

**THE QUOD
WRANGLE. A
FARCE IN ONE ACT**

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The Quod Wrangle. A Farce in One Act by Oliphant Down

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THE QUOD WRANGLE

Produced at the Apollo Theatre on Monday evening,
March 2, 1914.

BILL JENKS	<i>Mr. E. W. Tarter.</i>
SNIPPY	<i>Mr. Franc Stoney.</i>
A DUTCHER	<i>Mr. Hugh Gibson.</i>
A POLICEMAN	<i>Mr. Leslie Rea.</i>
MISS ORMEROD	<i>Miss Gladys Maude.</i>
BOY	<i>Master Stanley Burton.</i>

PRODUCED BY MR. CHARLES HAWTREY.



THE QUOD WRANGLE

SCENE.—*A room in a poor class tenement. There is a door centre back with corridor backing, and a fireplace in the right side wall. The room is very bare of furniture, containing only a decrepit chair, a heap of bedding against the left wall, and a packing-case against the back wall a little to the right of the door. On the packing-case stand a teapot and a cup and saucer. The walls are pasted here and there with pictures from police journals and other lurid publications.*

BILL JENKS, a dirty, unshaven man, is discovered asleep in the chair by the empty fireplace. He is an invertebrate specimen, a wasier of the incorrigible, non-working class. He snores placidly. Presently the door is pushed cautiously ajar and a BOY'S head appears. Seeing that his father is apparently asleep, the BOY opens the door as softly as possible and creeps down centre, watching BILL to make sure it is not bluff. He carries a bundle of evening papers and a contents bill. Satisfied that the sleep is genuine, he tiptoes to the bedding, and, laying his papers down, commences to count his coppers. An incautious chink wakes BILL JENKS. He looks round and sees what is going on. Rising, he tiptoes across the room and seizes the youngster by his shoulder. The urchin starts to his feet.

BOY (*struggling*). Let go; d'yer 'ear, let go!

BILL. Yer didn't think yer farver was at 'ome, did yer? Come in to 'ide yer money, didn' yer?

BOY (*stoutly*). Yus!

BILL. I'll learn yer to 'ide yer money from yer farver. Come on, 'and it over.

BOY. Shan't!

BILL. Oh, yus you will! (*He wrests the coppers from the boy, who, released, goes L.*)

BOY. Why don't yer git out and do some work?

BILL (*advancing a step*). Work! (*BOY recoils against wall L.*) Work this bloomin' cold weather! (*BILL turns R.*) Not me! I'm fair froze as it is. (*Turning back.*) 'Ave yer got any more money on yer?

BOY. No!

BILL (*advancing*). Don't you tell no lies to yer farver what's brought you hup! Come 'ere and let me see.

(*BOY dodges him round the room and makes for the door, where he collides with SNIPPY, a clean-shaven, close-cropped man of about thirty. He is fairly tidily dressed, though the suit he is wearing is too large for him.*)

SNIPPY. 'Old 'ard! 'Old 'ard!

BOY. Garn! (*He ducks under SNIPPY's arm and vanishes.*)

SNIPPY (*advancing L.C.*). 'Ello, Bill, what wer the gime?

BILL (*sitting on chair*). Gime! Yer don't call things a gime, do yer? Me strugglin' to keep a roof over the kids' 'eads, and that young devil goes and 'ides arf 'is money!

SNIPPY. Yus, you look as if you was strugglin'.

BILL. 'Oo yer gettin' at? Yer might close the bloomin' door. I'm fair froze.

(*BILL shuts the door.*)

SNIPPY (*crossing to fireplace*). Well, 'ow's things? Ain't seen you for a tidy time.

BILL (*coming down*). I'm fair sick of everythink.

(BILL *prepares to sit*. SNIPPY *occupies chair instead*.)

SNIPPY. I thought you was one of them 'appy vagrants what always enjoyed hisself.

BILL (*shivering*). It's this bloomin' cold weather what fetches me. 'Ow can a feller lie out in the Park and 'ave a sleep all day this weather? Winter's a curse to the working man, that's what it is!

SNIPPY. 'Ave a do to keep warm, eh? Why don't yer get a job?

BILL (*crossing to mattress and dragging it centre as he speaks*). What, me work? Yer don't catch me earnin' no money fer other blokes! I 'old with them Socialists in the Park, "Why should the workin' man 'ave to work?" they says. "'Aven't hevery man got a right to live?" they says. "The State ought to keep yer, else what do yer pay taxes for?" they says.

SNIPPY. Garn, you never paid no taxes.

BILL (*standing c. and talking to SNIPPY'S back*). I should 'ave to if I worked, shouldn't I! That's why I don't do no work. You don't git me payin' four 'undred a year to no bloomin' nobs fer sittin' in Parliament to tax us bloomin' blokes. Down with the State wot does nothing fer you, I says! (*He has picked up a corner of the mattress and drags it to fireplace*.)

SNIPPY. The State's all right, Bill . . . 'Ow d'yer think I'm lookin'?

BILL (*sitting on mattress, with his back to lower side of fireplace*). Looks as if you'd been dossin' it a fair treat somewhere.

SNIPPY. I 'ave. Where d'yer think I've been?

BILL. I dunno.

SNIPPY. I've been in quod.

BILL. Quod! Been in trouble, 'ave yer? Thought I 'adn't seen yer lately. What 'ad yer done?

SNIPPY. Stole a pair of boots and a nat.

BILL. And they copped yer?

SNIPPY. Yus. (*Smiling*.) I took good care of that.

BILL (*getting on to his knees, aghast*). What?

SNIPPY. Mikes yer jump, don't it? Remember 'ow cold it wer five weeks back? I'd 'ad enough of shivering on an empty stunnick. So I stole them boots and a nat, and got a month nice and warm in quod: Food reg'lar every day. Mikes yer mouth water, don't it?

BILL (*rising*). Gor blimey, in quod!

SNIPPY (*rising and showing himself*). See these togs? Misson'ry give me these when I come out. Bit of all right, eh? (*Moving L.C.*) I'm goin' to get a shilling or two on 'em. And when I've blued it, I'm goin' back in again.

BILL. Goin' in again?

SNIPPY (*standing L.C.*) Yus, steal somethink else and stop in quod till the cold weather's done.

BILL. Do they give yer good food?

SNIPPY. Well, 'tain't what we're used to at the *Carlton*, but it's a bloomin' sight better than a crust on the Embankment. Every man's got a right to live, you says. The State ought to keep 'im, you says. Well, there you are, I says. (*Strolls up L.*)

BILL (*meditatively*). Warm; and food reg'lar.

SNIPPY (*turning up L.*). Course, they'll cut yer 'air. They're fair beggars with a pair of scissors.

BILL (*coming c.*). 'Ow ought yer to start?

SNIPPY. It's as easy as kiss yer hand!

BILL. I shouldn't never 'ave the pluck!

SNIPPY (*coming c.*). Are yer thinkin' of it serious?

BILL. It's bloomin' cold 'ere.

SNIPPY. I tell yer what. Nip down to the butcher's what's at the corner. Lay yer 'ands on a bit of meat and then run like 'ell.

BILL. Run like—— But they mightn't cop me.

SNIPPY. Well, then you've got yer bit of meat.