

"We'll cook their goose for 'em. There they sit in their pride, the robbers of the poor. Wait till my lady comes on—we'll fix her."

Fritz's muscles grew tense. Instinctively, with knightly courage he ranged himself on the side of his lady. If this miscreant attempted any mischief he would do his best to circumvent him.

The curtain went up, revealing the set for the first scene, and to the familiar accompanying music the opera began.

But when the prima donna, Mdle. Saffron, made her appearance, and the house broke into tumultuous applause, it seemed to be the signal for an altogether different kind of demonstration. From several points in the gallery came the most determined and prolonged hisses, mingled with groans and cat-calls.

Among the hissers none were more bitter or exasperating than Dave Helbrod and his companion.

Fritz's blood was up, and his great muscle tingled. Turning to Helbrod, he said, "Here this isn't fair play. Stop it or I'll put you out."

"You will? I should think not." And lifting his face with a look of malice, he emitted a prolonged "yah" of defiance, the result of which was that he received a smart "backhander" in the mouth, and a fight immediately began.

A lightning glance at the stage showed Mdle.