

ACT I

[Covent Garden at 11.15 p.m. **Torrents** of heavy summer rain. Cab whistles blowing **frantically** in all directions. Pedestrians running for shelter into the market and under the **portico** of St. Paul's Church, where there are already several people, among them a lady and her daughter in evening dress. They are all **peering** out **gloomily** at the rain, except one man with his back turned to the rest, who seems wholly **preoccupied** with a **notebook** in which he is writing busily.]

[The church clock strikes the first quarter.]

THE DAUGHTER.

[in the space between the central pillars, close to the one on her left] I'm getting **chilled** to the bone. What can Freddy be doing all this time? He's been gone twenty minutes.

THE MOTHER.

[on her daughter's right] Not so long. But he ought to have got us a cab by this.

A BYSTANDER.

[on the lady's right] He won't get no cab not until half-past **eleven, missus**, when they come back after dropping their theatre fares.

Thesaurus

chilled: (*adj*) frozen, freezing, cool, refrigerated, icy, inhibited, restrained, confined, shivering, iced, stiff.

eleven: (*adj, n*) xi; (*n*) eight, squad, football team, team.

frantically: (*adv*) frenziedly, desperately, wildly, distractedly, furiously, excitedly, deliriously, ravingly, distraughtly, fiercely, crazily. ANTONYMS: (*adv*) sensibly, cautiously, peacefully, sluggishly.

gloomily: (*adv*) murkily, obscurely, drearily, darkly, somberly, morosely, sadly, sorrowfully, despondently, unhappily, glumly. ANTONYMS: (*adv*) brightly, favorably, happily, optimistically, contentedly; (*adj*) auspiciously.

missus: (*n*) lady, wife, matron, married woman.

notebook: (*n*) book, exercise book, exercise-book, jotter, books, laptop, pad, notebook computer, folder,

agenda, note pad.

peering: (*adj*) nosy, prying, snoopy.

portico: (*n*) portal, arcade, entrance, veranda, corridor, mouth, lips, inlet, chops, balcony, orifice.

preoccupied: (*adj*) absorbed, abstracted, thoughtful, lost, rapt, distracted, faraway, inattentive, deep in thought, engrossed, pensive. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) alert, carefree, uninterested.

torrents: (*n*) white water, rapids.

THE MOTHER.

But we must have a cab. We can't stand here until half-past eleven. It's too bad.

THE BYSTANDER.

Well, it ain't my fault, missus.

THE DAUGHTER.

If Freddy had a bit of **gumption**, he would have got one at the theatre door.

THE MOTHER.

What could he have done, poor boy?

THE DAUGHTER.

Other people got cabs. Why couldn't he?

Freddy **rushes** in out of the rain from the Southampton Street side, and comes between them **closing** a **dripping umbrella**. He is a young man of twenty, in evening dress, very wet around the ankles.

THE DAUGHTER.

Well, haven't you got a cab?

FREDDY.

There's not one to be had for love or money.

THE MOTHER.

Oh, Freddy, there must be one. You can't have tried.

THE DAUGHTER.

It's too **tiresome**. Do you expect us to go and get one **ourselves**?

FREDDY.

I tell you they're all **engaged**. The rain was so sudden: nobody was prepared; and everybody had to take a cab. I've been to Charing Cross one way and nearly to Ludgate Circus the other; and they were all engaged.

THE MOTHER.

Did you try Trafalgar Square?

Thesaurus

closing: (*n*) end, finish, conclusion, close, ending, shutting, finishing; (*adj*) ultimate, last, final, terminal. ANTONYMS: (*adj, n*) opening; (*adj*) first.

dripping: (*adj*) wet, damp, drenched, sodden, soaked, soggy; (*adj, adv*) sopping, soaking; (*adj, v*) reeking; (*n*) dribble, a drop. ANTONYM: (*adj*) lacking.

engaged: (*adj*) occupied, betrothed, employed, affianced, engrossed,

reserved, absorbed, working, pledged, involved, committed. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) free, unengaged, unemployed, uncommitted, unattached, single, detached, idle.

gumption: (*n*) fortitude, nous, grit, backbone, mettle, judgment, sagaciousness, cleverness, sagacity, initiative, moxie.

ourselves: (*pron*) myself, herself, itself, oneself, themselves, yourself; (*n*) me, yourselves, usself.

rushes: (*n*) rush, grasses.

tiresome: (*adj*) tedious, dull, laborious, irksome, monotonous, annoying, slow, dreary, bothersome; (*adj, v*) wearisome, troublesome.

ANTONYMS: (*adj*) stimulating, fun, varied, soothing, pleasant, brisk, exciting, convenient, refreshing.

umbrella: (*n*) parasol, sunshade, shelter, canopy, cover, gamp, protection, tent, shield, screen, umbra.

FREDDY.

There wasn't one at Trafalgar Square.

THE DAUGHTER.

Did you try?

FREDDY.

I tried as far as Charing Cross Station. Did you expect me to walk to Hammersmith?

THE DAUGHTER.

You haven't tried at all.

THE MOTHER.

You really are very helpless, Freddy. Go again; and **don't** come back until you have found a cab.

FREDDY.

I shall simply get **soaked** for nothing.

THE DAUGHTER.

And what about us? Are we to stay here all night in this **draught**, with next to nothing on. You selfish pig--

FREDDY.

Oh, very well: I'll go, I'll go. [He opens his umbrella and dashes off Strandwards, but comes into **collision** with a flower girl, who is **hurrying** in for shelter, **knocking** her basket out of her hands. A **blinding** flash of **lightning**, followed instantly by a **rattling** peal of **thunder**, orchestrates the incident]

THE FLOWER GIRL.

Nah then, Freddy: look wh' y' gowin, deah.

FREDDY.

Sorry [he rushes off].

THE FLOWER GIRL

[picking up her scattered **flowers** and replacing them in the basket] There's

Thesaurus

blinding: (*adj*) dazzling, blazing, amazingly impressive, bisson, blatant, fulgent, glory; (*n*) clogging, blind blocking, blindage.
collision: (*n*) clash, hit, conflict, crash, smash, clashing, accident, rencounter, jar, striking, hitting.
don't: (*adv*) not; (*n*) taboo, prohibition.
draught: (*n, v*) draft, sketch, design, potation, plan; (*n*) dose, air current, wind, gulp, outline; (*v*) blueprint.
flowers: (*n*) analecta, anthology.

hurrying: (*n*) hastening, speed, quickening, rushing, early, speeding, speeding up, stepping up, amphetamine, forward, eager.
knocking: (*n*) sound, bang, beating, hit, rap, strike, belt, criticism, bash.
lightning: (*n*) levin, electricity, thunderbolt, Leven, ignis fatuus, heat lightning, forked lightning, fetter, dart, chain lightning; (*adj*) wind.
peal: (*n*) ding, noise, clang, dingdong, blast; (*v*) chime, knell, toll, echo; (*adj*,

n) swell; (*n, v*) bang.
rattling: (*adj*) lively, brisk, racy, marvelous, fantastic, zippy, snappy, spanking, merry; (*adv*) very, real.
soaked: (*adj*) wet, drenched, sopping, soggy, soaking, drunk, wet through, soaking wet, damp, sloshed; (*adj, v*) sodden. ANTONYM: (*adj*) dry.
thunder: (*adj, n, v*) boom; (*n, v*) roar, bang, roll, bellow; (*adj, n*) peal; (*adj, v*) explode, detonate; (*v*) howl, rumble, fulminate.

menners f' yer! Te-oo banches o voylets trod into the mad. [She sits down on the **plinth** of the column, sorting her flowers, on the lady's right. She is not at all an attractive person. She is perhaps eighteen, perhaps twenty, hardly older. She wears a little sailor hat of black straw that has long been exposed to the dust and **soot** of London and has seldom if ever been brushed. Her hair needs washing rather badly: its **mousy color** can hardly be natural. She wears a **shoddy** black coat that reaches nearly to her knees and is shaped to her waist. She has a brown skirt with a coarse apron. Her boots are much the worse for wear. She is no doubt as clean as she can afford to be; but compared to the ladies she is very dirty. Her features are no worse than theirs; but their condition leaves something to be desired; and she needs the services of a dentist].

THE MOTHER.

How do you know that my son's name is Freddy, pray?

THE FLOWER GIRL.

Ow, eez ye-ooa san, is e? Wal, fewd dan y' de-ooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to **spawl** a **pore** gel's flahrzn than ran awy atbaht pyin. Will ye-oo py me f'them? [Here, with apologies, this desperate attempt to represent her dialect without a phonetic alphabet must be abandoned as **unintelligible** outside London.]

THE DAUGHTER.

Do nothing of the sort, mother. The idea!

THE MOTHER.

Please allow me, Clara. Have you any **pennies**?

THE DAUGHTER.

No. I've nothing smaller than sixpence.

THE FLOWER GIRL

[hopefully] I can give you change for a tanner, kind lady.

Thesaurus

color: (*n, v*) flush, blush, tint, tinge, paint, stain; (*adj, n, v*) colour; (*v*) redden; (*n*) guise, complexion; (*adj, n*) tone. ANTONYMS: (*v*) discolor, pale, show, whiten, untwist, denote, depict, represent, blanch, blench.
mousy: (*adj*) mousey, shy, mouselike, fearful, silent, dull, gray, sheepish, frightened, dumb, chromatic. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) bold, brazen.
pennies: (*n*) change.
plinth: (*n*) footstall, pedestal, dado,

shank, zocle, support, wainscot, socle, skirting board, stand, dais.
pore: (*n*) stoma, interstice, emunctory, gully hole; (*v*) speculate, meditate, contemplate, concentrate, centre, engulf, engross.
shoddy: (*adj*) inferior, poor, tawdry, shabby, tacky, paltry, low, substandard, cheapjack, sleazy, common. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) meticulous, polished, thorough, professional, perfect, tasteful.

soot: (*n*) smut, lampblack, carbon black, grime, carbon, crock, dirt; (*adj*) ink, ebony, coal pitch, jet.
spawl: (*n*) spattle, spatula.
unintelligible: (*adj*) opaque, inarticulate, unfathomable, impenetrable, unaccountable, ambiguous, not clear, obscure, indistinct, inconceivable, secret. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) understandable, clear, comprehensible, intelligible, obvious.

THE MOTHER

[to Clara] Give it to me. [Clara parts reluctantly]. Now [to the girl] This is for your flowers.

THE FLOWER GIRL.

Thank you kindly, lady.

THE DAUGHTER.

Make her give you the change. These things are only a penny a **bunch**.

THE MOTHER.

Do hold your tongue, Clara. [To the girl]. You can keep the change.

THE FLOWER GIRL.

Oh, thank you, lady.

THE MOTHER.

Now tell me how you know that young gentleman's name.

THE FLOWER GIRL.

I didn't.

THE MOTHER.

I heard you call him by it. Don't try to **deceive** me.

THE FLOWER GIRL

[protesting] Who's trying to deceive you? I called him Freddy or Charlie same as you might yourself if you was talking to a stranger and wished to be pleasant. [She sits down beside her basket].

THE DAUGHTER.

Sixpence thrown away! Really, **mamma**, you might have spared Freddy that. [She retreats in **disgust** behind the pillar].

[An ELDERLY GENTLEMAN of the **amiable** military type rushes into shelter, and closes a dripping umbrella. He is in the same **plight** as FREDDY, very wet about the ankles. He is in evening dress, with a light **overcoat**. He takes the place left vacant by the daughter's retirement.]

Thesaurus

amiable: (*adj*) friendly, genial, agreeable, benign, complaisant, sweet, cordial, pleasant, likable, nice, lovely. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) disagreeable, argumentative, aggressive, antisocial, unkind, hateful, mean, quarrelsome, rude, surly, cold.

bunch: (*n, v*) crowd, clump, pack, bundle, group, huddle; (*n*) batch, lot, band, troop, gang. ANTONYMS: (*v*) spread, separate, scatter; (*n*)

individual.

deceive: (*v*) cheat, circumvent, bamboozle, pretend, hoax, fool, cozen, trick, beguile; (*n, v*) dupe; (*n*) fraud. ANTONYMS: (*v*) guide, inform, undeceive, protect.

disgust: (*n*) antipathy, aversion, abhorrence, abomination, detestation, dislike, repugnance; (*n, v*) shock, distaste; (*v*) nauseate, displease. ANTONYMS: (*n, v*) delight; (*n*) love, attraction, liking, adoration; (*v*)

attract, allure, charm, entice, please.

mamma: (*n*) breast, mother, ma, knocker, boob, mum, mammy, mom, momma, mommy, mummy.

overcoat: (*n*) greatcoat, coat, cloak, robe, topcoat, surcoat, coating, overcoating, capote, chesterfield, gown.

plight: (*n*) condition, predicament, fix, fettle, quandary, dilemma, case, guarantee; (*n, v*) engage, promise; (*v*) covenant.

THE GENTLEMAN.

Phew!

THE MOTHER

[to the gentleman] Oh, sir, is there any sign of its **stopping**?

THE GENTLEMAN.

I'm afraid not. It started worse than ever about two minutes ago. [He goes to the plinth beside the **flower** girl; puts up his foot on it; and stoops to turn down his trouser ends].

THE MOTHER.

Oh, dear! [She retires sadly and joins her daughter].

THE FLOWER GIRL

[taking advantage of the military gentleman's **proximity** to establish friendly relations with him]. If it's worse it's a sign it's nearly over. So **cheer** up, Captain; and buy a flower off a poor girl.

THE GENTLEMAN.

I'm sorry, I haven't any change.

THE FLOWER GIRL.

I can give you change, Captain,

THE GENTLEMEN.

For a **sovereign**? I've nothing less.

THE FLOWER GIRL.

Garn! Oh do buy a flower off me, Captain. I can change half-a-crown. Take this for **tuppence**.

THE GENTLEMAN.

Now don't be **troublesome**: there's a good girl. [Trying his pockets] I really haven't any change--Stop: here's three hapence, if that's any use to you [he retreats to the other pillar].

Thesaurus

cheer: (*v*) animate, applaud, amuse, hearten, inspire, lighten; (*n, v*) comfort, delight, cry; (*adj, v*) embolden; (*n*) consolation.
ANTONYMS: (*n*) sadness, boo, uncheerfulness, hiss, pessimism, raspberry; (*v*) depress, discourage, dissuade, complain, jeer.
flower: (*n, v*) blossom, blow; (*v*) effloresce, flourish; (*adj, n*) prime; (*n*) efflorescence, elite, cream, bouquet, floret, florescence. **ANTONYMS**: (*n*)

residue; (*v*) wither.
proximity: (*n*) propinquity, vicinity, adjacency, neighborhood, contiguity, presence, closeness, contact, nearby, juxtaposition, approach. **ANTONYM**: (*n*) remoteness.
sovereign: (*n*) ruler, king, lord, emperor; (*adj*) independent, autonomous, imperial, royal, free, regal; (*adj, n*) prince. **ANTONYMS**: (*adj*) dependent, ineffective, useless.
stopping: (*n*) stoppage, cessation,

shutdown, padding, fillet, suspension, stay, discontinuance, abeyance, interruption; (*adv*) haltingly.
troublesome: (*adj*) difficult, hard, arduous, bothersome, inconvenient, onerous, awkward, annoying, laborious, tough, heavy.
ANTONYMS: (*adj*) nice, helpful, useful, advantageous, convenient, uncomplicated, delightful.
tuppence: (*n*) twopence.

THE FLOWER GIRL

[disappointed, but thinking three halfpence better than nothing] Thank you, sir.

THE BYSTANDER

[to the girl] You be careful: give him a flower for it. There's a bloke here behind taking down every blessed word you're saying. [All turn to the man who is taking notes].

THE FLOWER GIRL

[springing up terrified] I ain't done nothing wrong by speaking to the gentleman. I've a right to sell flowers if I keep off the kerb. [**Hysterically**] I'm a respectable girl: so help me, I never spoke to him except to ask him to buy a flower off me. [General **hubbub**, mostly sympathetic to the flower girl, but **deprecating** her excessive sensibility. Cries of Don't start hollerin. Who's hurting you? Nobody's going to touch you. What's the good of fussing? Steady on. Easy, easy, etc., come from the elderly **staid spectators**, who pat her **comfortingly**. Less patient ones bid her shut her head, or ask her roughly what is wrong with her. A **remoter** group, not knowing what the matter is, crowd in and increase the noise with question and answer: What's the row? What she do? Where is he? A tec taking her down. What! him? Yes: him over there: Took money off the gentleman, etc. The flower girl, distraught and **mobbed**, breaks through them to the gentleman, crying mildly] Oh, sir, don't let him charge me. You dunno what it means to me. They'll take away my character and drive me on the streets for speaking to gentlemen. They--

THE NOTE TAKER

[coming forward on her right, the rest **crowding** after him] There, there, there, there! Who's hurting you, you silly girl? What do you take me for?

THE BYSTANDER.

It's all right: he's a gentleman: look at his boots. [Explaining to the note **taker**] She thought you was a copper's **nark**, sir.

THE NOTE TAKER

[with quick interest] What's a copper's nark?

Thesaurus

comfortingly: (*adv*) consolatorily, satisfyingly, cheeringly, encouragingly, soothingly.

crowding: (*n*) plough crowding, bunch, jostlement, overcrowding.

deprecating: (*adj*) deprecatory, belittling, ironic, deprecative, slighting, deadpan, critical, captious, depreciatory, depreciative, insulting.

hubbub: (*n*) commotion, uproar, disorder, din, noise, bustle, tumult, bedlam, brouhaha; (*n, v*) racket,

brawl. ANTONYM: (*n*) calm.

hysterically: (*adv*) feverishly, frantically, agitatedly, worriedly, wildly, violently, turbulently, excitedly, emotionally, passionately, stormily. ANTONYM: (*adv*) peacefully.

mobbed: (*adj*) packed, congested.

nark: (*v*) provoke, displease, annoy, irritate, rile, frustrate, get, harry, exasperate; (*n*) informer, narc.

remoter: (*adj*) ulterior, further, more

distant.

spectators: (*n*) spectator, gallery, viewer, viewers, attendance.

staid: (*adj, v*) serious, sedate, grave, solemn, sober, demure; (*adj*) calm, quiet, composed, somber, decorous.

ANTONYMS: (*adj*) frivolous, exciting, funny, daring, playful, bright, relaxed.

taker: (*n*) wagerer, user, customer, beggar, client, captor, stealer, respecter, punter, parasite, better.

THE BYSTANDER

[inept at definition] It's a--well, it's a copper's nark, as you might say. What else would you call it? A sort of informer.

THE FLOWER GIRL

[still **hysterical**] I take my Bible **oath** I never said a word--

THE NOTE TAKER

[overbearing but **good-humored**] Oh, shut up, shut up. Do I look like a policeman?

THE FLOWER GIRL

[far from **reassured**] Then what did you take down my words for? How do I know whether you took me down right? You just show me what you've wrote about me. [The note taker opens his book and holds it steadily under her nose, though the pressure of the mob trying to read it over his shoulders would upset a weaker man]. What's that? That ain't proper writing. I can't read that.

THE NOTE TAKER.

I can. [Reads, **reproducing** her **pronunciation** exactly] "Cheer ap, Keptin; n' haw ya flahr orf a pore gel."

THE FLOWER GIRL

[much **distressed**] It's because I called him Captain. I meant no harm. [To the GENTLEMAN] Oh, sir, don't let him lay a charge agen me for a word like that. You--

THE GENTLEMAN.

Charge! I make no charge. [To the note taker] Really, sir, if you are a detective, you need not begin protecting me against **molestation** by young women until I ask you. Anybody could see that the girl meant no harm.

THE BYSTANDERS GENERALLY

[demonstrating against police **espionage**] Course they could. What business is it of yours? You mind your own affairs. He wants promotion, he does. Taking down people's words! Girl never said a word to him. What harm if

Thesaurus

distressed: (*adj*) worried, distraught, anxious, sad, disturbed, downcast, hurt, distracted, wretched, shocked, troubled. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) composed, content, euphoric, happy, comforted, glad, joyful, collected, unconcerned, unaffected.

espionage: (*n*) reconnaissance, spy, intelligence, spying, watch, autopsy, speculation.

good-humored: (*adj*) affable, cheerful, good-natured, pleasant, sweet,

funny, amicable, congenial, mild, obliging.

hysterical: (*adj, n*) feverish; (*adj*) wild, violent, eccentric, frenzied, emotional, fitful, febrile, erratic; (*n*) fanatical, hysterics. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) relaxed, composed, restrained.

molestation: (*adj, n*) annoyance; (*n*) disturbance, badgering, baiting, molest, hindrance, affliction, inconvenience, sexual harassment; (*adj*) infestation, outrage.

oath: (*n*) expletive, malediction, imprecation, promise, affidavit, cuss, swearing, pledge, assurance, asseveration; (*v*) swear.

pronunciation: (*n*) accent, articulation, enunciation, elocution, delivery, pronouncing, speech, inflection, homophony, mispronunciation, pronounce.

reassured: (*adj*) hopeful, reinsured, secure, confident.

reproducing: (*adj*) fruitful, fecund.

she did? Nice thing a girl can't shelter from the rain without being **insulted**, etc., etc., etc. [She is **conducted** by the more sympathetic demonstrators back to her plinth, where she resumes her seat and struggles with her emotion].

THE BYSTANDER.

He ain't a tec. He's a **blooming busybody**: that's what he is. I tell you, look at his boots.

THE NOTE TAKER

[turning on him **genially**] And how are all your people down at Selsey?

THE BYSTANDER

[suspiciously] Who told you my people come from Selsey?

THE NOTE TAKER.

Never you mind. They did. [To the girl] How do you come to be up so far east? You were born in Lisson Grove.

THE FLOWER GIRL

[appalled] Oh, what harm is there in my leaving Lisson Grove? It wasn't fit for a pig to live in; and I had to pay four-and-six a week. [In tears] Oh, boo--hoo--oo--

THE NOTE TAKER.

Live where you like; but stop that noise.

THE GENTLEMAN

[to the girl] Come, come! he can't touch you: you have a right to live where you please.

A SARCASTIC BYSTANDER

[thrusting himself between the note taker and the gentleman] Park Lane, for instance. I'd like to go into the Housing Question with you, I would.

THE FLOWER GIRL

[subsiding into a **brooding melancholy** over her **basket**, and talking very **low-spiritedly** to herself] I'm a good girl, I am.

Thesaurus

basket: (*n*) cage, hamper, basketful, creel, Corf, coop, bucket, spinner basket, bassinet, containerful, cradle.
blooming: (*adj*) rosy, thriving, flourishing, healthy, prosperous, ruddy, booming, blossoming, cherry, verdant, green. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) arid, pale.
brooding: (*adj*) pondering, thoughtful, contemplative, hatching, meditative, pensive, wistful; (*v*) brewing, batching; (*n*) chick management,

parturition. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) shallow, cheerful.
busybody: (*n, v*) snoop; (*adj*) pickthank, devotee, enthusiast; (*n*) interloper, scandalmonger, big mouth, blabbermouth, chatterbox, chatterer; (*v*) meddle.
conducted: (*adj*) directed, guided.
genially: (*adv*) cordially, graciously, jovially, warmly, amiably, benignly, brightly, heartily, pleasantly, cheerfully, affably. ANTONYMS:

(*adv*) frostily, nastily, spitefully.
insulted: (*adj*) affronted, offended, injured, huffy.
low-spiritedly: (*adv*) depressedly.
melancholy: (*adj, v*) dreary; (*adj, n*) gloom, melancholic; (*adj*) depressed, dejected, dismal, gloomy, doleful; (*n, v*) low spirits; (*n*) gloominess, depression. ANTONYMS: (*n*) happiness, cheerfulness, hopefulness, optimism; (*adj*) happy, bright, cheery, satisfied.

THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER

[not attending to her] Do you know where I come from?

THE NOTE TAKER

[promptly] Hoxton.

Titterings. Popular interest in the note taker's performance **increases**.

THE SARCASTIC ONE.

[amazed] Well, who said I didn't? Bly me! You know everything, you do.

THE FLOWER GIRL

[still nursing her sense of injury] Ain't no call to **meddle** with me, he ain't.

THE BYSTANDER

[to her] Of course he ain't. Don't you stand it from him. [To the note taker] See here: what call have you to know about people what never offered to meddle with you? Where's your **warrant**?

SEVERAL BYSTANDERS

[encouraged by this **seeming** point of law] Yes: where's your warrant?

THE FLOWER GIRL.

Let him say what he likes. I don't want to have no **truck** with him.

THE BYSTANDER.

You take us for **dirt** under your feet, don't you? Catch you taking **liberties** with a gentleman!

THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER.

Yes: tell HIM where he come from if you want to go fortune-telling.

THE NOTE TAKER.

Cheltenham, Harrow, Cambridge, and India.

THE GENTLEMAN.

Quite right. [Great laughter. Reaction in the note taker's **favor**. Exclamations of He knows all about it. Told him proper. Hear him tell the **toff** where he come from? etc.]. May I ask, sir, do you do this for your living at a music hall?

Thesaurus

dirt: (*n, v*) soil, grime; (*n*) filth, dust, scandal, garbage, ground, earth, crap, mire, contamination. ANTONYMS: (*n*) cleanness, purity, luxury, cleanliness, newness.

favor: (*n, v*) countenance, aid, grace, support, benefit, boon; (*adj, n*) kindness; (*n*) advantage; (*v*) befriend, encourage, patronize. ANTONYMS: (*v*) hinder, contradict, dislike, hurt, differ, thwart, reject, demean; (*n*) derogation, disapproval, unkindness.

increases: (*adj*) increasing; (*n*) augmentation, addition.

liberties: (*n*) freedoms, familiarity, intimacy.

meddle: (*v*) intervene, interfere, intrude, monkey, interpose, fiddle, pry, dabble, interlope; (*n*) interference; (*adj*) moil. ANTONYM: (*v*) disregard.

seeming: (*adj*) ostensible, superficial, illusory, outward, probable, deceptive, specious; (*adj, n*)

appearance, semblance; (*n*) aspect, show. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) actual, deep, inner.

toff: (*n*) fop, man of means, rich man.
truck: (*n, v*) barter, traffic; (*n*) lorry, van, hand truck, car, cart, trade, bogie; (*v*) swap, swop.

warrant: (*n, v*) permit, vouch, license, assure, sanction, empower; (*n*) authority, authorization, security; (*v*) justify, ensure. ANTONYMS: (*n*) break; (*v*) debar.

THE NOTE TAKER.

I've thought of that. Perhaps I shall some day.

The rain has stopped; and the persons on the outside of the crowd begin to drop off.

THE FLOWER GIRL

[resenting the reaction] He's no gentleman, he ain't, to interfere with a poor girl.

THE DAUGHTER

[out of patience, pushing her way **rudely** to the front and displacing the gentleman, who politely retires to the other side of the **pillar**] What on earth is Freddy doing? I shall get **pneumonia** if I stay in this **draught** any longer.

THE NOTE TAKER

[to himself, hastily making a note of her pronunciation of "monia"] Earlscourt.

THE DAUGHTER

[violently] Will you please keep your **impertinent** remarks to yourself?

THE NOTE TAKER.

Did I say that out loud? I didn't mean to. I beg your pardon. Your mother's Epsom, unmistakably.

THE MOTHER

[advancing between her daughter and the note **taker**] How very curious! I was brought up in Largetady Park, near Epsom.

THE NOTE TAKER

[uproariously **amused**] Ha! ha! What a devil of a name! Excuse me. [To the daughter] You want a cab, do you?

THE DAUGHTER.

Don't dare speak to me.

THE MOTHER.

Oh, please, please Clara. [Her daughter repudiates her with an angry shrug

Thesaurus

amused: (*adj*) amusing, smiling, tickled pink, pleased, diverted.

draught: (*n, v*) draft, sketch, design, potation, plan; (*n*) dose, air current, wind, gulp, outline; (*v*) blueprint.

impertinent: (*adj*) fresh, pert, saucy, forward, audacious, brash, brazen, extraneous, discourteous, disrespectful, flippant. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) respectful, polite, courteous.

pillar: (*n*) brace, mainstay, post, obelisk, foundation, pier, monument,

stanchion, backbone, buttress; (*adj, n*) tower.

pneumonia: (*adj*) pertussis, necrosis, pyrosis, rubeola, ringworm, rachitis, quinsy, pyaemia, psora; (*n*) pneumonitis, pneumony.

rudely: (*adv*) crudely, coarsely, uncivilly, indelicately, impolitely, roughly, harshly, vulgarly, brutally, meanly, wildly. ANTONYMS: (*adv*) respectfully, graciously, decently, civilly, properly, attentively,

agreeably, tactfully, thoughtfully, acceptably, gently.

taker: (*n*) wagerer, user, customer, beggar, client, captor, stealer, respector, punter, parasite, better.

and retires haughtily.] We should be so grateful to you, sir, if you found us a cab. [The note taker produces a **whistle**]. Oh, thank you. [She joins her daughter]. The note taker blows a **piercing** blast.

THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER.

There! I knewed he was a plain-clothes **copper**.

THE BYSTANDER.

That ain't a police whistle: that's a **sporting** whistle.

THE FLOWER GIRL

[still preoccupied with her **wounded** feelings] He's no right to take away my character. My character is the same to me as any lady's.

THE NOTE TAKER.

I don't know whether you've noticed it; but the rain stopped about two minutes ago.

THE BYSTANDER.

So it has. Why didn't you say so before? and us **losing** our time listening to your **silliness**. [He walks off towards the Strand].

THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER.

I can tell where you come from. You come from Anwell. Go back there.

THE NOTE TAKER

[helpfully] *Hanwell*.

THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER

[affecting great distinction of speech] Thank you, teacher. Haw haw! So long [he touches his hat with **mock** respect and strolls off].

THE FLOWER GIRL.

Frightening people like that! How would he like it himself.

THE MOTHER.

It's quite fine now, Clara. We can walk to a motor bus. Come. [She gathers her skirts above her ankles and hurries off towards the Strand].

Thesaurus

copper: (*n*) brass, bull, cop, Cu, constable, gold, fuzz, pig, cent, bobby, coin.

losing: (*v*) lose; (*n*) loss; (*adv*) losingly, behind; (*adj*) unbeneficial.
ANTONYM: (*adj*) lucrative.

mock: (*adj, v*) counterfeit; (*n, v*) ridicule, jeer, gibe, laugh at, flout; (*adj, n, v*) burlesque, sham; (*v*) mimic, ape, taunt. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) real, natural; (*v*) praise, applaud, respect, approve.

piercing: (*adj, n*) sharp, cutting; (*adj, v*) keen, penetrating, biting, bitter, harsh, shrill; (*adj*) high, raw, loud.
ANTONYMS: (*adj*) quiet, dull, soft, hot.

silliness: (*n*) absurdity, foolishness, folly, nonsense, giddiness, fatuousness, fatuity, lunacy, idiocy, inanity, stupidity. ANTONYMS: (*n*) logic, maturity, wisdom, responsibility, sensibleness.

sporting: (*adj*) fair, sportsmanlike,

clean, gambling, betting, dissipated, athletic, adventurous, sporty; (*v*) tauromachy; (*n*) diversion.
ANTONYM: (*adj*) unsporting.

whistle: (*v*) sing, twitter, hiss, warble, tweet, cheep, chirp, wheeze; (*n, v*) cry; (*n*) whistling, tin whistle.

wounded: (*adj, v*) hurt; (*n*) casualty, maimed; (*adj*) bruised, injured, bloody, aggrieved, saddened; (*v*) stricken, wound, struck. ANTONYM: (*adj*) unaffected.

THE DAUGHTER.

But the cab--[her mother is out of hearing]. Oh, how tiresome! [She follows angrily].

[All the rest have gone except the NOTE TAKER, the GENTLEMAN, and the FLOWER GIRL, who **sits arranging** her basket, and still **pitying** herself in murmurs.]

THE FLOWER GIRL.

Poor girl! Hard enough for her to live without being worried and chivied.

THE GENTLEMAN

[returning to his former place on the note taker's left] How do you do it, if I may ask?

THE NOTE TAKER.

Simply phonetics. The science of speech. That's my profession; also my **hobby**. Happy is the man who can make a living by his hobby! You can spot an Irishman or a Yorkshireman by his **brogue**. I can place any man within six miles. I can place him within two miles in London. Sometimes within two streets.

THE FLOWER GIRL.

Ought to be **ashamed** of himself, **unmanly coward**!

THE GENTLEMAN.

But is there a living in that?

THE NOTE TAKER.

Oh yes. Quite a fat one. This is an age of upstarts. Men begin in Kentish Town with 80 pounds a year, and end in Park Lane with a hundred thousand. They want to drop Kentish Town; but they give themselves away every time they open their mouths. Now I can teach them--

THE FLOWER GIRL.

Let him mind his own business and leave a poor girl--

Thesaurus

arranging: (*n*) arrange, arrangements, disposition, composing, composition, order, position, set, orchestration, organization, agreement.

ashamed: (*adj*) hangdog, guilty, embarrassed, sheepish, remorseful, regretful, bashful, disconcerted, contrite, chagrined; (*v*) dashed.
ANTONYMS: (*adj*) proud, arrogant, unremorseful, unashamed, pleased, blatant, bold, happy, unabashed, unrepentant.

brogue: (*n*) dialect, shoe, patois, idiom, accent, burr, galligaskin, buskin, clodhopper, larrigan, work shoe.

coward: (*n*) cur, pantywaist, sneak, dastard, milksop, weakling, milquetoast; (*adj*) gutless, chickenhearted, pusillanimous, chicken-hearted. ANTONYMS: (*n*) daredevil, stalwart; (*adj*) brave.

hobby: (*n*) amusement, cockhorse, pursuit, avocation, interest, pastime, entertainment, indulgence, fancy,

hobbyhorse, sideline. ANTONYMS: (*n*) work, job.

pitying: (*adj*) sympathetic, merciful, pity, pityingly, gloomy, meritless, pitiful, sorry, sorry for, humane, dreary.

sits: (*n*) sat.

unmanly: (*adj*) pusillanimous, fearful, unmanlike, unchivalric, unknighly, unmanful, craven, weak; (*adv*) unmanfully, cowardly, effeminately. ANTONYM: (*adv*) manfully.

THE NOTE TAKER

[explosively] Woman: cease this **detestable** boohooing instantly; or else seek the shelter of some other place of worship.

THE FLOWER GIRL

[with feeble defiance] I've a right to be here if I like, same as you.

THE NOTE TAKER.

A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere--no right to live. Remember that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech: that your native language is the language of Shakespear and Milton and The Bible; and don't sit there crooning like a **bilious pigeon**.

THE FLOWER GIRL

[quite overwhelmed, and looking up at him in **mingled** wonder and **deprecation** without daring to raise her head] Ah--ah--ah--ow--ow--oo!

THE NOTE TAKER

[whipping out his book] Heavens! what a sound! [He writes; then holds out the book and reads, reproducing her vowels exactly] Ah--ah--ah--ow--ow--ow--oo!

THE FLOWER GIRL

[tickled by the performance, and laughing in **spite** of herself] Garn!

THE NOTE TAKER.

You see this creature with her **kerbstone** English: the English that will keep her in the **gutter** to the end of her days. Well, sir, in three months I could pass that girl off as a duchess at an ambassador's garden party. I could even get her a place as lady's maid or shop assistant, which requires better English. That's the sort of thing I do for commercial millionaires. And on the profits of it I do genuine scientific work in phonetics, and a little as a poet on Miltonic lines.

THE GENTLEMAN.

I am myself a student of Indian dialects; and--

Thesaurus

bilious: (*adj*) atrabilious, liverish, dyspeptic, queasy, irascible, saturnine, touchy, testy, splenic, peppery; (*v*) jaundiced.
deprecation: (*n*) defamation, condemnation, disparagement, denigration, calumny, aspersion, censure, disfavour, denunciation, blame, criticism. ANTONYMS: (*n*) approval, commendation.
detestable: (*adj*) hateful, abhorrent, damnable, odious, offensive,

despicable, execrable, horrible, infamous; (*adj, v*) cursed; (*adj, adv*) atrocious. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) admirable, adorable, sweet, loveable, lovable, likable, delightful, cherished, honorable, desirable, nice.
gutter: (*n*) groove, trough, ditch, drain, chute, trench, canal, furrow, conduit, waterway, gully.
kerbstone: (*n*) curbstone, kerb, curb.
mingled: (*adj*) miscellaneous, complex, indiscriminate, heterogeneous,

medley, confused, eclectic, motley, different; (*v*) blended, blent.
pigeon: (*n*) dove, gull, gudgeon, cully, ringdove, victim, cushat, gobemouche, cull; (*v*) bilk, mulct.
spite: (*n*) malice, grudge, hatred, malevolence, rancour, venom, rancor, maliciousness, ill will, animosity; (*n, v*) pique. ANTONYMS: (*v*) please; (*n*) benevolence, goodwill, love, affection, harmony.

THE NOTE TAKER

[eagerly] Are you? Do you know Colonel Pickering, the **author** of Spoken Sanscrit?

THE GENTLEMAN.

I am Colonel Pickering. Who are you?

THE NOTE TAKER.

Henry Higgins, author of Higgins's Universal Alphabet.

PICKERING

[with enthusiasm] I came from India to meet you.

HIGGINS.

I was going to India to meet you.

PICKERING.

Where do you live?

HIGGINS.

27A Wimpole Street. Come and see me tomorrow.

PICKERING.

I'm at the Carlton. Come with me now and let's have a jaw over some **supper**.

HIGGINS.

Right you are.

THE FLOWER GIRL

[to PICKERING, as he passes her] Buy a flower, kind **gentleman**. I'm short for my **lodging**.

PICKERING.

I really haven't any change. I'm sorry [he goes away].

HIGGINS

[shocked at girl's **mendacity**] Liar. You said you could change half-a-crown.

THE FLOWER GIRL

[rising in **desperation**] You ought to be **stuffed** with nails, you ought. [**Flinging** the basket at his feet] Take the whole blooming basket for **sixpence**.

Thesaurus

author: (*n*) writer, producer, founder, creator, inventor, parent, originator, architect, maker; (*v*) compose, create. ANTONYM: (*n*) reader.

desperation: (*adj*, *n*) despair, fury, rage; (*n*) recklessness, foolhardiness, desperateness, burst, confusion, trouble, misery; (*adj*) raving. ANTONYMS: (*n*) optimism, confidence, hopefulness, hope, happiness, caution, prudence, calmness.

flinging: (*n*) casting, cast.

gentleman: (*n*) gent, Mr, male, patrician, sir, adult male, esquire, sahib, gentlemen; (*adj*) gentlemanly, gentlemanly.

lodging: (*n*) abode, apartment, accommodation, housing, hostel, residence, quarter, home, lodgement, address, hospice.

mendacity: (*n*) falsehood, falsity, deception, lie, deceit, falseness, fabrication, untruth, untruthfulness;

(*v*) perjury; (*adj*) untrue. ANTONYM: (*n*) veracity.

sixpence: (*n*) bender, coin, teston, testern.

stuffed: (*adj*) crammed, packed, congested, replete, loaded, filled, fraught, chock-full, crowded, jammed, gorged. ANTONYMS: (*adj*) hungry, lacking.

supper: (*n*) meal, tea, lunch, repast, reception, mealtime, siesta, social affair; (*v*) dejeuner, beber, whet.

[The church clock strikes the second quarter.]

HIGGINS

[hearing in it the voice of God, rebuking him for his Pharisaic want of charity to the poor girl] A reminder. [He raises his hat **solemnly**; then throws a handful of money into the basket and follows PICKERING].

THE FLOWER GIRL

[picking up a half-crown] Ah--ow--ooh! [Picking up a couple of florins] Aaah--ow--ooh! [Picking up several coins] Aaaaaah--ow--ooh! [Picking up a half-sovereign] Aasaaaaaaaaah-- ow--ooh!!!

FREDDY

[springing out of a **taxicab**] Got one at last. **Hallo!** [To the girl] Where are the two ladies that were here?

THE FLOWER GIRL.

They **walked** to the bus when the rain stopped.

FREDDY.

And left me with a cab on my hands. **Damnation!**

THE FLOWER GIRL

[with **grandeur**] Never you mind, young man. I'm going home in a taxi. [She sails off to the cab. The driver puts his hand behind him and holds the door firmly shut against her. Quite understanding his **mistrust**, she shows him her handful of money]. Eightpence ain't no object to me, Charlie. [He **grins** and opens the door]. Angel Court, Drury Lane, round the corner of Micklejohn's oil shop. Let's see how fast you can make her hop it. [She gets in and pulls the door to with a **slam** as the taxicab starts].

FREDDY.

Well, I'm **dashed!**

Thesaurus

damnation: (*n*) damn, condemnation, anathema, state, curse, execration, judgment, oath, imprecation, denunciation, denouncement.

dashed: (*v*) ashamed, cut up, sunk; (*adj*) broken, done for, dejected, discouraged, dotted.

grandeur: (*n*) dignity, splendor, magnitude, brilliance, glory, pomp, elegance, majesty, magnificence, grandness; (*adj, n*) solemnity. ANTONYMS: (*n*) modesty,

simplicity.

grins: (*n*) merriment, amusement, entertainment, fun, gaiety, levity, diversion, mirth, recreation, sport.

hallo: (*n*) hi, hullo.

mistrust: (*adj, n, v*) distrust; (*n, v*) doubt, query; (*n*) suspicion, misgiving, disbelief, apprehension, wariness; (*v*) suspect, disbelieve, discredit. ANTONYM: (*v*) believe.

slam: (*n, v*) knock, slap, smash, hit, bat; (*n*) sweep, crash, clap, shot, gibe;

(*v*) shut. ANTONYMS: (*v*) open, commend.

solemnly: (*adv*) earnestly, gravely, majestically, stately, sternly, staidly, thoughtfully, soberly, formally, ceremoniously, importantly. ANTONYMS: (*adv*) cheerfully, flippantly.

taxicab: (*n*) hack, cab, yellow cab, jade, car, political hack, plug, nag, motorcycle, hack writer, drudge. **walked:** (*adj*) exempt; (*v*) yode.