

# The Devil's Auction

By Barry Pain

Now, gentlemen, your offers. This maiden sings and dances,  
She's beautiful, and innocent, and lively as the day.  
You bid a fortune? Thank you, sir. I'm waiting for advances;  
And you a life's devotion? Here, take that boy away.  
A title? Come, that's better. Now it's going, going, going—  
She is but seventeen, sirs, and lovely as you see—  
Gone! Madam, you're the property, you will be pleased at knowing,  
Of a genial old roué of the age of sixty-three.

Now here's a nice cold chicken and a bottle from the ice, sirs—  
Ah, you dramatic critics, aren't you hungry? Won't you bid?  
Won't some one offer me his soul—a very moderate price, sirs?  
You sold *your* soul last week, sir? Yes—dear me—of course you did!  
Here's a ticket for a prize-fight. The magistrate's the winner,  
After some sharp contention—the bidding's getting bold.  
Here's a poet. What, no offers? Won't some one bid a dinner?  
Take the brute away and drown him; he never will be sold.

And lastly I would offer here an over-dose of chloral.  
That boy again? Bide twopence? Why don't you turn him out?  
I may mention that the notion that suicide's immoral  
Is an antiquated fallacy—it's utterly played out.  
We cannot think of twopence; now, I'm waiting for advances—  
There's not a death more painless, and I'll guarantee it true—  
Oh! Here's a better offer from the maid who sings and dances.  
Thank you, maiden—I'd a fancy I should sell this lot to you.