

**FOUL PLAY. IN
THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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Foul play. In three volumes, Vol. I by Charles Reade & Dion Boucicault

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CHARLES READE & DION BOUCICAULT

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FOUL PLAY.

BY

CHARLES READE

AND

DION BOUCICAULT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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1868.

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NOTICE TO MANAGERS.

A DRAMA entitled "FOUL PLAY" has been written by the Authors of the Story, and produced at the Theatre Royal, Leeds. So that no other person can legally dramatise the Story.



F O U L P L A Y .

CHAPTER I.

THERE are places which appear at first sight inaccessible to romance: and such a place was Mr. Wardlaw's dining room in Russell Square. It was very large, had sickly green walls, picked out with aldermen, full length; heavy maroon curtains; mahogany chairs; a turkey carpet an inch thick: and was lighted with wax candles only.

In the centre, bristling and gleaming with silver and glass, was a round table, at which fourteen could have dined comfortably; and at opposite sides of this table sat two gentlemen, who looked as neat, grave, precise, and unromantic, as the place: Merchant Wardlaw, and his son.

Wardlaw senior was an elderly man, tall, thin, iron-grey, with a round head, a short thick neck, a

good brown eye, a square jowl that betokened resolution, and a complexion so sallow as to be almost cadaverous. Hard as iron : but a certain stiff dignity and respectability sat upon him, and became him.

Arthur Wardlaw resembled his father in figure, but his mother in face. He had, and has, hay-coloured hair, a forehead singularly white and delicate, pale blue eyes, largish ears, finely chiselled features, the under lip much shorter than the upper ; his chin oval and pretty, but somewhat receding ; his complexion beautiful. In short, what nineteen people out of twenty would call a handsome young man, and think they had described him.

Both the Wardlaws were in full dress, according to the invariable custom of the house ; and sat in a dead silence, that seemed natural to the great, sober room.

This, however, was not for want of a topic ; on the contrary, they had a matter of great importance to discuss, and in fact this was why they dined *tête-à-tête* : but their tongues were tied for the present ; in the first place, there stood in the middle of the table an cpergne, the size of a Putney laurel tree ; neither Wardlaw could well see the other, without craning out his neck like a rifleman

from behind his tree: and then there were three live suppressors of confidential intercourse, two gorgeous footmen, and a sombre, sublime, and, in one word, episcopal, butler; all three went about as softly as cats after a robin, and conjured one plate away, and smoothly insinuated another, and seemed models of grave discretion; but were known to be all ears, and bound by a secret oath to carry down each crumb of dialogue to the servants' hall, for curious dissection, and boisterous ridicule.

At last, however, those three smug hypocrites retired, and, by good luck, transferred their suffocating epergne to the sideboard; so then father and son looked at one another with that conscious air which naturally precedes a topic of interest; and Wardlaw senior invited his son to try a certain decanter of rare old port, by way of preliminary.

While the young man fills his glass, hurl we in his antecedents.

At school till fifteen, and then clerk in his father's office till twenty-two, and showed an aptitude so remarkable, that John Wardlaw, who was getting tired, determined, sooner or later, to put the reins of government into his hands. But he conceived a desire that the future head of his office should be