

"Can you tell me, Bob," he said, "who and what is this divine creature?"

"Not I," replied his friend, "but here comes one who can, for I verily believe that he knows every actress in England;" and at this instant the box door opening, let in no less a personage than the Hon. Matthew Larkins. This gentleman was what may be called the essence of dandyism. His cravat was faultless; his Wellington boots polished to a miracle, and his coat so well fitted to his stays, and his stays so well fitted to his waist, that he could almost contrive to breathe. In figure he was tall but stiff; with an affected lisp in his voice, a drawling softness in his manner, and a mouth forever on the gape, in order to display a fine set of teeth. As he belonged to the same college with Edward, and had besides been lately introduced to him, no further ceremony took place between them, so that the latter addressed him unreservedly on the subject of his present dilemma.

"Do you know, Larkins, the name of our to-night's Ophelia? I merely ask for information."

"Information," replied Handiman, knowingly, "Oh Lord! Ned, how droll you are,—why, you've been worrying me to death this half-hour about the girl, and now you say it is only for information."

"Information!" exclaimed the Honorable Matthew Larkins, "very good—'pon honor: fact is, you're in love."

"I believe," replied Edward laughingly, "you were never troubled with that complaint?"

"Oh lord! Ned, what a quiz you are! just what you were at school, not a bit altered."

"Love, love," replied Larkins, heedless of his interruption. Very good—'pon honor: Hah! hah!" and he adjusted his cravat with a smile of the most amiable satisfaction.

By this time the tragedy was nearly at an end; the King had been already murdered, ditto the Queen; so that nothing further was wanting to complete the happiness of all parties, but the appearance in Act 5 of young Fortinbras, who being exceedingly drunk behind the scenes, was loth to resign his rum punch for even the proffered crown of Denmark. A substitute was accordingly provided, in the person of an ingenious candle-snuffer, which gentleman being a degree soberer than his rival, was next day announced in the bills as his successor (at an advance of eighteen shillings per week) during the rest of the stay the company made at Barnwell.

Meantime Daubigny, whose fancy heightened of course by champagne, had raised the "fair Ophelia" into something transcendantly beautiful