

Original Plays by W. S. Gilbert: fourth series: containing The Fairy's Dilemma, The Grand Duke, His Excellency, 'Haste to the Wedding,' Fallen Fairies, The Gentleman in Black, Brantingham Hall, Creatures of Impulse, Randall's Thumb, The Fortune-Hunter, Thespis
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The Fortune-Hunter.

AN ORIGINAL PLAY IN THREE ACTS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE DUKE OF DUNDEE, AN OCTOGENARIAN PEER.
SIR CUTHBERT JAMESON, A MIDDLE-AGED BARONET.
MARQUIS DE BRÉVILLE.
VICOMTE ARMAND DE BREVILLE, HIS SON.
M. LACHAUD, A FRENCH AVOCAT.
MR. DUDLEY COXE-COXE, ON HIS TRAVELS.
MR. BARKER, THE DUKE'S COURIER.
MR. TAYLOR, THE DUKE'S VALET.
M. PAILLÀRD, A FRENCH MONEY-LENDER.
MR. MACQUARRIE, PURSER OF P. AND O. SS. 'AFRICA.'
POLLARD, A DETECTIVE.
CAPTAIN MUNRO, OF THE STEAM YACHT 'FLYING EAGLE.'
MR. MCFIE, THE DUCHESS OF DUNDEE'S SECRETARY.
QUARTERMASTER, P. AND O. SS AFRICA.
SERVANTS.
THE DUCHESS OF DUNDEE, NÉE EUPHEMIA S. VAN ZYL, OF CHICAGO.
THE MARQUISE DE BREVILLE, ARMAND'S MOTHER.
DIANA CAVEREL, AN AUSTRALIAN HEIRESS.
MRS. DUDLEY COXE-COXE, ON HER TRAVELS.
MISS SOMERTON, PASSENGER, P. AND O. SS. 'AFRICA.'
MISS BAILEY, THE DUCHESS'S MAID.
PASSENGERS, SAILORS, LASCARS, &C.

ACT I.

PORT SAID.

Quarter-deck of P. and O. SS. 'Africa.'
Twelve months elapse between Acts I. and II.

ACT II.

PARIS.

(Vicomte de Bréville's Residence in the Champs Elysées).
Eight months elapse between Acts II and III.

ACT III.

MONTE CARLO.

Library in the Duchess's Villa.

ACT I. – Woo'd.

SCENE. — Quarter-deck of P. and O. ship 'Africa' (starboard side), looking aft. Deck cabins L. Bulwarks R. Saloon skylight up L. Awning overhead. The ship is at anchor at Port Said. Chairs ranged on deck. Afternoon.

MR. and MRS. DUDLEY COXE-COXE, MISS SOMERTON *and other passengers discovered grouped in a semi-circle round* SIR CUTHBERT JAMESON *and the* VICOMTE DE BRÉVILLE, *who are entertaining the group with a fencing bout. After a few passes, SIR CUTHBERT hits DE BRÉVILLE over the heart. Applause from passengers.*

DE B. Good! Again you have pinked me! And precisely on the same spot! Once more.

[They resume. After a few passes, Sir Cuthbert hits De Bréville as before.]

DE B. Five times in succession! I give in. It is impossible to stand up to you. It is absolutely incomprehensible to me. I am not unskilled in fence, yet every time you hit me on exactly the same spot!

SIR C. It's very simple—a mere trick. See!

[They cross foils again, and with the same result. Applause from spectators.]

DE B. A trick? Yes! But when you hold all the trumps, tricks are easy to make.

SIR C. Let's try again. 'Spot barred,' if you like.

DE B. No, no! Enough for the moment. We Frenchmen rather pride ourselves on our skill with the foils, but I must take off my mask to *you*, my dear Cuthbert, I must indeed. *(To spectators.)* Ladies and gentlemen, you see a vanquished Frenchman!

[They both remove their masks. De Bréville hands his mask and foil to Sir Cuthbert, takes off his fencing jacket, and puts on his coat.]

SIR C. *(taking the mask and foil)*. I learnt the trick of Jules Javot, *maître d'armes* to the 10th Cuirassiers, thirty years ago. Poor fellow, he was knocked over in one of the battles round Metz and his skull cracked with a drum-major's staff. No one is skilled with all weapons.

DE B. Ah! I was sure France had something to do with it. *(To spectators.)* Ladies and gentlemen, when you think lightly of the Vicomte de Bréville, remember Drum-major Jules Javot. But, Cuthbert, you must teach me the trick, some day. Eh? Will you not?

SIR C. With pleasure, when we meet in England. The trick's easy enough when you've got the hang of it. *(Bell.)* Ah! The dressing bell. You leave us to-night, but I shall see you before you go.

[Exit down companion, followed by all the passengers except MR. and MRS. DUDLEY COXE-COXE and MISS SOMERTON.]

MISS SOM. Never mind, M. de Bréville. If Sir Cuthbert has the best of you with the foils, you beat him out and out with the rifle.

DE B. Yes, I believe I have a little the best of him with the rifle.

MRS. COXE. Is it true that you once saved his life when he was tiger shooting in India?

DE B. Ah! Pardon. It was the other way—he saved mine. A magnificent tiger held me under his claws when Sir Cuthbert dropped a bullet into his ear just as he was about to begin on my right arm. It was my very narrowest escape!

MRS. COXE. You must be a very brave man, M. de Bréville, to care so little for tigers.

DE B. Ah, but you mistake, Mrs. Coxe-Coxe. I care a great deal for tigers! Do you think that when I am face to face with a man-eater I am not frightened? My dear lady, I have killed twenty-three tigers, and each tiger has terrified me beyond expression.

MISS SOM. But when one is terrified one runs away.

DE B. Not from a tiger, for to run away from a tiger is death. Frankly, I have not the courage to run away from a tiger. I prefer to stay and put a ball into him—not because I am brave, but because I am afraid to run away.

MR. COXE. How did you come to take to tiger-shooting? It's not the sort of fun that most Frenchmen care about.

DE B. Most Frenchmen? No—nor most Englishmen, my good Mr. Coxe-Coxe. It is an acquired taste, and one must have the chance to acquire it. But, given that chance, in the desire not to be killed, your Frenchman and your Englishman are of one mind. So your Frenchman and your Englishman are equally disinclined to run away, when running away means certain death. By the way, have the Duke and Duchess of Dundee come on board yet?

MRS. COXE. No, but their luggage has. They are coming off in the harbour-master's launch. Did you happen to meet the Duchess when you were in the States? They say that she rose from nothing at all.

DE B. Yes — when I was Attaché at Washington, I had the honour of meeting her Grace many times. But she was not her grace then — she was Miss Euphemia S. Van Zyl, the charming millionaire orphan of absolutely self-made parents. Her father, who was an aristocrat in pork, died, having made a vast fortune, every penny of which—ten millions of dollars—he bequeathed to her.

LITTLE GIRL. Ten millions of dollars! If I had ten millions of dollars, I wonder what I would buy with it?

DE B. My dear child, if you were a grown-up young American lady, you would buy with it exactly what Miss Van Zyl bought with it — you would buy an old, old English Duke.

LITTLE GIRL. (*puzzled*). A doll-Duke?

DE B. Well, yes — a doll-Duke. And you would nurse your poor old doll-Duke as she nurses him — you would be kind to him, and you would be very careful not to break him — and when your poor old doll-Duke fell to pieces you would renounce dolls forever, for by that time you would be a very great lady, and very great ladies do not nurse dolls if they can help it.

MISS SOM. And you are really leaving us to-day?

DE B. Yes, alas! My luggage is already on board the 'Cleopatra,' and I sail for Athens in an hour!

MRS. COXE. We shall miss you terribly, M. de Bréville!

DE B. Ah, Mrs. Coxe-Coxe, you are so good! To me it will be like going from one planet to another, and this has been such a delightful planet. After you, Miss Somerton.

[MISS SOMERTON *and* DE BRÉVILLE *go down companion. MR. and MRS. DUDLEY COXE-COXE remain on deck.*

MR. COXE. Do you know, Godiva, I'm quite glad that we are going to travel with a live Duke and Duchess.

MRS. COXE. My dear Dudley, what an extraordinary speech! What in the world are the Duke and Duchess to us?

MR. COXE. Absolutely nothing — except for the amusement they will indirectly afford us.

MRS. COXE. Oh, from *that* point of view I admit they have their value.

MR. COXE. My dear Godiva, these enormous swells exist in an atmosphere of perpetual comedy. *They* don't see it, poor devils! they think it's all right enough — but to the independent onlooker, who doesn't care a fig for these tinpot distinctions, the comedy is delightful. It will be interesting to watch the effect produced by these pompous nobodies upon the tuppenny-ha'penny K.C.S.I.s, the cheap colonels, the seedy subalterns, the bumptious globe-trotters, that crowd this quarter-deck. It will give us matter to moralize upon for a month!

MRS. COXE. And the woman-folk of these gentry! How they will scheme and manoeuvre, and plot and plan to get a little notice — if it's only a morning nod — from the great people!

MR. COXE. How the Duke's babbling commonplaces will be passed from mouth to mouth as miracles of satirical observation!

MRS. COXE. And his wife's gaudy American taste eulogized for its chaste but daring originality! Ah, my dear Dudley, there are sad snobs in this world!

MR. COXE. Well, it's ungrate — (*Rises.*) Hallo!

MRS. COXE. What's the matter?

MR. COXE. (*impressed*). I believe I've been sitting on the Duke's chair!

MRS. COXE. (*awe-struck*). No!

MR. COXE. I do believe I have! (*Looks at card on back of chair.*) I have! It's the Duke's own chair!

MRS. COXE. (*delighted*). Dudley!

MR. COXE. (*patting the seat*). It doesn't look new. I wonder if he's sat on it much — and, by Jove! Godiva —

MRS. COXE. What — what?

MR. COXE. You've been actually sitting on the Duchess's!

MRS. COXE. So I have! Oh, Dudley. (*Dusts it with her pocket-handkerchief.*) It's very like other people's chairs!

MR. COXE. (*having recovered himself*). Why, of course it is. You don't suppose that these people travel with ducal thrones, do you? But they're wiser than we are in one thing — they've taken care to have them placed on the cool side of the deck.

MRS. COXE. Yes; it's dreadfully hot on the port side — one gets all the afternoon sun. I think I should like *my* chair on this side. Will you tell the quartermaster?

MR. COXE. Quartermaster! (*Sailor appears.*) Just bring Mrs. Coxe's chair here — you'll find it between those of Sir Cuthbert Jameson and Lord Frederick Foley. (*Exit*

QUARTERMASTER.) By Jove, I see the harbour-master's launch! They are coming! I don't like that hat, Godiva — haven't you another?

MRS. COXE. Plenty. Shall I wear the white felt with the strawberry leaves?

MR. COXE. The strawberry leaves by all means! Nothing could be better. Don't be long.

MRS. COXE. I won't be a minute. (*Exit down companion.*)

MR. COXE. Shall I be smoking? No. And yet one looks more at one's ease with something in one's mouth. Not a cigar, though (*throwing away cigar*) — a cigarette is better form. (*Lights one.*) And yet I don't know — perhaps the Duchess doesn't like tobacco. Stop! I'll light it and throw it away when she sees me. It's just as well to let these tuppenny swells see that one is accustomed to the habits of refined society.

Enter QUARTERMASTER with chair.

QUAR. Where will you have it, sir?

MR. COXE. Oh, put it down anywhere. (*Pointing to vacant space next the DUKE'S chair.*) — Here, there's just room.

QUAR. (*with bated breath*). That's the Duke's chair, sir.

MR. COXE. (*angrily*). The Duke's chair, sir? Well, sir, what the deuce is the Duke to me? Damn the Duke, sir! — put it where I tell you! Deck's as much mine as his! (*QUARTERMASTER places chair as directed and exit.*) Upon my word, the snobbishness of people is perfectly sickening! (*COXE places DUKE and DUCHESS'S chair close to his own.*) It's enough to turn a fellow into an infernal Radical! (*Sees BARKER coming up gangway. He mistakes him for the DUKE.*) Oh, here comes the Duke — now for it! (*Strolls up and off.*)

Enter from gangway ladder MR. BARKER, the DUKE'S courier, and MISS BAILEY, the DUCHESS'S maid.

BARKER (*to officer on gangway*). Purser about?

OFFICER. The Purser's coming. There he is.

Enter PURSER.

PURSER. What is it?

BAR. I am Mr. Barker, his Grace's courier, and this lady is Miss Bailey, her Grace's maid. We have four deck cabins, I believe?

PUR. Yes; these two starboard cabins are for the Duke and Duchess — your cabins are immediately adjoining on the other side.

BAR. Oh! The luggage was brought on board this morning by Mr. Taylor, his Grace's valet.

PUR. Quite right. You'll share the after port cabin with him — you'll find him unpacking in the Duke's state room, I believe.

[Miss Bailey enters Duchess's cabin.

BAR. But stop! I am accustomed to have a cabin to myself.

PUR. Are you? Well, you won't have one this voyage — we're full up. When do the Duke and Duchess come on board? We get under weigh in half an hour.

BAR. The launch is going back for them. I suppose you'll be here to receive them?

PUR. No — I don't think that will be necessary. If the Duke wants me he can send for me. I shall be in my office. [*Exit.*]

BAR. Cool hands these merchant fellows, upon my honour! Start in half an hour, do they? Not before *we* come on board, I fancy. (*Arranging chairs.*) Whose chair's this? (*Reads.*) Mr. Dudley Coxe-Coxe. Now, who the deuce is Mr. Dudley Coxe-Coxe?

COXE has strolled down.

MR. COXE. (*with great deference*). I beg your pardon —

BAR. Eh?

MR. COXE. You were good enough to mention my name, I think?

BAR. Oh, you're Mr. Coxe. Yes. I read it off your chair. You'll be rather in our way here, I fancy. Would it be troubling you too much to —

MR. COXE. Oh, remove it at once — pray permit me — quartermaster placed it there. (*Removing it.*) Charming weather.

[Barker throws away cigarette end. Coxe picks it up, while Barker is arranging rugs on chair, and puts it in his own case.]

BAR. Yes — smart breeze outside though.

MR. COXE. *Is there?* You yacht a good deal, I believe?

BAR. Yes — we usually winter in the Mediterranean; but this year we went up the Nile to Wady Halfa.

MR. COXE. Indeed! How awfully good of you — I mean that must have been very pleasant. By the way, I trust my cigarette is not disagreeable to you? If so, I'll —

BAR. Not a bit. I'll join you. May I ask you for one? I've mislaid my case.

MR. COXE. (*effusively*). With the very greatest pleasure. Pray permit me.

[Coxe offers cigarette case. Barker picks out cigarette end.]

BAR. Hallo! Why, I just threw this away!

MR. COXE. (*confused*). Oh, I beg your pardon. I'm — I'm collecting cigarette ends!

BAR. Curious hobby! Come from far?

MR. COXE. Calcutta. By the way, we travelled across India with the Viceroy.

BAR. Oh, Elliston?

MR. COXE. Yes, Elliston. You know him, of course?

BAR. Know him? Rather! Travelled all over Europe with him a couple of years ago. Quaint old fellow.

MR. COXE. Most quaint — most charming — most delightful. So frank and open-handed.

BAR. (*doubtfully*). Humph! Close-fisted old chap, *I* should say.

MR. COXE. Curiously close-fisted. Never knew a more close-fisted man. He was travelling with the Marquis of Samborough.

BAR. Ah! Good fellow, Samborough. Pretty daughters, too — especially Lady Arabella. Sad business her marriage.

MR. COXE. Awful — frightful — deplorable.

BAR. Turned out well, though, eventually.

MR. COXE. Turned out splendidly — magnificently — eventually. You—you are bound for Brindisi, I understand?

BAR. Yes — *en route* for Monte Carlo, where we spend a fortnight at our villa. Wish we could make it longer, for I always pull off a pot of money at the tables.

MR. COXE. Really! It's all luck, I suppose?

BAR. Not altogether. If the tables are properly worked, luck simply influences the sum of the gains.

MR. COXE. Properly worked?

BAR. Yes—I mean worked on a scientific system.

MR. COXE. I never found a system that was worth a da— (*correcting himself*) cent.

BAR. I've been more fortunate. *I* have a system that never failed me yet — but it wants a moderate bank. You can't lose, and with average luck you double your capital every three-quarters of an hour. It *may* be two hours, but it averages about three-quarters.

MR. COXE. That sounds tremendous! (*Much interested.*)

BAR. You see, Zero's the death of most systems, but in this case Zero is all in your favour. The bank are mad about it — and it's really hardly fair on them, for it's playing on a certainty.

MR. COXE. I can't quite see that. They'd have no hesitation in rooking *you* on a certainty.

BAR. True — true.

MR. COXE. *They'd* have no qualms about it — so why should you? Is it fair to ask —

BAR. Perfectly fair — but I'm sorry to say I mustn't reveal it. The fact is, it was confided to me by no less a swell than the apostate Archimandrite Poulos, on his death bed in the Carpathians, under a solemn promise never to reveal it.

MR. COXE. I see. Of course — a deathbed confidence —

BAR. In the Carpathians —

MR. COXE. Is sacred. I quite see that.

BAR. As a man of honour my tongue is tied. I, now and then, play for a friend — but I never reveal the theory.

MR. COXE. Does it require a large capital?

BAR. You must be prepared to lose £150 at the outset. I don't say you *will* lose it, but you must be prepared to do so. A couple of hundred is still better.

MR. COXE. Oh, that's nothing!

BAR. Nothing at all.

MR. COXE. Now, I wonder whether—but, no—it's asking too much—

BAR. Ah, I know what you were going to say. Will I play with a couple of hundred on your behalf? Wasn't that it? Ha! ha!

MR. COXE. Well, really, that's very remarkable. They are the very words I had on the tip of my tongue. Can't imagine how you came to guess it.

BAR. My dear fellow, it's quite simple. Everybody I meet asks me the same question. Yes, if you like to trust it to me: I've no objection.

MR. COXE. I can't express my gratitude. If you'll allow me, I'll go to my state room and fetch the notes.

BAR. Oh, any time will do.

MR. COXE. Well, we shall be under weigh in an hour, and when we're under weigh my wife and I are under hatches. We're such awfully bad sailors. So, as you leave the ship in three days, I'd better get the money now.

BAR. As you please. By the way, where's the bar?

MR. COXE. Forward of the saloon.

BAR. Then let's split a whisky-and-soda. Come along — after you.

MR. COXE. I couldn't think of it. Really, it would be impossible — quite out of the question.

BAR. As you please.

[Exit BARKER down companion. MR. COXE-COXE about to follow him when DE BRÉVILLE, who has overheard the latter part of the conversation from up stage, comes down.]

DE B. Ah, Mr. Coxe—one moment.

MR. COXE. Can't stop. I'm going to split a whisky-and-soda with the Duke.

DE B. The Duke?

MR. COXE. Yes, the Duke of Dundee.

DE B. Ah, that was the Duke you were speaking to?

MR. COXE. Of course. I've been chatting with him for the last twenty minutes. Let me go —

DE B. But stop —

MR. COXE. Do let me go — I'm keeping him waiting! *[Exit COXE-COXE.]*

DE B. The Duke? Why, that fellow's his courier! Here, Cuthbert, my dear boy, come here. *(Enter Sir Cuthbert.)* I have a good joke for you. That delightful snob Mr. Coxe-Coxe has been making love to the Duke's courier, in the belief that it is the Duke himself. It is delightful — it is enchanting — it is English!

SIR CUTHBERT. Ha! ha! Poor little devil!

DE B. They have gone below to split a whisky-and-soda. I would have told him of his mistake, but he would not stop to hear, because he wouldn't keep the Duke waiting! Sir Cuthbert, be prepared for a blow. These Coxe-Coxes are no longer true to you. Alas, you will lose them!

SIR C. I shall be much obliged to the Duke's courier if he will kindly take them off my hands. They are really very tiresome. And so you won't come to Jermyns in October? You are determined to stop in Paris on your way home?

DE B. Yes — I must report myself at Athens — then I spend October in Paris. After all, it is the city of my birth, and one owes something to one's parents. I have not seen them for two years.

SIR C. Of course; you are quite right. You see, I sometimes forget that you are a Frenchman.

DE B. But you overwhelm me with compliment! Is it possible that I have so many good points that you sometimes allow yourself to believe that I am an Englishman?

SIR C. No, no. I don't mean that exactly. There are lots of capital Frenchmen knocking about, of course.

DE B. Ah, but pardon me, you *do* mean that exactly; for you are a respectable John Bull. And, my respectable John Bull, you hate a Frenchman as you hate a bright Sunday. We are all vain, frivolous, egotistical. Is it not so — hein? But we have our *rôle* — we send you actors, singers, fiddlers, painters — we amuse you and we decorate your wives — *that* is our *rôle*. And while you pity the funny, ingenious, poor foreign devils, you are ready enough to laugh at their capers and to pay them handsomely for cutting them. My good, respectable, church-going John Bull, you are wrong, wrong, wrong! A word in your ear—but it is in confidence. There are men in France who are not mountebanks! But you do not perceive them, for your nose is not long, and you can see no further than the tip of it. Go — you are a good fellow, and I am a good fellow, and there are many on my side of the Channel that are as good as you, and better — far better — than I; but you do not perceive them because your nose is not long.

SIR C. Well, I suppose it's all confounded prejudice, but as a rule I certainly don't get on with Frenchmen. But it's different with you. You were brought up in England — went to Eton and Cambridge. You have all the good solid qualities of an Englishman — you ride straight across Leicestershire, you are conscientious with women, and there's no better hand at big game living.

DE B. Ah, I kill things, and so you love me, big, bloodthirsty John Bull that you are! Well, I will go on killing, and you will love me more and more. Tigers? Bah! tigers are nothing. When I come to England I will hire a slaughter-house, and pole-axe pole-axe pole-axe oxen until you are not able to contain yourself with joy! And then you will be merciful to my countrymen who shoot blackbirds, for the sake of your beloved Armand, who swims in the blood of cattle!

SIR C. (*laughing*). My dear fellow, one such Frenchman as you are redeems a whole Department. I wish you'd complete the illusion by marrying an Englishwoman.

DE B. (*seriously*). Well, it may happen — who knows? Englishwomen make admirable wives. Shall I confess? It is the dream of my life to marry an Englishwoman.

SIR C. My dear fellow, I'm rejoiced to hear you say so. But a dream! Why a dream? Why not make it a matter of fact? To a man with your qualities there should be no difficulty in doing that?

DE B. Ah, but I am not rich; and although there are plenty of rich English girls, I am no fortune-hunter. I must first love — and if I chance to love a rich girl and to be beloved in return, it is well, and I shall marry her; but if she happened to be poor — well, I could not forego her on account of *her* poverty, nor could I marry her on account of mine. Shall I tell you a secret which has been on the tip of my tongue for six weeks past? I once proposed to an enormously rich woman, and I confess that it was her wealth that fascinated me. It was the first time, and it shall be the last.

SIR C. An English girl?

DE B. Not English, and no girl. An American, ten years older than I, but still sufficiently young. She accepted me — at least so it was understood. But it's an old story. A better suitor presented himself, and I received my *cong *, and it served me right! But the humiliation! At all events, it taught me a salutary lesson: I shall not marry for money.

SIR C. My dear Armand, I'd bet my boots she never made a greater mistake in her whole life.

DE B. Then you would lose your boots, for she is now the Duchess of Dundee.

SIR C. Whew! Dundee cut you out, did he? The fascinating old butterfly! Why, then, my dear fellow, you'd better join your ship at once, for if you remain on board a few minutes longer you'll meet her!

DE B. It may be. It matters little. The wound was in my self-love, not in my heart — and it has healed, my dear friend, it has healed.

Enter DIANA CAVEREL from gangway ladder.

DE B. (*aside*). Ah, enfin!

DIA. Ah, M. de Br ville, then I am in time. You've not gone. I'm indeed glad of that. I was obliged to go on shore to the agent's, and I intended to have hurried back on board as soon as my business was completed, but there were tiresome delays. His wife insisted on my remaining to luncheon, and I should have gained nothing by refusing, as I couldn't come away without the papers that I went for. However, I'm heartily glad I'm not too late.

DE B. Indeed, Miss Caverel, I feared that I should be forced to leave without a farewell. It may be long — long — long before we meet again.

SIR C. Then, my dear boy, it will be your own fault, for Miss Caverel has most kindly promised to spend a fortnight with us at Jermyns. Come now, doesn't *that* smile upon you? She will join our house party on the 18th.

DE B. Of September. Impossible.

SIR C. September? No, no, October. I told you October.

DE B. Ah, October! I did not understand. If it is as late as October, it may be possible for me. I think that would give me three days in Paris. Stop a bit — stop a bit.

[Consults pocketbook. PURSER enters and gives a telegram to SIR CUTHBERT — he retires to read it.]

DIA. Do come, M. de Br ville, I want you — very much.

DE B. I thank you, Miss Caverel, from the bottom of my heart. (*To SIR CUTHBERT.*) My dear friend, I accept your invitation with heartfelt satisfaction.

SIR C. (*occupied with telegram*). That's capital. We'll count upon you. (*Reverts to telegram.*)

Enter STEWARD.

STEW. (*to DE BR VILLE*). Captain's compliments, sir, and he would be glad if you could make it convenient to speak to him in his cabin before you go.

DE B. (*aside*). Diable! (*Aloud.*) My compliments to Captain D'Arcy, and I will be with him at once. (*Going.*)

DIA. I shall see you again?

DE B. Be very sure of that. Indeed, I have much to say to you before I go. In five minutes I shall return. (*Impressively.*) You will then perhaps, be alone.

[*Exit DE BRÉVILLE . She looks after him.*

SIR C. (*having written a reply to telegram and given it to PURSER*). Miss Caverel, I hope you have not decided to go home all the way by sea?

DIA. I don't know — I think so. I hate making up my mind beforehand. I shall trust to the impulse of moment when I'm within twelve hours of Marseilles. I detest prearrangement.

SIR C. It is sometimes inevitable.

DIA. But not in this. My time is my own, you know. I have no one to control me. And you? It was but yesterday that you hoped I had decided not to disembark at Marseilles.

SIR C. Five minutes since I hoped so still. But I've just received a cable from my agent which makes it imperative that I should hurry across the Continent as rapidly as possible. So I suppose that in three days it will be 'good-bye.'

DIA. I am sorry.

SIR C. Really sorry?

DIA. Really sorry.

SIR C. But you will not forget that fortnight at Jermyns?

DIA. No, that is quite settled. It will be a pleasant fortnight, I'm sure.

SIR C. That's kind of you. It will be something — much — to look forward to. I should be very sorry if I thought we were not likely to meet again.

DIA. You mean that, I'm sure. Frankly, I shall be unhappy when we have to part, for you have been one of those who have made this voyage very delightful to me.

SIR C. And *you* mean that, I'm sure.

DIA. Unfortunately, it's not in my nature to say things I don't mean or to do things that are distasteful to me. I shall be heartily sorry to leave you and heartily glad to see you again. That's blunt and outspoken, is it not?

SIR C. (*after a pause*). Miss Caverel, I am also blunt and outspoken, and but a poor hand at masking the emotion of the moment, whatever it may be, and so I hope you will bear with me, for it may well be that what I am going to say will cause you some pain.

DIA. Sir Cuthbert, I am sure that whatever you may desire to tell me will be better spoken than unspoken.

SIR C. Thank you. It may be so, but I am no longer a young man. I have lost my hold on young people, and I have almost forgotten how that which I wish to say should be said. But in the goodness of your heart you will allow something for this, and when I tell you that I would your life were bound up with mine you will perhaps be sorry for me, but you will not be angry.

DIA. No — I am not angry. Deeply moved — not angry.

SIR C. It is not much, God knows, that I have to offer to a young, rich, and brilliant woman. I too am rich, but that is little. It is perhaps more to the point that if I have the power I have assuredly the will to make your life happy.

DIA. You have not much to offer! Sir Cuthbert, you have everything to offer that should appeal to a properly constituted woman. To such a woman the world has nothing better in store than that she should be the wife of such an Englishman as you. To be that woman is to have attained the very crown and summit of the high hill of her desires. But I am not such an one. I am a strange woman — unlike others in many respects. I am wilful, wayward, not subject to control — a woman to whom excitement and adventure are as the breath of her life. I regard you with a deep and proud esteem. I am profoundly touched to know that such a man as you — a man whose name is a byword of punctilious honour and manly rectitude — deems me worthy to become his wife. But I must live among scenes of excitement — I cannot wear the livery of sober respectability. I am but half tamed — but half civilized. I do odd things — I say odd things — I shock people. There is fire within me — there is even a touch of devilry. As the squire's wife I should have duties to discharge that would fret and gall me. I should have to busy myself with the poor — to play the ministering angel among the old, the halt, the lame, and the blind. Oh, do not misunderstand me. I do not mean to speak lightly of these things or of those who do them. But, my dear friend, I am not that woman, and so I may not be your wife. I have spoken plainly — partly because it is in my nature to be frank, but mainly because I am so proud of having gained the love of such a man that I can bear even the pain of telling him how unworthy I am to possess it. Shake hands on it, Sir Cuthbert, and be the best, the truest, the most valued friend I have ever possessed.

SIR C. (*sadly*). Thank you, Miss Caverel, I thought it only too likely that you would tell me that it could never be — but I did not know that you would say it so gently. Thank you, Miss Caverel! (*Exit SIR CUTHBERT.*)

DIA. He would that my life were bound up with his! It would be a mad coupling — and would it last? No! I must move about the world, or I am as a caged prisoner. I want fire and heat and colour — blue skies and bright sunshine — the bustle and movement of great cities — the whirl and torrent of rapid travel — and the give and take of bright brains. The dull, slate-coloured routine of English country-respectability would weigh me down as does the dull, slate-coloured English sky. Thank me, Cuthbert Jameson, rather for my refusal than for the manner of it. And thank me, too, good woman, whoever you are, who may one day be his wife — for there is no nobler life open to you than that with which such a man has the power to endow you. (*Exit DIANA.*)

[*The DUCHESS OF DUNDEE is heard speaking 'off' on the companion ladder.*]

DUCHESS. Now, doody, just you mind how you toddle, or you'll be slipping under, and I shall have to dive after you. (*To QUARTERMASTER on gangway.*) Take you hold of him, please — he's rather shaky on his pins.

DUCHESS *appears at gangway with the DUKE, who, being very infirm, is supported by QUARTERMASTER. MR. TAYLOR and MISS BAILEY come from deck cabins to meet them. TAYLOR and QUARTERMASTER lead DUKE to a chair — take shawls, &c., from Duchess, and exeunt.*

DUKE (*to QUARTERMASTER*). I thank you — I thank you, my good man. I am personally obleeged to you. (*Exit QUARTERMASTER.*)

Enter PURSER.

DUCH. Once more on board the old ship — and for the fifteenth time too! Well, I'm a cabin passenger this turn, thanks be! (*Sees PURSER.*) Why, Mr. Macquarrie, how do you do? Very glad to see you again, Mr. Macquarrie — why, it's quite like old times! (*shaking him heartily by the hand*).

PUR. (*rather puzzled*). I believe I have the honour of addressing the Duchess of Dundee?

DUCH. Yes — that's me, right enough.

DUKE (*aside to DUCHESS*). No, no — 'that's *I*' — my love — 'that's *I*.'

DUCH. No, no, Tommy — he said 'Duchess' — that's me.

DUKE. — 'I am indeed the Duchess of Dundee.'

DUCH. Poor old boy — he's wandering! Where's his air-cushion? There — now you keep quiet — there's a dear. (*To PURSER*.) He's not as young as he was, you know.

PUR. Would your Grace like to see the state rooms?

DUCH. No, Mr. Macquarrie, my Grace knows the state rooms better than you do. Besides, I can sleep in a butter-box — and as long as I'm near my maid, who always wants her head held in a sea way, that's good enough for me. But the Duke wants looking after, and I'll feel obliged if you'll fix him up as snug as may be.

PUR. Most certainly. My instructions are that everything is to be done to make the voyage agreeable to your Graces. You will find this a very comfortable ship.

DUCH. Then she must have changed quite a bit since *I* knew her. My sakes, how the old hooker used to dip her nose into it!

PUR. I was not aware that we had ever had the honour of your Grace's presence on board — and yet — (*As though recognizing her*.)

DUCH. Don't you? Why, Mr. Macquarrie, I was reported to you for incivility to a second-class passenger, and you tried your level best to give me a wiggling and couldn't do it for laughing!

PUR. I? Your Grace was reported to *me* !

DUCH. Oh, I wasn't 'her Grace' then. Why, don't you remember Euphemia S. Van Zyl, under-stewardess?

PUR. Euphemia — why, of course — but —

DUCH. Of course you do — shake hands on it. You *may* shake hands now that I've qualified for that honour.

PUR. (*shaking her hand respectfully*). I do assure you I'm perfectly thunderstruck.

DUCH. So am I when I think of it. Lord, what a world of ups and downs it is!

DUKE (*aside to DUCHESS*). Euphemia, my love — a little reticence, I beg!

DUCH. All right, Tommy.

PUR. But may I ask — for I've been at sea for six weeks past — how —

DUCH. Ask? Why, of course you may. When I was last on board, Poppa was in the small hardware line, but he saved money and got into a little pork ring, and I cut the sea. And when the little pork ring became a big pork ring, Poppa made his pile, and I blossomed out as a Society belle. Well, the rest is easy. Poor Poppa died and left me his pile, and after a week's courtship I married the Duke three weeks since. It's a record, I guess. Here, I'll present you — Tommy, this is Mr. Macquarrie — quite an old friend.

DUKE. Sir, your most obedient.

PUR. (*bowing*). If you'll allow me, I'll tell the Captain you've come on board. I'm sure he would like to know. (*Aside.*) Euphemia Van Zyl! Under-stewardness! Duchess of Dundee! Well, it's a great country! [*Exit* PURSER.

DUKE. My dear — my love, you really distress me. These reminiscences are all very well between ourselves. They are most interesting — most absorbing. But there's no necessity to take all the world into our confidence. A little reticence, I beg!

DUCH. Well, Macquarrie knows I was a stewardness, and anyhow I'm not ashamed of it.

DUKE. No, no. A very honourable calling — disagreeable duties, no doubt, but nevertheless most creditable. But it is not necessary to discuss these matters in public. It's not quite delicate, my love.

DUCH. But it's in all the papers! Everybody knows my Poppa wasn't a gentleman, but he was a smart man, and you may thank your stars and garters too — you *are* a Garter, aren't you?

DUKE. I have the honour to be a Knight of that Most Noble Order.

DUCH. Well, that's what I mean. You may thank your stars and garters too that when my Poppa married my Momma they took the first step towards providing you with a ten-million-dollar Duchess, who'll do you credit as soon as she's learnt the ropes; but having only been a Duchess three weeks, and not having had time to lay in a sea-stock of aristocratic small talk, why I must needs draw on my own experience, or bottle up. But all in good time, Tommy — all in good time. Rome wasn't built in a day. Now, Doody, you must go and lie down, or you'll be fractious. I know.

DUKE. But — obleege me in this. I beg that you will not call me 'Doody' before the stewards.

DUCH. Why, bless your simple old heart, why not?

DUKE. It's not dignified. It makes people laugh. No one was ever known to laugh at me — except in the papers.

DUCH. Very well — I'll take care that you're not laughed at — except in the papers. There! go and take your afternoon nap. Barker!

Enter BARKER from cabin.

BAR. Your Grace?

DUCH. Undress the Duke and put him to bed.

[As DUKE is helped off he kisses his hand to DUCHESS. DUCHESS looks after him.]

DUCH. (*sighing*). Ah, 'taint all pie!

[Barker leads the Duke into cabin. De Bréville comes down. Duchess turns and recognizes him. He bows.]

DUCH. (*much agitated*). Why, it's De Bréville! This is altogether unexpected! But you won't be hard on me — you'll shake hands, won't you? (*He shakes hands with her.*)

DE B. Duchess, we meet strangely.

DUCH. Yes, Viscount. But after all, the world is a very small potato, and this is a considerable big ship.

DE B. We parted in Chicago — a year ago.

DUCH. Yes — at Poppa's pork works, after a tender scene — at the boiling room. I remember it well.

DE B. Tell me frankly, Duchess — have I been fairly dealt with, do you think?

DUCH. Well, no. I can't say you have — and when I think of it I feel real mean, and that's so.

DE B. When I left, I carried with me a promise — need I recall it?

DUCH. Well, no — *I* did that. I cabled to you and told you how I was fixed up — I guess I couldn't do more. I was very fond of you — there's no denying that — and although I was the richest Society belle in Chicago I would have married you, poor as you are. But when a British Duke dazzles her, what's a Chicago girl to do?

DE B. Is his Grace so brilliant?

DUCH. Well, no, he's not exactly what you'd call brilliant, and that's the truth. But he *is* His Grace — and in common fairness don't forget that I'm a Republican.

DE B. True — that should not be forgotten. And when the Duke came — he is not in his first youth, I think?

DUCH. No, I can't say he is. He's eighty-five, and bad at that.

DE B. And when the Duke came — who is an indifferent eighty-five — poor De Bréville — who was a well-preserved four-and-twenty — received his *congé*. Oh, it is fit and proper! The Duke has his precedence, and de Bréville acquiesces. He is not a discarded lover — he is the victim of social etiquette.

DUCH. (*rather surprised*). He takes it pretty easy, though.

DE B. He is a man of the world, Duchess. (*With feeling.*) But shall I tell you what I suffered when your telegram came? Shall I tell you of the blank despair that numbed my soul? No, you would say it was for your wealth that I wept. Well, let it be so. It is the lost dollars that make my life quiver, even now, as I address your Grace. (*With emotion.*)

DUCH. Now, don't for gracious sake talk to me like that, or I shall go soft. You don't suppose I've nothing to blame myself with? I ain't chalk, if I ain't cheese. I *did* treat you badly, and that's the truth, and I'm just as sorry as I can hold. But it's done and over — and can't be undone, and won't be undone. I married the Duke to be his wife — and his wife I am, and his wife I mean to be — and a good and true wife too, to the end of the track. So let you and me start fresh and fair, with a clean slate and no reminiscences, for when I reminisce I go soft, and that don't suit Euphemia S. Dundee.

DE B. Be sure that I shall respect your Grace's wishes. But do not fear — your Grace will not be long oppressed by a presence that revives so much that is painful in your Grace's mind. I am on my way to Athens, and I leave this ship in ten minutes.

DUCH. (*rather disappointed*). What — you're not sailing with us? Well, I don't know that it isn't all for the best. Not that I shouldn't like to see you again, only — I'm not prepared for it yet — and that's the truth. So shake hands, Armand, and good-bye — and when you're in England, come and see us. I can't say where we shall be, but you can always find our movements in the Radical papers. But mind — I'm the Duke's wife, and don't you forget it. *I* shan't. (*Exit into cabin.*)

DE B. Well, Euphemia, go your ways in peace — the Duke has nothing to fear from me. But, United Statesmen, what a blind, illogical race you are! You profess to place enormous import duties upon all commodities that you are unable to produce, and yet you admit, on free-trade principles, the British Peer, who drains more dollars out of your country in a day than your Customs will produce you in a twelve month! (*Enter* DIANA.) Ah, Miss Caverel, I have been waiting — waiting — waiting — and in ten minutes I leave you — it may be for always!

DIA. But we shall meet at Jermyn's — that is understood.

DE B. Yes, but that is six months hence — and is not six months an always? Alas, that we can only see things with our own eyes and not with each other's! If I could see with yours, I should see that October was but a few months hence — if you could see with mine, you would see that it is an eternity away!

DIA. Then it is well that I cannot see with your eyes.

DE B. I do not know — it might be well for you, for then you would see me as I am, and not as I seem to be, for I am artificial even to you.

DIA. How artificial?

DE B. I study to please you, and in pursuit of that study I say not the thing that I mean, but the thing that will interest you — and yet you see me more nearly than other people do.

DIA. Is it that I am more clear-sighted, or that you are more candid?

DE B. It is because I have cheated myself into the audacious belief that we are in sympathy with one another. I have the honour to be cast in a gross and clumsy copy of your own mould. You have a strangely original nature — so have I, but I push it too far. You have strong, passionate, unconventional impulses — so have I, but they get me into discreditable trouble. You have a taste for adventure — so have I, but it is a brutal taste that leads me to destroy strong lives. Miss Caverel, I know you well. For three weeks past, day by day and hour by hour, I have studied you thoroughly, for you are, without exception, the most deeply interesting woman I have ever encountered. Miss Caverel, to you I would reveal myself — to you I would be the man I am — with the much that is bad and the somewhat that is good — but to no other woman I ever knew.

DIA. (*earnestly*). Prove this to me, for indeed I would know you as you are.

DE B. Then listen. I am vain — arbitrary — dictatorial — self-sufficient. I pretend that I attach no value to the world's good word, but in that I lie, for praise is as the breath of my nostrils. I am headstrong — wilful — passionate — and so, many times unreasonable. On the surface I am honourable, but it is with the honour of a gamester who does not cheat his opponent but who ruins his tailor. In danger I am sufficiently cool and steadfast, but here again I am instigated by the lust of praise to do that from which I should shrink were I unseen and alone. To those whom I love I am kind to the verge of folly. I am open-handed and generous — but not generous to men who are my rivals. To women? Well, there are women and women. It may seem incredible, but I once behaved with honour to a married woman whom I loved and who loved me — but the circumstances were exceptional, and it might not occur again. Still, let it weigh for something in a scale which suffers much from counterpoise. In fairness to myself, let me add that much of me that is evil is perhaps evil because I have never loved worthily until now. Dear lady, this is the man with the much that is ill and the somewhat that is good, who lays his poor erring heart at your feet.

DIA. (*after a pause*). Shall I be frank with you? (*He bows.*) You ask me to give you my life — to entrust my whole future to your guidance — your care — your keeping. You bid me love you — honour you — obey you. You ask me to mould my life on yours — to throw all else aside that I may, in all and all, devote myself to you and you alone. (*He makes a gesture of deprecation.*) Ah, forgive me, but this is what you ask. It is at *my* estimate of a wife's devotion that your demand must be measured — not at yours. I well know what I have to give, and, whatever that may be, you ask me to give it to you. Well, Armand de Bréville, take it, for it is your own. (*He seizes her hand and kisses it.*) I take you as you are — knowing you well, loving you much, hoping all things, fearing none. Shall I tell you that I have dreaded to look beyond this parting of ours? Shall I tell you that I had not the courage to face the blank life that lay before me after you had gone out of my eyes? Well, well — I did not know — how was I to know? — that the moment of our parting would be the crowning joy of my life!

He takes her in his arms and kisses her rapturously, then moves to gangway. Picture.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II. — Wedded.

(*Twelve months have elapsed.*)

SCENE. — DE BRÉVILLE'S *apartments in the Champs Elysées*. DE BRÉVILLE *is discovered with M. PAILLARD, a moneylender*. DE BRÉVILLE *seated at writing-table*. PAILLARD *on sofa*.

PAIL. Is it not rather late, M. le Vicomte, to find fault with the terms upon which I advance money? We have had dealings together for several years, and you owe me, in principal and interest, a very considerable sum — and now, for the first time, you complain of my terms. Frankly, you are unreasonable, M. le Vicomte.

DE B. My dear M. Paillard. I did not complain. I merely remarked that they were usurious.

PAIL. Well, I am a usurer. You should recollect, M. le Vicomte, that my profession is a very hazardous one.

DE B. And that is why you charge sixty per cent.

PAIL. No doubt. If it were a certainty I should be satisfied with five, and be glad to get it.

DE B. Then I may conclude that, on an average, only one in twelve of your clients pays you.

PAIL. Upon my word, it almost comes to that. There are heavy disappointments in my calling.

DE B. There are heavy disappointments in all callings — even in mine.

PAIL. In yours? In diplomacy?

DE B. Even in that. But I was referring to my other profession, M. Paillard.

PAIL. To tiger-hunting?

DE B. To fortune-hunting. I am a poor man with sporting instincts, highly extravagant tastes, and a defective moral sense. Consequently it follows that I hunt fortunes.

PAIL. I am, of course, aware that Madame la Vicomtesse possesses a very considerable fortune, but I should be doing an injustice both to her and to you if I assumed that in marrying her you were influenced solely by that consideration. The personal charm of Madame la Vicomtesse is so overwhelming that even —

DE B. M. Paillard, we will, if you please, refrain from discussing the personal charm of Madame la Vicomtesse. It is enough that when I married that lady she was possessed of two million and a half of francs. I afforded you every opportunity for satisfying yourself that that was the case, and of those opportunities you fully availed yourself.

PAIL. No doubt. As a matter of form.

DE B. As a matter of form. Well, M. Paillard, I have to inform you, as a matter of fact, that nearly every franc of that considerable fortune has melted into air.

PAIL (*aghast*). You — you are not in earnest. You are amusing yourself with me?

DE B. I am, unfortunately, quite in earnest.

PAIL. Am I to understand, M. le Vicomte, that you are absolutely unable to meet your many notes of hand?

DE B. You are to understand, M. Paillard, that with the exception of a moderate balance at my bankers', I have nothing in the world but the insignificant salary attached to my office as a Secretary of Legation. But come — I will be reasonable. You tell me that, if your business were a certainty, you would be satisfied with an interest of five per cent. I am prepared to pay you five per cent. on the principal sum I owe you until I am in a position to pay the balance of principal and interest, on the old terms — and this, I may tell you in confidence, will in all probability be within the next eight or ten months.

PAIL. What prospect is there that you will be able to do this?

DE B. A prospect which, in my confident belief, amounts to a certainty; but unfortunately I cannot afford to be more explicit at present. Will you accept my offer — which, at all events, means something — or do you prefer to make me a bankrupt — which means nothing at all?

PAIL. (*after a pause*). M. de Bréville, you have not treated me handsomely, but as you are an old client, I will be lenient with you. I will accept your offer and renew all your bills for twelve months, but when that time expires, be well assured that my forbearance will expire with it.

DE B. (*writing a cheque*). When that time expires your forbearance may go to the devil, M. Paillard, for I shall have no further need of it. There is my cheque for one-twelfth of the interest due to you. And now I feel that in detaining you any longer I should be doing an injustice to the brilliant commercial circles of which you are so distinguished an ornament. *Au revoir*, M. Paillard.

PAIL. You understand me, sir. If my bills are not met with interest in full, within twelve months, no consideration will interfere to prevent my punishing you by every means that the Code affords me. You know me to be absolutely a man of my word when I have no reason to be anything else. Good morning, M. le Vicomte! [*Exit PAILLARD*].

DE B. Yes, Paillard, you'll be paid. It is a fearful step to take, but there's no help for it. Bills — bills — bills everywhere, debts of honour — debts of dishonour — all of which were to have been satisfied out of Diana's fortune and with her knowledge and consent — and now — but there — they'll be paid, Paillard — they'll be paid — God help her!

Enter DIANA.

DIA. Armand, has the man gone?

DE B. Yes, Diana, the man has gone.

DIA. And he will wait?

DE B. Yes, he will wait. I have paid him some interest on account, which reduces my balance to three thousand francs.

DIA. Oh, Armand, Armand, forgive me, my love — oh, forgive me! (*Kneels at his feet.*)

DE B. What have I to forgive, Diana?

DIA. I promised you a life of happiness — a life free from debt — a life of independence and enjoyment — and my heart leapt within me at the thought that I could keep this promise — and all I have done is to hamper you with a wife who seems to have lost even the power to make your home acceptable to you — oh, forgive me, Armand, forgive me!

DE B. You have given me much love and much devotion. These are not to be bought with money. If I am often from home it is because I am a poor man and must work.

DIA. The life I have provided for you is so different from the life I promised you. You were to have thrown off your office shackles, and we were to have wandered at our will over this beautiful earth, drinking our fill of the joy of travel — encountering hazards which to you and to me are the very music of existence — daring everything — fearing nothing — the life of the mountain, the forest, the desert, and the sea! Oh, Armand, I do not regret these things for my own sake. But I know how your restless spirit chafes under the galling restraint of daily duty to be done, and how your mind frets over the bitter disappointment I have caused you. It stands between us like a dividing spectre — intangible — invisible — but there — always and inevitably there — there — there!

DE B. There is no spectre that is not the outcome of your own sensitiveness, my child. When we are divided it is at the command of my exacting chief. If there were no such chief there would be no such division.

DIA. That is true. When do you start for Naples?

DE B. In half an hour. Lachaud, my lawyer, is to call for me here, and we are to travel as far as Monte Carlo together.

DIA. And how long will you be away from me?

DE B. Ah, it is not easy to say. Diplomatic work is always uncertain, and Neapolitan officials are not remarkable for expedition. Perhaps three weeks — perhaps three months.

DIA. Three months! Three more weary months to be passed in this dismal solitude!

DE B. My child, be just, even to Paris. It is not dismal, and it is not a solitude.

DIA. To a lonely, heart-weary woman — knowing no one, known by none — Paris is more irritatingly dismal than the dingiest London suburb. When you are here it is well, and I am content; but when you are away I am as a hungry woman looking on at a feast of which she may not eat, and who is called upon, nevertheless, to go into ecstasies over the *menu*. Why am I excluded from my natural privileges? I am the Vicomtesse de Bréville — your wife — and as such entitled to hold my own among the proudest of your people. But you have not yet consented to acknowledge me — and in this multitude, in which I yearn to mix, I am alone — alone — alone!

DE B. My dear child, forgive me — but, frankly, you are not reasonable. My father and mother, as I told you when we met at Jermyns, are aristocrats of the most conservative type, and if they had known that I was about to ally myself with a lady whose parents were engaged in commerce they would have disavowed us both. It would have been useless to tell them that the world does not hold a purer woman than she whom I was about to marry. Their reply would have been, ‘Her people sold something,’ and that would have been their last word.

DIA. Still, though you were of age and could legally dispense with their consent, it would have been better to have asked it.

DE B. It would have done no good. Setting sentimental considerations aside, my father, although he is not rich, has great influence at our Foreign Office, and it is open to him to exert it either for me or against me. As it is —

DIA. As it is, you have told him, and he has contented himself with a cold acknowledgment of the receipt of your letter.

DE B. Yes, but when my parents come to know you —

DIA. Know me? In God’s name, how are they to know me?

DE B. When I see them — which I will do immediately after my return — I shall perhaps succeed in reconciling them to the inevitable. My child, I have a persuasive tongue —

DIA. (*bitterly*). Yes, you have!

DE B. After all, I am their son, and they love me very dearly — and although they are naturally irritated just now, yet when they see what an admirable daughter I have given them, they will surely relent.

DIA. Armand, I wish to speak with all respect of your parents, but it is foreign to my nature to wait submissively until they are persuaded to accept me as their daughter. They are entitled to satisfy themselves that I am a woman of good social position and good repute, but their right ends at that point. I have not married myself out of all self-respect. I still retain some independence of spirit. I consent to hold over until their return, but I will wait no longer. If they refuse to acknowledge me, that they will do for once and all, and from that point I refuse to acknowledge them.

DE B. So be it, Diana. It shall be as you say.

DIA. (*surprised*). You agree to this? You will then acknowledge me publicly and before all men?

DE B. Yes — that I promise.

DIA. Thank you, Armand; I can breathe more freely now that that is understood. Oh, forgive me — forgive me — but I am so miserable at being left so long alone! I hate the people you are with — the women you see —

DE B. I see no women. I have you always in my eyes.

DIA. Was I in your eyes when you were staying in Park Lane with your old *fiancée*, the widowed Duchess of Dundee — and that within three months of her husband’s death?

DE B. My dear girl, the Duchess of Dundee invited me to stay at her house, and as I could do my work as well from Park Lane as from Albert Gate I accepted her invitation. The Duchess is eccentric and unconventional, but her eccentricities are wholly on the surface, and

I give you my word that, *au fond*, her Yankee Grace is a good and honourable woman who is quite incapable of an unworthy attachment.

DIA. Armand, I think I love you better than a wife should love her husband. I know of no good reason why I should doubt you, but you are too much away from me, and to a woman of my temperament the unknown is terrible! Oh, the unknown — the unknown! The wondering where you are — what you are saying and doing — and with whom and to whom! The shapeless, formless, intangible spectre that pursues me, sleeping and waking, when you are away! My God, I can't get away from it! Armand, why cannot I go with you this time? I will be ready in half an hour — oh, let me go — for God's sake — for the love of me that you say you have in your heart — let me go!

DE B. My wife, do you know what you are asking? Have you counted the cost? A journey to Naples and back will cost — how many thousand francs? Can we afford to indulge such fancies? Come, now, candidly, can we afford this? You know how terribly we need money — how, since your losses, we have had to deny ourselves every luxury — can we afford this?

DIA. It is true. You are very prudent, all at once. Bah! I am a fool to give myself up to you thus. Go your way — who are you that you are to be so loved? Are you so much better, wiser, braver, fairer than other men that they are to be as nothing to me, and you are to be as all in all? Are you so — (*suddenly breaking down*) Yes, yes — God help me, you are the life that is in me, and I love you till I hate and abhor you for the fearful thralldom in which my senses are held! For God's sake, take your spell from me, and let me be as other men's wives are! There — go — what is all this to you? After all, I am only your wife; it would be well for me if I could think of you only as a husband!

DE B. Diana, you are utterly unreasonable.

DIA. Do you think I don't know that? Do you think that any woman that was reasonable would stake her life's happiness on the chance that the love of such a man as you would remain at the fever heat of its inception? Unreasonable? Why, I am mad!

DE B. My child, what have I done to justify this outburst? Have I ever spoken an unkind word to you?

DIA. No — you are kind — kind — kind — always and invariably kind — and no more! A curse on your kindness — it is not what I want of you! I would as lief you were brutal as kind — your kindness is but one remove from indifference. Between kindness and such love as I give you there is a great gulf fixed. I cross that gulf to go to you — you do not cross it to come to me! (*Exit weeping.*)

DE B. Ah, my poor child, how truly you speak, and how little you guess that you speak truly! How am I to break the truth to you who have set your heart so fully on me? Bah! it is not to be thought of — it must be done without reflection — done with closed eyes, a deadened heart, and every sense reduced to dull negation!

Enter M. LACHAUD.

LACH. Ah, my dear Armand, I am here in good time. Have you taken your farewell of Madame? Ah, what a lucky husband you are!

DE B. Lucky?

LACH. Yes — doubly lucky — lucky in being able to make up your mind to quit so charming a lady, and lucky to have so charming a lady to return to when your holiday is at an end. Frankly, if I were in your case, even the Duchess of Dundee — (*'Hush!' from DE*

BRÈVILLE) — would not lure me from her side. With me, the end of my holiday would be its beginning.

DE B. My good Lachaud, it is easy to theorize about the married felicity of one's friends. But theories have this failing — that they are apt to be fallacies.

LACH. What do you mean? In Madame De Bréville you have —

DE B. In Madame de Bréville I have a beautiful and blameless wife, of whom everyone would approve except the only people whose approval is important to us — my parents.

LACH. Is it possible that your parents have any fault to find with her? To know Madame de Bréville is to accept her as a miraculous incarnation of an impossible abstraction!

DE B. Perhaps; but my parents do *not* know Madame de Bréville. More than that, they never will know her.

LACH. You astound me! But you were of age when you married. Twenty-nine, were you not?

DE B. No, twenty-four.

LACH. But, my dear friend, what you have just told me is very serious. You are, of course, aware that by our Civil Code before a man who is under twenty-five may marry he must obtain the consent of his father and mother, or his marriage is voidable at their pleasure.

DE B. Or at his own.

LACH. Or at his own.

DE B. My dear Lachaud, I know it but too well. My parents, as you are aware, are aristocrats of the purest blood. They are poor, but their pride of lineage is superlative, and they would rather have seen their son lying dead before them than that he should marry a girl, English or French, whose people belonged to the merchant class. My only hope was to marry her and rely upon their accepting her as a daughter-in-law rather than place her in the position of a nullified wife.

LACH. But your father and mother will justify your confidence in them? They will not condemn this innocent lady to a life of unmerited ignominy?

DE B. Alas! my friend, in crediting them with such *bourgeois* emotions you do injustice their pride of birth.

LACH. But M. le Marquis is the soul of honour.

DE B. He is, but his honour is not so much heroic as heraldic. The De Brissacs, the De Vincennes, the De Gallifets, and the De Contades have contributed his ingredients, and my mother is descended in a direct line from the Bretignys of Poitou. From the tone of my father's reply to the letter in which I announced my marriage to him I am convinced (though I have not yet broken it to my wife) that he intends to apply at once to the Civil Tribunal for a declaration of nullity.

LACH. Surely — surely you misjudge him!

DE B. Ah, I know him well! And now, my dear Lachaud. I am in this difficulty: I love my wife dearly — I love my parents dearly. In marrying her I deceived them, and in taking the steps which I feel sure they intend to take they are well within their rights. This question, then, naturally arises: Am I, who wilfully deceived them, justified in allowing the odium of these proceedings to rest upon their aged shoulders? In other words, if these proceeding must

be taken, is it not rather my duty to initiate them myself? (*Carefully watching the effect of his words on LACHAUD.*)

LACH. To initiate them yourself? (*De Brèville nods.*) To apply in your own name for a decree of nullity?

DE B. Rather than impose that terrible necessity upon the shoulders of my father.

LACH. But you are jesting! You are incapable of such an act of infamy towards the woman you have sworn to cherish for life! If I am deceived in this —

DE B. Lachaud, I have too much respect for the sentiment that inspires a burst of honest indignation to criticize too closely the shape in which it presents itself. You have described my proposal as an act of infamy. It is a strong expression, but let it remain until I have convinced you that it is an act of justice.

Enter DIANA.

DIA. I beg your pardon, Armand — I thought you were alone.

DE B. This gentleman, whom you will permit me to present to you, is M. Lachaud, who is to be my travelling companion. (*Aside to LACHAUD.*) Not a word about the Duchess! (*Aloud.*) M. Lachaud — the Vicomtesse de Brèville.

LACH. Madame la Vicomtesse, I am overjoyed at the honour that is conferred upon me. (*Aside.*) Poor lady! Poor lady!

DIA. (*with assumed gaiety*). You have come to rob me of my husband, M. Lachaud. This is not kind, for he has only been home a week. Will you not relent, and spare him to me a little longer?

LACH. Madame, it distresses me beyond measure that my presentation to you should be associated in your mind with so deplorable a circumstance as M. de Brèville's departure. But pardon me, Madame — I do not take him from you.

DIA. True—he goes willingly!

LACH. M. de Brèville has, no doubt, some *adieux* to make which it would ill become me to interrupt. If Madame will permit me to retire —

DIA. It is unnecessary. M. de Brèville is so well accustomed to take leave of me that our farewells are of a very business-like description. And we part for so short a time — three months — perhaps only two!

DE B. Pardon me, my child, but if Lachaud will permit me, I would gladly be alone with you for a few minutes. (*LACHAUD bows, and exit.*)

DIA. (*surprised*). Armand! What can you have to say to me that M. Lachaud should not hear?

DE B. (*with some emotion*). I have only to say farewell, Diana. It is a little word, but — sometimes it means much. Only farewell!

DIA. Why — Armand! (*Looking into his eyes.*) One — one would think you were sorry to go!

DE B. I am. Deeply sorry, Diana.

DIA. (*surprised at his emotion*). Are you — are you in earnest, Armand?

DE B. (*sighing*). Yes, Diana — I am in earnest!

DIA. (*looking earnestly at him*). Armand! Why, this is music from heaven! Months have passed since you spoke to me in this way! What can it mean?

DE B. You know that I have a foolish unreasoning faith in presentiment. Well, I have a foreboding that a calamity is in store for you — that grave sorrow may come upon you before long. You are in the habit of laughing at my forebodings, but they impress me, and I cannot shake them off. And so, Diana, I am very sad at leaving you.

DIA. A calamity! (*Suddenly.*) You have no quarrel on hand? You are not in any danger?

DE B. No — I know of none. (*Diana relieved.*) Yet if a heavy blow should fall on you during my absence —

DIA. Do you mean if you should die?

DE B. Put it in that way, if you will. If my foreboding should come true — if it should come to pass that you find yourself husbandless — harden your heart towards me, my child, and remember that I am one who is not worth weeping for — that I am a cold, cruel, self-seeking man, who has so poor an appreciation of wifely love that he has dared to repay your priceless devotion with coldness, indifference, and neglect. Bah! such a man is not worth a tear.

Dia. Armand, it is cruel — it is foolish to say these things to me! There is a quiver in your voice which gives them the lie. Oh, forget my reproaches! When you hold me to you as you hold me now, I know that I have misjudged you, and my heart harks back to the days when your love was as the torrid sun, and I live once more the supreme life that I lived then. It is not that you have not loved me enough, but that I have loved you too well. Oh, my God, can it be that the love I had I have again? It will abide with you, Armand, while you are away — and it will come back with you — it will come back with you? (*Kneels, sobbing at his feet.*)

DE B. Yes, yes. Diana — surely — surely! There, there — be brave and strong! I am not worth such love. Diana — let me go, or I shall break down!

DIA. No — stop there — stop there — give me time to stamp this moment on my memory! There — I have it — go — I can bear it now!

DE B. Farewell, Diana! There — think of me at my worst, and waste no time on me! Adieu! [*Exit DE BRÉVILLE hastily.*]

DIA. (*staggers to a table, on which she rests*). He is gone! This parting, that has brooded over me like a bird of evil omen during the past week, it is over, and — God help me! — it has left me happier than I have been for months past! What in Heaven's name is the cause of this strange sense of calm relief, as if some wringing pain had been suddenly assuaged? (*Suddenly, as if a light had broken on her.*) The man loves me! loves me! Ah, God, it is that! It has all come back to me again! There has been a dark and sombre interval — an interval of gloom and deadness — but the cloud has passed, and the glorious sun beams full upon me in all its torrid fervour — as of old — as of old!

Enter SERVANT, with card.

SERV. A gentleman desires to see Madame la Vicomtesse.

DIA. To see *me*! (*Takes card.*) Sir Cuthbert Jameson! Show this gentleman in, at once! (*Exit SERVANT.*) Sir Cuthbert Jameson, of all men! It is well that he comes at this moment; it is well that he comes when I can tell him, frankly and truthfully, that I am as happy as he could desire me to be!

Enter SERVANT, showing in SIR CUTHBERT.

Ah, Sir Cuthbert, this is indeed a most welcome and most delightful surprise! I cannot tell you how overjoyed I am to see you, my dear, dear old friend!

SIR C. Thank you heartily for your kind reception. I should have given you notice of my intention to call upon you, but I started for Paris at an hour's notice, and I arrived only an hour ago, and — well, I couldn't wait! And how is Armand, and where is he?

DIA. How unfortunate! He has just left for Monte Carlo on his way to Naples. He will be very sorry when he learns that he has missed you. Ten minutes sooner and you would have seen him.

SIR C. That's unlucky indeed, for I have a proposal to make to which his consent is indispensable.

DIA. A proposal?

SIR C. Yes. I don't, as a rule, interfere in other people's affairs, but I confess I am not quite happy about this marriage of yours — without the consent and approval of his parents.

DIA. But you know how we were situated. I wrote and told you all.

SIR C. Yes, yes! Well, we won't discuss that. You know my views on the subject of concealment in such matters, and there's no necessity to repeat them. The mischief's done, and now the only question is — What is the best thing to do, and can I be of any service in helping you to do it?

DIA. You are very, very kind.

SIR C. Not a bit. I'm a fidgety old fellow, whose mind is not at rest upon this matter, and in my own interests I want to quiet it — that's all. Now, in the first place, have your husband's parents been informed of his marriage?

DIA. Yes. Armand wrote to them (they are at Tours — his father is the General commanding the district), telling them everything.

SIR C. Come, that's well. And they?

DIA. They contented themselves with a cold acknowledgment of the receipt of his letter.

SIR C. That is all?

DIA. That is all.

SIR C. Then, surely, if there ever was a case for an intermediary this is one. I will wire to De Bréville for his sanction, and as soon as I get it I will start for Tours, and the deuce is in it if I don't bring them round. I can start to-morrow and be back again in a couple of days, and perhaps bring them with me. Now — what do you say?

DIA. I say that you are a good, true, and tried friend, and that whatever you think it right to do will be the best thing that could be done.

SIR C.

Then I take that as consent. Now, tell me about yourself. You are well and thoroughly happy?

DIA. Quite well, and, but for the difficulty you have referred to, as happy as ever I was in my life.

SIR C. Come, that's good news indeed. And you don't find it irksome to be chained down to one spot?

DIA. I must make the best of a necessity which, after all, is not so very terrible. Of course, this is very unlike the life I intended to lead, but since the failure of the Brisbane Bank our resources have been much straitened, and when Armand has to go abroad he cannot afford to take me with him. But you must not suppose that I am complaining.

SIR C. You are a brave lady, indeed. And so Armand is on his way to Monte Carlo?

DIA. For a few days only — on his way to Naples.

SIR C. He will find an old friend at Monte Carlo or at Naples — her Grace of Dundee.

DIA. (*surprised*). The Duchess of Dundee?

SIR C. Yes — didn't you know she was there?

DIA. (*agitated*). No. No, I did not know it.

SIR C. Oh, yes. The jolly widow is (in her expressive vernacular) simply making the place hum. She has bought a lovely *château* — the Villa Bonaventura. She gives magnificent *fêtes* — plays heavily — doesn't care what she loses — and altogether, as she says, does her best to make up the lee-way that she lost when Tommy was more or less alive. She spends her time between Monte Carlo and Naples, running backwards and forwards in her fifteen hundred ton steam yacht, the Flying Eagle. Altogether, she's the presiding genius of the place.

DIA. (*aside*). He did not tell me that that woman was there. He must have known it — why did he keep it from me? He knows that I hate her — hate her!

SIR C. (*noticing her agitation*). My dear lady, what in the world is the matter?

DIA. Nothing — nothing — (*after a pause, throws herself sobbing on the sofa*) — Oh, I see it all now! Oh, my God, I see it all — I see it all!

SIR C. Come, come — this won't do! Surely there is nothing to distress you in the fact that the Duchess happens to be at Monte Carlo?

DIA. Sir Cuthbert, I told you just now that I was as happy as I have ever been. When I spoke it was true, for my husband — cold, polite, insensible as a rule — had displayed an emotion at leaving me which filled me with a joy to which I have been for months a stranger. But I have good reason to believe that this woman attracts him — he concealed from me the fact that she is there — and he has gone to her. That's all — he has gone to her!

SIR C. My dear Vicomtesse, you are surely torturing yourself with groundless suspicions. The Duchess is —

DIA. The duchess is an old flame of his — he was once engaged to marry her. When he went to London he stopped at her house in Park Lane. His letters to me were dated from the Embassy, and I only learnt the truth through the gossip of a Society paper. Now, although we are desperately pressed for money, he takes Monte Carlo on his road to Naples — whither she is in the habit of going — in her steam yacht — in her steam yacht!

SIR C. But all this is open to very obvious explanation.

DIA. It is open to an explanation that might, perhaps, satisfy anybody but a jealous woman. But I *am* a jealous woman, and I am not prepared to accept miraculous coincidences. It is well that you should know the truth. When I was rich, he loved me after the manner of his kind — when I lost all, his affection, such as it was, cooled down, and for months past I have lived the life of the damned — loving him with an intensity that even his coldness could not abate — sitting, as it were, by the bedside of his dying love — watching it as it grew day

by day weaker and weaker, and trying to blind myself to the certainty that its death was close at hand!

SIR C. That I feel deeply for you I need hardly say, but I am convinced that you have no ground for jealousy of the Duchess. She is frightfully frank, direct, and outspoken, but if I have any knowledge of human nature, she is incapable of an intrigue with a married man.

DIA. But that is just the point! How do I know that she knows that he *is* married? Is it likely that he would have revealed the fact to her, of all women? In her eyes he is as single as ever he was — and there, my dear old friend, is the case in a nutshell, and look at it as you will, you can't make more of it or less of it than I have done.

Enter SERVANT.

SERV. A lady and gentleman desire to see Madame la Vicomtesse.

DIA. I am engaged — I can see no one.

SERV. (*handing cards*). Pardon, Madame, but I believe they are the father and mother of M. le Vicomte.

DIA. His father and mother! What did you say?

SERV. I said that I was not sure that Madame was receiving to-day.

DIA. They must have returned unexpectedly from Tours. (*To* SIR CUTHBERT.) What shall I do?

SIR C. You must see them — you can't deny yourself to them.

DIA. (*after a pause*). Inform M. le Marquis and Madame la Marquise de Bréville that I will receive them. [*Exit* SERVANT.]

SIR C. Perhaps I had better go?

DIA. On the contrary, your presence, if you will be so good as to remain, will give me courage. Pray don't leave me.

SIR C. As you please.

Enter SERVANT, *ushering the* MARQUIS and MARQUISE DE BRÉVILLE. (*The* MARQUIS *is dressed in the undress uniform of a General of Division.*) *Exit* SERVANT.

MARQUIS. I believe I have the honour to address the Vicomtesse de Bréville. (*She bows.*) Permit me to introduce myself. I am the Marquis de Bréville — this lady is the Marquise — and we are the parents of the gentleman to whom, as we have recently learned, you were secretly married some six months since.

DIA. I need hardly say that my husband's father and mother are honoured visitors at my husband's house. Pray be seated.

MARQUIS. You are very good. This gentleman? (*alluding to* SIR CUTHBERT).

DIA. This gentleman is Sir Cuthbert Jameson, an old and trusted friend of my husband's and of my own. Sir Cuthbert possesses our fullest confidence, and you may speak in his presence without reserve.

MARQUIS. I am honoured in making the acquaintance of Sir Cuthbert Jameson. Then, Madame, I will proceed at once to the object of our visit. In the first place, I beg that what I have to say shall not be interpreted in any way as personal to yourself, but simply as

addressed to a lady, whoever she may be, whom our son has privately married without his parents' consent.

MARQUISE. You will understand, Madame, that we are far from assuming that the lady our son has married is not in every way fit to be his wife, but it is only right that before we acknowledge her in that capacity we should be supplied with ample proof that she is such a lady as we, if our son had thought proper to consult us, would have fully approved.

DIA. That, Madame la Marquise, is quite reasonable.

MARQUIS. At the same time it would be folly to blind ourselves to the fact that if our son believed it to be impolitic to take the customary and filial course of presenting that lady to his parents, he must have had some powerful motive for this abstention. But it is not impossible that this may be susceptible of some explanation, and upon this point also the Marquise and I are open to conviction.

MARQUISE. We love our son dearly, Madame, and so we would gladly be convinced.

DIA. I admit that the secrecy of our marriage is scarcely calculated to prejudice you in my favour. But I must say at once that for this secrecy your son is responsible. My own feeling was that concealment was undignified, unnecessary, unfilial, and calculated to provoke misconstruction.

MARQUIS. Madame, the sentiment redounds to your honour. May I ask how it was that our son was uninfluenced by its good sense?

DIA. He conceived that if our engagement were avowed you would raise objection to it on the ground that my father was occupied in commerce, whereas your natural affection for your son would induce you to forgive him after he had taken a step that was irrevocable. I confess that the argument appeared to me to be unjust to yourselves, to himself, and to me; but he was firm upon the point, and, as I loved your son, I obeyed him.

MARQUIS. (*coldly*). Not altogether unjust, Madame. To be quite frank with you, not altogether unjust. It is right that I should admit at once that if I had been informed that my son intended to contract a *mésalliance* I should unquestionably have forbidden the engagement. (*Marquis and Marquise rise.*)

Sir C. A *mésalliance* ! Why, sir, when you apply such a term to your son's marriage with this lady you cannot be aware —

DIA. (*rising*). Stay, Sir Cuthbert. M. le Marquis has expressed his views in terms that admit of no discussion. As to my birth, I am the daughter of an Australian merchant, who made a fortune and bequeathed it to me. Most of that fortune I have unhappily lost, and I am now quite poor. I have nothing to add except that I love your son and I am his wife. You will perhaps forgive me if I suggest that this interview has reached its natural termination. (*Exit DIANA.*)

SIR C. M. le Marquis, I must tell you that (quite unwittingly, I am sure) you do this lady a grave injustice.

MARQUIS. It distresses me, Sir Cuthbert Jameson, that you should think so, but it is possible that you do not quite appreciate the sentiment that actuates us. We of the old Noblesse are (as you would describe it) greatly prejudiced against alliances between one of our order and a lady, however worthy in other respects, of inferior birth. It is an act which we are so narrow-minded as to consider unpardonable.

SIR C. Sir, this lady's father was in every sense a gentleman, and my own intimate friend. His daughter is an accomplished lady, whom any man, even though he were descended from Pépin himself, might be proud to marry.

MARQUIS. Sir, you speak as an English gentleman — frankly and straightforwardly, but entirely (forgive me) from your own point of view. In your country — a country in which men and women of distinguished rank do not think it beneath them to engage in trade — I believe I am right in this?

SIR C. Well, of late years people of rank with narrow means have not thought it discreditable to work for their living.

MARQUIS. So I have understood. In a country in which this singular anomaly is recognized and permitted by its ancient aristocracy, I can well believe that our prejudice against trade may appear to be illiberal and narrow-minded. Still it exists, and must therefore be reckoned with.

SIR C. Well, sir, now that I know your views upon this point, I must admit that in keeping his intended marriage secret from you, your son was not as blameworthy as I supposed him to be.

MARQUIS. And you will pardon me, Sir Cuthbert Jameson, if I remind you that he is always blameworthy who defies the laws of his country.

SIR C. How do you mean? What law has he defied?

MARQUIS. He has broken the 183rd Article of the Civil Code, which declares that before a man who is under the age of twenty-five may marry he must obtain the consent of his father and mother — or whichever of them may be living.

SIR C. But how does this apply? Your son is eight or nine and twenty.

MARQUISE. Forgive me, sir—six months since, when he married, our son wanted four months of twenty-five.

SIR C. You amaze me beyond measure!

MARQUISE. You will not tell me, sir, that our son has deceived you upon this point?

SIR C. I certainly cannot, at this moment, charge my memory with any direct statement of his to that effect, but the impression on my mind —

MARQUIS. Still, sir, it is beyond all question that he was under legal age when he went through the form of marriage with this lady — consequently his act in marrying her without our consent is not only unpardonable — it is illegal. Forgive me, sir, if we appear to you to be unreasonable, but you are an Englishman, and you do not understand these things. We have the honour to wish you good-day.

[They are about to leave the room. Enter Diana, deadly pale and trembling with agitation. She holds an open letter in her hand.]

DIA. Stay — do not go yet. Something has happened, and you must hear it. I have just received a letter — from your son. It was written — before he left — and has been brought to me — by a commissionaire from the railway station. Sir Cuthbert — read it to them — I can't — I can't! (*Sir Cuthbert takes the letter and reads.*)

SIR C. (*reads*). 'It pains me deeply to have to reveal to you, by means of a letter, a terrible catastrophe which, I frankly admit, I had not the courage to break to you, face to face. When we were married I was, unfortunately, still under legal age. This fact justifies my parents in

taking steps to have our marriage declared null and void (*Marquis and Marquise make an indignant exclamation*) ; and knowing my father as I do, I cannot doubt that he will at once apply to the courts for a decree to that effect. But as the fault is mine, and not theirs, so it is I, and not they, who should bear the odium of these proceedings.' So, this is the son for whom this pure and peerless woman was not good enough! This scoundrel is the creature to whose miserable pride of birth this honourable lady is to be sacrificed! These are the parents whose blue blood must not be contaminated, even in their descendants, by admixture with that of a blameless English lady! You pride yourselves upon your nobility — there is not a scavenger in England who would not consider himself degraded if he stooped to such an act of infamy! But I am an Englishman, God be thanked, and so I do not understand these things!

DIA. Well, sir, your son has spoken. He — my husband — in whose honour I trusted — in whose love I placed my whole faith — to whom I gave all I had in blind, unreasoning trust — he has spoken, and you have heard. You — his mother — have you no woman's heart in your bosom that you have nothing to say to this? You — his father — do you accept the position in which your son has placed you? You say nothing. Is it because this is nothing to you? Why, man, do you understand that this is ruin to me — ruin utter, absolute, and complete? This is done to save you the shame of doing it! If he did not do it, you would — do you understand that? Do you understand that I, blinded by the love of this man — deafened to all reason by the love of this man — my very brain addled by the love of this man — am about to be cruelly, foully sacrificed at the altar of his honour — his honour! — and that it is in your name that this dastard blow is to be struck?

MARQUIS. Madame, you judge hastily, and so erroneously. It pains me inexpressibly to have to admit that our unworthy son — our son no longer — has shamefully calumniated us.

SIR C., DIA. What!

MARQUIS. Sir Cuthbert Jameson, I beg you to believe that nothing was further from our intention than to take the step you have described in words which, strong as they are, are not stronger than such a course would justify. When we came here to-day the only question in our minds was whether we should receive this lady into the bosom of our family. It never entered our minds to compass the ruin of an honourable lady, whom our son has shamefully lured into a secret marriage, by applying to have that marriage set aside. It is true that the law empowers us to do this, but that law is as infamous as he who would resort to it. It is not thus that French gentlemen are accustomed to act, Sir Cuthbert Jameson. (*Sir Cuthbert bows.*)

MARQUISE (*kneeling at DIANA'S feet*). Dear lady, my husband has spoken for himself and for me. Still, I implore you to deal gently with us, for he was my boy and I loved him, and he is dead to me, and I am sorrowing at his grave. Dear lady, you have lost a husband — I a son. In this hour of tribulation this should be a sacred bond between us — so let us comfort one another — let us comfort one another!

MARQUIS. My wife says truly, Madame. When we came here to-day the question in our minds was whether we should receive you as a daughter. That is no longer a question. I take you to my heart as one to whom, in atonement for the outrage to which you have been subjected at the hands of this unworthy man, we owe infinite reparation. I have lost a son, but I have found a daughter! (*MARQUIS embraces DIANA, who kneels sobbing at his feet.*)

SLOW CURTAIN.

ACT III. – Widowed.

SCENE. — *Library in the DUCHESS'S villa at Monte Carlo.* MR. MCFIE, *her secretary, discovered with* CAPTAIN MUNRO, *the Skipper of her yacht.*

MCFIE. Well, Captain Munro, her Grace bids me tell ye that the 'Flying Eagle' is to up-anchor and get under steam for New York the day after to-morrow.

CAPT. That's shortish notice. Let's see — we must go to Marseilles to-day to coal and ship stores, and — well, of course, it *can* be done. Same party of passengers returning in her?

MCFIE. Nay; there'll be just a varra important addeetion. No less a personage than the Vicomte de Bréville — the gentleman to whom her Grace is to be married on her arrival at Chicago.

CAPT. Aye, aye! French gentleman, isn't he?

MCFIE. Aye, he's a Frenchman, pur body. He's to have stateroom No. 3, next to Col. and Mrs. Pogson E. Bewilder. Her Grace wrote to him on her arrival, two days ago, to tell him she intended to take him back with her in her yacht, and he wires from Ventimiglia to say he'll be here this afternoon.

CAPT. Well, that's prompt. *Young* gentleman, I believe, this time?

MCFIE. Young? Just a rideeculously raw boy! Sax-and-twenty, sir! Sax-and-twenty!

CAPT. Well, that's only fair — eighty-four and twenty-six — average that, and it pans out fifty-five. Business man?

MCFIE. Well, not exactly, but I should say he's gifted with a varra remarkable business instinct. He's as poor as a rat, and he's secured a Duchess with £85,000 a year.

CAPT. Well, it does him credit. Good day, Mr. McFie. You can tell her Grace that the yacht will be ready to weigh any time after ten on Thursday morning.

MCFIE. I'll mention it. Good day, Captain Munro. (*Exit CAPTAIN*) Ah, it's a peety — a verra great peety! A magnificent wumman — in the prime o' life — not a day over forty — with her intellect matured, and all her physical faculties in the highest state of development, just squandering hersel' on an incomplete Frenchman of sax-and-twenty! Why, the man won't be finished for a quarter of a century yet! But a wumman's just anither name for a fule! — take 'em when ye will and where ye will and how ye will, that's a' ye can make of 'em!

Enter DUCHESS.

DUCH. Mr. McFie, when Mr. de Bréville arrives put him in the pink room, please. 'Tain't over big, but it's only for two days, and it's the only spare room left.

MCFIE. Certainly, your Grace.

DUCH. Now about these two swindling people — the Dudley Coxes. Is the detective here?

MCFIE. Yes, your Grace. He's sent wurd to say that he's just arrived from London with a warrant for their arrest on a charge of endeavouring to obtain a sum of £200 from his late Grace's estate on a false pretence. The detective will be here, I expect, in about ten minutes.

DUCH. Very well. When he comes show him into the ante-room and let me know. When is Mr. Dudley Coxe to call?

MCFIE. Well, he's due now.

DUCH. Have you got his letters?

MCFIE. Here are two which he wrote to his Grace asking him what had become of the £200 which he entrusted to his Grace at Port Said a year ago to be employed at the tables on Mr. Coxe's behalf —

DUCH. Ah, that's a poor shot of Coxe's! To my certain knowledge the Duke never staked a cent since '42, when he ruined himself at Chicken Hazard. Well?

MCFIE. And this is the note he addressed to your Grace yesterday, informing you that as an old and intimate friend of the late Duke he would do himself the pleasure of calling on your Grace at three to-day. Ah. (*Looking out of window.*) no doubt this is he, coming up the drive.

DUCH. Good — show him in here. *I'll* see the man.

MCFIE (*doubtfully*). There's — there's the young wumman with him who passes as his wife.

DUCH. Well, what of that? My sakes, I'm not squeamish! Show 'em both in, and mind, whatever you do, don't you scare 'em, *I'll* do that.

MCFIE. As your Grace pleases. [*Exit* MCFIE.]

DUCH. (*taking up letters*). Now, Mr. Dudley Coxe, look you out for squalls. I've got a rod in pickle for you which'll just whip you into pink fits, or I'm not Euphemia S. Dundee.

[*Exit Duchess* .

Re-enter MCFIE, followed by Mr. and MRS. DUDLEY COXE.

MCFIE. If ye'll just be so good as to tak' a seat, Mr. Coxe, her Grace will be with ye in a moment.

MR. COXE. I — I trust we're not intruding upon the Duchess?

MRS. COXE. If so, we can so easily call at another time.

MCFIE. Nay, by no means — her Grace fully expects ye, sir. I assure you she's just looking forward to your visit with the varra greatest interest imaginable.

MR. COXE. Really, the Duchess is most kind— *most* kind. (*Exit* MCFIE.) There, Godiva, what did I tell you? Mind you, there's no greater mistake on earth than to approach this class of people as if you were conscious of some social inferiority.

MRS. COXE. You were quite right, Dudley — your tact and knowledge of the world are simply marvellous. Only — no doubt you had some good reason for it — but wasn't it rather rash to say that we were old and intimate friends of the Duke? You know you only met him for half an hour at Port Said — for we were confined to our cabins with sea-sickness all the way to Marseilles.

MR. COXE. My dear Godiva, no man is less likely to brag of an intimacy with this class of people than I am. But we're in a serious difficulty, and it must be dealt with tactfully. Those infernal tables have cleaned us out, and our luggage is impounded for our hotel bill. By a rare stroke of good luck this Yankee Duchess turns up in the very nick of time. Now I have to convince her that I lodged £200 with her late husband to be employed on my account. If I admitted that my acquaintance with him was a purely casual one, do you suppose that she (who knows nothing, mind you, of my singular faculty for reading off a man's character at a glance) would believe me? No. Consequently, my obvious course is to allow her to suppose

that the Duke and I were intimate friends, between whom such transactions were matters of every-day occurrence.

MRS. COXE. Of course! How shrewd of you, dear!

MR. COXE. Tact, my good girl — mere tact — nothing more. Hark! I hear her coming!
(*Nervously settling his tie.*)

MRS. COXE (*anxiously*). Is my hat straight, dear?

MR. COXE. Yes, yes — bother your hat!

MRS. COXE. (*hurt*). Dudley!

Enter DUCHESS.

DUCH. Why, Mr. Coxe, how du you du? I've heard so much about you that it's real treat to make your acquaintance. Why, I've been looking for you these six months past!

MR. COXE. Your Grace is extremely kind. Will you permit me to present my wife — Mrs. Coxe-Coxe?

DUCH. Mrs. Coxe-Coxe. (*Shakes hands.*) Well now, I du declare this is most kind and unceremonious. As an old friend of my husband's, Mr. Coxe (*COXE suggests 'Coxe-Coxe'*) it's a real treat to me to make your acquaintance, and I can't say how much obliged I am to you for writing to tell me you were coming. I wouldn't have missed you, Mr. Coxe (*COXE murmurs 'Coxe-Coxe'*) not for a sackful of dollars, and that's so. Are you making a long stay here?

MR. COXE. No — that is — we were thinking of leaving tomorrow —

MRS. COXE. (*hastily*). But we *may* be unexpectedly detained.

DUCH. That's not at all unlikely. One never knows one's luck. (*MCFIE enters and whispers to DUCHESS.*) Oh — very good. I'll speak to him in the ante-room. May I ask you just to excuse me for one minute, Mrs. Coxe? (*COXE murmurs 'Coxe-Coxe.'*) I'll be back again before you can wink.

MRS. COXE. Oh, Duchess — certainly. (*MR. COXE opens door. Exit DUCHESS.*)

MR. COXE. It's all right, Godiva! I've done it! We're free — we shall get our money!

MRS. COXE. What a delightful woman — and how truly humorous — 'back again before we can wink.' So terse and expressive! So thoroughly frank and unassuming — and such perfect mourning!

MR. COXE. Unassuming! Well, why shouldn't she be? Her father was only a pork-butcher in a high state of development. Unassuming; I like that! After all, who's better than an English lady? Not a Chicago pig-woman, whomsoever she marries!

MRS. COXE. *Do* you think she'll ask us down to Glenbogie? Oh, *do* you think she'll ask us down to Glenbogie?

MR. COXE. Why shouldn't she? She ought to consider herself deuced lucky to get us.

MRS. COXE. How wild it would make the Fitz Abrahams!

MR. COXE. And the De Warrens! That snob De Warren would black a Duke's boots if he had the chance. Now the question is—how to approach the money matter. I don't exactly want to offend her, but we've only fourteen francs left.

MRS. COXE. Oh, for goodness sake don't offend her — that would never do! But with your consummate tact —

MR. COXE. Oh, I'll manage it — leave it to me!

Enter DUCHESS.

DUCH. A thousand apologies — a person from London on business of some importance.

MR. COXE. If we are in the way — (*Both rise.*)

DUCH. Why, you're not going? Rubbish! Sit you down again. Now I've found you I don't mean to lose sight of you in a hurry, I promise you!

MR. COXE (*sitting*). You are most kind, I'm sure.

DUCH. Not in the least, I do assure you. I mean to see considerable of you before I've done, Mr. Coxe. (*COXE murmurs 'Coxe-Coxe.'*) By the way, my secretary tells me that my poor old hub received some letters from you just before his death.

MR. COXE (*pretending not to understand*). Some letters? No — I think not.

MRS. COXE. Yes, dear — you forget — about the system.

MR. COXE. Oh, to be sure — of course — yes, I recollect! Oh, yes, I did write to the Duke — twice, I think.

DUCH. Business letters?

MR. COXE. Well, yes — a mere nothing — hardly worth mentioning. Still, as a matter of fact, they *were* business letters.

DUCH. Anything I can attend to? If so — pray don't hesitate to say so.

MR. COXE. Well, really it was such an insignificant matter that — well, it was partly this: — As you no doubt know, the poor Duke had an infallible system at roulette — given him by some Archimandrite or other on his death-bed.

DUCH. The Duke's death-bed?

MR. COXE. No — the Archimandrite's; and when we met at Port Said I left a trifle with him—

DUCH. With the Archimandrite?

MR. COXE. No, with the Duke — to be staked on my behalf, and my letters were merely to ask if anything had been done with it — that's all.

DUCH. And you received no reply?

MR. COXE. Well, no — oddly enough.

DUCH. As an old friend that must have surprised you.

MR. COXE. Well, it did, because we were always on such very good terms — and I can't tell you how delighted I was to hear that his Grace was dead, because that explained his silence so satisfactorily.

MRS. COXE (*aside*). Dudley's tact is wonderful!

DUCH. He gave you some acknowledgment, I guess?

MR. COXE. Oh, no — no — we — we never took receipts from each other!

DUCH. Just like poor Tommy! But we must be more business-like. Now it's quite clear that this sum — whatever it was —

MR. COXE. What was it, Godiva?

MRS. COXE. Two hundred pounds, dear, you said.

DUCH. Must be due to you now, because the Duke was confined to his room with gout during the whole time of his stay here, and certainly never showed his nose inside the Casino anyhow.

MR. COXE. Indeed? Then, ha! ha! if we *are* to take a strictly prosaic view of the situation, as your Grace insists, it does look as though I had some sort of claim on his Grace's estate, though, to be perfectly frank with you, it never occurred to me to look at it in that light until you mentioned it.

DUCH. Some sort of claim! Why, my dear Mr. Coxe (*COXE murmurs 'Coxe-Coxe'*), by your own showing it's a distinct debt, and I may as well write you a cheque at once! (*Writes.*)

MRS. COXE (*aside*). Dudley, you're a genius!

MR. COXE (*aside*). Told you I'd manage it!

DUCH. There you are. I'll take a receipt, please, because I shall have to claim against the executors.

MR. COXE. Most certainly. (*Writes.*)

MRS. COXE. It's really most kind of your Grace. You can have no idea from what a series of dreadful embarrassments you have freed us —

MR. COXE (*hastily*). Godiva — a postage stamp.

MRS. COXE. Certainly, Dudley — here it is. (*Gives him a stamp, which he puts on to receipt.*)

MR. COXE (*aside*). For God's sake, Godiva, don't give us away! (*Aloud—giving DUCHESS the receipt*) There — with many thanks, Duchess. And now, if we *do* leave to-morrow, I hope you will allow us to do ourselves the pleasure of calling on you when you return to England.

MRS. COXE. It will be so delightful to know for certain that we shall see your Grace again.

DUCH. Oh, you are sure to see me again. I shall be bound over, you know.

MR. COXE. Bound over?

DUCH. To prosecute.

MR. COXE. To prosecute?

DUCH. Yes — they'll want my evidence — at the trial.

MR. COXE. I'm afraid I'm very stupid, but may I ask — what trial?

DUCH. Why, yours and your wife's, of course.

MR. COXE. I don't understand —

DUCH. Great snakes, man, your trial — for obtaining £200 from me by false pretences.

MR. COXE. Duchess!

MRS. COXE. Dudley — what does she mean?

MR. COXE. I presume this is a joke.

DUCH. Well, I don't know — you must have a keen sense of humour if you see any fun in it. You see, you were mistaken in supposing that you spoke to the Duke at Port Said, because I didn't quit him for a moment till he was snugly tucked up in his state room, which he never once left till he reached Marseilles — and as to you having entrusted money to him to stake with, why he's never so much as risked a dollar on a gamble this fifty years.

MR. COXE. But on my honour as a gentleman he told me that he had a system —

DUCH. Well, so he had, of a sort, poor old man — but it broke up near a year ago. And it certainly wasn't a system that any one in his senses would have staked his money upon, anyhow. (*Calling at door.*) Now, Mr. Pollard, if you please.

Enter POLLARD, a detective.

MR. COXE. I'm absolutely at a loss to understand —

POLLARD. Mr. and Mrs. Dudley Coxe-Coxe, I hold a warrant for your arrest, duly backed by a Bow Street magistrate. (*Putting handcuffs on them.*) And it's my duty to caution you that any statement you may make will be used in evidence against you.

MR. COXE. But—

MRS. COXE. Oh, Dudley, Dudley, say something, unless you wish to see your wife a galley slave!

MR. COXE. This — this is most unwarrantable — most disgraceful. (*To DUCHESS.*) You shall pay for this, m'am. This is not the United States — this is a free country — at least England is — and you commit this outrage at your peril.

[During this Mrs. Coxe-Coxe, who is sobbing, has been unsuccessfully endeavouring to get her handkerchief out of her handbag, but is prevented by handcuffs.]

MRS. COXE. Dudley — (*sniff*) — my handkerchief — (*sniff*).

MR. COXE. Certainly, my love. (*takes it out of her hand-bag and dabs her eyes and nose with it*).

Enter BARKER.

BAR. Your Grace wished to speak to me?

MR. COXE (*astonished*). Why, there is the very man I lent the money to!

MRS. COXE. Oh, sir, you will endorse my husband's statement — the £200 that he entrusted to you at Port Said. They've put these dreadful things upon us because he claimed the money.

BAR. I don't know what the lady means.

DUCH. This person is my courier — Mr. John Barker.

MR. COXE. Courier! *You* a confounded courier? Why, this low-bred scoundrel allowed me to believe that he was — a — a —

DUCH. Your old and intimate friend?

MR. COXE. A — yes — and took the £200. A courier, Godiva, a damned courier!

BAR. I don't know what you mean, sir. I have never represented that I am the Duke of Dundee, and I never saw you in my life before.

Enter DE BRÉVILLE, as from a journey.

DE B. That statement is not true, Mr. Barker.

DUCH. Armand!

DE B. You certainly entered into conversation with Mr. Coxe at Port Said, and I happen to know that he was under the impression that he was speaking to the Duke of Dundee.

BAR. It's not my fault if Mr. Coxe mistook me for his Grace. The money was employed as Mr. Coxe directed. I lost it in fair play.

DUCH. Very good — you can go, and don't come back. Take you your books to Mr. McFie—he will settle with you. Be off!

[*Exit BARKER.*]

MR. COXE. Mr. De Bréville, we are deeply indebted to you for your timely interposition. (*Both shaking hands with him.*) Excuse me—it's difficult in these things: I'm not used to them.

DE B. No apologies, Mr. Coxe, I beg. (*To POLLARD.*) You may remove these things. (*POLLARD takes off handcuffs from both.*) Duchess, these are merely two of Nature's noblepeople who have got themselves into difficulties through an amiable desire to associate with their superiors in mere social rank. Do not let us press hardly on them. After all, it was a tribute to the charm of his Grace's society.

MR. COXE. Let me tell you, sir —

DE B. It is an excusable ambition, Mr. Coxe, which you share with many of your amiable countrymen and women. But, my good Coxe (*COXE shouts 'Coxe-Coxe, sir!'*) permit me to give you a hint. If you are an amateur of blacking, lick the boots of as many noblemen as will permit you to do so — ah, there are plenty! —but before you begin, make quite sure that the blacking has the proper aristocratic bouquet. The blacking of a courier is not nice.

MR. COXE. Why, you infernal Frenchman — (*Going up threateningly to DE BRÉVILLE, who turns suddenly on him.*)

DE B. Well, sir?

MRS. COXE. Oh, do come away, Dudley! He's not a gentleman — he'll call you out!

MR. COXE. You're right. He's beneath my notice! And as for you, ma'am (*to Duchess*), take your cheque, ma'am! (*Handing it to her.*)

MRS. COXE. Oh, Dudley!

MR. COXE. Take your cheque! I've not the advantage of knowing what the code of etiquette may be in Chicago pork circles, but it may interest you to learn that in a civilized country no one has a right to hold his head higher than an English gentleman!

MRS. COXE. Oh, Dudley, don't be too hard upon her! You are so trenchant!

MR. COXE. Trenchant! She's brought it on herself, and it serves her right! Come away, Godiva.

[*De Bréville opens window for Mr. Coxe. Coxe goes up to him.*]

MR. COXE. You — you'd feel uncommonly small if you knew the profound contempt I have for you — you —

MRS. COXE. Oh, do come away, Dudley! (*Drags him off backwards.*)

[POLLARD *exits into ante-room*. DUCHESS *looks after them for a moment, and then sits down to write*.

De B. Duchess, have you no welcome for me?

DUCH. Welcome? Why, I'm just bubblin' over with it — only let me get these people off my mind first and you'll see, my dear!

DE B. What people?

DUCH. These poor Dudley Coxes.

DE B. Ah, never concern yourself about those snobs!

DUCH. Well, Coxe is a snob — there's no two ways out of that. But, Lord bless you, so am I! I've worked a bit harder and paid a bit dearer than he has to get into good society — and, after all, he was only claiming what he believed to be his own. (*Rings.*) So there's his cheque — and much good may it do him. (*Enter SERVANT.*) Take that note to the Hôtel de Paris — there's no answer. (*Exit SERVANT.*) And now, Armand — *now* for the welcome! It's real smart of you to turn up just in time. The yacht's laying off Nice, and we up-anchor on Friday. In a fortnight we ought to rise Sandy Hook, and in a week or so after that you'll — well, you'll be about the richest Frenchman 'tween this and Dunkirk. Why, gracious, De Bréville, what's wrong? You look as down on your luck as a damp eagle on the moult!

DE B. Duchess, there is much that is wrong, and I must tell you at once that I am the wrong-doer.

DUCH. Why, what on airth are you steering at?

DE B. I have been guilty of a mean and miserable injustice, and I have come here to ask you, as the good and great-hearted woman I know you to be, to encourage me to repair it.

DUCH. Why, yes — if dollars will do it it's as good as done. But whom, in pity's name, have you been injusting? Not a woman, De Bréville — don't say it's a woman!

DE B. Alas, it is a woman!

DUCH. Not a young one, De Bréville — don't say it's a young one!

DE B. A young, beautiful, and blameless woman.

DUCH. (*aside*). Oh, what's coming — what's coming! (*Aloud.*) Who — who is she?

DE B. She is, at present, my wife.

DUCH. Your what!!! Do you mean to tell me that when you came messing around me in Park Lane you were a married man!

DE B. Before I became of age I went through the form of marriage with a lady. I need not tell you how good and how beautiful a lady, for you knew her on board the *Africa* as Diana Caverel.

DUCH. (*moaning*). Oh, I might have guessed it — I might have guessed it!

DE B. As I had designedly omitted to obtain my parents' consent, that marriage is voidable, and, as matters stand, will be annulled in a fortnight's time.

DUCH. And do you mean to tell me that you — great, big brawny tiger-shooter as you are — deserted that unhappy young critter because your Poppa and your Mumma refused their consent?

DE B. I had not even that poor excuse, for my parents, in their righteous indignation at the outrage I had committed, took her to their hearts and disowned me.

DUCH. Bully for them, anyhow! Well, I s'pose I've deserved this, but it comes hard and heavy for all that — vurry hard and vurry heavy! But there — I'll take it that I treated you real mean two years since, and you're payin' me back in my own coin. Tain't handsome, De Bréville, but anyhow I'm not the sort of woman to nail a bad dollar to the counter, so go you right away afore I break up, please. I'm a stupid, middle-aged woman with a thumping big British title, and a Niagara of dollars pouring, day after day, into her banking account, and you're a Frenchman with nary cent to your name, and more debts than you could reckon up 'twixt this and 'Frisco, and for all that, at present speaking, I don't rightly know how I'm going to fix myself up without you. Well, some good'll come of it anyhow, for, by — well, by the President of the United States, to put it no higher — I'll get such a sickener of Frenchmen out of this as'll set my perceptions right end up for the rest of my natural life, thanks be!

DE B. Now, Duchess, bring your kind and generous heart into this conference, and let it decide the point at issue. It is in my mind to atone for my misdoing, as far as atonement is possible, by staying these proceedings and begging my deeply-wronged wife to take me, penniless as I am, into her heart again. Now, Duchess, I implore you to help me to do this. I know your generous nature; I know it so well that I count implicitly on your readily setting aside the injury I have worked upon you that I may be at liberty to repair the incalculably greater injury I have inflicted upon this blameless lady. Tell me, Duchess, am I asking more than you, in the unbounded goodness of your heart, are willing to vouchsafe?

DUCH. (*after a pause*). No, De Bréville, that's me, right enough: you've set out your course, plain and straight — go you and steer it. It's awful hard to say, for you've just belayed yourself about me like a t'garns'l halliard on a bitt-pin, but a good big cry and a board or two to wind'ard in a ten-knot breeze will blow a lot of that away, thanks be! Now, De Bréville, go you right away to that poor wronged critter — shake the sheepshank out of your tongue and pay out your penitence hand over hand, for you've been going as near as you can lay, and may be all a-back before you can up-helm and pay off. Make it up to her as well as you can, and — well, you've no call to stand for dollars, for what dollars can do, dollars shall. Good-bye, De Bréville. You'll excuse me, I know. You see my biler's only equal to a given pressure to the square inch, and I'll need to rake out my stoke fires afore it reaches busting point. But oh, it does come hard and heavy, De Bréville — vurry hard and vurry heavy! (*Exit in a burst of tears.*)

DE B. When I started in life as a cynic I thought to find a ready text in every woman I met. I begin to think that if cynics are to justify their existence they must work on the surface, for when they penetrate beneath they too often find themselves face to face with their own refutation. And now, Diana — my brave and beautiful wife — how am I to approach you? In sackcloth and ashes? Ah, that masquerade is so readily assumed! Is there pardon for me in that proud heart? It may well be that there is none. Well, I must chance it — I must chance it! (*Ring heard.*) That is, perhaps, Lachaud. (*Looks at his watch.*) Yes — he is to meet me here at three.

Enter DIANA.

DE B. Diana! My God, what do you do here?

DIA. I told your servant not to announce my name lest you should deny yourself to me. It is necessary that, at any cost, I should speak to you once again and for the last time.

DE B. Your name was in my mind as you passed that door — nevertheless, it is needless to deny that this visit takes me greatly by surprise. Pardon me if I am unprepared for it. (*Offers her a chair, which she declines.*) How did you find me?

DIA. For a month past I have sought you vainly. Your parents — who have been as father and mother to me — knew nothing of your movements. I inquired at the Foreign Minister's, and was told that you had left the Service.

DE B. That is true. Since then I have lain *perdu* — travelling in Italy to avoid my creditors, who are seeking me like blood-hounds. Once more, Diana — how did you succeed in finding me?

DIA. Sir Cuthbert heard that you were at Genoa, so we left Paris for Genoa two days since. There we found that you had gone to Monte Carlo, and that your address was the Villa Bonaventura. So we followed you here.

DE B. And Sir Cuthbert Jameson — your former lover — was so good as to accompany you?

DIA. I am ill, and he did not think it right I should travel alone.

DE B. Did it not occur to Sir Cuthbert Jameson that your maid would have been a sufficient escort?

DIA. I have no maid. I am very poor.

DE B. That is true; I am sorry for it, and my thanks are due to Sir Cuthbert for his escort. And now, Diana, will you believe that I am greatly rejoiced to see you?

DIA. No, I will not. If you tell me that it is so, I will assume that you have some good reason for wishing me to believe it. In any case it matters little, for I am not here on my own behalf.

DE B. You are not here on your own behalf — on whose, then?

DIA. On that of our son.

DE B. Our son! (*Much taken aback.*)

DIA. A child has been born to us — a son who, if you determine to pursue the course upon which you have embarked, will go through the world a bastard. There is, I suppose, some strange magic in maternity — at all events, it has brought me a suppliant — my God! a suppliant — to *you* ! Well, it may be that in fatherhood there is some mysterious magic too — a magic that may work upon your nature as my motherhood has worked upon mine. If this be so, your heart will be turned towards your child, and you will be his father as I am his mother.

DE B. (*after a pause*). Diana, I am not readily moved, but what you have told me has moved me strangely. It is in your mind that I am a callous, heartless man — well, that is natural. I have justified that estimate, and six months since I should so have described myself. Nevertheless, it is not wholly true. I find — to my surprise, I admit — that it is not wholly true.

DIA. It is not necessary to discuss this. I am not here to reproach you, or to ask for explanations which can serve no end. I owe a duty to our son, and I am here, on his behalf, to ask you to stay proceedings which, if they were carried to their ultimate point, would stamp him with indelible disgrace.

DE B. (*after a pause*). Diana, I will gladly grant your request.

DIA. Ah!

DE B. Indeed, I have already taken steps to arrest these proceedings unconditionally. You do not believe this — you have it on your tongue that this is a lie. Well, I do not blame you. It is not to be wondered at that you do not quite know me, for I do not quite know myself. I fancied that I was committing myself to an act of villainy to which I was equal: it at no time seemed easy, but at one time it seemed possible. Well, I was mistaken. I cannot do this. You ask me, for our son's sake, to give you back my name. I implore you, for that son's sake, to give me back your heart.

DIA. My heart — my love — to *you* ! Great heaven, have you lost your senses? To you? Do you know in what esteem I hold you? Do you know — have you not realized — that such a woman as I — repudiated under the shelter of a cruel and calumnious lie in order that you might ally yourself with a wealthier wife — can have nothing for you but an unutterable detestation? I — the disavowed wife — the unwedded mother of your fatherless son? Oh, this is horrible — this is horrible!

DE B. (*gloomily*). Is there no echo of the old love within that proud heart of yours? Is all dead, and has it left no memory?

DIA. It is all dead — and God be thanked that it is so! Let it rest and be forgotten for ever between us! Go — take your course, whatever it may be! If you stay these proceedings it is from your child that you must claim acknowledgment. Whatever you may do you are to me as if you had never been. (*Going.*)

DE B. Diana — you must not go thus! Diana, in mercy — in pity — one word more! (*Seizing her hand.*)

DIA. Not a word — we have done with one another! Let me go — let me go, I say! Your touch horrifies me — your gaze sickens me! I hate you — hate you — hate you! (*Freeing herself.*) Go — I have done my duty — do yours, or leave me to myself forever!

[*Exit* DIANA.]

DE B. So, Armand de Bréville, the end has laid its hand heavily upon you, and it remains for you to learn to live out your punishment. Bah! I talk like a child. What manner of man am I that I am to bow a meek head to this storm of misery? A man's life is, after all, but his bondsman — it is valuable to him so long only as it serves him well. When it turns traitor let it pay the traitor's penalty!

Enter LACHAUD.

LACH. (*coldly*). I received your message, and I am here. What do you want with me?

DE B. I want to tell you that which will, I hope, re-establish me in your goodwill.

LACH. De Bréville, I am bound to presume that you are acting in accordance with what you believe to be your duty. I do not share your views, but as they are justified by the Code I cannot refuse to carry them forward. I bear you no ill-will.

DE B. Thank you. You will, then, be pleased to hear that I have abandoned my intention to apply for a decree. We have still three days — you must arrest these proceedings at once.

LACH. Three days? Say, rather, three hours!

DE B. What do you mean?

LACH. (*producing telegram*). I have just heard that the great case of Dupin against the Paris, Lyon, and Mediterranean was unexpectedly settled this morning. Your application will come before the Court this afternoon. My partner, Martel, will be there to represent you.

DE B. This afternoon?

LACH. In all probability this afternoon.

DE B. You must stop it by telegram. Quick, Lachaud, there is not a moment to lose.

LACH. Impossible. A case of such importance cannot be withdrawn at the last moment by telegram. All the affidavits are before the Court, and no earthly power can stop it now.

DE B. (*significantly*). You are wrong, Lachaud — you are wrong. For instance, if I were to die —

LACH. Ah! if you were to die —

DE B. The death of a plaintiff puts a stop to all personal actions.

LACH. No doubt, but —

[DE BRÉVILLE *turns away from LACHAUD, and takes a small phial from his waistcoat pocket. LACHAUD watches him closely. As DE BRÉVILLE is about to take out the stopper, LACHAUD rushes at him, and in the struggle the phial falls, broken, to the ground.*

DE B. (*furiously, during struggle*). Devil take you, let me go! Curse you! let go, I say!

LACH. You'll not leave this house in your present state of mind. (*Struggling with DE BRÉVILLE.*) Come come, be reasonable!

DE B. I tell you I am resolved.

LACH. And so am I. Great heavens, man, do you think I am likely to allow you to go forth with this determination in your mind?

[DE BRÉVILLE *breaks from him, and makes for the door. At this moment a SERVANT enters, with a card on a tray.*

SERV. A gentleman desires to see M. le Vicomte.

DE B. (*taking card*). Sir Cuthbert Jameson! Ah, I see my way! I see my way! (*To SERVANT.*) Admit this gentleman. (*Exit SERVANT.*)

LACH. Who is Sir Cuthbert Jameson?

DE B. A wealthy English baronet — a true, tried, and trusty friend. *He* will help me out of this. He will raise difficulties, but they will be vain, for I will compel him to render me this priceless service.

LACH. De Bréville, you are a veritable enigma!

DE B. Perhaps. But the solution is at hand.

Enter SIR CUTHBERT.

DE B. This is kind of you, Sir Cuthbert. You arrive very *à propos*. (*Offers his hand.*)

SIR C. (*coldly*). No — that is not necessary.

DE B. How is this, Sir Cuthbert Jameson? By what right do you refuse my hand?

SIR C. I would rather not discuss that point. Is your wife here?

DE B. (*sternly*). You refer to Madame la Vicomtesse de Bréville?

SIR C. Of course.

DE B. Then be good enough so to style her.

SIR C. I asked the question merely because I have something to say to you which I do not wish to say in her hearing.

DE B. Proceed, Sir Cuthbert Jameson.

SIR C. Am I to speak in the presence of this gentleman?

DE B. This gentleman is M. Lachaud, my legal adviser. He has my fullest confidence.

SIR C. It has reached me that you are much pressed by creditors. I have come to say that I am ready and willing to satisfy them if that will tend to facilitate an understanding between Madame Bréville and yourself.

DE B. Before I consent to discuss this suggestion — which I may tell you I regard as a clumsy impertinence — I must insist on your telling me why you decline to take my hand.

SIR C. Well, if your own conscience won't tell you, I will do so. You stated that you had reluctantly taken upon yourself to initiate these nullity proceedings, because if you did not do so your father would — and you desired to remove from his shoulders the burden of an act to which he was compelled by your own deception. I have ascertained from M. de Bréville that this is simply untrue — and, being untrue, it removes you from the category of those with whom a man of honour can consent to associate.

DE B. Am I to understand that you accuse me of having uttered a deliberate lie?

SIR C. I did not come here to quarrel with you, but if you force me to express myself in plain terms, I will, of course, do so. Yes, that is what I accuse you of.

DE B. Lachaud, you have witnessed this interview, and you have heard the insult that Sir Cuthbert Jameson has placed upon me. Excuse me one moment. (*De Bréville exits, door L.*)

LACH. But, monsieur is, no doubt, under some deplorable misapprehension. It is, I am sure, only necessary to convince you, sir, of this, and you will at once withdraw the charge and express an honourable regret that you have made it.

SIR C. I am ready to receive proofs that I have done M. de Bréville an injustice, but in fairness to myself, I should tell you that his father has stated in my presence that no consideration would have induced him to take proceedings which, although sanctioned by the laws of his country, he denounced as infamous beyond expression.

During this speech DE BRÉVILLE has returned with a case of duelling swords.

DE B. You will now understand, Lachaud, how impossible it is that this difficulty can be arranged. There is only one course — which I need not indicate to a gentleman of Sir Cuthbert's sense of honour.

SIR C. I don't understand you.

DE B. That is strange; but I will be more explicit. You are an accomplished swordsman, so am I. We have often tested our skill in jest — we will now do so in earnest!

SIR C. This is preposterous! I leave for Paris in three-quarters of an hour.

DE B. And I leave for Naples in an hour and a half; but in three-quarters of an hour much may be done. Will you go to Paris, or shall I go to Naples, I wonder? I wonder! (*During this, De Bréville has unlocked the case.*)

SIR C. I see that you are resolved to force a duel upon me. Well, you will find it difficult — I decline to cross swords with you.

DE B. How, Sir Cuthbert Jameson? I thought you a brave man.

SIR C. You know me very well, but I am sorry to say that your opinion, one way or the other, is a matter of indifference to me.

DE B. But it will cease to be a matter of indifference to you when I proclaim you throughout Paris as an English soldier who dared to inflict an insult on a French civilian, but who declined the consequences that a brave man would regard as inevitable.

SIR C. It will be time enough to declare what I shall do when you have taken that imprudent course. At present you are the husband of a lady whom I regard with profound esteem, and whose cause I am here to advocate. In that capacity you enjoy the privilege of giving your tongue full licence with impunity.

DE B. Ah, you are here to advocate the cause of Madame la Vicomtesse de Bréville. Does it not occur to you that in thus identifying yourself with that lady without her husband's permission you are seriously compromising her good name?

SIR C. (*amazed*). What!!!

DE B. (*triumphantly*). Ah, I have you now! (*With passionate insolence.*) Does it not occur to you that you — a former lover of this lady — may not have altogether forgotten the influence which she once exercised over you — if, indeed, you are not still under that influence?

SIR C. Damn you, hold your devilish tongue!

DE B. Does it not occur to you that the world may regard your interest in her as anything but disinterested interest; and that in accompanying her on her travels, whether she will or no, you are doing that which may tend to affect her blameless reputation? — that it may believe, as I believe, that you are a friend neither to her nor to me, but a deadly foe to both? — that it may regard your insolent offer — which you well knew that I should reject with scorn and contempt as a transparent veil through which your insidious designs were but too clearly apparent? Does it not occur to you that a man who, under the guise of friendship, does these things, and when detected submits to *that* (*striking him with rapier across chest*) with patience and resignation —

SIR C. (*who has been restraining his fury with difficulty during this speech*). Curse you, you hound! Take your guard! (*Seizing a rapier.*)

DE B. (*taking the other*). Ah, I thought I should bring you to this at last!

[*They fight, Sir Cuthbert attacking De Bréville furiously, De Bréville, calm and self-possessed, remaining on the defensive. Eventually, as Sir Cuthbert lunges, De Breville stands bolt upright throws up both arms, and receives Sir Cuthbert's point in his breast. He staggers for a moment, and falls round into Sir Cuthbert's arms.*]

SIR C. My God, he has killed himself! Lachaud — witness that he threw up his guard intentionally. Lachaud — call a doctor — alarm the house!

[*Exit LACHAUD, hurriedly.*]

DE B. (*as SIR CUTHBERT lays him tenderly on a cushion*). Ah, Sir Cuthbert — my friend — ever my friend, and my truest friend now — of all the kindly offices you have done me, this last is the best and the kindest!

SIR C. But why, in Heaven's name, have you forced me to this?

DE B. There is no time for details — enough that it became necessary that I should efface myself, and to do so, I forced this quarrel upon you. As a dying man I tell you that I am sorry and ashamed.

Enter DUCHESS, LACHAUD, SERVANTS, VISITORS, *and lastly* DIANA.

DUCH. For pity's sake, Sir Cuthbert, what has happened? What does this mean?

DE B. Madame, I have been most gravely wounded by Sir Cuthbert in a fair and honourable encounter which I violently forced upon him. He had no alternative; Lachaud will tell you so. Diana! (*She kneels by him and supports him.*) I have most grievously wronged you, and I implore you to believe my dying words that I repent from my very heart. I — I entreat you to kiss me, for I die. (*She kisses him.*) Cuthbert — my friend — my old friend — you will forgive me for causing you this pain? Ah, it was the only way!

SIR C. My poor De Bréville! (*Takes his hand.*)

DE B. I thank you. I am grieved to give you so much trouble, Duchess (*DUCHESS is weeping*) but I was much in the way of everybody — and when one is in everybody's way it behoves one to withdraw. Cuthbert — my old friend — you will take good care of Diana — I know you will take good care. (*Dies.*)

CURTAIN.