs, 'ammer and tongs, until death them do part. Why, mum, only just before you came——

MRS. B. Why, this is incredible! They seemed so happy together when I saw them.

JANE (wisely). All, so they are, mum — before strangers; but, bless you, as soon as your back's turned they'll be at it again as bad as ever.

MRS. B. This is very strange. That will do, my good girl, you can go. (Exit JANE. Sits on chair, L.) I see it all now. He is a brute; and she has concealed it from me - his mother-in-law! Well, I suppose it was to spare him. But she shall not make a martyr of herself, she doesn't stay with him a day longer — not a day longer! Ah, here they come.

(She retires to L., opens door and sits behind it, door opening inwards.

MR. and MRS. W. come down, C., on each side of table C.)

MRS. W. (putting rose in his buttonhole). Really, Dick, I had no idea you could look so handsome; but, then, I've so seldom seen you with a smile on your face.

W. And your dear little mouth is ever so much prettier when it makes pretty speeches.

MRS. B. I can't hear what they're saying. She seems to be imploring him — (MR. and MRS. W. suit attitude) — perhaps for mercy!

MRS. W. (going L. chaffingly). Pooh! If I have any of your impertinence, I'll throw something at you. (Throws roll of music.)

W. (taking up sofa cushion from couch, R.) Take notice that I only act in self-defence. {He raises sofa cushion. MRS. W. cowers in mock terror.}

MRS. B. (rushing forward to C., and brandishing umbrella, gasping.) No, not while I am here to protect her!

MRS. W. Whatever do you mean, mamma?

MRS. B. No, my dear, not assaults! Bullyings, snubs, ill-treatment of all sorts a wife should put up with, but not personal violence. I will stand between you and his brutality. (She opens umbrella, and, clasping MRS. W. with one arm, protects her with the other.)

MRS. W. (struggling). Mamma, how silly you are! Dick and I were only——

MRS. B. Useless to try and deceive me, my dear; I know all. My poor innocent child! (To W., who approaches.) Back, Bluebeard — back!

W. My dear Mrs. Boucher.

MRS. B. Down, tyrant of the domestic hearth — down!

W. Down where — into the kitchen?

MRS. W. (succeeding at last in escaping from her mother's too-fond arm, and trying to put down umbrella. MRS. B. refuses to part with her weapon, and re-erects it. Business. Finally.) Mamma, the fact is, we have both been very silly children, and now we have come to our senses. The experiences of a single hour's mutual amiability, the remembrance of past happiness have come to convert us; we are converted.

MRS. B. But, my dear child, Jane told me — I don't quite understand.

MRS. W. Jane told you? (Pause.)

W. I never quite liked that girl.

MRS. W. No; it has been all her fault. Mr. Wranglebury, there is but one solution to this difficulty. (Strikes bell.)

W. I know what you are going to say, my dear. Jane must go, instantly.

(Enter JANE.)

MRS. W. Jane, here are your month's wages, you can go and pack up your boxes at once.

W. Yes, Jane, you can go.

MRS. B. Yes, my good girl, here's the half-crown, but I think, on the whole, you'd better go.

JANE (going). Well, I never! (Exit.)

MRS. W. We've sworn a truce I trust will never cease.

W. Call it an amnesty.

MRS. W. Call it a peace.

And now our stormy weather we've got through,  
We hope, to please ourselves, we've not offended you.

(MUSIC.)

(Sings)            We mean to see the Abbey,  
                         and St. Paul's, and Hyde Park Gate.  
                         The Tower and the Monument,  
                         Bow Bells and Billingsgate;  
                         We won't omit a single sight  
                         that's fit for us to view,  
                         And hope to see a smile that tells  
                         we have not wearied you.

TRIO.                We mean to see the Monument, &c., &c.

CURTAIN.