

"RANDALL'S THUMB"

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY IN THREE ACTS
BY W. S. GILBERT.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

DR. TROTWAY	MR. H. MELLON
JOE BANGLES	MR. EDWARD RIGHTON
RANDALL, an Adventurer	MR. W. BELFORD
BUCKTHORPE, under his thumb	MR. HERMANN VEZIN
MR. SCANTLEBURY, on his honeymoon	MR. FRANK MATTHEWS
MR. FLAMBOYS, an Old Stager	MR. ASTLEY
CUMMING, a Waiter	MR. PARRY
CLENCH, a Superintendent of Police	MR. JARVIS
EDITH TEMPLE, Dr. Trotway's Niece	MISS KATE BISHOP
MRS. SCANTLEBURY	MRS. STEPHENS
MISS SPINN	MISS MAGGIE BRENNAN
MRS. FLAMBOYS	MISS ELEANOR BUFTON

ACT I.

GARDENS OF BEACHINGTON HOTEL.

ACT II.

THE CLUMP ROCKS.

ACT III.

GARDENS OF BEACHINGTON HOTEL.

Scenery by Mr. BRINEWOOD POTTS and Assistants.

Modern Seaside Dresses. Randall's dress rather seedy and pretentious.

Time in Representation : Two Hours and a Half.

First performed at the Opening of the Royal Court Theatre,
under the management of Miss M. Litton, 25th January 1871.

"RANDALL'S THUMB"

ACT I

SCENE - GARDENS OF BEACHINGTON HOTEL. ENTRANCE TO HOTEL, L;
GARDEN TABLE AND TWO CHAIRS, R; TABLE AND CHAIR, L;
GONG AT ENTRANCE TO HOTEL; VISITORS' BOOK ON R. TABLE;
ENTRANCE TO HOTEL GARDEN, C; SEA VIEW.

[MR. AND MRS. FLAMBOYS DISCOVERED SITTING AT
TABLE, R., BUT APART AS IF THEY HAD QUARRELLED.]

[ENTER MR. BANGLES, FROM HOTEL.]

BANGLES: Ha, Flamboys! How d'ye do, Mrs. Flamboys? [ASIDE.] Hallo,
another row! It's a most extraordinary thing that these
young people should quarrel as they do. Flamboys is a
capital fellow. Mrs. Flamboys is a pretty and agreeable
woman. And they don't speak half-a-dozen words a day.
FLAMBOYS (YAWNING): Oh dear! oh dear! It's awfully slow here! I say,
Bangles, don't you find it awfully slow?
BANGLES: Slow? No!
FLAMBOYS: Ah, you're a single man, that makes all the difference at a
watering place.
BANGLES: It does make a difference, no doubt, but it seems to me that
the advantage is all on your side. [BOWING TO MRS. FLAMBOYS]
FLAMBOYS: Unsophisticated soul! May that fond delusion never be
disturbed. You're a bachelor - take an old stager's advice
and keep so.

[MRS. FLAMBOYS RISES, IN A HUFF, AND RETIRES UP.]

BANGLES (CROSSING TO FLAMBOYS) My boy, I don't like to hear any man talk
like that. It's excusable in a half-fledged griff, with a
pocket full of dangerous money and a body full of dangerous
tastes, but a married man who speaks as you speak is a
traitor to his order. You've taken the shilling - stick to
your colours like a man - and don't damn the service because
you don't happen to hit it off with your commanding officer.
FLAMBOYS: My dear fellow, who *does* hit it off with his commanding
officer?
BANGLES: Bosh! That's the foolish fast sham-cynical cant of the day.
I've heard many a youngster speak as you speak, and I've
lived long enough to see nearly all of them happy husbands
and happy fathers. Those who stick to the professions of
their youth are those whom no decent woman would have.
MRS. FLAMBOYS: But it seems strange that so ardent an advocate of married
life should have lived single so long.
BANGLES: It's no fault of mine, Mrs. Flamboys - I should have been
married thirty years ago, if I'd had my way - to a lady
twenty years older than myself! Perhaps it's as well that I

didn't.

FLAMBOYS: Quite, I'm sure.

BANGLES: But I've turned the corner some time now, and I'm going downhill pretty quickly, and I - I often wish, Mrs. Flamboys, that I had some one to put the skid on for me, and let me down easily. An old man feels the want of a wife more than a young one does, depend upon that. It's no joke to look forward to a solitary old age with death in apartments at the end of it; and the only symptom of regret, the demand made by your landlady on your executors for compensation on account of the house having got an ill name from your having died in it.

FLAMBOYS: Well, if an old stager's example can be of any service in inducing you to come to a practical conclusion on the subject, you're quite welcome to it! How long do you propose to stay at Beachington?

BANGLES: Stay? All the autumn - all the winter, perhaps. It's a delightful place. By Jove, sir, it suits me down to the ground. When I see a face I like, I want to speak to it; and at Beachington one can do that without the fear of a snub. I've lived in London for the last three months, and I haven't made three acquaintances. I have been here three weeks and I've made thirty. I like most faces. By Jove, I like yours - though you do talk infernal nonsense.

[SHAKING HANDS WITH FLAMBOYS.]

MRS. FLAMBOYS (SEATED): Strange taste!

BANGLES: And I like your wife's.

FLAMBOYS: You're easily satisfied.

BANGLES: I don't dislike Scantlebury's face.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: And Mrs. Scantlebury's?

BANGLES: Well - yes, and Mrs. Scantlebury's?

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Take care, Mr. Bangles - she's a bride!

BANGLES: Oh, don't misunderstand me - it's purely aesthetic - purely aesthetic. I admire Mrs. Scantlebury as I admire a painting.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Oh, I see! If you look upon Mrs. Scantlebury as a work of art, I admit there is some ground for your admiration.

BANGLES: Ha, ha! you're severe on the bride, Mrs. Flamboys - but I say - how does she do it?

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Indeed I don't know - you had better ask Mr. Scantlebury.

FLAMBOYS: Oh, he doesn't know. He's not been married long enough. Husbands learn these things slowly and by degrees. Mr. Scantlebury has only been married a fortnight, and I suppose that at the present moment he's at that stage of discovery which takes the form of a puzzled wonder why the deuce his wife will keep her dressing case locked. He'll find out all about it some day. At least I did.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Mr. Flamboys! How dare you say such a thing?

FLAMBOYS: Well, and whom else do you admire. There's Trotway.

BANGLES: Oh, Jack Trotway, of course. Why, Jack Trotway is the oldest and dearest friend I have in the world. We were at school together - walked Guy's together - entered the

Service together as Assistant Surgeons - left it together as Inspectors of Hospitals.

FLAMBOYS: And Miss Temple, his niece?

BANGLES: Edith Temple! Yes, yes! God bless her - I like Edith Temple's face. Oh yes, I like Edith's face.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Well, then there's Miss Spinn.

BANGLES: Well, and I like - no, hang it, I do **not** like Miss Spinn.

[TAKES STAGE, R.]

MRS. FLAMBOYS: But that's very ungrateful, Mr. Bangles, for I'm sure she likes you. Why you are always together!

BANGLES: Always together, ma'am? We are Siamese twins in everything but physical union! If we were physically united, a surgical operation might separate us; as it is, I'm not aware of any operation - surgical or otherwise - that will keep us asunder. That woman's the pest of my life.

FLAMBOYS: I wonder you stand it.

BANGLES: Stand it? Confound it, you don't want me to strangle the woman, do you?

FLAMBOYS: No, that would be an extreme measure. I shouldn't try that until all other means had failed.

BANGLES: All other means **have** failed. Sir, the woman is too old a hand. She comes to attack me armed with an experience which I suppose is utterly unexampled. What is a simple-minded Indian to do with a woman who in her time has been a governess, a lady's companion, a Crimean nurse, a columbine, a missionary, a vivandière, a stewardess, and a Bloomer?

[ENTER MISS SPINN FROM HOTEL.]

MISS SPINN: Talking about me, Mr. Bangles, as usual? [ASIDE TO BANGLES] Oh, you indiscreet man!

BANGLES: Yes, ma'am, I **have** been talking about you. I'm not aware there are any secrets between us.

MISS SPINN (ASIDE TO BANGLES): Very judiciously passed off. [ALOUD.] Secrets? Certainly not. I haven't a secret in the world! Yes, Mrs. Flamboys, in my time, I've been everything, by turns ...

FLAMBOYS: Except a wife.

MISS SPINN: And nothing long.

BANGLES: Except a spinster.

MRS. FLAMBOYS (MISCHIEVOUSLY): Do you know, Miss Spinn, I often wonder that, with your love of change, it has never entered your head to get married? Mr. Bangles was just saying so as you came in!

BANGLES: I, ma'am? Hang it, Mrs. Flamboys ...

MISS SPINN: Dear Joe! [ASIDE TO BANGLES.] Oh, you imprudent boy! [ALOUD.] Mrs. Flamboys, I will tell you a secret. [CONFIDENTIALLY.] It **has** entered my head to get married!

[EXIT BANGLES, UNPERCEIVED.]

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Impossible!

MISS SPINN: But true. Over and over again I have said to myself, "It is my duty to marry." But whom? There's my difficulty.

FLAMBOYS: Yes - I see your difficulty.

MISS SPINN: He must be a good man - he must be a rich man - he must be a man of exquisite taste, and his admiration for me must be unbounded. Now, it isn't easy to find this combination of qualities in one individual.

FLAMBOYS: That I can quite understand.

MISS SPINN: Exactly. Above all, he must be furiously jealous in order to - to -

MRS. FLAMBOYS: To curb your love of change?

MISS SPINN: Exactly. When I find such a man, I will throw myself into his arms and I will say, "Take me, and be happy!"

MRS. FLAMBOYS: But, would not that be rather abrupt?

MISS SPINN: What, the remark? Oh, of course, as I put it; but I am assuming that he has led up to it.

FLAMBOYS: But that's begging the question.

MISS SPINN: Oh, but that's often done.

FLAMBOYS: I believe it is. It was in my case.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Mr. Flamboys!

FLAMBOYS: Ah! [SIGHS.]

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Ah! [SIGHS.] Brute!

MISS SPINN: Um! Pleasant people, these. [ALOUD.] But, Mr. Bangles - where's Mr. Bangles?

FLAMBOYS: Gone.

MISS SPINN: Gone? Why, do you know, I came here on purpose to find him?

FLAMBOYS: No!

MISS SPINN: I did, indeed. I'm organising a pic-nic to the Chump Rocks this day week, and I want Mr. Bangles to help me.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Well, Miss Spinn, Mr. Bangles went off very quietly, directly you came.

MISS SPINN: Very quietly?

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Very.

MISS SPINN: As if he didn't want to be observed?

FLAMBOYS: Exactly.

MISS SPINN: Sly old gentleman - he meant me to follow him. Silly fellow; as if there's anything to be ashamed of in our liking each other's society. But these Indians are so sly. Which way did he go? Into the grove? Thank you. Good morning. [EXIT MISS SPINN.]

[MR. AND MRS. FLAMBOYS RUSH TO EACH OTHER'S ARMS.]

FLAMBOYS: My darling - now, at last, we are alone! [KISSES HER.]

[RE-ENTER MISS SPINN. THEY DISENGAGE.]

MISS SPINN: I beg your pardon - I forgot to ask if I might put your name down?

FLAMBOYS: Oh, certainly.

MISS SPINN: And Mrs. Flamboys?

FLAMBOYS (BRUSQUELY): Oh, she doesn't want to go. She's got nothing to go in. Besides, a pic-nic is no fun, when one's wife's there.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Indeed, but I shall go, if I have to wear my alpaca. Put me

down, if you please, Miss Spinn, as well as Mr. Flamboys.
[TO FLAMBOYS.] Brute!

MISS SPINN: That's right. It will be delightful if we have a fine day.
Now for Mr. Bangles. [EXIT MISS SPINN.]

MRS. FLAMBOYS: There now - she saw you kiss me! It'll be all over the
hotel!

FLAMBOYS: But, my darling pet, you are my wife!

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Certainly, dear. But husbands don't avail themselves of
every opportunity of kissing their wives after they have
been married five years. It's all very well at first, but
people cool down.

FLAMBOYS: Ah, it's so difficult to remember the dreary fiction that
we've been married five years, in face of the delightful
fact that we've only been married three weeks.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: But you must try, my pet, you must indeed. Only think, if
it should be known in the hotel that we are on our honeymoon
tour! Why we shouldn't have a moment's peace!

FLAMBOYS: It would be extremely awkward. Well, I've done all I can.
I've quarrelled with you over and over again in public.
I've worn the oldest boots I could find. I've flirted with
every woman I've come across. I've constantly referred to
our numerous family, and I've never lost an opportunity of
eating sake and onions.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: My pet, how good of you! [KISSING HIM.] Our numerous family!

FLAMBOYS: Yes - four!

BOTH: Ha, ha!

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Now, mind - I insist on your being extremely rude to me on
all public occasions. You must say the unkindest things
about my dress, and my complexion, and my hair - and you
must snub me whenever you've an opportunity.

FLAMBOYS: My love, I'll be a perfect brute!

MRS. FLAMBOYS: I'm sure you will. Think how much annoyance and observation
we save ourselves by such a course. Look at those two
ridiculous old donkeys, the Scantleburys, who are always
advertising the fact that they are honeymooning, although
she's sixty, if she's a day! Look at them, with their arms
round each other's waists, as if they were two-and-twenty!
It's positively indelicate!

FLAMBOYS: Ah! there are no fools like old ones!

[ENTER MR. AND MRS. SCANTLEBURY, FONDLING.]

SCANTLEBURY: Now, my darling, I must insist on your wearing a shawl -
it's too cold to be out without one. Ah, Mrs. Flamboys!
assist me in persuading Frederica that she will certainly
catch cold, if she doesn't wrap herself up.

MRS. FLAMBOYS (SEATED): Oh! I couldn't presume to dictate to a lady of
Mrs. Scantlebury's age! Besides, it's not a cold day.

FLAMBOYS: Not cold? - it's freezing! Mr. Scantlebury is quite right!
It's all very well for you to go about as you do - you're a
mere girl! But when you're Mrs. Scantlebury's age you'll
know better, won't she, Scantlebury?

SCANTLEBURY (ASIDE): These persons are very insufferable!

MRS. FLAMBOYS: And when Mr. Scantlebury has been married as long as we

have, he will only trouble himself about one circumstance connected with Mrs. Scantlebury's toilette.

SCANTLEBURY: And that is ...?

MRS. FLAMBOYS: That it is regulated with a due regard to economy. Such, at least, is my experience. [LOOKING SAVAGELY AT FLAMBOYS.]

FLAMBOYS: There you are - at it again! Nag - nag - nag - all day long!

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Then you should give me something fit to wear! Will you believe me, Mrs. Scantlebury, when I tell you that he hasn't give(n) me a single dress since my marriage? I am positively wearing out my trousseau at this moment!

SCANTLEBURY: Oh, Flamboys! I'm ashamed of you!

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Oh, Mr. Flamboys, we're ashamed of you!

FLAMBOYS: Ah! wait till you've been married five years! You are young at it just now, and you're carried away by enthusiasm. It's astonishing how that sort of thing dies out!

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Horace, assure me that this sort of thing will not die out. Tell me that you will always - always - always - love me as you do now!

SCANTLEBURY: Frederica, do you doubt me?

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: No - I cannot doubt those eyes! [GAZING AT HIM.]

SCANTLEBURY: My own!

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: My love!

FLAMBOYS (ASIDE): Old fools! [ALOUD.] Ah! when I married, Scantlebury, I believed in all that.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: So did I - but I have been bitterly undeceived! Oh, Mrs. Scantlebury! it is a pleasant thing to dream that the honeymoon is to last for life! - but it is a terrible thing to awake and find that you have married an icicle! [WEEPS.]

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Horace, is it possible that you are an icicle in disguise?

SCANTLEBURY: If I were, what would become of me before the blaze of those radiant eyes?

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Go, flatterer.

SCANTLEBURY: My own!

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: My love!

FLAMBOYS: Oh, this is intolerable!

SCANTLEBURY: Mr. Flamboys, you must excuse us if we are a little effusive. This is the most interesting period of our existence. I dare say now that, under similar circumstances, you went on just as we do now?

FLAMBOYS: I dare say; but really, it's so long ago that I hardly remember. I've no doubt we made ourselves excessively ridiculous. Newly-married people always do. [LIGHTING CIGAR.]

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Mrs. Flamboys, do you allow Mr. Flamboys to smoke?

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Oh, he can do as he likes!

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Mr. Scantlebury never smokes.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Nor did Mr. Flamboys under Mr. Scantlebury's interesting circumstances. But all that is changed now!

[EXEUNT MR. AND MRS. FLAMBOYS, UNOBSERVED BY THE SCANTLEBURYS.]

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Horace, is it possible that the time will ever come when

you will be so indifferent to my wishes as to degenerate into a highly-flavoured smoker?

SCANTLEBURY: Frederica, the man who, in pursuance of any selfish indulgence, would fly in the face of his wife's expressed wishes, I hold to be no better than a - [LOOKING AROUND, AND CHANGING HIS TONE.] Oh! we are alone. [LIGHTS A CIGAR.]

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Eh? Oh! Now, Mr. Scantlebury, did you hear what that man said? Did you hear him say that I was making myself excessively ridiculous?

SCANTLEBURY: Yes, I heard that.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: And are you going to permit that young man to insult me with impunity?

SCANTLEBURY: What do you propose that I should do to that young man?

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: I ask you - is such a remark to pass unchallenged?

SCANTLEBURY: Oh, I've no objection to challenge the remark. But really, considering that this is our thirty-fifth wedding-day ...

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Mr. Scantlebury! I believe we agreed that the first thirty-four were to go for nothing.

SCANTLEBURY: Go for nothing! Have I passed through thirty-four years of married life with you to be told that I am to consider that they have gone for nothing?

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Certainly. I am a bride; you are a bridegroom. Why, bless my heart, one's nobody at Beachington if one isn't a bride!

SCANTLEBURY: Then am I nobody!

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Do you think that I should be the central attraction at Beachington if it were not supposed that I am newly married?

SCANTLEBURY: No.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: My attractions are fading.

SCANTLEBURY: They are.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: I am not so young as I was.

SCANTLEBURY: I don't agree with you there. You've been thirty-nine for the last twenty years.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY (BITTERLY): Ah - but you are my husband! [CROSSES TO L.]

SCANTLEBURY: I am convinced of it.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: And a very pretty husband you are!

SCANTLEBURY: Go, little flatterer!

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Now, once for all, Mr. Scantlebury, let us understand one another. I choose to be looked upon as a bride, for I cannot do without attention, and I will not do without attention. The doctor has prescribed it for me. Therefore, I prefer to have it supposed that we are a newly-married couple, and you will be good enough to give countenance to my scheme. And a very pretty countenance it is!

[EXIT MRS. SCANTLEBURY.]

SCANTLEBURY: Incredible as it may appear, that was a very pleasant woman - five-and-thirty years ago. So I'm a bridegroom again! I wish I was! Well, the fiction has its advantages. It makes Mrs. Scantlebury extremely pleasant in public - and I contrive to keep in public as much as I can. It's hard when it comes to dancing with Mrs. Scantlebury, as it did last

night; but she doesn't dance long at a time. [RETIRES UP.]

[ENTER RANDALL, C., FOLLOWED BY CUMMING, A WAITER, WITH
VERY LARGE SEEDY PORTMANTEAU AND A NEW SMART VALISE - THEN
BUCKTHORPE, WHO SITS ON BENCH AT THE BACK OF THE STAGE.]

RANDALL: Very good; then take the large portmanteau to thirty-five.
CUMMING: The one with very little in it, sir?
RANDALL: What the devil is it to you what's in it? Don't shake it
about like that! Take it up-stairs, and carry it carefully.
Mind, if the side comes out I hold you responsible.

[EXIT CUMMING INTO HOTEL.]

What's this, the visitors' book? [OPENS AND READS.] "Mr.
and Mrs. Flamboys, Scarborough; Miss Spinn, Hookham; Mr.
and Mrs. Scantlebury on their" - ha, ha! - "on their
honeymoon." [SEES SCANTLEBURY.] I beg your pardon.
SCANTLEBURY: I am Mr. Scantlebury, sir. [WITH DIGNITY.]
RANDALL: Oh, indeed! On your honeymoon?
SCANTLEBURY: Yes, sir, on my honeymoon.
RANDALL: Ha, ha!
SCANTLEBURY: I see nothing to laugh at, sir?
RANDALL: Of course you don't - it's a devilish serious position for
you. But don't you find it amuses your friends?
SCANTLEBURY: No, sir, I do **not** find that it amuses my friends.
RANDALL: They must be dull dogs.
SCANTLEBURY: I believe there is nothing to be ashamed of in the fact that
I am on my honeymoon?
RANDALL: Nothing at all. Quite the reverse. It's very creditable to
you at your time of life.
SCANTLEBURY: Society, sir, I believe, could not be carried on without
honeymoons.
RANDALL: Quite out of the question. You're a martyr in a good cause.
SCANTLEBURY (ASIDE): This fellow is laughing at me. He shall see that I'm
not to be trifled with. [CROSSES TO R., - THEN ALOUD.]
Good morning, sir. [EXIT.]
RANDALL: Ha, ha! [REFERS TO BOOK.] "Joseph Bangles, M.D., late
Bengal Army. Dr. Trotway and niece." Good. [ASIDE.]
They are here.
BUCKTHORPE (COMING DOWN): Well, now that you've brought me all the way
down to Beachington, perhaps you'll let me know what you
want with me.
RANDALL: I want you to help me carry out a scheme by which I shall
make a pot of money.
BUCKTHORPE: Suppose I refuse?
RANDALL: But you won't refuse; you can't help yourself. Do you
remember the night of the 14th. of August, 1869?
BUCKTHORPE: I'm not likely to forget it.
RANDALL: Probably not. We don't commit murders every day. At least,
I don't.
BUCKTHORPE: It was no murder, and you know it. I was attacked by a
stranger in the dark, at the edge of Banton Cliffe, and in
self-defence I struck at him with a sword-stick.

RANDALL: You did. He fell over the cliff and was killed. At my suggestion you left England that night. The body was found, and your victim turned out to be a highly respectable commercial traveller named Peters, and a coroner's jury having the fact of the sword-thrust strongly before their eyes, returned a verdict of "Wilful Murder" against some person or persons unknown.

BUCKTHORPE: In the sight of heaven I am innocent.

RANDALL: No doubt. But in the sight of the law you are guilty. A reward of three hundred pounds is offered for your apprehension. I could earn that three hundred pounds this evening. I am extremely hard up. The letters you wrote to me from Dijon, identifying you with the man who caused his death, are in my pocket, and the local police station is next door.

BUCKTHORPE: You know that I am innocent of any crime.

RANDALL: Stop. What do you understand by the word "crime"?

BUCKTHORPE: An offence against the law.

RANDALL: Childish! A crime is that unfortunate combination of circumstances which induces a jury to return a verdict of guilty. Believe me, I speak from experience. But don't be afraid. I don't intend to inform against you. I want you: you are very valuable to me.

BUCKTHORPE: You are very good.

RANDALL: Not at all.

BUCKTHORPE: Well, perhaps not.

RANDALL: I am sure not. Now for the work that I want you to do.

BUCKTHORPE: Disagreeable, I suppose?

RANDALL: Very. There's an extremely nice girl with thirty-eight thousand pounds, stopping in this hotel, and I want you to make love to her.

BUCKTHORPE: Why don't you do it yourself?

RANDALL: Do you think I should be successful?

BUCKTHORPE (LOOKING AT HIM COOLLY): No. Why am I to do this?

RANDALL: To explain that, I must go back to the history of my marriage.

BUCKTHORPE: I thought you were a bachelor?

RANDALL: So do a good many others - but I'm not.

BUCKTHORPE: Heaven help your wife!

RANDALL: Heaven has. She is no more.

BUCKTHORPE: Was she pretty?

RANDALL: Very.

BUCKTHORPE: What did she die of?

RANDALL: Old age.

BUCKTHORPE: You said she was pretty?

RANDALL: She **was** - but that was long before I was born or thought of. I met her at Beachington three years ago - she was then seventy-nine. She was a very affectionate lady; and, as I found that she had money, I proposed to her then and there, and then and there she accepted me. Within three days we were married.

BUCKTHORPE: Sharp work!

RANDALL: It **was** sharp. But when the bride is seventy-nine, time is

of the essence of the contract. Two hours after the ceremony, the tranquil joys of my honeymoon were interrupted by the information that I was wanted for felony. I bolted.

BUCKTHORPE: With your wife?

RANDALL: No. She had many recommendations, but rapidity of movement of movement was not one of them. She only felt herself equal to a Bath chair - under the circumstances, I preferred the limited mail. So we were separated - cause, incompatibility of locomotion. The old lady, ashamed, no doubt, of her husband, kept her marriage secret, and six weeks after she died of inanition. Well, her will was opened, and by it she left all her property - thirty-eight thousand pounds - to her niece. But as the will was dated six months before her marriage with me, it was to all intents and purposes a worthless document. That is the money that I want you to help me to recover.

BUCKTHORPE: But if your story is true, why don't you take legal proceedings to recover it?

RANDALL: Because, my child of nature, if I rely on the simple truth of my story - every word of which I am in a position to prove - the circumstances are so remarkable, that public attention will be directed to it, and the fact will come out that I am the unfortunate individual who, under another name, left this hotel for Liverpool five minutes before two detectives from Scotland Yard entered it in search of me. That contingency, my unsophisticated shepherd, you will understand I am anxious to avoid. So, my lamb, I want you to give out that the old lady and I were friends of some years' standing; but in order to do this, I must know something about her previous history - her friends - her way of living - her movements - and so forth - of which I happen to know nothing whatever. So I want you to establish a flirtation with this girl, in order that you may be able to extract from her such information on these points as shall enable me to concoct a rather less violent account of my marriage with her.

BUCKTHORPE: And if I refuse?

RANDALL: If you refuse, I shall have to content myself with three-hundred pounds instead of thirty-eight thousand.

BUCKTHORPE: It's a dirty job!

RANDALL: Not at all. If my story is true, I am entitled to the money.

BUCKTHORPE: Yes - if it's true!

RANDALL: My simple lad, you can ascertain its truth by reference to the register of St. Jude's in this parish. After all, you are only helping me to my own. It's a roundabout way of doing it, but as it's a matter of life and death to you, you are not likely to be squeamish on that point. [ASIDE.] This must be Dr. Trotway.

[ENTER DR. TROTWAY, THROUGH C. FROM L., SMOKING.]

[ALoud.] I'm going round to the post-office. I shall be back directly. Have you a light?

[CROSSING TO L. - TAKING OUT CIGAR CASE.]

BUCKTHORPE: No. You know I don't smoke.
TROTWAY: Allow me to offer you one. [OFFERS LIGHTED CIGAR.]
RANDALL: Thank you. Eh! Not Dr. Trotway?
TROTWAY: Yes. Should I know you?
RANDALL: I had the pleasure of meeting you, many years ago, at your regimental mess in - in ...
TROTWAY: Kurrachee?
RANDALL: Kurrachee. You sat vice, I remember. Don't remember me, I dare say. No! I had no whiskers then. This is my old chum, Reggy Buckthorpe - late 24th. We shall meet at dinner, I dare say. Good morning!

[EXIT RANDALL THROUGH GATE, C., AND OFF L.]

TROTWAY: Don't know his face; don't want to. Friend seems a decent fellow. [ALOUD.] 24th - eh - Mr. Buckthorpe? Knew them very well in the Punjaub; but that's before your time.
BUCKTHORPE: Yes, I joined in '62 - left in '68.
TROTWAY: Half-pay?
BUCKTHORPE: No. Sold out.
TROTWAY (ASIDE): Bad!
BUCKTHORPE: Hard up.
TROTWAY: Good! Like a man who owns to that.

[ENTER EDITH.]

EDITH: Uncle, this pic-nic promises to be a great success.
BUCKTHORPE (ASTONISHED): Edith!
EDITH: Mr. Buckthorpe!
BUCKTHORPE: How strange that we should meet thus!
TROTWAY: Eh? Why, what's this? You are old friends?
EDITH: Oh yes! I had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Buckthorpe some years ago, before papa's death. I then went to India, and we have never met since. I am very glad to see you.
TROTWAY: So am I. I don't know you, sir; but as a friend of my poor brother's I am heartily glad to make your acquaintance. Are you making a long stay?
BUCKTHORPE: Well, yes - some weeks, I think.
TROTWAY: That's right! Then we shall see something of each other. I must be off to join Bangles. We are going to take shootings here, and we shall be delighted to give you a gun. Good morning, Mr. Buckthorpe! You and Edith can talk over old times. [EXIT TROTWAY, R.U.E.]
BUCKTHORPE: This is a strange meeting, Edith!
EDITH: It is indeed, Mr. Buckthorpe!
BUCKTHORPE: Mr. Buckthorpe!
EDITH: Yes; we are merely friends now.
BUCKTHORPE: Are - are you married?
EDITH: No.
BUCKTHORPE: Are you engaged?
EDITH: No.
BUCKTHORPE: Then you have quite ceased to love me?
EDITH: You have no right to ask me that. My poor father forbad me

even to speak to you again. He is dead.

BUCKTHORPE: So I heard. He was very hard on me.

EDITH: He was very just.

BUCKTHORPE: Yes; but it is as hard to distinguish extreme justice from extreme injustice, as to distinguish extreme heat from extreme cold. I was a penniless spendthrift, and I suppose he was right; but it would have made a good man of me, if I had married you.

EDITH: Was he to know that?

BUCKTHORPE: No; but you knew it.

EDITH: I believed it. I am sure I could have influenced you.

BUCKTHORPE: Why, from the very first day I saw you, my life changed. During the six months that our acquaintance lasted I was an altered man. You loved me then - I know you did. I was amazed - astounded when I learnt this; it opened out a prospect of a new and changed life to me; it had never entered my head that a good and pure woman could love such a man as I. I have known so few, Edith; and those I have known have treated me as a hopeless outcast.

EDITH: Oh, Mr. Buckthorpe!

BUCKTHORPE: They have had good reason to do so. I had been left to my own ways all my life, to make what associates I pleased, and when I entered the service, I was banished to a foreign station where time hung heavily on my hands, and where the devil of mischief had full opportunity of working his worst with me. Under different auspices I might have been a different man - I am sure of this, from the influence that association with so pure and good a woman as you had over me. Oh, Edith, I am a miserable fellow! [SITS AT TABLE.]

EDITH: I - I am truly sorry to hear you say this, Mr. Buckthorpe, you pain me deeply.

BUCKTHORPE: After your father dismissed me from your presence, I lived on in hope that circumstances - I knew not how - might bring us together again. But he died, and you had to join your uncle in India, and the sun went down on the only bright day my miserable life had known!

EDITH: Mr. Buckthorpe, it is not fair to tell me all this. When I told you that I loved you, I knew nothing of your past life - you seemed to me to be all that a man should be. I loved you, because you realised my dream of what a man should be; but when I learnt the circumstances of your past career, my eyes were opened to the folly of my dream, and if you had died on the day that I owned my love for you, I should not have suffered greater anguish. [SITS.]

BUCKTHORPE: But, Edith, you could not say this to me if you had wholly ceased to love me.

EDITH: Mr. Buckthorpe, do not mistake me; I love the memory of an ideal man. The man I love has no existence - he never lived. I loved the man whom I believed Reginald Buckthorpe to be.

BUCKTHORPE: I was a good man when we parted - I may say so now; for I am good no longer. I look back on those six months in my life as on an episode in the life of another man. Edith, have pity on me - give me another chance.

EDITH: No; I am bound by my father's wishes. He is dead.
BUCKTHORPE: He is dead, and therefore cannot recall his words. He knew nothing except that my career had been wild, reckless, extravagant. He attributed my altered life to interested hypocrisy - because you had wealth, and I was poor. But when he knew me, I was indeed a changed man. Edith, **you** loved me. Where is the man whose heart would not be purified by such love as yours?
[EDITH APPEARS UNDECIDED HOW TO ACT.]

[ENTER RANDALL FROM L. AND THROUGH C.]

RANDALL (ASIDE TO BUCKTHORPE): Very good.
BUCKTHORPE: What do you mean?
RANDALL: I mean very good. I mean that you've lost no time - you've been going it, you babe of nature!
BUCKTHORPE: I don't understand you.
RANDALL: Don't you? I mean that you've lost no time in commencing operations. This is the young lady whose thirty-eight thousand pounds I claim.
BUCKTHORPE: Edith Temple?
RANDALL: Exactly. Didn't you know that? Introduce me.
BUCKTHORPE: She is a lady.
RANDALL: You'd better do as I tell you.
BUCKTHORPE (RELUCTANTLY): Miss Temple - Mr. Randall. [RETIRES UP.]
RANDALL: Miss Temple, I had the pleasure of knowing your uncle, Doctor Trotway, in India, some years ago.
EDITH: Indeed?
RANDALL: Yes, we renewed our acquaintance this morning. [TO BUCKTHORPE] I had no idea that Miss Temple and you were acquainted.
EDITH: Yes, we are old friends, but we have not met for some years.
RANDALL (ASIDE): This simplifies matters. Young people who are old friends, and who haven't met for some years, generally get very confidential when they do meet.

[ENTER MISS SPINN AND BANGLES.]

MISS SPINN: Well, we've settled all the preliminaries. There are three carriages, and a donkey cart, which I am going to drive.
EDITH: How many names have you, Miss Spinn?
MISS SPINN (REFERRING TO LIST): Sixteen. [EDITH AND BUCKTHORPE RETIRE UP.]
RANDALL (CROSSING TO MISS SPINN): Have you really got sixteen names?
Fifteen of 'em aliases! That beats me hollow.
MISS SPINN: I really have! and I want one more to be complete.
BANGLES (ASIDE): I know you do - mine! But you won't get it. [ALOUD.] Perhaps these gentlemen will join you?
RANDALL: Certainly - eh, Buckthorpe?
MISS SPINN: Oh, but that's two, and it will throw out all my arrangements. Never mind, Mr. Bangles, you and I will charter the donkey cart.
BANGLES: Impossible!
MISS SPINN: Why?
BANGLES: I don't enjoy riding in donkey carts, besides we should

never keep pace with the others, we should drop behind.

MISS SPINN (TENDERLY): A little, perhaps - half a mile or so - not more.
That wouldn't matter a bit!

BANGLES: It would spoil the whole thing, ma'am. It's the essence of
of a thing of this kind that all should arrive at the same
moment.

MISS SPINN: Then we two will start an hour before the others, and get
everything ready - there it's quite settled, Mr. Bangles,
that I take you in my trap.

RANDALL (ASIDE): Egad, it looks like it!

BANGLES: No, no - it would be better if Edith and I were to go
together, eh - Edith? - and ...

MISS SPINN: Wouldn't do at all. It would never do to take the only
young unmarried lady out of the party. Besides, what would
people think? Now two old fogies like us can do what we
like?

BANGLES: I wish we could.

MISS SPINN: Mr. Bangles, I'm shocked at you! There, that's all settled,
and if these gentlemen will give me their names -

RANDALL: Mr. Randall - Mr. Buckthorpe.

BUCKTHORPE: Excuse me, I can take no part in this excursion. I leave
for London to-night.

[ENTER DR. TROTWAY.]

EDITH: Oh, Buckthorpe!

BUCKTHORPE: I leave for London to-night. [WITH DELIBERATION.]

RANDALL (ASIDE): Are you mad?

TROTWAY: What's that? You told me you intended to remain some weeks.

BUCKTHORPE: Circumstances have occurred which render necessary my
immediate presence in London. There is a Chancery suit -
involving my succession to a large fortune -

RANDALL: But you knew of that this morning, my bleating lambkin, you
knew of that this morning.

EDITH (ASIDE): Is this on my account?

BUCKTHORPE: It is.

EDITH: Then, on my account, stay.

BUCKTHORPE: I cannot stay - you don't know all!

RANDALL: I think on reflection you will see that this haste is
unnecessary. [TAKES HIM ASIDE.] If you attempt to leave
this place until I give you permission, I will place your
letters in the hands of the local police - you know me well.
[ALOUD.] Ladies and gentlemen, I have the pleasure to
inform you that I have convinced Mr. Buckthorpe that his
intended departure is unnecessary. He will have much
pleasure in joining your party!

[END OF ACT I]

ACT II

SCENE - THE CLUMP ROCKS. THE ENTRANCE TO A LARGE CAVE OCCUPIES THE FOREGROUND OF STAGE, WITH SEASHORE IN THE DISTANCE. THE ENTRANCE FROM L. IS OVER LARGE LOOSE ROCKS; THE ENTRANCES, R., ARE OPEN; THE TWO LARGE DETACHED ROCKS IN THE CENTRE SHOULD BE SUFFICIENTLY FLAT ON THEIR SURFACES TO SERVE AS TABLES, AND THEY SHOULD BE SURROUNDED WITH ROUGH LEDGES, ABOUT EIGHTEEN INCHES HIGH, TO SERVE AS SEATS; THE SMALL DETACHED ROCK, R., SHOULD BE ABOUT TWELVE INCHES HIGH; THE STAGE IS COVERED WITH OTHER ROCK-WORK TO MASK THE RISING OF THE WATER.

[SERVANTS DISCOVERED ARRANGING LUNCH, SUPERINTENDED BY MISS SPINN - BANGLES SITTING MOODILY APART, ENDEAVOURING TO TURN OUT A JELLY.]

MISS SPINN: Well, Mr. Bangles, how are you getting on with that jelly?
BANGLES: Ma'am, the confounded thing won't come.
MISS SPINN: Put it back into the warm water. [COMING DOWN.] Mr. Bangles, I often think that I'm very like a jelly. A good and clever husband might melt me down and pour me into any mould he pleased.
BANGLES: Ma'am, it's a privilege of which he would be certain to avail himself at the earliest opportunity. But I don't think you'd "turn out" well.
MISS SPINN: Yes I should, dear. A little gentle warmth - such as I apply to this jelly.
BANGLES: Gentle warmth? Nothing short of perpetual hot water would do it.
MISS SPINN (CROSSING TO BANGLES): And would you try the hot water?
BANGLES: I would indeed, ma'am.
MISS SPINN (EARNESTLY): Perpetual hot water?
BANGLES: Perpetual hot water.
MISS SPINN: Hot water that would not cool down as time went on; water that would be always, always hot?
BANGLES: Ma'am, it would be as hot as fire could make it.
MISS SPINN: Ardent soul! We will talk of this again.
BANGLES: Really, Miss Spinn -
MISS SPINN: Oh, Joseph, I am so happy!
BANGLES: Hold up, ma'am, pray - this is extremely awkward. They are coming, ma'am, and we shall be caught!
MISS SPINN: You are right, we must be discreet - we must be very - very prudent. I am not angry - indeed I am not angry, you imprudent headstrong boy! There, hush, they are coming; we will speak of this again at a more convenient time. Oh, Joseph, I am so happy!

[ENTER DR. TROTWAY AND MR. AND MRS. FLAMBOYS, OVER ROCKS.]

BANGLES: Miss Spinn, I - That woman would extract a proposal of marriage from the Pope of Rome! [TAKES STAGE, R.]
TROTWAY: Take care, Mrs. Flamboys, the rocks are very slippery. Well, Miss Spinn, you have arranged everything, I see.
BANGLES: Yes, Miss Spinn has arranged everything.
TROTWAY: I always said she was a capital manager.
BANGLES: And I heartily endorse the observation!
MRS. FLAMBOYS: Here come the turtle-doves. Ah, I wonder how long it will last? [MR. AND MRS. FLAMBOYS SEAT THEMSELVES IN FRONT OF DETACHED ROCK, L.]

[ENTER MR. AND MRS. SCANTLEBURY, OVER THE ROCKS.]

SCANTLEBURY: Come along, my angel. Ladies and gentlemen, oblige me by looking the other way while Mrs. Scantlebury climbs over the rocks. [THEY DO SO.] Now jump.
MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Edward, if anybody is looking, I shall go and drown myself! There. [JUMPS.]
FLAMBOYS: May we look now?
SCANTLEBURY: You may. [THEY STAND IN AN ATTITUDE OF EMBRACE.]
ALL: Beautiful!
MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Are we all here?

[ENTER RANDALL.]

RANDALL: No, there's Miss Temple to come, and Buckthorpe. I tell you what it is, I vote we don't wait for them.
TROTWAY: We won't wait for them. It will serve them right. Won't it, Bangles?
MISS SPINN: Oh, but that would be a pity. Suppose, Mr. Bangles, you and I start off to meet them and hurry them on.
TROTWAY: No, no, leave them alone. They must be taught that if they chose to separate themselves from the rest of the party, they must be prepared to take the consequences.

[THEY SEAT THEMSELVES - MR. AND MRS. SCANTLEBURY AT LOWER ROCK, DR. TROTWAY AT HIGHER ROCK - BANGLES ON SMALL ROCK, AND MISS SPINN ON HAMPER BETWEEN BANGLES AND MR. SCANTLEBURY - RANDALL STANDING, C.]

Let them lunch together.

RANDALL (ASIDE): Where shall I sit?

[HE MAKES ONE OR TWO ATTEMPTS TO SIT NEAR MRS. FLAMBOYS AND MRS. SCANTLEBURY. THEY CLOSE UP TO PREVENT HIM DOING SO.]

Somehow, I'm afraid I'm not a favourite here. There's Mrs. Flamboys - she's a nice little thing - black eyes, plump figure, and doesn't get on with her husband. She'll do. [SITS NEAR MRS. FLAMBOYS.] I know I'm not a pleasant person to look at, but my conversation is considered sparkling. I'll try and sparkle. [ALOUD.] Mrs. Flamboys!
MRS. FLAMBOYS: Yes.

RANDALL (SENTIMENTALLY): Do you believe in first impressions?
MRS. FLAMBOYS: Sincerely.
RANDALL (TAKEN ABACK): Oh! But don't you find that your first estimate of a man is sometimes a mistaken one?
MRS. FLAMBOYS (WITH DECISION): Never. [ASIDE.] I wish this person would go.
RANDALL: Humph! Cold shoulder!
MRS. FLAMBOYS: Mr. Flamboys, if it's not asking you too great a favour, I should like a little lobster salad.
FLAMBOYS: Oh, hang it! Can't you get it yourself?
RANDALL: What an ill-bred boor it is. Allow me, Mrs. Flamboys. [GIVES HER SALAD.]
MRS. FLAMBOYS: Oh, thank you. [ASIDE TO FLAMBOYS.] I can't touch it after that dreadful man; get me something else - anything.
FLAMBOYS: My darling - there. [GIVES HER CHICKEN.]
MRS. FLAMBOYS: Thank you, dearest. What are you eating?
FLAMBOYS: Nothing. I live on love.
MRS. FLAMBOYS: My darling!
FLAMBOYS: My pet!
TROTWAY: Ha! - hem!
FLAMBOYS (RUDELY): Here, somebody give my wife something - she won't touch anything I give her.
MRS. FLAMBOYS: No, thank you; I've finished. Ah, I had an appetite once!
FLAMBOYS: You had - enormous!
MRS. FLAMBOYS: Brute!
RANDALL (WHO HAS COME ROUND TO MRS. SCANTLEBURY): Mrs. Scantlebury, do you believe in first impressions? [PATHETICALLY.]
MRS. SCANTLEBURY (STARTLED): Bless and save the man - what does he mean?
RANDALL (REPROACHFULLY): Ah, and you, too, give me the cold shoulder!
MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Some cold shoulder for Mr. Randall. [TURNING AWAY FROM HIM.]
SCANTLEBURY: Certainly, Randall. Shall I put some mint sauce over it?
RANDALL: Devilish odd; they don't seem to like me at all. [ALLOUD.] Thanks, I have some pigeon pie.
TROTWAY: Then have some more. [GIVES HIM SOME.]
RANDALL: Is this pigeon?
TROTWAY: No, it's rook.
FLAMBOYS: They go very well together, don't they, Randall?
SCANTLEBURY: It's a great Homburg dish, isn't it, Randall?
TROTWAY: Rook and pigeon, with a good steak, is a dish you're always glad to have a finger in, ain't you, Randall.
MRS. SCANTLEBURY: A finger? [TO RANDALL.] There's no occasion to use your fingers, sir! Allow me to hand you a fork.
FLAMBOYS: Randall always prefers a spoon if he can get one; don't you, Randall?
SCANTLEBURY: I can provide you with one. [OFFERS ONE.]
RANDALL: I'm sure you can. Thank you.
SCANTLEBURY: What do you mean by that, sir? [RISING.]
RANDALL: You were born with a silver one in your mouth, were you not?
SCANTLEBURY: Well, sir, and if I was, sir - and if I was, sir?
RANDALL: Well, I meant that one. [GOES ROUND TO MISS SPINN.]
SCANTLEBURY (ASIDE TO MRS. SCANTLEBURY): Now, how the deuce did he know I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth.
MRS. SCANTLEBURY: He traced it in your conversation.

SCANTLEBURY (ANGRILY): Frederica.
MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Horace!
SCANTLEBURY (RECOLLECTING HIMSELF): My own!
MRS. SCANTLEBURY: My love!
FLAMBOYS: Scantlebury, leave your wife alone, do.
MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Sir! Mr. Scantlebury is not in the habit of letting his wife alone. If you are envious of Mr. Scantlebury's happiness ...
FLAMBOYS: But I'm not.
SCANTLEBURY: You're right, Flamboys.
MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Horace! [ANGRILY.]
SCANTLEBURY: Frederica!
MRS. SCANTLEBURY (RECOLLECTING HERSELF): My love!
SCANTLEBURY: My own! [THEY EMBRACE.]
RANDALL: Miss Spinn!

[RANDALL IN THE MEANTIME HAS GONE ROUND TO MISS SPINN,
INTRODUCING HIMSELF BETWEEN MISS SPINN AND BANGLES.]

MISS SPINN: Well?
RANDALL: Do you believe in first impressions?
MISS SPINN: Oh, I don't believe in anything.
RANDALL: I'm glad of that, it shows a sense beyond your years. I believe in nothing, but I have been five and thirty years learning that nothing is worthy of belief. If I had known it at your age, I should have been a happier man.
MISS SPINN: Indeed! [SIC]
RANDALL: Yes - alas! I have lived a life of trust!
MISS SPINN: A life **on** trust, you mean. [ASIDE.] I wish he'd go.
RANDALL: And my trust has been utterly misplaced. In me you behold a wasted destiny. I was made to be believed in, but no one believes in me. You don't seem surprised.
MISS SPINN: Well, I'm not.
RANDALL: Ah, you are like the rest of the world - you, whom I had thought so different. You see that I am ugly, and you conclude that I am wicked.
MISS SPINN: Oh, I didn't say that! [ASIDE.] He **is** extremely plain.
RANDALL: Oh, I don't complain, ma'am. It's natural enough; I myself often act on the converse of the proposition. I see that you are beautiful, and I conclude that you are good.
MISS SPINN (ASIDE): Poor fellow! How nicely he expresses himself. I am afraid I have judged him harshly. How angry Joseph looks! I'll make him jealous! [ALOUD - RISING AND COMING DOWN.] But if you knew me better, you might find that I was not ...
RANDALL: Beautiful?
MISS SPINN: No - good.
RANDALL: Will you let me try?
MISS SPINN (BASHFULLY): Yes.
TROTWAY: Come, we must be off to the caves if we want to see them - the tide is coming in, and this place will be under water in half an hour. Bangles, give your arm to Miss Spinn. [HE DOES SO - SERVANTS BEGIN TO CLEAR AWAY.]
RANDALL: Pardon me, I claim Miss Spinn. It's an engagement five minutes old.

BANGLES: Thank you - thank you sincerely. [SHAKES RANDALL'S HAND.]
MISS SPINN (ASIDE): Oh, you sarcastic creature! There'll be blood spilt, I
know there will! [TO RANDALL.] Swear that you will not
fight on my account!
RANDALL: I swear!

[ALL EXEUNT, EXCEPT BANGLES AND DR. TROTWAY.]

TROTWAY: Come along, Joe, you and I'll pair off together.
BANGLES: No - I'm out of sorts.
TROTWAY: Why, what's wrong?
BANGLES: Well, to be candid with you, I don't like to see Edith and
that fellow Buckthorpe so much together.
TROTWAY: Young people, Joe - young people! We were young once, you
know.
BANGLES (SADLY): Yes once. [ASIDE.] They're always together - on the
beach, on the parade, on the pier - wherever she goes he's
sure to turn up with his confounded "Miss Temple, this is
indeed an unexpected pleasure!" Unexpected - bah! Why, he
knows her movements to a minute, and her plans for a week to
come.
TROTWAY: This is a rather critical moment in Buckthorpe's existence.
He is expecting every minute to hear that a Chancery suit
has determined in his favour, and if it does, it will put
him in possession of a considerable fortune.
BANGLES: The deuce it will!
TROTWAY: Yes. As Edith and I were walking through Beechwood,
yesterday, who should turn up of all people in the world but
Buckthorpe. "Dear me, Miss Temple," he said, "this is
indeed an unexpected pleasure."
BANGLES: Bah! Trotway, do you ever go to the play?
TROTWAY: Oh, yes; often.
BANGLES: Very good. Then here's a little drama in two acts and a
moral that will interest you. Act I - Scene, the Earth.
Time, sunrise. Personage discovered: the Astronomer-Royal.
The Sun rises in the East. Astronomer-Royal speaks, "God
bless my soul," says he, "you rising in the east? This is
indeed an unexpected pleasure." End of Act 1. Act 2 - Same
Scene. Time, sunset. Personages discovered: the
Astronomer-Royal, and the Sun about to set. Astronomer-
Royal speaks, "God bless my soul," says he, "you setting in
the west? This is indeed an unexpected pleasure." Moral -
The Astronomer-Royal's a humbug. [EXIT BANGLES.]
TROTWAY: Nonsense, Joe, you're hard on Buckthorpe. It's very odd
that Joe Bangles who likes everybody should have taken such
a dislike to young Buckthorpe whom everybody else likes so
much. I can't account for it.

[ENTER EDITH AND BUCKTHORPE OVER THE ROCKS.]

TROTWAY: Well, young lady, you've taken your time about it. We've
lunched without you.
EDITH: Uncle, I was so tired, I was obliged to sit down.
TROTWAY: Well, we had to remove everything to the top of the cliff,

as the tide is rising; so if you want any lunch you'd better come with me - come along Buckthorpe.

[EXEUNT TROTWAY AND EDITH. AS BUCKTHORPE IS FOLLOWING THEM, RANDALL ENTERS.]

RANDALL: Stop - I want to speak to you.
BUCKTHORPE: Well?
RANDALL: Well, you've been a week at work, and precious good running you've made in the time.
BUCKTHORPE: Yes - pretty well.
RANDALL: Nice girl.
BUCKTHORPE: Yes.
RANDALL: Pity she has to lose her money?
BUCKTHORPE: It is a pity.
RANDALL: Well, you've made good use of your time. I couldn't have got round her in a week as you have.
BUCKTHORPE: Oh, you're too modest.
RANDALL: Yes, I am modest. Why, at this moment I know of half-a-dozen ladies - devilish fine women, too - who'd give a good deal to know where I am.
BUCKTHORPE: Ladies?
RANDALL: Yes.
BUCKTHORPE: What kind of ladies? [CONTEMPTUOUSLY.]
RANDALL: Landladies. Don't mistake me - it's rent, not spoons. No, no - Jack Randall is not the man to run away from that sort of thing.
BUCKTHORPE: No, he's just the sort of man to run away with that sort of thing.
RANDALL: What sort of thing?
BUCKTHORPE: Spoons.
RANDALL: My good friend, you don't understand these things. I am not a strictly honest man, but I should no more think of sneaking down an area after a plate basket than you would of sitting down to dinner with a dustman. Damme, sir, pay some regard to social distinctions. If you are a swell, swindle; if you are a snob, sneak. Always rob, according to your station in life. Golden maxim.
BUCKTHORPE: Then, by your own admission, you're a swindler.
RANDALL: I'm a chess-player.
BUCKTHORPE: But you cheat.
RANDALL: No - I finesse.
BUCKTHORPE: I don't understand the distinction.
RANDALL: I'll make it clear to you. I have a scheme to take your queen. To effect this, I arrange that my bishop shall occupy this square - my knight that, my rook that, and so forth. If you're a skilful player you detect my scheme and prepare to baffle it; if not, I gain my end. And because I don't explain my tactics beforehand, you kick the board over.
BUCKTHORPE: Your games generally end that way, don't they?
RANDALL: Generally. The art of losing with a good grace is an accomplishment which is very generally neglected. I often wish it was otherwise.

BUCKTHORPE: No doubt.
RANDALL: But let's get to business. What have you gathered from this girl about my lamented wife?
BUCKTHORPE: Nothing.
RANDALL: Not yet?
BUCKTHORPE: No, not yet?
RANDALL: Then, as time's getting on, and as I have very good reasons for not stopping here longer than is necessary, I think you'd better begin.
BUCKTHORPE: Oh, you think that?
RANDALL: Yes, I do. Look here, Buckthorpe, I'm not going to stand any nonsense - I've got my fingers round your throat, and one squeeze will choke the life out of you. This evening I must know all about this wife of mine - you've got about an hour to do it in; you'd better begin at once. Here comes the girl. I shall be within hearing, so you'd better be careful.
BUCKTHORPE: I would rather you did not listen.
RANDALL: No doubt; but I shall.

[RANDALL GOES BEHIND ROCK AS EDITH ENTERS.]

EDITH: Mr. Buckthorpe, do you know where my uncle is?
BUCKTHORPE: No; I have not seen him.
EDITH: I saw some one with you ...
BUCKTHORPE: Yes - Mr. Randall.
EDITH: Oh! Is Mr. Randall a great friend of yours?

[THEY SIT - EDITH ON LOWER ROCK WITH HER BACK TO RANDALL, BUCKTHORPE ON HIGHER ROCK FACING HIM.]

BUCKTHORPE: No, he's not a great friend of mine.
EDITH: Is he - you'll think it a strange question - is he a very nice man?
BUCKTHORPE: No, he's not a very nice man.
EDITH: He doesn't look at all nice.
BUCKTHORPE: He is not at all nice. [RANDALL ATTEMPTS TO GO.] It's about two years since your aunt, Miss Brackenbury, died?

[RANDALL STAYS.]

EDITH: Just two years, poor old lady.
BUCKTHORPE: So Randall told me.
EDITH: How in the world does he know anything about her?
BUCKTHORPE: He is a very well informed man.
EDITH: Indeed? He looks like a - a - You don't mind my speaking openly about him?
BUCKTHORPE: Not at all. I like it.
EDITH: He looks like a --- What do you call those people at fairs and races?
BUCKTHORPE: Punch and Judy man?
EDITH: No, swell mob. Surely he is not a gentleman?
BUCKTHORPE: Most surely not.
EDITH: Then how is it that you and he are so much together? You

are so entirely different. He is the worst looking man I ever saw. [RANDALL GOING.]

BUCKTHORPE: I'll tell you all about that, some day. How old was your aunt when she died? [RANDALL STOPS.]

EDITH: Seventy-nine.

BUCKTHORPE: So Randall told me.

EDITH: Mr. Randall seems to know a great deal about my aunt.

BUCKTHORPE: It is part of Mr. Randall's profession to know a great deal about a great many people.

EDITH: His profession? Is he at the bar?

BUCKTHORPE: Very often. He is a swindler - a forger - an adventurer - a low-bred thief, and an utterly unmitigated scoundrel!

[EXIT RANDALL.]

BUCKTHORPE (RISING): Edith, that man has a terrible hold upon me. He has evidence which implicates me in a crime of which he knows me to be utterly innocent, and he threatens to make that evidence public if I withdraw from his society.

EDITH (RISING): A crime?

BUCKTHORPE: A crime of which, before heaven, I am utterly innocent! I have been weak, imprudent, selfish, dissipated, but my honour, as honour is esteemed by the world, is still unstained.

EDITH: I am sure of it. Quite, quite sure of it. But is there no prospect of your being able to shake off the influence of this fearful man? Reginald - I am - I am rich - forgive me for what I am going to say - I am rich, and my money is at your disposal. Will you let me help you?

BUCKTHORPE: Edith, you have it in your power to help me as no other soul on earth can help me. There is a help that you can give me, for which I, who do not often pray, will pray night and day - the help of your companionship - of sweet association with one as good and pure as you. Edith, give me this hope - tell me that, weak, wicked as I have been, I am not beyond the reach of your mercy!

EDITH: Who am I, Reginald, that I should set myself up as a judge of your conduct? I have been so hedged about from the very approach of temptation, that I can only guess at the meaning of the word. I have been jealously guarded through life, by strong, and wise, and loving counsellors. I have never had one wish thwarted. I have revelled in the happiest life that this world can bestow, and shall I sit in judgment upon you who have been left from boyhood to your own courses - turned adrift into the world without friends, without counsel, and without example - to fight the world unadvised, unaided, and alone? Oh, Reginald, I am more just!

BUCKTHORPE: Edith, your words give me new life - new hope. I have been an outcast so long, that I had almost given up the struggle with the world in despair.

EDITH: Still the world is a good world; you were your worst enemy -

BUCKTHORPE: Yes; God help him of whom that may be said! A brave man can grapple with an outside foe - and if he falls, he falls with honour. But when one's deadliest enemy is locked up in

one's own heart, ever present, and ever watchful to take advantage of weakness known only to itself - his case is desperate indeed! Yes, I was my worst enemy. I knew the strength of my weakness, and I surrendered to it at discretion.

EDITH: But there is yet time. You are young and strong and brave - you have that within you, which, under due guidance, may yet place you high among your fellows.

BUCKTHORPE: And where shall I look for that guidance - to you?

EDITH: Reginald, I am a poor, weak, inexperienced girl - a baby in the world - untempted and untried. I do not know myself, for I have been put to no proof. I am unfitted for so great a charge!

BUCKTHORPE (PASSIONATELY): Edith, in your hands I place my life - do with it what you will. It is my last - my only hope! Tell me that you will take it into your keeping.

EDITH (AFTER A PAUSE): If you think me worthy to undertake this great charge - yes.

BUCKTHORPE: Bear in mind what I am - what I have been - an adventurer - an outcast.

EDITH: I think only of what you will be, when you have separated yourself from the evil influences that have hitherto surrounded you. It may be within my power to help you to do that; if it is, I will help you with all my heart, with all my soul. Reginald, I *will* be your guide.

BUCKTHORPE: For life?

EDITH: For life. [THEY RETIRE UP, AND GO OFF.]

[ENTER MRS. SCANTLEBURY AND FLAMBOYS.]

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: How delightful this is, Mr. Flamboys! How pure - how grand - how calm! I don't know whether I admire the ocean most under its present peaceful aspect, or when it is lashed into fury by the demon of the storm.

FLAMBOYS: I do. When it is lashed into fury by the demon of the storm, there's no fish for breakfast next day.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: I'm afraid you've no romance, Mr. Flamboys.

FLAMBOYS: Not a grain; I had plenty of it when I was your age.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Oh, Mr. Flamboys, you are surely younger than I! [BASHFULLY.]

FLAMBOYS: Oh, much - in years - but I mean matrimonially speaking. I mean when I was first married.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Oh!

FLAMBOYS: But Mrs. Flamboys soon knocked that out of me.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Indeed?

FLAMBOYS: Yes. Mrs. Flamboys has no romance. She is as matter-of-fact as the multiplication table, and quite as difficult to master. Now, when I married, my conversation was so metaphorical that no one understood me. In fact, Mrs. Flamboys hooked me by placing a matter-of-fact interpretation upon a flower invitation to dance. She married me through a metaphor, and fixed me with a figure of speech. And a pretty dance she's led me ever since.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Poor Mr. Flamboys! That was enough to cure you of

romance.

FLAMBOYS: Yes, but it didn't. After my marriage, I surrounded myself with a mamelon of metaphor - a palladium of poetry - a fortress of figure of speech - but it was of no good, Mrs. Flamboys battered it all down.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Battered it all down? What with?

FLAMBOYS: Babies. Four of 'em - George, Thomas, William and John.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: And how old are they?

FLAMBOYS: Oh, I don't know! The youngest may be ten days.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Ten days! [ASTONISHED.]

FLAMBOYS (CONFUSED): No, no - I mean ten years.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Ten years! [HORRIFIED.]

FLAMBOYS: No, no - what am I saying? Ten months - months - months! I know it's ten something. [ASIDE.] I wish this woman would go.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Poor Mr. Flamboys! Do you know, the more I see of Mrs. Flamboys the more I pity you.

FLAMBOYS: The deuce you do! - that is - of course - thank you - thank you sincerely. [ASIDE.] I wish Scantlebury would come and fetch her away.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Any one can see that you are not happily mated. It is a great pity, for you are young, and - and - good-looking.

FLAMBOYS: Eh? [FRIGHTENED.]

MRS. SCANTLEBURY (SIMPERING): Very good-looking. I may say so, Mr. Flamboys, for I am old enough to be your - ahem! - aunt.

FLAMBOYS: Quite. Wouldn't you like to rejoin Mr. Scantlebury?

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Oh, dear no, Scantlebury's all right; that is - yes, if you please. Dear Mr. Scantlebury, where can he be? [LOOKS OFF, R. - THEN ASIDE.] Here he comes. [ALOUD.] I think I see him over there. [POINTS OFF, L.] Will you take me to him?

[EXEUNT MRS. SCANTLEBURY OGLING MR. FLAMBOYS, L.
ENTER MR. SCANTLEBURY AND MRS. FLAMBOYS, R.]

MRS. FLAMBOYS: There's Mrs. Scantlebury; I'm so glad you've found her at last.

SCANTLEBURY: Ah, to be sure, there *is* Mrs. Scantlebury.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: And with Mr. Flamboys. [ASIDE.] Poor boy, how he must be suffering! Well?

SCANTLEBURY: Well, ma'am?

MRS. FLAMBOYS: We had better join them, hadn't we?

SCANTLEBURY: Join them? never!

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Yes; my husband will take charge of me.

SCANTLEBURY: No, Mrs. Flamboys, I can't permit you to make so great a sacrifice on my account.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Sacrifice?

SCANTLEBURY: Yes; you are happier with me, ma'am; he means well, I dare say, but he's a brute.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: But still - Mrs. Scantlebury - she will be anxious about you if you keep away from her on my account.

SCANTLEBURY: Mrs. Scantlebury has every confidence in me. Besides, the longer I keep away from her, the better pleased she will be to see me when I return to her. I want her to be extremely

pleased to see me, so I shall keep away from her as long as possible. I didn't leave Mrs. Scantlebury's side all day until an hour ago, and after twenty-four hours of it, I'm afraid even my society may begin to pall upon her.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Oh, impossible, Mr. Scantlebury.

SCANTLEBURY: Yes, it seems so to you, because you see me at my best. But I'm not always the lightsome thing you see before you. I have my moments of depression - I feel one coming on now. Let me see - what is it that cheers, but don't inebriate?

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Oh, it's some cup ...

SCANTLEBURY: It's some cup. Perhaps it's champagne cup?

[POURS OUT SOME FROM TANKARD WHICH BANGLES
HAS LEFT ON HIGHER ROCK, AND DRINKS.]

It *is* champagne cup. [TAKES SOME MORE.]

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Indeed, I think we'd better go. [ASIDE.] There's Edward still with that horrible woman - I'm sure he's dying to get away from her. [ALOUD.] Come, Mr. Scantlebury, you must take me to my husband.

SCANTLEBURY (GETTING TIPSY): Your husband? Never! Your husband's a brute!

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Well, never mind that.

SCANTLEBURY: He's a brute, ma'am; he's not worthy of you - *is* he worthy of you?

MRS. FLAMBOYS: No, no - perhaps not - but still -

SCANTLEBURY: But still you want to go to him? It's a beautiful trait in your character - a beautiful trait. [DRINKS.] Yes, this is the cup I've heard of. It cheers, but it don't inebriate. I'm quite cheerful now, ma'am. Flamboys is a brute - he insults his wife, and beats his children. He beats his children, don't he?

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Oh, yes, yes! [IMPATIENTLY.]

SCANTLEBURY (INDIGNANTLY): He beats his children. How many are there?

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Oh, four.

SCANTLEBURY: Four! I'll drink to all their healths. What are their names?

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Oh, I don't know.

SCANTLEBURY: Don't know? That's nonsense.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Oh, Jane, Emma, Mary, and Kate.

SCANTLEBURY: Jane, Emma, Mary, and Kate! Beautiful names! God bless 'em all. [DRINKS.]

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Now, Mr. Scantlebury, once for all, I must insist on your rejoining Mrs. Scantlebury.

SCANTLEBURY: Never mind Mrs. Scantlebury. I have plenty of Mrs. Scantlebury at home. It's astonishing how soon one gets sick of Mrs. Scantlebury. She's a fine woman, but a very little of Mrs. Scantlebury goes a long way. I wish a great deal of Mrs. Scantlebury would go a long way - and stop there!

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Mr. Scantlebury! Is this the way you speak of a wife to whom you haven't been married three weeks?

SCANTLEBURY: Three weeks. Thirty-five - [RECOLLECTING.] Yes, three weeks! She's too good for me, Mrs. Flamboys. It's too much happiness for one man! She's a noble woman, ma'am, and I've

much pleasure in drinking her health. Take me to her! I'll allow you to have the pleasure of taking me to her!

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Thank goodness, here she is.

[ENTER MRS. SCANTLEBURY WITH FLAMBOYS, L.]

SCANTLEBURY: Just as we were getting on so com-com-comfably!

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Mrs. Scantlebury, we've been looking for you everywhere. Allow me to hand Mr. Scantlebury over into your keeping - he appears to be unwell.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Unwell! [RUSHES TO HIM.]

SCANTLEBURY: Unwell? Never berrer.

FLAMBOYS (INDIGNANTLY, L.): Unwell? Why, he's tipsy!

SCANTLEBURY (EXPLAINS): It's a pic-nic.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY (C.): Why, Horace, dearest Horace, what is the matter? Speak, I implore! [TO MR. AND MRS. FLAMBOYS.] Don't be alarmed, he is often so.

SCANTLEBURY: Matter? Matter's plain enough - I'm tip-tip-tipsy. It's a pic-nic. Don't be alarmed, I'm often so.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Come with me, love, come with me. [ASIDE, VICIOUSLY.] And if I don't talk you sober in five minutes, my name's not Scantlebury.

SCANTLEBURY: If your name's not Scantlebury, I decline to recognize your authority.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: I say if I don't talk you sober in five minutes, my name's not Scantlebury!

SCANTLEBURY: Then I shan't know whether you're entitled to take such a liberty until you've taken it.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Edward, you forget yourself. Remember, if you please, that we are a newly-married couple.

SCANTLEBURY: So we are - that's 'scuse for everything. [TO MRS. FLAMBOYS.] If my remarks have 'peared a little incoherent, please be good enough to attribute it to the fact that I'm a newly married couple - and that's 'scuse for everything!

[EXEUNT MR. AND MRS. SCANTLEBURY. MR. AND MRS. FLAMBOYS RUSH TO EACH OTHER'S ARMS. ENTER BUCKTHORPE, UNOBSERVED. HE COUGHS - THEY SEE HIM AND DISENGAGE.]

MRS. FLAMBOYS (ANGRILY): Oh Mr. Flamboys! your brutality will break my heart.

[EXEUNT MR. AND MRS. FLAMBOYS, AS IF QUARRELLING. ENTER RANDALL, IN A RAGE.]

RANDALL: Now, you're a pretty fellow!

BUCKTHORPE (SITS ON ROCK): You're good enough to say so.

RANDALL: I overheard what you told that girl about me.

BUCKTHORPE: I know you did - that's why I said it.

RANDALL: And do you think I'm going to stand this?

BUCKTHORPE: No. I thought you wouldn't like it - I told you you had better not listen.

RANDALL: And I told you that I didn't agree with you.

BUCKTHORPE: Well, you see I was right.

RANDALL: You infernal scoundrel! I ...

BUCKTHORPE: Stop! If this is to resolve itself into a duel of bad language, I give in. With those weapons I'm no match for you.

RANDALL: Do you know what you've done? Do you know that you've blown upon me? Do you know that instead of helping my game on, you've spoilt it beyond redemption?

BUCKTHORPE: I hope so.

RANDALL: Do you know that what you've told that girl will be all over the place to-morrow? Do you know - curse you! - that you've made it too hot to hold me?

BUCKTHORPE: Yes, I think so. If I haven't, I will. Randall, it's a fearful thing to feel that one is dependent on the mercy of such a man as you.

RANDALL: So it is.

BUCKTHORPE: I am, unhappily dependent on that mercy.

RANDALL: Entirely.

BUCKTHORPE: You have in your possession letters that implicate me in the death of that unhappy man Peters. There's a reward of three hundred pounds for my apprehension; and, as you say, you could earn that reward to-morrow!

RANDALL: To-night.

BUCKTHORPE: Very well then - earn it. [RISING.]

RANDALL: What?

BUCKTHORPE: Earn it, I say.

RANDALL: Are you mad, Buckthorpe?

BUCKTHORPE: I am. I am maddened by the hold you have upon me. I'm maddened by the fact that it depends upon the will and pleasure of such a hound as you, whether I, an innocent man, go free, or stand at a criminal bar on a charge of murder. I am mad, and I shall be mad until that hold is removed. So do your worst - I've made up my mind, and I'll chance it.

RANDALL: Come - be reasonable. I only want you to help me to my own.

BUCKTHORPE: Damn your own! If it's your own, prove your claim to it yourself. I've been under your thumb long enough, and I'll shake myself free or take the consequences. Randall, your fearful presence has haunted me, night and day, for two years. Your infernal threats have reduced me from the position of a gentleman to be your miserable associate. You've been the nightmare of my life. When I was falling you pulled me down, and held me down when I might have risen. You've flavoured my miserable life with the taint of your own. You cursed jail-bird! You proclaimed thief! Be off, for my hands are not my own just now! Be off, and do your worst, for as there's a heaven above us, I'll do mine!

RANDALL: Buckthorpe, if I consulted my personal feeling towards you, I'd take you at your word to-night. If I spare you till to-morrow, it is because it is to my interest to give you one more chance. If you have not procured the information I want by twelve o'clock to-morrow, you're a dead man. I give you this chance - not out of any consideration for you, whom I would gladly see dead at my feet - but because I prefer thirty-eight thousand to three hundred. And one or the other I will have. Good evening. [EXIT RANDALL.]

BUCKTHORPE: What have I done? [MAKES A MOVEMENT AS IF TO CALL HIM BACK.] No, no! I mustn't let him see that I feel his power over me. I've taken up my position, and I must stand or fall by it. No, no; I think I'm safe. There's a warrant out for his arrest on a charge of forgery. I might lay information against him, if I knew details of the charge; but then he would be brought to bay, and he'd turn upon me, and this miserable affair would come to light - and then, Edith! No, I can't do that - I can't do that.

[ENTER MISS SPINN.]

MISS SPINN: Mr. Buckthorpe, was that Mr. Randall who left you just now?
BUCKTHORPE: Yes.
MISS SPINN: Humph. I don't like Mr. Randall a bit.
BUCKTHORPE: Indeed!
MISS SPINN: No. He took me to see the caves, and he wanted to give half-a-crown to the woman who shows them.
BUCKTHORPE: Well, there's no harm in that.
MISS SPINN: Not a bit, only - he'd forgotten his purse.
BUCKTHORPE: I see; and he borrowed yours?
MISS SPINN: No, he didn't. Fortunately, I had forgotten mine too. Now, I don't like other people who've forgotten their purses.
BUCKTHORPE: And how did you settle it?
MISS SPINN: I promised to make it up to her in sandwiches; but she said she couldn't drink sandwiches. "Well, but you couldn't drink half-a-crown," said I. "Oh, couldn't I!" said she. And I really believe she could!

[ENTER MR. BANGLES AND EDITH.]

BUCKTHORPE: Edith! [GOING TO HER.]
BANGLES: That woman here? How very annoying! [SITS ON LOWER ROCK.]
MISS SPINN: Mr. Bangles, why, what in the world is the matter? [ASIDE.] Oh, you foolish, you foolish, jealous boy! Because he's found me here alone with Mr. Buckthorpe! Why, you silly child, Mr. Buckthorpe is dying for Edith! See how glad they are to get together again. Why, I came here to find you.
BANGLES: To find me?
MISS SPINN: Yes; I began to think you had been punished enough.
BANGLES: So I have; too much!
MISS SPINN: Bless your heart, I only did it to tease you.

[EDITH AND BUCKTHORPE ARE SEATED ON HIGH ROCK - BANGLES AND MISS SPINN ON LOW ROCK.]

BANGLES (LOOKING AT BUCKTHORPE): Confound the fellow - how happy he seems! And how happy she seems too!

[DURING THIS CONVERSATION THE TIDE HAS RISEN AND SURROUNDED BOTH ROCKS.]

MISS SPINN: Oh, Mr. Bangles! the water! We're surrounded!
BANGLES: Eh? Confound it, I thought we were above high-water mark.

MISS SPINN: Mr. Bangles, this is a trick!

BANGLES: A trick, ma'am?

MISS SPINN: Yes, I see it all. It's a planned thing to get me alone. Oh, Mr. Bangles, this is unmanly, unmanly! What will people say? [PRETENDS TO WEEP.]

BANGLES: Absurd! What the deuce are we to do?

MISS SPINN: If I believed that this was a planned thing to enjoy my society alone, until the tide goes down, I'd never, never speak to you again!

BANGLES: You wouldn't?

MISS SPINN: Indeed, I wouldn't.

BANGLES: You promise that?

MISS SPINN: I do!

BANGLES: Then I'll confess all. It **was** a planned thing. I settled it with Buckthorpe an hour ago. There - now keep your promise.

MISS SPINN: Do you really mean to tell me this?

BANGLES: Certainly; no doubt about it.

MISS SPINN: Oh, Joe, dear Joe!

BANGLES: Ma'am, you said you'd never speak to me again.

MISS SPINN: But I didn't mean it, Joe.

BANGLES (ASIDE): I must put an end to this. [ALOUD.] Miss Spinn, let us come to the point. It's an awkward thing to have to say to a lady, but I can't close my eyes to the fact that you seem to think that I - in short that - I propose to marry you.

MISS SPINN: You do?

BANGLES (DECIDEDLY): I do!

MISS SPINN: You propose to marry me? Oh, Joseph, how good you are to me!

BANGLES: Hang the woman! [ALOUD.] Miss Spinn, let me assure you that ...

MISS SPINN: You may call me Adelaide, Joe. [SHYLY.]

BANGLES: Miss Spinn ...

MISS SPINN: I say you may call me Adelaide.

BANGLES: Well, then, Adelaide, I am sorry if my manner has conveyed a false impression, but ...

MISS SPINN: No, Joseph - I knew that you were very fond of me, but I hardly expected a formal declaration so soon; still, I am not angry - indeed, I am pleased - gratified - delighted! But give me till to-morrow to decide before I take the final and irrevocable plunge! Oh, the water - the water! Mr. Bangles! we shall be drowned! Miss Temple - Mr. Buckthorpe! see - we are surrounded, and I shall be drowned! - and in my new silk!

BUCKTHORPE: Hallo! [SEES HIS SITUATION.] This is awkward! - but you are quite safe. The sea is as smooth as glass, and the tide is almost at its highest. At the very worst, you'll only get a wetting.

BANGLES: Edith, you will be drowned!

BUCKTHORPE: Oh no - the water never covers this rock in calm weather, except at spring tides; but as your rock will be a few inches under water, you had better signal for a boat.

BANGLES: But you - what will you do, Edith?

BUCKTHORPE: Oh, we shall be all right. I'll take care of Miss Temple till the tide goes down.

MISS SPINN: Oh! - I'm slipping, Joseph! Save me! - save me! Put your arm round me - like that - there - I'm better now. Oh, what shall I do!

BANGLES: If you'll take my advice, ma'am, you'll take off your shoes and stockings, and walk on shore.

MISS SPINN: Mr. Bangles!

BANGLES: I won't look, ma'am - upon my honour!

[RANDALL ENTERS IN BOAT, IN FRONT OF LOWER ROCK.]

BUCKTHORPE: Here's a boat. You're quite safe, Miss Spinn.

MISS SPINN: Saved - saved! [ASIDE.] That man always turns up when he isn't wanted.

BANGLES: Come, Buckthorpe.

RANDALL: The boat will only hold two. Buckthorpe and Miss Temple are quite safe, as that rock is never covered. Come along, Bangles. [BANGLES AND MISS SPINN GET INTO THE BOAT.]

MISS SPINN: Oh, Mr. Bangles!

BANGLES: What?

MISS SPINN: If it had only been the other rock! [THEY ARE ROWED OFF.]

EDITH: How strange to be cut off so completely from the world!

BUCKTHORPE: And how pleasant! Here we are on a little world of our own.

EDITH: King and queen of a tiny kingdom.

BUCKTHORPE: With this advantage over other kings and queens - that we have no subjects.

EDITH: But it's such a very little kingdom.

BUCKTHORPE: It is large enough for our wants.

EDITH: Yes, for an hour or two. How shall we pass the time? Shall I be Robinson Crusoe - and will you be my man Friday?

BUCKTHORPE: Yes. Saved by you from enemies who would have destroyed me.

EDITH: And true and faithful to me, in return, for ever after?

BUCKTHORPE: For ever after!

EDITH: Very well; that's settled. Now, let me see - what happened when Robinson rescued Friday?

BUCKTHORPE: Friday kissed Robinson.

EDITH: Are you sure?

BUCKTHORPE: Quite! [KISSES HER.]

EDITH: I don't remember that. Well, then Friday was taught to hunt for Robinson's dinner. Hunt away! Ah, I've puzzled you now!

BUCKTHORPE: No. He was *taught* to hunt for it. Teach me.

EDITH: I can't do that. However, in this case, Robinson is not hungry.

BUCKTHORPE: In other words, Robinson hauls down his colours?

EDITH: Yes. Surrenders at discretion. The analogy is imperfect. Let us try something else.

BUCKTHORPE: What shall we try? I am a storm-tossed vessel, safely anchored in the haven of your love.

EDITH: It's a poor haven, Reginald - a haven that will afford you little protection against the rude winds of the outer world.

BUCKTHORPE: It is a haven of peace and rest - a haven into which sorrow, care, and trouble can never enter. See - the sun is setting, and the sorrows of my life sink with it. From this hour I live a new life - strong in your faith - faithful to

my strength. Who would not be strong in the certainty of such love as yours?

EDITH: My love is for you, Reginald, for ever and for ever.

BUCKTHORPE: I have fretted sorely under the yoke that I have had to bear, but I would have borne it patiently had I known that those words were in store for me. I would bear it all again to hear you speak them once more.

EDITH: There is no need, Reginald!

BUCKTHORPE: No need, Edith, for my troubles are at an end. A good, grave, and earnest life is before me, and with your help and your counsel and your example, I will lead that life. Edith, at last I am at peace!

[ENTER RANDALL, IN BOAT.]

BUCKTHORPE (ASIDE): Randall! [ALOUD.] Why are you here?

RANDALL: I have come to take you off.

BUCKTHORPE: It is unnecessary. We are high and dry above high-water mark.

RANDALL: But the wind may rise.

BUCKTHORPE: The sea is calm enough now.

RANDALL: Calm enough now! But don't deceive yourself. There's a storm brewing for you. If you want to escape it, you must do as I bid you.

[END OF ACT II]

ACT III

SCENE - SAME AS ACT I. MRS. SCANTLEBURY SEATED KNITTING.

[ENTER MRS. FLAMBOYS FROM HOTEL WITH LITTLE BASKET.]

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Oh, Mrs. Scantlebury - I have such news!

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: News, my dear?

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Yes; Edith Temple is engaged to Mr. Buckthorpe.

[SITS AT TABLE.]

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Engaged? How very indelicate!

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Indelicate?

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Certainly. Why, they haven't known each other a week!
It's very bad taste.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Oh, yes; they're old friends who were engaged eighteen
months ago. It was broken off, and now they've made it up.
What *do* you call good taste?

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Eighteen months? My dear, Mr. Scantlebury knew me
thirty-five years before he thought of marrying me. Ah,
you may well be surprised, but it's quite true.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Oh, I am not at all surprised.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Eh? [OFFENDED.]

MRS. FLAMBOYS: No doubt he was frightened away by your other admirers.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: No, my dear. There were crowds of them, but I never
kept them in suspense. For thirty-five years I made up my
mind to remain single. Young men had only to look at my
face, and they saw at once that it was made up.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: They would.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Yes; there is something in my face that had such an
effect on them that, directly they looked at it, they went
away, and they never came back again. Now, I call that good
taste.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: On the part of ...

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Of myself - of course. It's a great mistake to marry
too young.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: It is indeed. [SIGHING.] Ah, if I had been a little more
like you, Mrs. Scantlebury -

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: If you had been a little more like me, my dear, you
would never have married Mr. Flamboys.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: I'm sure of that, Mrs. Scantlebury.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: No, no; depend upon it a man makes a great mistake when
he marries a young girl who grows older and older every day.
In my opinion, a wife should begin as she means to go on.
Mr. Buckthorpe marries Edith at her best - Mr. Scantlebury
married me at my worst. I shall make a point of cautioning
Mr. Buckthorpe.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: Cautioning him?

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Certainly. How does he know what Edith will be at my
age? It isn't every woman who preserves her good looks at
eight-and-forty. If Mr. Buckthorpe is wise, he'll do as
Mr. Scantlebury did - he'll wait and see.

[EXIT MRS. SCANTLEBURY.]

MRS. FLAMBOYS: What a dreadful old woman! Well, at all events, Mr. Scantlebury knows the worst. I suppose even they are happy in their odd way! People always are, I suppose, at first. At first! I speak as though such happiness as mine could have an end. Now that I am alone, I can set to work again. [PROCEEDS TO ROLL CIGARETTES.] Happy cigarettes! your lives are brief indeed - but then you live through your short span at his lips. I declare I envy you the few moments during which each of you usurps my place!

[ENTER FLAMBOYS.]

FLAMBOYS: My love!
MRS. FLAMBOYS: Theodore!
FLAMBOYS: What are these?
MRS. FLAMBOYS: Cigarettes. Pretty things with a pretty name. I declare I'm jealous of them. I wish cigarettes were not feminine.
FLAMBOYS: Do you think I should let you roll them if they were masculine?
MRS. FLAMBOYS (EARNESTLY): I hope not, dear; I hope you love me far - far too well. I've been at work at them all the morning, and I've made forty-two.
FLAMBOYS: What an industrious little woman. And whom are they for?
MRS. FLAMBOYS: Can't you guess?

[ENTER BANGLES.]

FLAMBOYS: Can't imagine.
BANGLES (COMING FORWARD): Perhaps they are for Mr. Flamboys.
MRS. FLAMBOYS (CONTEMPTUOUSLY): Mr. Flamboys, indeed!
BANGLES: Surely they are not for yourself.
MRS. FLAMBOYS: Really, Mr. Bangles, I hope it's not necessary to assure you that I don't smoke.
BANGLES: Well, let me see, they can't be for Trotway.
[MRS. FLAMBOYS SHAKES HER HEAD.]
For Randall, then?
[MRS. FLAMBOYS SHAKES HER HEAD.]
Why, they must be for me!
MRS. FLAMBOYS (RELUCTANTLY): Why, of course they must. [ASIDE.]
Tiresome old man. [BANGLES TAKES THEM - MRS. FLAMBOYS TO FLAMBOYS.] Theodore, get them away from him, they are for you. Dearest Theodore, he mustn't have them.
FLAMBOYS: My love, what can I do? [ALOUD - CROSSING TO BANGLES.]
I say, Bangles, take an old stager's advice, don't you smoke Mrs. Flamboys' cigarettes - they're beastly.
BANGLES: What am I to do? I don't like amateur cigarettes as a rule, but she'll be offended if I refuse them.
FLAMBOYS: No, no; I'll square her. [ALOUD.] Mrs. Flamboys, call these cigarettes? - Ridiculous! Come along with me, ma'am, and I'll teach you how to roll cigarettes. Here's a thing! Look at it, ma'am; why, its back's broken. Examine it, ma'am; it's a deformity. Taste it, ma'am. [PUTS IT IN

HIS MOUTH AND LIGHTS IT.] It's - it's - it's - oh,
it's delicious!

[EXEUNT MR. AND MRS. FLAMBOYS.]

BANGLES: Strange people! They little thought when they married, four years ago, that they were taking a yoke upon their shoulders that would gall them through life. Well, I've steered clear of that sort of thing hitherto, and now I'm going on the rocks in my old age! I'm a wicked old scoundrel to fall in love with a girl of twenty! But she'll never know it - she'll never know it! I've kept it to myself for two years, and I suppose it will die with me. It won't die till then!
[SITS AT TABLE.]

[ENTER EDITH.]

EDITH: Why, you're all alone - where's Miss Spinn?
BANGLES (AT TABLE): Washed out to sea, my dear, for anything I know or care.
EDITH: Do you know I'm very glad to hear you say that? Because people think that - that -
BANGLES: That I intend to marry her?
EDITH: No, that she intends to marry you - that's worse. Now, I can't allow any one to marry you - because -
BANGLES: Because I'm a confirmed old bachelor, eh, Elsie?
EDITH: Oh, she told you what I said, did she? Yes, because you're a confirmed old bachelor. I should be dreadfully jealous of any one you married. [SITS ON STOOL AT HIS FEET.]
BANGLES: You would?
EDITH: Certainly. What would become of me?
BANGLES: Of you?
EDITH: Yes, of me! Why, I've been your little wife since I was two years old, and do you think I'm going to allow any one else to light your cheroot, or warm your slippers, or nurse you when you are ill. Why, what a wicked old man you must be to think of such a thing.
BANGLES: But I never did think of such a thing, and I never shall think of such a thing.
EDITH: Never?
BANGLES: Never.
EDITH: That's all right. Then you see you **are** a confirmed old bachelor after all.
BANGLES: Oh, I didn't say that.
EDITH: But do say it. Promise me that you will never, never marry. I can't bear to think of you as a married man. Besides you are married already.
BANGLES: Indeed?
EDITH: Yes, to me.
BANGLES: Then - **you** will never marry?
EDITH: Oh, I didn't say that. That's quite a different thing.
BANGLES: But if you are my wife?
EDITH: Oh yes, - no doubt I am your wife - but then, you see, you are not my husband.

BANGLES: How do you make that out?
EDITH: Why, in the first place, a husband has black whiskers - now yours are grey.
BANGLES: They were black once.
EDITH: Dear me! Well, I suppose they were. Now that's very odd, to think that you once had black whiskers. They've always been grey ever since I can remember, and I never associated them with any other colour. I believe I thought you were born with grey whiskers. It seems so strange to think that you were ever a young man - you are such a thorough old foggy!
BANGLES: I am! A thorough old foggy! A growling, grumbling discontented old foggy! A bald old foggy! A grey old foggy! A gouty old foggy! I'm a nice sort of fellow to talk of getting married. Married! And in ten years time I shan't have a tooth in my head. Married! with an outfit of flannel bandages, silver-gilt crutches, and a cellar of antimonial wine. No, no; Joe Bangles' work is done. Shelve him - superannuate him - lay him up in lavender - he's only in the way. And if he wants to be a family man, let him go a-godfathering. It's all he's fit for now, God help him! It's all he's fit for now!

[SITS AND COVERS HIS FACE WITH HIS HANDS. EDITH, WHO HAS BEEN LAUGHING WITH MR. BANGLES THROUGH THIS SPEECH, IS ALARMED AT HIS EMOTION.]

EDITH: Oh! Mr. Bangles - I hope I haven't vexed you. I can't bear to see you look unhappy - and I am so happy, too!
BANGLES: You?
EDITH: Yes - I have come to tell you some news. I - I think I am going to be married.
BANGLES: Married - to - to -
EDITH: To Mr. Buckthorpe. Oh, Mr. Bangles, I'm so happy!
BANGLES (ASIDE): Then it's over. [ALOUD.] God bless you, my love! I - I - hope and pray that you may be sincerely happy.
EDITH: Won't you kiss me?
BANGLES (KISSES HER): Buckthorpe is a good fellow - I'm sure of it. I - I - you may not think it, my dear, but I do believe I'm delighted to hear it!

[ENTER BUCKTHORPE.]

BUCKTHORPE: Thank you, Mr. Bangles - thank you heartily! Edith speaks so kindly - so affectionately - of you! - her heart is so full of the unvarying love you have borne her for eighteen years, that I am overjoyed to think so old and true a friend does not appear displeased at her engagement.

[EXIT EDITH INTO HOTEL.]

Yes, Mr. Bangles, I'm going to be married to Edith. And that's not all - the Vice-Chancellor's decision has just been telegraphed to me, and I'm owner in fee of Ardleigh

Park, two-thirds of a coal-mine, and thirty-eight thousand pounds consols.

BANGLES: My boy, I don't know much about you - I've only known you a week or so - but you come of good stock, and I hope and believe you're the hearty, straightforward, manly fellow I take you to be.

BUCKTHORPE: Mr. Bangles, I must be candid with you. If I'm a straightforward fellow, my straightforwardness is only a week old.

BANGLES: Eh?

BUCKTHORPE: When I came down to Beachington, I was an adventurer.

BANGLES: Confound it, sir! You don't mean to say that that dear girl's money brought you down here?

BUCKTHORPE: No - I came down to Beachington not knowing that Edith was here; and when I learnt that she was here, I also learnt that she was penniless.

BANGLES: Penniless! Confound it, sir! It's all very well for a man with a park, a coal-mine, and devil knows how many consols, to call Edith penniless; but thirty-eight thousand pounds is a pretty sum, notwithstanding. You recent good luck has enlarged your views, Mr. Buckthorpe.

BUCKTHORPE: Edith has not one penny she can call her own. She does not know this - but I knew it all along. That thief Randall secretly married her great-aunt after the date of the will, and he claims all that she left. There's a warrant against him for forgery, and so he dares not declare himself.

BANGLES: The deuce there is! Let me ask you, sir, if Mr. Randall is a forger, how do you and he come to be together?

BUCKTHORPE: Because I am under his thumb. Mr. Bangles, I'll tell you all. Twelve months ago, I killed a man in self-defence. Randall holds evidence which makes my crime look like wilful murder.

BANGLES: Do I understand you to say, sir, that you are an infernal scoundrel?

BUCKTHORPE: I didn't say that. I've been imprudent - unfortunate - dissipated; but I've done nothing to bring me within the grasp of the law.

BANGLES: Hang it, sir, you confessed to having killed this miserable man!

BUCKTHORPE: Yes, under circumstances that would have justified an archbishop in killing him.

BANGLES: It may be so, sir, and it may not. Does Dr. Trotway know that you killed this man?

BUCKTHORPE: No! [ABASHED.]

BANGLES: Does Edith know it?

BUCKTHORPE: No!

BANGLES: Then, sir, I shall consider it my duty, sir, to place them in possession of the facts. I have no wish to deal hardly, sir, with a young man who, having fallen, through his own weakness, is struggling to right himself in the world's opinion and his own. But in this charge that hangs over you the question of weakness does not arise. Either you murdered this man, or you did not. And I tell you this frankly - if you murdered him, I'll hang you!

BUCKTHORPE: Mr. Bangles, let me tell you this - if this accusation reaches Edith's ears, whether I am guilty or whether I am innocent, I am lost beyond redemption.

BANGLES: Come, sir, I'll make a bargain with you. I'll tackle this fellow Randall myself. I think I know how to deal with him. If I see reason to be satisfied that his charge is a true one, I give you up to justice. If I have reason to believe it is false, I place no obstacle in the way of your marriage; and if you knew all that I could tell you, you would give me credit for some forbearance in making this promise.

BUCKTHORPE: But by what means -

BANGLES: Leave the means to me. I think I see my way to the end I propose to accomplish. If you are innocent your innocence will appear.

BUCKTHORPE: Mr. Bangles, will you shake hands with me?

BANGLES: Sir, I would rather postpone that ceremony until I have put my plan into operation. Here comes that unspeakable scoundrel Randall. Be good enough to leave me to deal with him.

[EXIT BUCKTHORPE.]

Here's a devil of a business. If I tell Trotway, as I'm bound in honour and in duty to do, and the charge turns out to be false, it will appear as though I were taking a dastardly revenge on a man who has cut me out. If I let the matter rest, I allow Edith to marry an admitted roué and a possible murderer!

[ENTER RANDALL FROM HOTEL.]

Now, sir. It appears by all accounts that you are an infernal villain.

RANDALL: You're very good. [CROSSES TO R.]

BANGLES: I've just learnt from Mr. Buckthorpe that there is a warrant out for his apprehension on what he describes as a false charge of murder; and that you hold the means of bringing him to justice.

RANDALL: Did he tell you that?

BANGLES: He did. Now, sir, Mr. Buckthorpe may be guilty or he may be innocent. If he is guilty he ought to be hanged. If he is innocent you ought to be transported. Now one or other of these events I propose to bring about.

RANDALL: You will take your own course, but what the deuce has it to do with you?

BANGLES: I'll tell you what it has to do with me. You state that you know of your own knowledge that he is guilty?

RANDALL: Undoubtedly.

BANGLES: Then if you don't act upon that knowledge you are an accomplice after the fact. I shall detain you here while information is given to the police, and I shall give you both into their custody when they arrive.

RANDALL: What? [ASIDE.] Devil take him; that won't do. They'll

spot me as the Rum Customer directly. [ALoud WITH MUCH AGITATION.] Mr. Bangles, I am a man of the world. I don't want to hang this poor devil, Buckthorpe, if I can help it. He doesn't deserve any pity, but I can't help pitying him. I'm an infernal tender-hearted old lamb, I know; but still I can't help it. But, look here, if you insist upon it, I'll go and lay my information myself - there! [GOING.]

BANGLES: Stop! I shan't let you leave this hotel.
RANDALL: By what right do you propose to stop me?
BANGLES: By no right at all - by main force.
RANDALL: I'll try that. [GOING.]
BANGLES: Stop! You see this gong? [GOING TO GONG AT ENTRANCE OF HOTEL.] If you take one step further in that direction, I'll call every man in the house to my assistance, and I will denounce you as a murderer's accomplice! Now then, one step, and -
RANDALL: What do you want me to do?
BANGLES: Write a note to the superintendent here, and send it by a porter. Yes or no? Come, one, two, three! [PREPARING TO STRIKE.]
RANDALL: Stop! What am I to write?
BANGLES: This. [RANDALL SITS DOWN TO WRITE AT TABLE.] "To the Superintendent, Beachington Police Station. Sir, - A notorious criminal, a warrant for whose arrest is out ..."
RANDALL: But -
BANGLES: Ah, would you? [PREPARES TO STRIKE GONG.] "Is staying at this hotel. Send a sergeant and two strong men, and I will give him into custody." Sign it.
RANDALL: Wouldn't it be better if you signed it?
BANGLES: No, no - I wouldn't deprive you of the three hundred pounds reward, on any account. [RANDALL SIGNS IT.] "Postscript - Let the two men be very strong."
RANDALL: I say -
BANGLES: Ah, would you? [ABOUT TO STRIKE GONG - RANDALL FINISHES NOTE - BANGLES TAKES NOTE, AND READS.] Very good. Now direct it to the Superintendent. [RANDALL DOES SO.] Good. Waiter!

[ENTER CUMMING, FROM HOTEL.]

BANGLES: Take this note to the police station directly. [RANDALL FOLDS ANOTHER PIECE OF PAPER, ASIDE.]
CUMMING: Police station, eh?
RANDALL: Immediately. There's no answer.
BANGLES: Oh, yes - there is. A sergeant and two strong men. Bring them here with you. [CUMMING GOING.]
RANDALL: Stop! Hadn't I better direct it to the Superintendent by name? I happen to know his name. [TAKES NOTE BACK.]
BANGLES: No doubt you do.

[RANDALL WRITES ADDRESS ON BLANK NOTE, AND HANDS IT TO CUMMING, RETAINING THE NOTE FIRST WRITTEN.]

RANDALL: There - that's better.

BANGLES (INTERCEPTING THE NOTE): Allow me. [READS.]
"To Mr. Superintendent Clench." Much better.
RANDALL: More regular, you know.
BANGLES: Much more regular. [OPENS IT DELIBERATELY - RANDALL
VERY UNEASY.] Bless me! How very odd! The writing has
disappeared! Blank paper!
RANDALL: Dear me! That's very strange.
BANGLES: Very strange, indeed.
RANDALL: These mistakes will happen.
BANGLES: No doubt. Ha, ha!
RANDALL: Ha, ha! [UNEASILY.]
BANGLES: Come, Mr. Randall - in the confusion of the moment you
changed the papers. Oblige me with the original document.
RANDALL: Exactly. In the hurry of business, I - that's it. Confound
you!
BANGLES: Thank you. [GIVES IT TO CUMMING - RETURNING BLANK
NOTE TO RANDALL.] Allow me. Now, Mr. Randall, you are
free to go. [EXIT CUMMING.]
RANDALL: To go where I please?
BANGLES: To go where you please.
RANDALL: Right away?
BANGLES: Right away!
RANDALL (ASIDE): In ten minutes the express starts for London. I can pack
in two, and reach the station in five. Bangles, you're a
muff! [EXIT INTO HOTEL.]

[ENTER BUCKTHORPE.]

BANGLES: Well, sir, I've done it.
BUCKTHORPE: Done what?
BANGLES: Laid information. Mr. Buckthorpe, I don't mind owning to
you that my impression is that you're a bit of a scamp, but
that you're not guilty of this murder. You told me there
was a warrant out for Randall's arrest for forgery. I've
made him write a note to the Superintendent to the effect
that a notorious criminal is staying here, but I haven't
said who the criminal is, or what he's charged with. Now,
if he knows you to be guilty of this murder, he'll give you
into custody, and you'll be hanged, and serve you right.
If he knows you to be innocent, he'll be off and away before
the officers arrive, for fear that he should be arrested on
a charge of forgery. Now, sir, you stand on your own
deliverance; and - hang it - whichever way it goes, I shall
be perfectly satisfied! [EXIT.]
BUCKTHORPE (SINKS INTO A CHAIR): So, the end is at hand, and in a
few minutes I shall know the worst. Well, it is better that
it should be so, than that I should drag on a miserable
existence under the shadow of that cursed scoundrel's ban!
Here he comes.

[ENTER RANDALL, WITH PORTMANTEAU
AND TRAVELLING RUG, FROM HOTEL.]

He's going, and I am saved! [TO RANDALL, WITH FORCED

CALMNESS.] Why, what's this? You don't mean to say you're going to leave us?

RANDALL: Yes.
BUCKTHORPE: This is rather sudden, isn't it?
RANDALL: It is sudden.
BUCKTHORPE: Pressing business?
RANDALL: Very.
BUCKTHORPE: Can I have a word or two with you before you go?
RANDALL: No.
BUCKTHORPE: Must catch the express?
RANDALL: Yes. [GOING.]
BUCKTHORPE: Then you've thought better of your threat?
RANDALL: For the present.
BUCKTHORPE: For the present?
RANDALL: Yes; until you're married. Then, look out! Good morning.
[GOING.]

[ENTER WAITER FROM HOTEL.]

WAITER: Beg pardon, sir. I took your cheque to master. He says - very sorry, sir, but he says he can't take a cheque in payment of your bill.
RANDALL: Why, he knows me.
WAITER: Yes, sir - that's it - he *knows* you. He says - beg pardon, sir - but he says he thinks there would be a difficulty at the bank.
RANDALL: Nonsense - absurd. [GOING.]
WAITER: Beg pardon, sir, but I can't let you go.
RANDALL (VIOLENTLY): Stand away, and let me pass.
WAITER: Bless you, sir, I'm not afraid of *you*. My impression is you're like your portmanteau. [TAKING IT.] Very big to look at, but - [SHAKING IT] - very little in you.

[WAITER SITS ON PORTMANTEAU AT THE BACK.]

RANDALL: Buckthorpe, if you'll give me a cheque for three hundred pounds, and five pounds down, I'll give up those letters.
BUCKTHORPE: The deuce you will? Why, you'll get that sum from the Home Office?
RANDALL: Yes, but I want to go.
BUCKTHORPE: But you've laid information against me - they'll want your evidence.
RANDALL: No, I don't want to be hard on you - I'll let you off at cost price.
BUCKTHORPE: Can't you do it under that - for a friend, you know?
RANDALL (ASIDE): They'll be here in five minutes, and I shall be nabbed. [ALOUD.] Say a hundred pounds and a fiver down, and the letters are yours.
BUCKTHORPE: Suppose we say the fiver without the hundred pounds?
RANDALL (IN DESPERATION): Done - here are the letters - give me the money. [LOOKS AT WATCH.] In the devil's name, man, be quick, or it will be too late. They are right enough.
BUCKTHORPE: One moment. I don't doubt your word, but I would rather see that they are all here. [OPENS THEM, AND COUNTS THEM

VERY DELIBERATELY.]

RANDALL: There are six of them - four from Dijon, and two from St. Valerie. Look sharp!

BUCKTHORPE: Quite right.

RANDALL: Come, the money. Don't put me in a hole - I've acted straightforwardly in this matter, at all events.

BUCKTHORPE: You have; I congratulate you. How do you feel after it?

RANDALL: Give me the money, man, in the devil's name -

BUCKTHORPE: There it is, Mr. Randall. [GIVES NOTES.] Why, how your hand shakes.

RANDALL (TO CUMMING): Give that note to your master. [GOING.]

CUMMING: There's ten shillings change, sir.

RANDALL: Keep the change. Poor devil, you look as if you wanted it! Off at last!

BUCKTHORPE: Don't go, Randall.

RANDALL: Why not?

BUCKTHORPE: Because I'm going to detain you on a charge of forgery.

RANDALL: The devil you are! What do you know about that charge?

BUCKTHORPE: Nothing, except that you're wanted for it. [HOLDS HIM.]

RANDALL: And do you think I can't break away from you?

BUCKTHORPE: On the contrary, I think you can; but I don't think you've the pluck to try. [RANDALL MUCH DISCONCERTED.] Why, you haven't! Why, you trembling cur, you dare not move an inch when a man's hand is on your throat.

RANDALL: Don't be a fool! You've got your letters - let me go.

BUCKTHORPE: Let you go? You - who have held an unfounded charge over me for eighteen months? - you, who have used that charge to wring from me the miserable remnant of my shattered fortune! - you, who have used that charge to foist your cursed company on me for eighteen months! - you, who have used that charge to pull me down when I was falling, and to keep me down when I might have risen! No, no, Randall - my turn's come!

[RANDALL STRUGGLES FURIOUSLY TO RELEASE HIMSELF - BUCKTHORPE FORCES HIM INTO A CHAIR, AND PLACES HIS HAND ON RANDALL'S THROAT.]

Lie still, you cur! - lie still! - or, by heaven, I'll choke the life out of you!

RANDALL: Help, help! He'll murder me! Help, help!

[ENTER BANGLES AND TROTWAY FROM HOTEL - THEY SEIZE RANDALL.]

Here, Bangles - Trotway - take this fellow off! He's a murderer! I denounce him! - seize him! - he has letters in his pocket at this moment that suffice to hang him half-a-dozen times over. Don't let him destroy them! - he will if he can.

BUCKTHORPE: I have no intention of destroying them. They are here. [PLACES THEM IN TROTWAY'S HANDS.] Dr. Trotway, I might have destroyed those letters five minutes ago, but I have preserved them, in order that you might know the full truth about this miserable business.

TROTWAY: Mr. Buckthorpe, Mr. Bangles has told me all. I need not tell you that the truth of your story must be established before you are allowed to see my niece again.

BANGLES (TO BUCKTHORPE): I say, you, sir!

BUCKTHORPE: Yes.

BANGLES: When did this so-called murder take place?

BUCKTHORPE: On the 14th August, 1869.

BANGLES: You were attacked in the dark by a man in the prime of life, and you defended yourself with a swordstick?

BUCKTHORPE: Yes, yes!

BANGLES (CROSSING TO BUCKTHORPE): You ran your adversary through the neck?

BUCKTHORPE: Yes.

BANGLES: Just - just here? [SHOWING A SCAR ON HIS NECK.]

BUCKTHORPE: Yes.

BANGLES: And hang it, sir, do you mean to say that a coroner's jury ever sat on *me*?

ALL: On you?

BANGLES: Yes, on me, sir - on me!

BUCKTHORPE: But it was Peters - a commercial traveller.

BANGLES: Peters be hanged, sir! It was I. I think I ought to know.

BUCKTHORPE: Then you didn't die?

BANGLES: Die! Who the devil says I'm dead? Do I look like a dead man? Did you ever see anybody look more like a live man? I'm good for a great many years yet, sir - a great many years yet!

TROTWAY: But the coroner's jury -

BANGLES (TURNING ROUND SUDDENLY): Coroner's jury, sir? No coroner's jury ever sat on me! [TO BUCKTHORPE, IN A FURIOUS RAGE.] Why, confound you, sir - how dare you? Who the deuce are you, sir, that you consider yourself justified in spreading such a report? What do you mean by it? Hang it, sir, explain yourself!

BUCKTHORPE: But Randall told me that a jury had set [SIC] on the body, and returned a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown.

BANGLES: Oh! Randall told you! Do you mean to say you are such an infernal fool as to believe a word that fellow(s) tells you?

RANDALL: Let me tell you, sir -

BANGLES (CROSSING TO RANDALL): Let me tell you, sir, that you're a miserable imposter! Let me tell you, sir, that when you say my name's Peters, and that I'm a confounded bagman, you tell a group of lies, sir - a group of lies. And when you say that I'm dead, and that a coroner's jury ever sat on me, you anticipate matters by a great many years, sir - a great many years!

TROTWAY: But how did you escape?

BANGLES: Escape? I tumbled over the cliff, and was caught - never mind how, sir - in a most ignominious manner, halfway down, sir - halfway down. I had attacked the wrong man. I mistook him for a fellow who had robbed me, and I got the worst of it, and serve me devilish well right! I found out my mistake, and as I was all in the wrong, and as I had to sail for India next morning, and as the wound was only a flesh wound, why - I plastered it up, and joined my ship.

TROTWAY: Buckthorpe, forgive me. My dear Joe - [TO BANGLES] - you have made us all extremely happy!

BANGLES: Made you all extremely happy! I've made myself confoundedly miserable. If I had been killed right off, Buckthorpe might have been tried for murder, and I might have married Edith and been happy for the rest of my life! [TO BUCKTHORPE.] Now, sir, if you will allow me, I shall have a melancholy pleasure in shaking your hand. [HE DOES SO.]

[ENTER SERGEANT AND CUMMING.]

SERGEANT (TO RANDALL): Beg pardon, sir! Are you the gent that wrote this note?

RANDALL: Eh - yes!

SERGEANT: Well, here we are, sir. What can we do for you. I suppose your information's along of Bill Burke, alias the Rum Customer. We've got information that he's somewhere hereabouts.

BUCKTHORPE: Burke! That's an alias of Randall's! Sergeant, that's your man!

SERGEANT: Eh? Oh, I see! [REMOVES RANDALL'S WIG AND BEARD.] Lor'! So it is! William Burke, I arrest you on a charge of forgery! Here's my warrant. Much obliged to you for sending for me, sir. Lor' bless you, I should never have known you!

CUMMING (TO RANDALL): Beg pardon, sir! Here's your change. Poor devil! You look as if you wanted it.
[GIVES HALF-SOVEREIGN AND EXIT.]

RANDALL: Done! But my game's not up yet. Buckthorpe, I've another card to play, as you know. Edith Temple hasn't a penny. I married her great-aunt, after the date of the will under which she takes her fortune. Here's a copy of the certificate. [GIVES PAPER TO TROTWAY.]

SERGEANT: It won't do you much good, my man, seeing it's fifteen thousand to one you get a lifer.

[ENTER MISS SPINN AND EDITH FROM HOTEL.]

RANDALL: It'll do me this good - that that girl's penniless. It's the only revenge in my power, and by heaven I'll take it!

TROTWAY (READS): "John Randall to Penelope Brackenbury."

MISS SPINN: Penelope Brackenbury? An old woman of seventy?

TROTWAY: Yes.

MISS SPINN: Married in this parish two years ago?

TROTWAY: Yes, so it seems.

MISS SPINN: Tall stout old lady - dropped her h's - swore a good deal.

TROTWAY: Oh, dear no! A little wizened old lady of singularly refined manners, and of a remarkably serious turn.

MISS SPINN: Didn't she drink?

EDITH: Aunt Penelope drink? Why, she was the quietest and dearest old lady in the world! Stop, here's her portrait! [SHOWS PORTRAIT.]

MISS SPINN: Oh, dear me, this isn't Miss Penelope Brackenbury - at least not the Penelope Brackenbury who was married at Saint Jude's

in this parish. I remember her well, she lodged at my house two days before her marriage with a tall man with a bald head. Why, - [SEES RANDALL] - there he is! [CROSSING TO RANDALL.]

SERGEANT: John Randall, alias Bill Burke, alias the Rum Customer, in custody on a charge of forgery.

MISS SPINN: Well, upon my word! I always thought those whiskers were too good to be true. Do you mean to say you married this lady? [SHOWS PORTRAIT.]

RANDALL: How do you know I did not?

MISS SPINN: How do I know? Because - because - well, I'm not ashamed to own it - I've been a good many things in my time, and a pew-opener among others; and I witnessed the marriage, and here's my signature - and I don't care who knows it - there! Others have fallen lower and risen higher afterwards, and I may do so too - there!

RANDALL: And do you remember me?

MISS SPINN: Yes, I do remember you; I've good cause to, for you gave me half-a-crown and it was a bad one. Bless you all, it was a vamped-up marriage! He bribed some old thief, whose age corresponded with Miss Brackenbury's, to assume her name and description, and they went through the form of marriage, with a view to getting hold of her money after her death. Bless you - it's done every day.

BANGLES: Adelaide Spinn, you're a trump after all! and, if you'll allow me, I'll - hang it! - I'll kiss you! [CROSSES TO MISS SPINN.]

MISS SPINN: Allow you, Joseph? - why, of course I will! There! [HE KISSES HER.] That's the first of a great, great many to come.

BANGLES (AFTER A PAUSE): Well, upon my life, Adelaide, I believe it is. [THEY RETIRE UP.]

[ENTER MR. AND MRS. SCANTLEBURY.]

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Hey? What? Policemen? Heavens, what are they here for?

SERGEANT: We've come to walk one of your party, ma'am. Serious charge - forgery!

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Forgery! Who is it? Scantlebury, what have you been about?

SCANTLEBURY: My love, I've done plenty of foolish things in my life, but I never was a thief.

MRS. SCANTLEBURY (SLILY): Not when you stole my heart?

SCANTLEBURY: My own!

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: My love! [THEY EMBRACE.] Don't mind us, Mr. Policeman, we are so happy together!

[ENTER MR. AND MRS. FLAMBOYS.]

FLAMBOYS: Oh, go on, it won't last - bride and bridegroom - old story! Take an old stager's advice, and make your hay while the sun shines.

MRS. FLAMBOYS: "Ah, me, how heedless of the fate, the little lambkins

play!" Ah! make the most of Mr. Scantlebury while you can -
you'll be heartily tired of each other in five years.

[GIVES PARCEL, WRAPPED UP IN A NEWSPAPER, TO MISS SPINN.]

SCANTLEBURY: Five years! We hadn't so much as a squabble for the first
fifteen!

TROTWAY: Fifteen! I thought you had only been married three weeks!

SCANTLEBURY: Three weeks? Nonsense - away, deception! Thirty-five years!

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: It has *seemed* like three weeks, hasn't it, Scantlebury?

SCANTLEBURY: My own!

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: My love!

BOTH: Ugh!

MISS SPINN (COMING FORWARD WITH PARCEL): Bless me! How very odd!

ALL: What's the matter?

MISS SPINN (READS FROM NEWSPAPER COVER): "On the 19th instant, at
Trinity Church, Paddington, by the Reverend Reginald
Reredos, Theodore Flamboys, Esq., to Augusta, only daughter
of Caleb Walker, of Jamaica, West Indies."

TROTWAY: Why, you young rascal, I thought you had been married five
years.

FLAMBOYS (VERY MUCH CONFUSED): It has *seemed* like five years, hasn't it,
Augusta!

MRS. SCANTLEBURY: Then George, and Thomas, and William, and John -

SCANTLEBURY: And Jane, and Emma, and Mary, and Kate -

FLAMBOYS (TO SCANTLEBURY): Some day.

BUCKTHORPE (SEATED WITH EDITH ON BENCH AT BACK OF STAGE):
So Friday's enemies at last are gone,
And Friday owes his life to Robinson.
In gratitude to Robinson he'll bend
True, faithful, and submissive to the end.

EDITH: Will Friday always, always be the same?

BUCKTHORPE: Even when Robinson has changed her name;
The only change that we shall undergo.

EDITH: No, you must change *your* name.

BUCKTHORPE: Indeed! How so?

EDITH: For that day forth - that happy, happy high day,
You shall be Robinson and I'll be Friday!

[THE END]