

"BRANTINGHAME HALL"

by W. S. Gilbert

A Drama in Four Acts

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LORD SAXMUNDHAM, of Brantinghame Hall	MR. NUTCOMBE GOULD
HON. ARTHUR REDMAYNE, his elder son	MR. W. HERBERT
HON. ALARIC REDMAYNE, his younger son	MR. DUNCAN FLEET
MR. THURSBY, a country gentleman	MR. RUTLAND BARRINGTON
RALPH CRAMPTON, travelling with Arthur Redmayne	MR. LEWIS WALLER
REV. NOEL ROSS, a Bush missionary	MR. NORMAN FORBES
MR. PARFIT, a London Solicitor	MR. GILBERT TRENT
MR. PAULBY, a Sydney Solicitor	MR. NEWALL
DICK SOMERS)	(MR. C. DODSWORTH
SMITHERS)	(MR. DIXON
CRUMP) Australian stockmen	(MR. MONTAGU
BLUEBY)	(MR. F. LACY
BAKER)	(MR. NICOL PENTLAND
PARKER, Mr. Thursby's Butler	MR. WARDEN
LADY SAXMUNDHAM	MRS. GASTON MURRAY
RUTH, wife of Arthur Redmayne	MISS JULIA NEILSON
MABEL, Thursby's daughter	MISS ROSE NORREYS

ACT I

BRUNT'S STATION, NEW SOUTH WALES.

ACT II

BRANTINGHAME HALL, eighteen months later.

ACT III

BRANTINGHAME HALL again, a fortnight later.

ACT IV

MORNING ROOM AT MR. THURSBY'S, two hours later.

First performed as the St. James's Theatre, London,
under the management of Mr. Rutland Barrington,
on Tuesday 27th. November 1888.

"BRANTINGHAME HALL"

ACT I

SCENE - BRUNT'S STATION, N.S.W. HOUSE AND VERANDAH, L.
PALISADE, R., WITH GATE UP STAGE.
BASKET CHAIRS, R.C., AND L.C., AND UNDER VERANDAH.

[GROUP OF AUSTRALIAN STOCKMEN AND COWBOYS DISCOVERED.
THE FOLLOWING SONG HEARD BEFORE THE CURTAIN RISES.
AS THE CURTAIN RISES THE SONG FINISHES.]

SONG - CRUMP, AND OTHERS

Your Saturday night comes once a week,
And once a month your pay day;
And once a year your birthday's here
(And I was born on May-day).
But honeymoons 'twixt women and men,
They mostly happen but now and then;
So better sing, Tol the rol.
And likewise, Tooral lay.
Some years, mayhap, must needs go by
Ere you are likely to enjoy
Another wedding day!
Another wedding day!

CRUMP: Whew! Singin's warm work!
SMITHERS: Gar' long. 'Taint work - it's play. Call it work, and
who'd do it? Not Bill Crump, I know!
BLUEBY: That's true. But here's Mr. Redmayne comin'. Who'll speak
to him?
BAKER (UP STAGE, COMING DOWN R.C.): **I'll** speak him. Clear a space, mates;
gie us elber room.
SMITHERS: No, no. We don't want no Jackaroo to speak for us. Dick
Somers'll speak; he's got larnin'. [PUSHES BAKER DOWN R.]
BLUEBY: Aye, and manners, too.
ALL: Aye, Dick Somers!
CRUMP: Dick Somers it is. Tail off, Johnny Baker - you're no good.
SOMERS (L. OF CRUMP): All right, mates, here goes! [BAKER SULKILY.]

[ENTER ARHUR REDMAYNE AND REV. NOEL ROSS FROM HOUSE.]

REDMAYNE (FROM VERANDAH): Good day, my men. I hear you wish to speak
to me.
SOMERS: Beggin' your pardon, sir, but I'm the mouth of these hands,

as the sayin' is.

BAKER (DOWN R.): Hands ain't go mouths.

CRUMP: Shut up, Johnny. Carry on, Dick Somers.

SOMERS (BOTHERED): I dunno' where I was.

BAKER: You was a saying' you was a mouth. Oh you **was**.

SOMERS: Of all these here cowboys. To be sure. Leastwise they've arst me to convey to you their sentiments on the recent aspicious occasion of your marriage with Miss Ruth. That's right, mates, ain't it?

BLUEBY: Aye, that's right; carry on.

SOMERS: Well, I'm a doin' my best.

BAKER: Aye, aye, it's **your** best, I dessay.

SOMERS (ASIDE, WITH AN EFFORT): It's 'ard to 'old oneself in, but manners prewail. [ALOUD.] Three months since you come here, unbeknown to us, and in that time you've won the 'andsomest and the best, and the truest-'arted gal in the colony. Well, Sir, we don't thank you for that - we'll wait and see how you treat her, fust. That's right, ain't it mates?

BLUEBY: Ah, right enough, God bless her!

SOMERS: We've know'd her longer than what you have. Most of us 'as seed her grow up from a babby to a gal, and from a gal to young woman, and she's allus had a kind word and a kind look for all of us. We're a roughish lot, but there ain't one of us as she ain't softed. She softed **me**.

BAKER: Somebody has. You're soft enough, anyhow!

[SOMERS RUSHES ANGRILY AT BAKER. SMITHERS AND BLUEBY CATCH HOLD OF SOMERS'S COAT-TAIL, AND HOLD HIM BACK.]

SOMERS: Look 'ere, Johnny Baker. I'm a hot'un; I can't help it. I'm a 'olding of myself back by main force, but by thunder, next time you put your spade in, it's a fair fight, so tail off! [TO REDMAYNE.] Beggin's your pardon, sir, for displayin' a little 'eat, but I ain't a Parliament man, and consekently, ain't been brought up on interruptions. Here's wishing you both 'ealth and 'appiness, sir. And that's all!

REDMAYNE (ON STEPS OF VERANDAH): My good friends, I'm much touched by your kind words. That I've won a treasure, I know, and I'll keep her as I'd keep a treasure. I won't say what I'll do, for nothing is easier than to do that now, and go from it afterwards. Time will show. Three months ago my friend, Mr. Ralph Crampton, brought me here to Brunt's Station, a poor thread-paper of a man, deadly sick of a raging fever. Stephen Brunt knew nothing about me, except that I was a sick man, but that was enough for him, and he received me with generous hospitality; and as my friend was obliged to leave me to go to Sydney, Stephen Brunt's daughter tended me with angel hands and angel heart. So I fell in love with her, and we were married at Rathbone, three weeks ago. We stopped there till three days ago, when we started on our ride home. And as there's a good dinner spread for you under yonder gum tree, the first that gets there will get the most of it.

SOMERS: Thankee, sir. [STOCKMEN GOING OFF THROUGH GATE.] Hold hard, mates! Manners, mates, manners! Three cheers for Mr. Redmayne. He ain't arned them yet, but he will.

ALL: Hurray! hurray! hurray! [EXEUNT CROWD THROUGH GATE.]

ROSS (COMING DOWN AND SITTING): By the way, Redmayne, have you written to tell Lord Saxmundham that you have married Ruth Brunt?

REDMAYNE (STANDING): Well, no - not yet.

ROSS: I think you ought to let your father know.

REDMAYNE: I ought, no doubt, Noel Ross. The question is, when and how? [CROSSES TO ROSS.]

ROSS: The answer is, at once, and in the plainest terms.

REDMAYNE: Ah, you don't know my father. He's as poor as Job, and as proud as Lucifer; and if I wrote to tell him that I, his eldest living son, and heir to the title, had married the daughter of an ex-convict, I don't believe he'd live to read any further. I might cover a ream of paper with the story of how she saved my life, and how I fell in loved with her, bit by bit, until she was more to me than the life she saved. It wouldn't do. No, I must take Ruth to England with me as soon as her father is well again, and let her gentle voice tell its own convincing tale. [CROSSES TO R.C.]

ROSS: Well, as you please. I've said my say, and I've done. By the way, I suppose you know that your friend Crampton is expected back from Sydney today? [RISING.]

REDMAYNE: Yes, I'm sorry to say I do.

ROSS: Sorry? I thought you were close friends?

REDMAYNE: We were - but I've just heard that Ralph Crampton has been proved to be a thorough scamp. It seems that he has an unacknowledged wife somewhere, whom he ill-treated, and who left him. It's rather awkward, for he has advanced eighteen thousand pounds to my poor father on the security of Brantingham Hall, and it won't do to quarrel with him just now. [SEATED R.C.]

ROSS: Does **he** know of your marriage?

REDMAYNE: No, he doesn't.

ROSS: And is Ruth satisfied with this state of things?

REDMAYNE: Poor child, she knows nothing of the world outside Brunt's Claim. It is enough for her that we love each other dearly, and that you have married us. I have told her that I will take her home to my father, and she is content. Ah! you old bachelors don't know how far the devotion of a loving woman will carry her.

ROSS: Don't I? My good friend, I was once the incumbent of a fashionable London parish.

REDMAYNE: The deuce you were! Then this bush-life must be a change to you?

ROSS: It is; and that's why I adopted it. Between ourselves, my dear fellow, I had to leave London in a hurry.

REDMAYNE: How was that? If it isn't a fair question, don't answer it.

ROSS: Why the fact is - you'd never guess it - but, between ourselves, I'm desperately impressionable, and with half the women of my parish setting their caps at me, I wasn't safe. They never left me. Presents showered down upon me. It literally rained carriage-rugs, altar-cloths, birthday

books, paper-knives, letter-weights, pocket-diaries, knitted waistcoats, and presentation inkstands. I was the repository of all their confidences. I had to devote two hours every day to deciding cases of female conscience of the most complicated and delicate description. My photographs bought up as fast as they could be printed! Half-a-dozen ladies of exalted rank were carried out in convulsions whenever I preached! The situation became serious: it was more than a highly susceptible clergyman ought to be called upon to bear. To make a long story short, there was nothing for it but flight. So, one night - one dark November night - I fled! I sailed at once for Sydney, and here I am, a hard-working bush missionary, with thirty or forty miles to ride every day - a fine field of usefulness before me, and - except your wife, whom I am much obliged to you for having married - nothing in the shape of a handsome woman with a week's march. I weathered 'em, sir; I weathered 'em. It was a hard fight, but, by Jove! I won it, sir. By Jove! I won it. [TAKES STAGE L.]

[ENTER RUTH, FROM HOUSE.]

RUTH: Who speaks of fighting on such a day as this? Noel Ross! a clergyman! Oh, Noel Ross! [GOES.]

ROSS: It was a bloodless fight, my dear Ruth, but a hard one, nevertheless. [REDMAYNE COMES DOWN.] I have been told that I am no one's enemy but my own. But a man who is his own enemy, and in that capacity conquers himself, has achieved a victory of which he may be permitted to crow a little. [GOES TO STEPS OF VERANDAH.] By the way, we were talking about you a minute ago. Redmayne, my boy, tell her what we were saying.

[EXIT ROSS INTO HOUSE.]

REDMAYNE: Noel Ross was saying that I ought to tell my father of our marriage, my darling.

RUTH: Yes. It seems to me that that is right. Why should you not do so?

REDMAYNE: I wanted my father to see you first.

RUTH: He may not like me. [SITTING.]

REDMAYNE: Ha! ha!

RUTH: He is a very proud man, is he not?

REDMAYNE: Yes; and he will be prouder than ever when he sees the beautiful daughter I have given him.

RUTH: I do not quite understand. I am stupid, I think, because to tell him seems to me so easy, and so simple, and so plain a thing to do. He is a lord, you say?

REDMAYNE: Yes, he is a lord.

RUTH: Is he very wise and good?

REDMAYNE: Very. Good and wise in all he does.

RUTH: And is that why he was made a lord?

REDMAYNE: No. It is not for their wisdom or their virtues that lords are made. Our family has been noble for three centuries.

RUTH: Then I suppose, **you** will be lord some day.

REDMAYNE: Yes, if I survive my father. And then you will be Lady Saxmundham.

RUTH: I! That is strange. It does not seem in reason. [RISES.]

REDMAYNE: Why not, Ruth?

RUTH: I have done nothing to deserve it. I am an untaught farmer's girl - very foolish, I suppose, and quite ignorant of all that a lady should know. Lady Saxmundham! No, it certainly does not seem right.

REDMAYNE (SEATED - RUTH AT HIS FEET): My dearest child, there are many good and beautiful women in the British Peerage, and there are, I am sorry to say, some who are neither good nor beautiful. They are as other woman are - neither better nor worse. But be sure of this, my darling - that there is none among them who wears her coronet more gracefully than the good and pure and gentle girl will do whom I have made my wife. Will you believe this?

RUTH: It seems strange that it should be so, but I believe everything you say to me. Even now I cannot understand why you do not write to your father to say that you have married me.

REDMAYNE: You believe me when I tell you that it is better that I should wait until he sees you.

RUTH (LOOKING UP AT HIM): Yes, I believe that. You say so, and therefore I believe it. I love you, and therefore I am content to believe. I am untaught, and I do not know many things. But be sure that I believe. [REDMAYNE KISSES HER.]

REDMAYNE: And now, Ruth - [THEY RISE.] - I have some news for you. My friend, Ralph Crampton, who had to go to Sydney ten days after I was brought to your father's run, wrote a few days since to say that he was soon to return. I did not get the letter until I arrived to-day, and his horses are already in sight on the Wabba Road.

RUTH: Mr. Crampton?

REDMAYNE: Yes. You don't seem pleased.

RUTH: No, I am not pleased. Is he very dear to you?

REDMAYNE: Well, no, he is not very dear. But why do you ask?

RUTH: When you first came to us - when your fever was at its very worst - I saw him often.

REDMAYNE: Yes.

RUTH: During that time his bearing towards me made me think - that he hoped I should some day be to him what I am to you.

REDMAYNE: Why, what do you mean, Ruth?

RUTH: He seemed strangely interested in me; and, indeed, before he quitted us he gave me cause to think that it distressed him solely [SIC] that he should have to go. At first I thought it was because he wished to be with you; but from what he said, I do not think it was that.

REDMAYNE: Do you mean to tell me that Ralph Crampton had the audacity to make love to you?

RUTH: He said little, but - I am quite frank with you, as I always will be - and I think he wished me to believe that he loved me.

REDMAYNE: Why the man is married!

RUTH: Married?
REDMAYNE: Yes, secretly married, and parted from his wife! And this fellow dared to cast his eyes upon you? Why he is a scoundrel indeed.
RUTH: It may be that I have misjudged him. Still I am not glad that he is coming back. There is that in him which makes me fear him.
REDMAYNE (TAKING HER HAND): Have no fear, Ruth, while I am here. But say nothing to him about his marriage. I only heard of it by a side wind, and I suppose he would resent any allusion to it. Here he is - whom has he brought with him?
[GOES L. RUTH GOES R.]

[ENTER RALPH CRAMPTON AND MR. PAULBY, THROUGH GATE.]

RALPH: Redmayne, my dear fellow, I'm overjoyed to see you well and hearty again. Why you **have** picked up, indeed! And it is to this kind and good nurse that we owe it that you are still with us. [TO RUTH.] Thank you, thank you most heartily, my dear young lady. [TAKES HER HAND. TO REDMAYNE.] Why you're as bright as a pippin! By the way, allow me to introduce my fellow-traveller, Mr. Paulby. I know his name, and that he has business with you; but he's a devilish close fellow, and he won't tell me more than that.

[RUTH IS UP THE STAGE AT GATE. RALPH GOES TO HER.]

PAULBY: Mr. Redmayne, I am a Sydney solicitor, and I have business of the very deepest importance with you. Will you kindly grant me ten minutes interview.
REDMAYNE: Business with me? You bring me no bad news about my father or mother?
PAULBY: No, my business has no connection with them.
REDMAYNE: Then pray be so good as to step inside. Mr. Crampton will excuse me, I know. [EXEUNT REDMAYNE AND PAULBY INTO HOUSE.]
RALPH (UP STAGE): Mr. Crampton will do so, with all his heart. [RUTH CROSSES AS IF TO ENTER HOUSE. RALPH INTERCEPTS HER.] Miss Ruth, I have taken it for granted, perhaps unreasonably, that I may once more claim your hospitality.
RUTH: It is not my hospitality that you claim but my father's.
RALPH: I would not accept his hospitality, unless I knew it was endorsed by yourself.
RUTH: It is my duty to welcome my father's guests.
RALPH: Well, I must make the most of your answer.
RUTH: Why must you make the most of it? I speak in plain and simple words.
RALPH: Perhaps I expected more than a statement of duty. If so, I was unreasonable. I finished my work in Sydney four days since, and, as you see, I have lost no time in returning here.
RUTH: To see your friend, and to learn from his own lips that he is well again. That is natural. [CROSSES TO L.]
RALPH: He owes his life to you. [PUTTING HIS RIDING CROP DOWN.]
RUTH: Nay, I did but tend him. Heaven was good to him, and he

lived. [SEATED.]

RALPH: He's a lucky fellow. It is worth while travelling to death's door, to be brought back by you. I would gladly - oh, how gladly! - have done so myself. [CROSSING TO L.]

RUTH: I do not see why you should wish to do that. You have been well, while he has been sick. You should be thankful.

RALPH: I would gladly be what I should be. I would gladly learn what I should be, from you.

RUTH: From me!

RALPH: Yes. I've passed a wild life enough, yet no worse a life than that of ten men out of a dozen - a heedless, reckless life, living for the day, and for the day only. I have thought lightly of women, and treated them lightly, and many of the women I have met deserved nothing better. But when fate threw me into your path, I saw in you, not what woman is, but what woman might be - [RUTH RISES ALARMED] - something to idolise, something to worship with a sacred madness, something that purifies by the emanation of her own purity, the incarnation of every psalm that has found favour in the Creator's eyes!

RUTH: Oh stop - stop, I pray you! [CROSSES TO R.]

RALPH: During the fortnight that I was with you, I had but one thought, and that was of you. I loved you, from the moment our eyes met, with a love that has become a religion, I have knelt to you, I have prayed to you, night and morning. Night and morning! Every hour of the day and night, every minute of every hour! Oh, my God, every atom of time has been passed with you! Well, I am here at last in your presence, and I hang on your answer, as a doomed man hangs on the hope of pity and of pardon.

RUTH: Mr. Crampton! You do not know what you are saying!

[SEES REDMAYNE WHO ENTERS FROM
BEHIND HOUSE, AND RUSHES TO HIM.]

Oh Arthur! Arthur! Tell him - tell him!

[REDMAYNE SEIZES RALPH WHO HAS FOLLOWED
RUTH. RUTH REMAINS IN GREAT AGITATION.]

[ROSS AND PAULBY ENTER FROM BEHIND
HOUSE, AND WATCH THE SCENE FROM GATE.]

REDMAYNE: You mean and miserable hound! You coarse and cowardly scoundrel!

RALPH: What do you mean? Take your damned hands off! Are you all mad?

REDMAYNE: You accursed villain! you shall have good cause to repent this - this insult - this outrage!

RALPH: Insult! Outrage! I love this girl honourably, and I have told her so. What is there in this to justify your brutal insolence? It is the insolence of a coward who knows his strength. It is that, and no more and no less than that!

REDMAYNE: You dare to characterise the insult you have offered to this

lady as honourable love? Why, your love is a blasphemy; and the lady to whom you have offered it is my wife.

RALPH: Your wife!

REDMAYNE: Yes. Where is yours?

RALPH: Mine? I don't understand you.

REDMAYNE: You lie. I know your secret. You are married to one Eva Templeman. Heaven pity and help her! [TO RUTH.] My darling, don't tremble; you are safe. I am with you.

RALPH (WITH SUPPRESSED FURY): You have done well to make an enemy of me. You have done well and wisely. You fool; was there no way to let me know this, but the way you have chosen? Do you know the nature of the man on whom you have inflicted this deadly insult? Do you know how much devil goes to make a determined and life-long enemy? If not, you shall learn. It may be sooner; it may be later. It may be to-day; it may be to-morrow. But the reckoning will come - be sure of it - and it shall dog you to the grave!

[EXIT RALPH THROUGH GATE, WHICH PAULBY POLITELY OPENS.]

REDMAYNE: There, the pest has gone, and the air is sweeter for it. I beg your pardon, Mr. Ross; but he's a villain, and I've told him so.

ROSS (UP STAGE): So you have, I think you made your meaning quite clear. Don't apologise, my dear fellow. I should be sorry if I had been a restraint on your movements.

RUTH: But his threat. Oh, my beloved; his threat!

REDMAYNE (PUTTING HER OVER TO C.): Hush, my wife. You must not allow yourself to be frightened by such a turnip-headed ghost as that. If he rise, be sure I know how to lay him. But in the excitement of dealing with that scoundrel, I forgot to tell you the news that Mr. Paulby has brought me. It is good news, Ruth, though there's a death in it. My godfather, James Crawshay, died in England a few weeks ago, and has left me the bulk of his fortune. It is a big thing - nearly three hundred thousand, I understand - enough to make me a rich man. and rich enough to enrich my poor old father.

RUTH: Why, that is avast fortune, is it not?

ROSS (COMING DOWN): Pretty well, my dear. Nothing to an American oilman; but a large fortune, indeed, to a poor Englishman.

REDMAYNE: But that's not all my news. I am one of the trustees under the will - the affairs of the estate are in the greatest confusion, and, in short, we must leave for England at once.

RUTH: At once? Oh no, no!

REDMAYNE: At once, - without an hour's delay. Mr. Paulby secured a cabin for us on board the "Calypso" before he left, and we sail in three days. A pair of fast cobs are already in the trap, and all that is necessary for the voyage we can purchase in Sydney.

[RUTH DAZED, TURNS TO PAULBY, ENQUIRINGLY.]

PAULBY (COMING DOWN): I am sorry to say, Mrs. Redmayne, that, having

regard to the enormous interest at stake, and the confusion in which Sir James Crawshay's affairs were left, it is absolutely necessary that your husband should return to England forthwith.

RUTH: But my father! I cannot leave my father! He is very sick and like to die! Oh, Arthur, you will not take me from my father!

REDMAYNE: I know it is hard to have to leave him in his critical condition; still, means can, no doubt, be found whereby he could be nursed during your absence.

RUTH (AFTER A PAUSE): No. I cannot leave my father to be tended by strangers. He is sick unto death, and I am everything that he has.

[PAULBY GOES TO RUTH AND ATTEMPTS TO CONSOLE HER.]

ROSS: Redmayne, she's right. There is no knowing how long you may be detained in England, and her duty is with her father.

RUTH: Yes, my duty is with my father; that is plain. My duty is with my father.

REDMAYNE: Then, my love - my darling love, be comforted. It is a bitter parting to both of us, but the interests at stake are enormous, and at any sacrifice I must go. As soon as your father can be left, you will follow me; Noel Ross and Mr. Paulby will see to that - and who knows but that in a few months we shall be in England together. [ASIDE TO ROSS.] Ross here is my will, made in Ruth's favour, and some other papers, which you will read and act upon. [GRASPING ROSS'S HAND.] Good-bye, old fellow. [MUSIC TO THE END OF ACT.] And now, my beloved child - [TURNING TO RUTH AND PUTTING HER L.C.] - farewell, and may heaven protect and guide you, my darling, until we meet again.

[EMBRACES HER. RUTH IS WEEPING BITTERLY THROUGH THESE LINES. HE MAKES AS IF TO GO - PAUSES - EMBRACES HER AGAIN.]

Mr. Paulby, I am ready! [BACKS FROM HER.]

RUTH (ABOUT TO FAINT): Arthur! Arthur!

[REDMAYNE CATCHES HER IN HIS ARMS AS SHE FALLS FAINTING ON THE STAGE.]

[END OF ACT 1]

ACT II

SCENE - INTERIOR OF BRANTINGHAME HALL. LARGE OAK WRITING TABLE R.; SETTEE R.C.; SMALL TABLE L.C. A LITTLE HIGHER UP STAGE THAN THE SETTEE; CHAIR R. OF TABLE; LARGE DOORWAY C.; DOORS R. AND L., AT FIRST ENTRANCES; FIREPLACE AND OVERMANTEL; OAK STAIRCASE LEADING TO GALLERY OVER CENTRE DOOR; A "CABINET" PHOTOGRAPH OF ARTHUR REDMAYNE STANDS ON TABLE.

[LORD SAXMUNDHAM DISCOVERED, SEATED ON SETTEE. LADY SAXMUNDHAM AT TABLE. PARFIT STANDING R. OF WRITING TABLE, DEALING WITH VARIOUS LEGAL DOCUMENTS. EIGHTEEN MONTHS HAVE ELAPSED.]

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Now Mr. Parfit, I am but an indifferent man of business, and my lady finds even greater difficulty than I do in grasping legal technicalities. Will you be so obliging as to recapitulate, in the simplest terms, the present state of affairs?

PARFIT: My lord, matters stand thus: Eighteen months since, your lamented son, Mr. Arthur Tremayne, sailed from Sydney, Southampton, in the steamship "Calypso." No news of the ship came to hand until twelve months ago, when a bottle was washed on shore, near Point de Galle, containing a slip of paper, on which was written in the captain's hand, the words: "Steamship Calypso - Lat., 8.15 North; long., 89.12 East. Ship sinking - no hope. God help us all." Your lordship, as heir-at-law to your son, is entitled to the estate demised to him by his godfather, the late Sir James Crawshay, and valued at three-hundred and fifty thousand pounds.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (IMPATIENTLY): Yes, yes, we know all that; but the proceedings that have been taken to support my claim -

PARFIT: Application has been made to the Judge of the Probate Division for letters of administration as to the personalty, supported by your affidavit - [TURNING OVER THE DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO] - to which is annexed a letter from the deceased, written on board the "Calypso" - proof that she is seventeen months overdue - proof that the document enclosed in the bottle is in the captain's handwriting - proof of the absence of other tidings, save the date when she was last seen - proof that the underwriters have paid on the policies, as for a total loss. Also by an affidavit of the ship's agent, upon the general facts of the case. The application comes on for hearing to-day. It is practically unopposed, and if the Court is pleased to accept this very strong presumption of evidence, there is no doubt but that your lordship will be placed in immediate possession of this most valuable estate - [GOING.]

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: Then at any moment we may expect to hear that judgment has been given?

PARFIT (UP STAGE): At any moment. My partner, who is in Court, will at once wire the Court's judgment to you and to your friend, Mr. Thursby, as one of the executors under the will.

[EXIT PARFIT.]

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Janet, this state of suspense is terrible. With ample prosperity, and utter ruin staked on the chance of a judge's caprice, it is difficult, indeed, to preserve an appearance of composure.

LADY SAXMUNDHAM (RISING): My dear, you must not allow yourself to be agitated. Suppose the worst - suppose that the Court is not satisfied with the evidence of our dear son's death - so conclusive, alas, to all but lawyers! We shall, at least, be no poorer than we have been for many years past.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: True, but what a struggle it has been! Brantinghame mortgaged to the very tree-tops - rents reduced everywhere, and the reduced rents unpaid - creditors pressing on all hands, and Alaric just on the point of leaving Eton!

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: Has not the last year's interest on Mr. Crampton's mortgage been paid?

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: No; and if the case is decided against us, heaven only knows how it is to be raised! [RISING.]

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: But Mr. Crampton will surely not press for payment?

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: I am not disposed to place myself under an obligation to Mr. Crampton. As you know, the divorce proceedings, though they resulted in his favour, exhibited him in a most discreditable light. I would make a large sacrifice, my dear Janet, to be enabled to shake off the man's hold on Brantinghame Hall. [EXIT LORD SAXMUNDHAM.]

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: The situation is indeed terrible; and yet how light these troubles seem, compared with the bereavement that is to place us beyond the reach of trouble! Heaven knows I would face very beggary to have my poor boy with us again.

[ENTER ALARIC FROM GALLERY.]

ALARIC: Mother, I want to talk to you on a very important matter.

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: Indeed, Alaric? Then come down and tell me all about it. [ALARIC COMES DOWN.]

ALARIC: Why, mother, you've been crying. And I am so chock-full of happiness. I'm awfully sorry I'm so happy. [SITS BY HER.]

LADY SAXMUNDHAM (SEATED): Come, my darling boy, tell me all about it.

ALARIC: A - you are awfully fond of me, are you not?

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: Very fond, my dear boy. You are the only son that is left to me now.

ALARIC: And anything that concerns my happiness, naturally concerns yours too, doesn't it?

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: Most assuredly.

ALARIC: Well, then - [RISING AND CALLING TO MABEL, WHO APPEARS IN THE GALLERY AT THE BACK OF THE STAGE] - come down Mabel, and don't be a goose. Come down you little muff, and get it over. [HE RUNS UP THE STAIRS AND BRINGS MABEL DOWN. SHE STAND ON HIS L.]

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: Oh, Mabel is concerned in this, is she?

ALARIC: Well, yes - indirectly. The fact is, Mabel and I want to be married.

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: Married? That's rather sudden, is it not?

ALARIC: Oh, no - it's been going on for ever so many years - about ten, I think - hasn't it, Mabel?

MABEL: Eleven, Alaric. I was six when you began to - to pay me attention.

ALARIC: And I was seven; yes, eleven years. Marriage is much too serious a thing to hurry over, you know. What I say is, that however attractive a man may think a girl to be, when he first sees her - and when I first saw Mabel I thought her the most attractive girl I had ever met - it is impossible to feel sure that she has those solid and sympathetic qualities, without which mere beauty is a delusion and a snare. So Mabel and I have been studying each other for eleven years, and - well, we think we were made for each other.

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: But don't you think that, at your age, you are rather young to marry?

MABEL: Oh, but we don't think of marrying yet, for a long time, Lady Saxmundham.

ALARIC: Oh no - not for some months. No fellow with my serious responsibilities ought to marry until - well, until he has left Eton. It wouldn't be good form, you know. Besides, a fellow would get so chaffed.

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: I certainly think a young gentleman should not marry while he is at school.

ALARIC: Mother, dear - now you are laughing at us. [CROSSES TO R.]

LADY SAXMUNDHAM (RISING AND STANDING BETWEEN THEM): No, my dear children, I love you both too tenderly to say or to do anything, intentionally, that would make you unhappy. I want you, Alaric, to be a good and true man; scrupulously honourable in all things, and, above all things, in chivalrous regard to all women. Be strong and earnest in this, and you will be strong and earnest in all good things; and so I do not laugh at any love that is true and honest and straightforward. But a long time must elapse before such a topic can be seriously entertained; and in the meantime, you must content yourself with remembering that your father and I love you both very dearly, and that if you have a good and honourable wish at heart, we are not likely to stand in the way of its fulfilment. Now that must satisfy you - [CROSSING TO R.C.] - so let me hear no more about it, you foolish children, for a long - a very long time to come.

[EXIT LADY SAXMUNDHAM.]

ALARIC (ON SOFA): Now, isn't that a trump of a mother? And mind, I didn't chose her - her being my mother is a pure bit of luck.

MABEL (SEATED ON STOOL AT HIS L.): I am sure of that, dear. But what do you think Lord Saxmundham will say?

ALARIC: Oh, I've no fear on that score. It is true that my father's political principles are entirely opposed to my own; but then, you know, I've given a great deal more attention to politics than he has.

MABEL: I'm sure you have, dear.

ALARIC: Yes. You know, one's father may be a very fine fellow, even though his political views are still in their infancy. Your own father, Mr. Thursby, is one of the finest gentlemen in England, yet he has the misfortune to hold political opinions that are still more ridiculously at variance with my own.

MABEL: Poor papa! I'm afraid he's a terrible - what is the word?

ALARIC: Tory, Mabel.

MABEL: A terrible Tory! And he ought to be, and would be, if he knew as much about it as you and I do - a - a Radical, isn't it?

ALARIC: A Radical. You know, I've explained to you what a Radical is, haven't I?

MABEL: Oh, yes. [RISES.] A Radical is one who - he's a person who holds that - he's one who thinks that he's everybody - well, **You're** a Radical, you know.

ALARIC: Yes, but that is not sufficiently definite. Now listen to me. A Radical is one who - who considers that - all men - and all women - are, in a way - that to say, in a certain qualified sense - more or less - and generally more **than** less - a - a - well, I'M a Radical, you know.

MABEL (SEATED ON STOOL): How clever you are, dear, and what a statesman you will make, some day!

ALARIC: Yes. You know, radically speaking, everyone's equal.

MABEL: Equal to what, dear?

ALARIC: Oh, equal to what's wanted of him. Tories are **not** equal to what's wanted of them. There you have the distinction in a nutshell. And all property ought to belong to everybody or nearly everybody - equally. And there oughtn't to be any Bishops, or rich men - or scarcely any - or anybody (or, at all events, very few) better or wiser than anybody else.

MABEL: I see. But why are you so much better and wiser than anybody else? That's what I can't understand.

ALARIC: It's the fault of the detestable system under which we groan, my dear Mabel. [RISES AND CROSSES TO L.] You see, the system required that I should go to Eton. That's how I came to be so much more intelligent than I have any right to be.

MABEL: What a shame! But, when everybody is a Radical, will they all be as good and wise as you, or will you be as foolish and bad as they - or, if not, how will you manage it?

ALARIC: Well, you see, I expect we shall meet half-way.

MABEL: That'll be a terrible come down for you.

ALARIC: Yes. I'm not quite sure how that will be. [CROSSING TO R.C.] I'm going to think that out. It's a large question.

MABEL: Then, of course, there will be no Peers?

ALARIC (SURPRISED AT THE QUESTION): Oh, yes, there'll be Peers!

MABEL: You're quite sure of that?

ALARIC: Oh, quite. But they will be Radical Peers, you know, so it will be all right.

MABEL: I see. And they won't have any more money than anybody else?

ALARIC: Well, they must have a good deal of money, or they couldn't do the good that's expected of them. Oh, yes, a Peer ought

to have a lot of money.
MABEL: But no social influence?
ALARIC: Oh, yes, he'll have a lot of social influence - but only for good. He'll set an example, you know - that's what **he'll** do. Come, let's have a "knock up." [TAKING UP TENNIS BAT FROM SETTEE.] I'm afraid you don't quite understand Radical principles, Mabel.
MABEL: I don't think I do, dear, but a few more lessons from you will make it as clear as day. Oh, Alaric!
ALARIC: What?
MABEL: What a statesman you will make some day!
[EXEUNT MABEL AND ALARIC.]

[ENTER SERVANT, SHOWING IN MR. THURSBY.]

THURSBY: Tell his Lordship I must see him at once. Oh, here he is.

[ENTER LORD SAXMUNDHAM. EXIT SERVANT.]

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (ANXIOUSLY): Thursby! Any news?
THURSBY: News! I should think so! My dear, Saxmundham, I bring you the very best of all good news, and I congratulate you with all my heart!
LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Then the decision has been given?
THURSBY: To be sure it has; and a very first-class decision it is. The Judge of the Probate Division deserves a peerage, and he shall have it, if he'll wait till I'm Prime Minister. Ha! ha!
LORD SAXMUNDHAM (ANXIOUSLY): There's no possibility of doubt, Thursby?
THURSBY: Doubt? Not a bit of it. [LORD SAXMUNDHAM SITS ON SOFA.] Look at that. [HANDS TELEGRAM TO LORD SAXMUNDHAM.] Why, it's done, finished, settled, wiped off the slate. It's done, my boy; done!
LORD SAXMUNDHAM: And can no one dispute it?
THURSBY: No. Stop! Yes; I can! As trustee under the will. And if you don't play leap-frog for very joy over every armchair in the house, I'll enter proceedings against you at once. Come; here's a little one to begin with. [INDICATING CHAIR] Over you go! Ha! ha! [SITS ASTRIDE ON CHAIR, WHICH STOOD AT TABLE.]
LORD SAXMUNDHAM: And am I to understand that I can touch the personalty at once?
THURSBY: To be sure you can! Stuff your pockets with the personalty! roll in the personalty! swim in the personalty! feed the pigs with the personalty! Ha! ha! By George, I envy you. I'd willingly pass the next ten years in poverty to enjoy the delightful sensation of having come into a large fortune without having done anything at all to earn it. But I had the misfortune to be born rich, and consequently never knew what it was to enjoy money. Melancholy case, mine. [RISING AND REPLACING CHAIR.] Ha! ha! [SUDDENLY.] I say, Saxmundham! See those two young people, there? [LOOKING OFF.]
LORD SAXMUNDHAM (RISING): Mabel and Alaric?
THURSBY: Yes, Mabel and Alaric. They've got their arms round each

other's waists!

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Bless my heart, so they have.

THURSBY: Ha! Nice, prudent, careful, considerate young gentleman, Alaric! By George, sir, he's proposed to my girl! Proposed to her! Wants to marry her! And she says, "Yes, my buck, and as soon as you please!"

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (RATHER SHOCKED): Bless me, did Mabel say that?

THURSBY: Something very like it. She barely out of the nursery, and he liable to be birched at Eton, any day! Birched, sir! Fancy a married man who can't sit down at his own fireside for the best of all possible reasons, while his wife duns him for money to buy baby-linen for the doll! But there are no boys and girls nowadays. The race died out with the dodo! [EXIT THURSBY.]

[ENTER SERVANT WITH CARD.]

SERVANT: A gentleman is in the library who wishes to speak with your lordship.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (READING CARD): Ralph Crampton! Returned to England at last. I suppose he waited for his divorce, the scamp! [TO SERVANT.] Show him in at once. It will be a relief to square accounts with him, and have done with him for ever.

[ENTER RALPH CRAMPTON.]

Mr. Crampton, your visit is unexpected.

RALPH: Naturally. I have been travelling for three years, and I only returned to England two days since.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Mr. Crampton, if I am rightly informed, you were with my poor son shortly before he left Sydney. You have, of course, heard the terrible news.

RALPH: I have heard that the ship in which he sailed was lost with all hands. Lord Saxmundham, let us be quite frank with one another. Your son and I parted in hot anger. He passed a gross and cowardly insult on me, and his insult was based on a letter which he stated that he received from you.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: It is true, sir, that I wrote to him to the effect that you had an acknowledged wife whom you had greatly maltreated.

RALPH: My lord, I am a man who does not readily forgive. Your son's infamous treatment of me, and the cause of that treatment have placed it out of the question that friendly relations can continue to exist between us.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: I am disposed to agree with you, sir. I have a pardonable faith in my dead son's actions, and if, as you say, he addressed you in terms of obloquy, it was no doubt for a sufficient cause. That obloquy, sir, whatever it was, I cordially endorse!

RALPH: As your lordship pleases. Under these circumstances you will probably prefer that our business relations should terminate at once.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (SEATED ON SOFA): You refer, of course, to the money you advanced me on the security of Brantingham Hall. As you

say, sir, I greatly prefer that all relations between us, of whatever kind, should terminate forthwith.

RALPH: You are entitled to three months' notice of foreclosure, but no more.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (ANGRILY): I wish for no notice, sir - I desire to have done with you at once. I desire that our account may be closed forthwith. The principal and arrears of interest shall be paid to you within a week.

RALPH (MUCH SURPRISED): Within a week! Am I to take that as definite?

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: You are to take that as definite. The money shall be placed to your account on Thursday next. Are you satisfied?

RALPH: Yes. That is, of course, sufficient. [ASIDE.] Where is the money to come from, I wonder! He's as poor as a rat!

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (RISING): You will pardon me if I put an immediate end to this interview. My son is dead, sir, and you think yourself justified in coming to his sorrowing father with an attack upon his memory. It might have been done more delicately - you understand me, sir - more delicately.

[RALPH IS ABOUT TO REPLY WHEN MABEL ENTERS.]

MABEL: I did not know that you were engaged.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (UP STAGE): Don't go, Mabel, my dear; don't go! [PATTING HER HEAD.]

RALPH (WITH AN EFFORT AT SELF-CONTROL): Good morning, my lord. [EXIT.]

MABEL: Has anything happened to distress you?

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (WITH AN ATTEMPT TO SPEAK CHEERFULLY): No, my dear, no. Mr. Crampton, who left as you entered, has wounded me a little. But it will pass - it will pass. Say nothing to Lady Saxmundham. I have some good news for her, my dear, and I wish her to hear nothing but good news to-day.

[EXIT LORD SAXMUNDHAM.]

MABEL: What has that man been saying to him, I wonder! It seems to me that everyone is destined to be miserable to-day except Alaric and me! [CROSSES TO L.C.]

[ENTER RUTH. SHE IS DRESSED AS A WIDOW.]

RUTH: I ask your pardon. I wish to see Lord Saxmundham or Mr. Thursby. I called at Mr. Thursby's house, and I was told that he was here.

MABEL: Lord Saxmundham has just left the room, and Mr. Thursby, my father, has just gone home. I - I am sorry to see that you have some great grief.

RUTH: Forgive me. I have, indeed, a great sorrow, and it is fit that I should weep when I am here, for I am the widow of Lord Saxmundham's dead son.

MABEL: The widow of Mr. Redmayne! I did not know that he was married.

RUTH: I was wed to him three short weeks before he left Australia. I ask you to pardon my tears. It is natural that I should be much moved, for I loved him with all the love that my

heart could hold, and I am in his old home and he is dead.
[SITS ON SOFA.]

MABEL (ADVANCING TO HER): Poor lady! If there be words that can console such grief as yours, try and believe that I have spoken them. They are in my heart, but I do not know how to utter them. I have known so little of sorrow.

RUTH: May Heaven spare you such sorrow as mine!

MABEL: Shall I tell Lord Saxmundham that you are here?

RUTH: Yes, for he was my darling's father. But my darling wrote to me before he left, commending me to Mr. Thursby, who would tell me what to do, if perchance he should never reach England.

MABEL: My father will, I am sure, do all he can to serve one who was dear to his very dear friend. [GOING R. RUTH RISES.]
May I - may I kiss you?

RUTH: I thank you. [KISSES HER. EXIT MABEL.] At last I stand in the house that was my darling's home - the home in which he was born, and in which he grew to noble manhood! It is strange to know that every corner - every nook in this old house, so strange to me, was known, so closely known to him, my dearly loved! [SEES PORTRAIT OF ARTHUR REDMAYNE ON TABLE, AND KNEELS TO IT.] Oh, my darling, dead and in heaven! My darling, dead and in heaven!

[ENTER LORD SAXMUNDHAM, RUTH RECOVERS HERSELF, AND RISES.]

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Madam, I hear that you would speak with Mr. Thursby.
May I ask whom I have the honour of addressing?

RUTH (MUCH MOVED): Are you Lord Saxmundham?

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: I am.

RUTH: I have come from far away to see you. I am Ruth, the daughter of Stephen Brunt, of Brunt's Claim, near Sydney.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: I recollect the name. Surely it was from a place so called that my poor dead son's last letter was dated?

RUTH: Yes. The station then belonged to my father, but he is dead, and it is now my own.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (TAKING HER HAND): Pray tell me anything you may have to say to me. My poor son was inexpressibly dear to me, and all that relates to him must interest me deeply.

[HE MOTIONS HER TO BE SEATED. SHE SITS AT TABLE.]

RUTH: Was it not at your house that he fell ill?
His friend, Ralph Crampton, brought him to us, very sick with fever. [LORD SAXMUNDHAM SITS.] We gave him shelter, and I tended him for many weeks, for he was sorely stricken, and like to die. But he was not to die then, and when the fever left him, he told me that he loved me, and bade me become his wife. And as he was very dear to me, I said "Yes," and so my love married me, and we were happy beyond all telling!

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (MUCH AGITATED): You were married to my son!

RUTH: Even so.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: But I knew nothing of this!

RUTH: No. It was my wish that he should write and tell you, but he said "No," for you were an old man, and a proud man, and I am but a convict's daughter. [LORD SAXMUNDHAM OVERCOME.] He said that if he wrote to tell you this, you would never pardon him. I do not know why, but so he spake; and all that he said was good and wise in my eyes, and I did not gainsay him. Moreover, I was his wife, and a wife obeys. He told me that he would take me to England, and that then you would see me, and you would know that I was not a wicked woman - and that I had saved your son's life; and that when you knew this, you would take me to your heart and call me "daughter" - not the less because my father was a convict. [LORD SAXMUNDHAM MUCH AGITATED.] And in truth his sin was of long ago; and in his old age he was penitent, and he died as a good man should, and I grieved for him as for the best of all fathers, for so, in truth, he was to me!

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (ASIDE): Arthur married! And to the daughter of such a man!

RUTH: One day he heard that one had died, and left him great wealth. So it was needful that he should return to England, and that at once. So my love kissed me, and departed, and I never saw him more. But his last kiss is still where he placed it, and his last look is still in my eyes; and I felt his heart beat as he took me unto him, and it is still beating against mine, and his hand is always in my hand - for I loved him dearly, dearly, dearly - and he is dead!

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: God help me, if this be true, for it is ruin, indeed!

RUTH: I waited for tidings of him, but no tidings came. Week after week went by, and month after month, until nearly a year had passed away. Then came the news; his ship was wrecked, and all had perished! So it was to be. I bowed my head, and wept bitterly - for many days, I wept bitterly; and the rough men on the farm said, "Let her bide, for he was brave and good, and they loved one another, and it is good for her that she should weep." And the rough men had tears in their eyes as they spake, and their voices failed them as they bade God bless me. And my heart ached with its very fulness; it had more love in it than it could bear, and there was none to give it to; so I said, "He had a father whom he dearly loved, and a fond mother who prayed every night for him, and a brother who looked up to him. I will take my love to them, and I will lay it at their feet, and when they know how dearly I loved the dead son who was so dear to them, they will not find it in their hearts to turn my love away." And I have come over many miles of stormy sea, - [RISING] - and I have brought my love with me, and I am here to ask if you will have it, for my heart is full of it, and he was very dear to me, and he is dead.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (RISING): I will not disguise from you that the news you have brought me amazes and distresses me beyond measure. If your tale be true -

RUTH (IN ASTONISHMENT): If my tale be true? Wherefore should it not be true?

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: You are no doubt provided with proofs?

RUTH: Yes; for Noel Ross bade me bring them with me. Here is my marriage certificate, and here is my darling's will, witnessed by Mr. Paulby and Noel Ross, who married us.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (READING THE DOCUMENT): "I hereby devise and bequeath unto my dear wife, Ruth Redmayne, all my real and personal estate, whatever and wheresoever, for her absolute use and benefit." I see no reason to doubt your word. [RETURNING THE DOCUMENTS.] It may well be as you have said. But I need not tell you that to such a marriage I should never have consented. You must be aware that to ask me to take to my heart, as my daughter, the daughter of a man in your father's unhappy position - pardon me if I speak plainly - is not reasonable. No, not reasonable. [LEANS AGAINST MANTLEPIECE.]

RUTH: I know little of such matters. It was my poor dead father who sinned; it was not I. I have heard that you are a great lord. I do not know what that means, for I have lived at Brunt's Station all my life, and at Brunt's Station all men are alike. I know little, save that I loved your son; that he is very dear to me; and he is dead. That is all.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: The news that you bring me is of graver import than you seem to imagine. In the full belief that my poor son died unmarried, I claimed his estate; and the claim has been allowed. But it is clear to me that the wealth I thought was mine, is yours; and I have no claim to it.

RUTH: But this may not be! I knew nothing of this! I am not here for money! I am your son's widow, and my heart yearns to you; and that is why I am here. For you are his father, and I would be a daughter unto you, and all that I have is yours; and I pray you take it, for you are his father, and he is dead.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (TAKING HER HAND): You speak kindly and generously; but you do not understand these matters. It is impossible that such a thing could be. Pray do not speak of this again. You are kind and good, I am sure, and you would not willingly give me pain. You would do well to go to my solicitor at once, and I will instruct him to afford you every possible facility to enable you to establish your claim to my son's estate. Leave me, madam, I pray - I would be alone.

[RUTH PAUSES; KISSES HIS HAND; WALKS SLOWLY OUT.
LORD SAXMUNDHAM BURST INTO TEARS AS THE ACT DROP FALLS.]

ACT III

SCENE - SAME. THE TABLE L.C., SHOULD BE BROUGHT DOWN LEVEL WITH THE SETTEE R.C., FOR THIS ACT.

[LORD SAXMUNDHAM ENTERS WITH MR. PARFIT.]

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (SEATED): The surrender of the estate, Mr. Parfit, can be made at once.

PARFIT (SEATED): This very day. The mortgagee, Mr. Crampton, attended, as agreed at the Rolls, made the usual affidavit, and applied for and obtained a final order of foreclosure. That order is the title deed shutting out your lordship's equity to redeem.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: But the surrender - how is that to be effected?

PARFIT: That must be done, of course, by a deed under seal. As you are anxious to conclude this matter to-day, I will endorse a short deed on the mortgage, which your lordship and Mr. Crampton will execute.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: That is all you have to say?

PARFIT: As your legal adviser, that is all I have to say. But I think I am more than a legal adviser. I believe I am entitled to look upon myself as a friend.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Most certainly, a friend.

PARFIT: Thank you. Then speaking as a friend - as a very true and devoted friend - let me implore you to consider whether you are acting reasonably in not making an effort to preserve this old property? When Mr. Crampton is made acquainted with the circumstances, he will surely give time. Moreover, there are a dozen of your friends who would gladly afford you every facility. Even I myself, or my partner -

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Mr. Parfit, I will not hear you on this subject. Brantinghame is mortgaged to the very crow's nests. An appeal to Mr. Crampton's consideration is absolutely out of the question; and if I were to borrow money to stave off the evil day, I should be staving it off - that is all - and that with money for which I can offer to adequate security. I have said enough.

PARFIT: But the old place, in which nine generations of Saxmundhams have been born, and have lived, and died!

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Mr. Parfit, I protest that these considerations should not be submitted to me. These are points that I have no right to consider. Let me hear no more of this, I pray. Nay, sir, I insist.

PARFIT: As your lordship pleases. Your lordship has made me feel that I have outstripped my duty. [RISING TO GO.]

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: No, Parfit, my dear old friend. [TAKING PARFIT'S HAND.] Pardon me, if I spoke harshly, but I - I am much upset. I am an old man, and not strong - no, not strong. So you will pardon me, I know, and you will believe that all I would have said is, that I am resolved, and that I must not be gainsaid. I would have said this gently, Parfit, but - I am unstrung.

PARFIT: Pray say no more. It must be - that is certain; Mr.

Crampton is due in ten minutes. I will get the papers together without delay. [EXIT PARFIT.]

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (AT FIREPLACE): Yes, it must be. Oh, my old home, my old home!

[ENTER LADY SAXMUNDHAM.]

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: Has Mr. Parfit gone?

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (SEATED): Yes, Janet, Mr. Parfit has gone.

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: He can give us no hope?

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: There is no room for hope. With hope we have done.

Janet, the old Hall in which three centuries of Redmaynes have lived and died, must go!

LADY SAXMUNDHAM (QUIETLY): Then I will make the necessary preparations.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: We shall be poor, Janet.

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: That will matter by little, Saxmundham. We must live quietly.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Very poor, Janet.

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: Well, we must live very quietly, my dear. That is all.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Janet, we are ruined! [BREAKS DOWN.]

LADY SAXMUNDHAM (GOING TO HIM AND SITTING ON HIS L.): My husband!

My love of fifty years ago! My love, my cherished love of to-day! Come, be brave. There is such a thing as ruin, but take heart, my dear, it has not come to us yet.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Why, Janet, my girl, we have nothing left!

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: Nay, we have much, for we have each other.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Yes, it is true. I ask for pardon. We have much, for we have each other.

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: In this half century, we have seen many changes. Children have been born to us, they have grown to manhood, and they have died in the very flower of their lives. Friends have fallen around us as leaves in autumn. Our fortunes, that rose with the dawn of life have set with its setting sun. But, throughout our changing fate, our love of long ago has been true to us - it has never quitted us, even for one brief hour. Let us thank God for this true and staunch friend, for throughout it has been our most precious possession, and we have it still.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: My own dear lady!

LADY SAXMUNDHAM: In pain, sorrow, and sickness, in the birth-chamber, in the death-chamber, have we not turned to one another for comfort, and have we ever turned in vain?

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: No, no! Never! Never! [THEY RISE.] As we were to one another in the sweet old days of courtship, when life was bright, and hope was young and strong, so are we now in the evening of our days - so shall we be, till the long night comes. For I am as I have ever been, your ladyship's most devoted and most faithful lover!

[KISSES HER HAND WITH OLD-FASHIONED COURTESY.]

[ENTER ALARIC.]

ALARIC: Father, I hear that you want to speak to me.

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Alaric, my dear boy, I have just broken some grievous

news to your dear mother, and she has borne it superbly. It will affect you seriously, my boy. Bear it as she has done.

ALARIC: Why, what has happened?

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: My dear child, a fortnight ago you told your mother of your attachment to the daughter of my old friend, Thursby. Mabel will be rich - very rich, and I had good reason to believe that your own fortune would, in some measure, balance hers. But that is so no longer. I am a penniless old man, and you will have to make your own way. To do this, it will be necessary that you go to India for some years. Under these circumstances, it is your duty, my dear fellow, to absolve Mabel from her promise. [GOES UP.]

ALARIC: To absolve Mabel from her promise!

[CROSSES TO LADY SAXMUNDHAM.]

LADY SAXMUNDHAM (ON SOFA): Oh, my poor boy!

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (COMING DOWN): For a time. You will have little, very little to live upon, and no son of mine would ever lay himself open to the suspicion of being a fortune-hunter. So you will give me your promise not to take advantage of the regard that the child has for you, but to explain to her, frankly and honourably, the position in which you are placed.

ALARIC: I will tell her, of course; but am I never to see her again? Oh, mother! [TURNING TO LADY SAXMUNDHAM.]

LADY SAXMUNDHAM (RISING): It is, perhaps, better, my child, that you should not see her for a while. But, if I know my boy, that is a matter that we can surely leave to his sense of duty.

ALARIC: But Mabel would never give me up because I am poor!

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: My son, Mabel is a child. In two or three years she will be a woman, but at present she is a child. She is rich - you are penniless. To a son of mine, I need say no more. Come, Janet. [EXIT LORD SAXMUNDHAM.]

ALARIC: Oh mother, mother!

LADY SAXMUNDHAM (CROSSING TO L.C.): It is hard to bear, my poor boy, but your father is right. Come, come, be brave, and tell the little maid gently and tenderly, as a brave man should. She will not love you the less, take my word for it.

[EXIT LADY SAXMUNDHAM.]

ALARIC: It's awfully hard. I suppose it's all right, but if I can't see it myself, how can I expect to make it clear to her? Here she comes. Now for it! It will be awfully difficult!

[ENTER MABEL.]

MABEL: Alaric, I've great news for you. I'm to play in the Brantwich tournament - the best of three seats, the winning side to play each other single. Why, how grave you look!

ALARIC: Mabel - Miss Thursby -

MABEL (AMUSED): Miss Thursby!

ALARIC: It is my duty to break to you a piece of distressing news. My father has lost all his money.

MABEL: What a pity! Papa has several sovereigns in his purse -

he's with Mrs. Redmayne in the library - I'll go and tell him. [GOING.]

ALARIC: No, don't do that. He has lost more than Mr. Thursby is in the habit of carrying in his pocket. He has lost three hundred and fifty thousand pounds!

MABEL: Oh dear! [DROPS INTO CHAIR.]

ALARIC: When I did myself the honour to propose for your hand ...

MABEL: Alaric! Are you mad?

ALARIC: Well, when I told you how awfully I loved you, I believed I was rich. I am now quite poor, and my father tells me that it is my duty to release you from your promise.

MABEL: But I don't want to be released! I wouldn't be released for the world! And as if you were doing me a favour, too!

[TURNING TO L.C.]

ALARIC: Miss Thursby, I am doing you a justice. I must go to India for some years, and I've promised my father that, in the meantime, I will abstain from communicating with you, except on the footing of a mere acquaintance. For, as he says very truly, you are not old enough to judge for yourself.

MABEL (TURNING TO ALARIC): That's very rude of him. Surely seventeen is the very prime of life!

ALARIC (BOWING GRAVELY): It would certainly seem so.

MABEL: Then we are to be Mr. Redmayne and Miss Thursby, I suppose, in future.

ALARIC: Yes; I believe that is what happens when an engagement is broken off. [TAKES HER HAND MECHANICALLY.] I beg your pardon. [RELEASES IT.] Force of habit.

MABEL (SEATED): Then, Mr. Redmayne, I am greatly concerned to hear of your serious loss.

ALARIC: Miss Thursby, accept my sincere thanks for your sympathetic condolence. [ALARIC SITS ON SOFA.]

MABEL: I presume that the loss of your fortune will not materially affect your political principles, Mr. Redmayne?

ALARIC: No, Miss Thursby. Nothing has happened to shake my conviction that property should be equally divided. In fact, I am more of that opinion than ever. May I trust that separation from your political preceptor will not endanger the stability of your own convictions?

MABEL (RISING ENTHUSIASTICALLY): No; I shall always be an out-and-out Radical, in memory of the dear old days of poetry and sentiment! It *is* a Radical that I am, isn't it, Ric?

[CROSSING TO ALARIC.]

ALARIC: Yes, Mab. Oh, I forgot.

MABEL: So did I!

ALARIC: Accept, I beg, my sincere apologies, Miss Thursby. [RISES.]

MABEL: Mr. Redmayne, we were both in fault. So you are going away for two years?

ALARIC: Yes, two or three years!

MABEL (SIGHING): It's a long time to be separated from you, dear Mr. Redmayne! I suppose I may say, "dear Mr. Redmayne?"

ALARIC: Well, I don't know. It's rather strong isn't it, to a mere acquaintance.

MABEL: Why, I should say that at the beginning of a letter to a mere acquaintance!

ALARIC: True, so you would. It's a very good test. I think "dear Mr. Redmayne" may be conceded.

MABEL: Dear, dear Mr. Redmayne! [SIGHING.]

ALARIC: Dear, dear Miss Thursby! [SIGHING.]

MABEL: Then I suppose I may say that I am yours faithfully? Because that is what I should say at the **end** of a letter to a mere acquaintance.

ALARIC: True; you would say, "yours truly," or "yours faithfully." I think "yours faithfully" may be conceded.

MABEL: Then I am yours, Ric - yours - yours - faithfully - oh, how faithfully! Always, always faithfully! So faithfully! So faithfully! [SOBS IN HIS ARMS.]

ALARIC: And I am yours, - yours Mab - so truly, oh, so truly! Ever, ever most truly yours!

[EMBRACE. MABEL THEN WITHDRAWS HERSELF DEMURELY; GOES TOWARDS DOOR, STOPS, TURNS AND LOOKS AT ALARIC - THEY ARE ABOUT TO RUSH INTO EACH OTHER'S ARMS, BUT THEY SUDDENLY CHECK THEMSELVES.]

MABEL: Good morning, Mr. Redmayne!

ALARIC: Good morning, Miss Thursby! [EXIT MABEL.] How true it is a fellow never knows what he can do till he tries. If anyone had told me, an hour ago, that I could have schooled myself to address Mabel upon the footing of the coldest and most ceremonious formality, I should have questioned his sanity! [EXIT ALARIC.]

[ENTER RALPH CRAMPTON AND MR. PARFIT.]

PARFIT: If you will take a seat, Mr. Crampton, his lordship will be with you directly.

RALPH (SEATED): Good. I suppose I may take it, Mr. Parfit, that Lord Saxmundham is much distressed at losing Brantinghame?

PARFIT: He is greatly, terribly distressed, Mr. Crampton, though he bears it with wonderful composure.

RALPH: Ha! Mr. Parfit, I'm afraid you think me a very hard-hearted and vindictive creditor.

PARFIT: Sir, it is not for me to comment on you action in this matter. His lordship admits that you are well within your rights.

RALPH: So I most undoubtedly am. Now, Mr. Parfit, I mean to astonish you. Eighteen months ago, Arthur Redmayne, acting upon information supplied by Lord Saxmundham, inflicted an outrage upon me that might well have constituted me the life-long enemy of both. But I am not the altogether remorseless man you take me to be, and time has, in some sort, dulled the edge of my resentment. I have had the satisfaction of showing Lord Saxmundham that I have him completely and absolutely at my mercy. That mercy I am disposed to extend.

PARFIT: Mr. Crampton, I find it difficult to express my sense of your generosity.

RALPH: It is not necessary. I have no desire to pose as a good angel, for I assure you I am nothing of the kind.

PARFIT: If you will allow me, I will tell him the good news without delay. [GOING.]

RALPH (RISING): No, I wish to tell him myself. Oblige me by saying no more than that I am here, and that I wish to speak to him.

PARFIT: As you please, sir. Be sure that I will lose no time.

[EXIT PARFIT.]

RALPH (SEATED ON SOFA): Yes, Saxmundham, the account may be said to be closed between us. I have set my heel upon your neck, and to such a man as you, that is punishment enough. It is well for you that I am rich. It is even better for you that I am disposed to remember that my quarrel is not so much with you, as with your dead son.

[DURING THIS SPEECH RUTH CROSSES THE GALLERY FROM L. TO R., AND COMES DOWN THE STAIRS, L.]

RUTH: Ralph Crampton! You here?

RALPH (RISING MUCH AGITATED): Mrs. Redmayne! This is a strange meeting; I did not know that you were in England.

[RUTH PAUSES FOR A MOMENT, THEN MOVES TO LEAVE THE ROOM. RALPH UPSTAGE.]

Mrs. Redmayne - pray hear me!

RUTH (DOWN STAGE): I have no wish to hear you. I think of you with terror and shame. Let me pass you.

RALPH: Mrs. Redmayne, go if you will; but you have greatly misjudged me. It is perhaps no fault of your own that you have done so, for I have been cruelly misrepresented to you.

RUTH: There is no need to say this. I judge you from my own knowledge of your wicked nature.

RALPH: Of that nature you know nothing. I loved you deeply, and with an unspeakable devotion. It may be that I had no right to tell you this, but I was carried beyond myself. I was helpless, and like a madman, I spoke madly. That love has dominated me ever since. It has haunted me as a nightmare - it has wrecked my peace of mind. Tell me to leave you, and I will do so; but, in common mercy, tell me in gentle words.

RUTH: It is enough that you, who had a wife, dared to speak of love to me. I care to know no more. [CROSSES TO R.]

RALPH: Yes, I had a wife - an unworthy wife, who left me. Her misconduct was a shame to me, and I hid my shame away. When I spoke to you, I had already taken steps to break the chain that bound me to her. I spoke with the certainty that in a few weeks I should be free. I have proofs of the truth of my words - you cannot refuse to hear them!

RUTH: I refuse utterly. It concerns me not to know. I think of you as one to be shunned, and as one would shun a sin. I am set against you.

RALPH (WITH SUPPRESSED FURY): It is well. I am answered - fully and finally answered. You do not know what you have done. I will tell you. I hold Lord Saxmundham's welfare in the hollow of my hand. It is in my power to ruin him - your dead husband's father - by a stroke of the pen. You

understand me? It is in my power to crush the light out of his life, and send him, a miserable pauper, to his grave. I came here to-day with some sort of pity in my heart for the broken old man - with the germ of that which, under fostering circumstances, would have developed into mercy. But such an insult - such an atrocious insult - as you have placed upon me, it is not within man's nature to endure. There is no room within me for mercy; so with mercy I have done. [TURNS AWAY TO L.C.]

RUTH: Mr. Crampton -

RALPH: It is useless to appeal. You have spoken words that cannot be withdrawn.

RUTH: Mr. Crampton, I am not a woman who withdraws her words. I speak plainly. and my words tell you what is in my heart. Still, it may be that you will not do this thing. You are my enemy, for the words that I have spoken. That is natural. But to strike at me through a helpless old man, who is dear to me - to stifle the mercy that had begun to plead for him, because I, who am nothing to him, have angered you, is the act of a coward; and it may well be, Ralph Crampton, that you are not a coward. [EXIT RUTH.]

RALPH: A curse on the ill-fortune that caused you to cross my path at such an hour! You count on my love? Yes, I love you, but take heed, Ruth Redmayne, for there is a love that is more like hate than hate itself!

[ENTER LORD SAXMUNDHAM AND MR. PARFIT.]

LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Sir, I have come to hear what you have to say to me. Mr. Parfit is my solicitor, and I prefer that what takes place between us should take place in his presence.

[PARFIT SITS AT TABLE.]

RALPH: Lord Saxmundham. I have little to say that it will please you to hear. I am here, as arranged, to take over your equity of redemption.

PARFIT (RISING): Mr. Crampton! Sir!

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (SEATED): Hush, I pray. [TO RALPH.] Sir, you will understand that when I undertook that the mortgage debt and interest should be paid into Court at a given day, I believed myself to be a man of wealth and substance. I - I have since been undeceived. I am advised that the surrender must be under seal, and Mr. Parfit is prepared to endorse such a deed on the mortgage.

PARFIT: Mr. Crampton! - nay, my lord, I will speak! Sir, you have most cruelly misled me as to the object of your visit. You told me that you came to inform his lordship that you were disposed to be merciful -

LORD SAXMUNDHAM (PEREMPTORILY): Mr. Parfit, I insist that you will not speak of mercy in relation to myself! On pain of my displeasure, sir! It is not a word that I am accustomed to introduce into my dealings with my creditors. The money is due, and I cannot pay it. That is all. Mr. Parfit, you will be so obliging as to prepare the surrender without delay.

[ENTER RUTH AND MR. THURSBY, HURRIEDLY.]

THURSBY: One moment, Saxmundham -
RUTH: Stay, Lord Saxmundham. I must speak to you.
LORD SAXMUNDHAM: This is an unaccountable interruption. Thursby, what does it mean?
THURSBY: It means, Saxmundham, that this poor great-hearted lady has just learnt that you are in grave trouble, and she insisted upon coming to you at once. I am ashamed to say that I did my best to prevent her, but, thank Heaven, ineffectually!
RUTH: Yes, you must listen to me. I came to England to be a daughter to a bereaved father - not to take an old man's inheritance from him. If you will not take the wealth that was your son's you cannot, at least, prevent my paying this man his claim.
LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Madame, I think you, but it is imposible for me to entertain such a proposal.
THURSBY (STANDING BEHIND LORD SAXMUNDHAM): Now, Saxmundham, don't be Quixotic. There will be no obligation on either side. Reduced to its elements, Mrs. Redmayne, who is one of the shrewdest women of business I ever met, invests eighteen-thousand pounds at four-and-a-half per cent, on unimpeachable security! Capital woman of business, Mrs. Redmayne!
RALPH: I may state at once that I decline to treat with this lady. The transaction to which she refers is one with which she has no concern. Lord Saxmundham understands me?
LORD SAXMUNDHAM: I understand you, sir. I am ready.
THURSBY (CROSSING TO RALPH): Mr. Crampton, confound you; this is sheer vindictiveness. Saxmundham, you ought to know the truth. Eighteen months ago, that scoundrel pestered this poor lady with disgraceful attentions. You did, sir! you know you did! She repelled him with the scorn he deserved. You did, ma'am, you know you did! - and your son thrashed him for his audacity. He did, sir! you know he did! this is the scoundrel's revenge. Baulk him, my dear Saxmundham - baulk him, and society will owe you a debt of gratitude!
[CROSSING TO LORD SAXMUNDHAM.]
LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Thursby, I am here to discharge an obligation - not to contract one. Be so good as to spare me any further discussion. Mr. Parfit, is the endorsement ready?

[THURSBY RETIRES UP WITH LORD SAXMUNDHAM.]

PARFIT (WRITING AT TABLE): In one moment, my lord.
RUTH (SEATED): Oh, is there no way? Is there no way?
RALPH (ASIDE TO RUTH, STANDING ON HER L., BEHIND TABLE): Yes, there is one way, and only one by which this old man may be spared. Mrs. Redmayne, there is yet time, but the time is brief. Give me the love for which I have so long waited, and even at this eleventh hour, I stay my hand. For heaven's sake, think before you decide finally and for ever!
RUTH (ASIDE TO RALPH): And will nothing else content you?

RALPH: Nothing.
RUTH: Then God help me; there is, as you say, but one way, and only one. Ralph Crampton, when you lie upon your deathbed, you will remember that you have driven me to this!
RALPH: Ruth, bear with me. I swear to you that you shall never repent having taken this step.
RUTH: I trust not. I do not know; but I trust not. Yet it is terrible. Oh! the shame of it! The bitter, bitter shame of it!
PARFIT (TO LORD SAXMUNDHAM, WHO HAS RETURNED THE DEED TO PARFIT):
Now, my lord, be good enough to sign here, if you please.
LORD SAXMUNDHAM: Good. [ABOUT TO SIGN.]
RALPH: Stop! This lady has something to say that it is important you should hear.

[LADY SAXMUNDHAM ENTERS, AND HEARS WHAT FOLLOWS.
RALPH COMES DOWN L. OF L.C. TABLE.]

RUTH: It is true. Lord Saxmundham, a fortnight since you reproached me with having allowed your son to marry me - I, a convict's daughter; an outcast; a thing to be thought of with a shudder, if thought of at all. It is a blot upon your honour that your son should have stooped to this. It would have been better, would it not, that he had sinned in any way, rather than in this? Be of good cheer, Lord Saxmundham; your son did not act as shamefully as you believe. I told you I was his wife. I lied! [ALL START.]
RALPH: What!
RUTH: I lied, Ralph Crampton! I was no wife of his! I was no wife of his!
LORD SAXMUNDHAM:) Madam!
THURSBY:) Great heaven!
RALPH:) Ruth, are you mad?
PARFIT:) But the certificate - the will!
LADY SAXMUNDHAM: Oh, for shame! for shame!

[LADY SAXMUNDHAM COMES DOWN TO LORD SAXMUNDHAM.]

RUTH: Aye, for shame, and for shame! Why, Lady Saxmundham, what would you have? Would you not have me make the best of my poor bargain? With such a chance of placing myself well in the world, would you have me neglect that chance, and leave the poor lie untold? [RUTH ADVANCES A STEP TOWARDS LADY SAXMUNDHAM, WHO SHRINKS FROM HER.] But there is something of good in us all - even in such poor lost souls as I! When I, in my unblushing hardihood, claimed to be your son's wife, I did not know that by so doing I was robbing you of your inheritance. Keep your own, my lord, keep your own, and leave me to my legacy of untold shame.

[RUTH RUSHES FROM THE ROOM. LORD SAXMUNDHAM DOWN STAGE,
RALPH FALLS INTO SEAT AND COVERS HIS FACE WITH HIS HANDS.]

[QUICK ACT DROP.]

ACT IV

SCENE - MORNING ROOM AT MR. THURSBY'S. SMALL WRITING TABLE R., SOFA, C., DOORWAY WITH PORTIERE IN FLAT R.C., DOORS R. AND L., GARDEN SEEN THROUGH BAY WINDOW L.C.

MR. THURSBY DISCOVERED WRITING AT TABLE R. FLOWERS, WORK TABLES, &C., ABOUT THE ROOM. HE RINGS AS CURTAIN RISES.

[ENTER PARKER, A BUTLER.]

THURSBY: Parker, Mrs. Redmayne is leaving us unexpectedly to-day. Tell Watts to have the brougham here in time to catch the 4.25 for London.

PARKER: Very good, Sir. [EXIT PARKER.]

THURSBY: Pleasant piece of business to have to ask one's guest to go! By George, I'd sooner have lost my right arm than that this should have happened! If ever there lived a woman to whose integrity I could have sworn affidavits without number, that woman is the very woman who has turned out to be one of the most bare-faced impostors of ancient or modern history! And to think that my Mabel has been on terms of the closest affection with her for the last fortnight! But that woman's face would deceive an Old Bailey solicitor! [CROSSES TO L.C.] Here she comes. Now for it!

[ENTER RUTH.]

RUTH (UP STAGE): Mr. Thursby, will you let me speak to you?

THURSBY: Madam, I - I do not know how to deal with you. I am shocked, amazed beyond measure, by the disclosures you have made. There is something else which, as Mabel's father, I ought to say to you; but, confound it, I can't say it! If you've any sympathy with the particularly awkward position in which I find myself, you'll say it for me. [CROSSES TO R.]

RUTH: You would say that it is not fitting that such a woman as I should remain in your house. You have an innocent daughter, and I am not fit to be with her. That is just. I will be a burden to you no longer. [SITS ON SOFA.]

THURSBY: Can't you think of anything to say that would make one forgive you? Haven't you such a thing about you as an excuse that one could hang on to? Hang it, ma'am, have you **no** invention?

RUTH: I have nothing to add to what I have already said.

THURSBY (RUEFULLY): Well, ma'am, then I suppose I've no right to oppose your intention to go. I dare say I ought to be glad to get rid of you. But I've grown to be very fond of you, ma'am - very fond indeed - and - and you've behaved abominably - and - and -

[ENTER MABEL.]

Now, Mabel, my good girl, why do you invariably come in at highly inconvenient moments?

MABEL: Papa, I'm very sorry. I did not know you were busy.

[GOING.]

RUTH (DOWN): Mr. Thursby, I want very much to speak to Mabel. [ASIDE TO THURSBY.] I pray that you will not refuse me this. It is for the last time. I - I will do her no harm.

THURSBY: Well, I don't know. I oughtn't to, you know. But there - there's a hat-full of good in you, I verily believe - and it's for the last time, poor soul. [CROSSES TO R.] Poor soul! Poor soul!

[EXIT THURSBY, R.]

MABEL: Mrs. Redmayne, what has distressed you? Why have you been weeping?

RUTH (ON SOFA): Why have I been weeping, my dear? Why, I bring you good news, and when we bring good news to those we love, our hearts swell, and you see that is why I weep.

MABEL (SITTING ON HER R.): You bring good news to me?

RUTH: Yes, great news. I have just left Lord Saxmundham. He was mistaken in believing that ruin had come upon him. He is rich and happy, and it should not be needful that Alaric should leave you, and so a burden will be lifted from your own heart, and your father will be glad when he sees that his little daughter's eyes are bright again!

MABEL: Alaric will not go away from me! Oh, Mrs. Redmayne, you have done this! [KNEELING ON RUTH'S R.]

RUTH: Yes. Do not ask me more. I have done this.

MABEL: If there is any virtue in the prayers of two broken-hearted lovers, whom stern necessity has placed upon a footing of mere acquaintance, they are yours from the bottom of our hearts. [KISSES HER.]

RUTH: And now, my child, I am going to make you sorry. A great trouble has befallen me, and it is needful that I return at once to Australia.

MABEL: Oh, Mrs. Redmayne, are you saying "good-bye" to me?

RUTH: I have something more to say than "good-bye." I may never see you again, and I ask you to promise me, if ever you hear ill of me, not to believe it, but to believe that there is something kept back - something which, if it were known, would clear me of all blame. It will gladden me to know, when I am far away, that there is one little heart in England into which my memory may creep for shelter, when the pitiless storm breaks upon it.

MABEL: Oh, I promise! I promise! never, never will I believe any one who says anything against you! Oh, Mrs. Redmayne, tell them what it is, and look at them with those brave, stedfast, truthful eyes, and they will believe!

RUTH: It would be useless, Mabel. [RISING.] And now good-bye, my dear! Oh, my dear, good-bye!

[EMBRACES HER - THEN TURNS TOWARDS THE DOOR - STOPS, TURNS -
THEY RUSH INTO EACH OTHER'S ARMS. THEN EXIT RUTH.]

[ENTER THURSBY.]

THURSBY (TO MABEL, WHO IS SOBBING ON THE SOFA): Mabel, my girl! Come, come, you mustn't cry like this!

MABEL: Oh, she's going - going from me, never to return! [SOBS.]

THURSBY: Well, yes, she certainly is going - that is to say - oh, yes, she's going.

MABEL: But why is she going, and why don't you stop her?

THURSBY: Why, she's going because she - well, she has an appointment with her solicitor in Australia - and she's got some shopping to do in Sydney.

MABEL (RISING): I don't believe a word of it. There's some wicked plot to send her away. [THURSBY INTERRUPTS HER WITH ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN.] But I'll find out what it is, if I die for it, you great, big, cruel, hard-hearted papa!

[EXIT MABEL.]

THURSBY: Now, why will women do things that can't be explained to young girls? A woman ought always to argue thus: "Can what I'm going to do be explained to young girls? No, it can **not**. Then, dash my wig, if I do it!"

[ENTER PARKER.]

PARKER (ANNOUNCING): Mr. Parfit.

[ENTER PARFIT. EXIT PARKER.]

THURSBY: Hallo, Parfit! Well, here's a pretty kettle of fish!

PARFIT: Yes, Mr. Thursby; it certainly is extremely serious.

[SITS ON SOFA.]

THURSBY: There's a thundering lot of good in that woman, you know!

PARFIT: Yes, I daresay there is. There's good in all of us, if we only knew it. But I suppose it is unnecessary to remind you that by uttering a forged will, to say nothing of the other documents, she has brought herself within the pale of the law?

THURSBY: Well, what then? You don't expect me to prosecute her, I suppose?

PARFIT: As you please, Mr. Thursby. But it's my duty to remind you, as one of the trustees under the will which this forgery was intended to set aside, that if you don't prosecute her, you will be compounding a felony.

THURSBY: Felony, be hanged! It's a family matter, entirely between ourselves. How is it to get about? [CROSSES TO R.C.]

PARFIT: You forget Mr. Crampton. He is her declared and relentless enemy. If he should persist in prosecuting this unhappy woman, what would you do?

THURSBY: My dear Parfit, what an absurd question. Break every bone in his body, of course! The thing's obvious.

PARFIT (RISING): Well, Mr. Thursby, I've no wish to see this poor lady punished; but it was my duty to advise you, and I've done it.

THURSBY: It was as you say, my dear Parfit, your duty to advise me, and it was equally my duty to pitch your advice to the devil. Very good; you've done your duty, and I've done mine. It's a pleasant reflection. Let's shake hands on it.

[RALPH CRAMPTON HAS ENTERED DURING THIS SPEECH.]

RALPH (DOWN L.C.): Mr. Thursby, I must ask you to hear me on this matter.

THURSBY: Mr. Crampton, I prefer to have nothing to say to you.

RALPH: Very likely, but you must and shall hear me!

THURSBY (WITH SUPPRESSED RAGE): Mr. Crampton! sir! I can guess the abominable motive which has prompted you to present yourself here. Anticipating this interview, I have taken the precaution, as a magistrate, to bind myself over to keep the peace towards all her Majesty's subjects for the space of three calendar months. That will give you a good start, sir! I advise you to make the most of it.

RALPH: Mr. Thursby, I have something of graver import to deal with than any terms of reproach you can frame. I have been witness, this afternoon, to an act of heroic devotion on the part of a most pure and blameless lady. It has moved me as I am not wont to be moved; the more so because my indefensible conduct is the cause of the inestimable sacrifice she has made.

[RUTH HAS ENTERED UNOBSERVED.]

THURSBY: Why, what do you mean, sir?

RALPH: That Mrs. Redmayne, in denying her marriage, has uttered the noblest falsehood that ever fell from the lips of woman. I know Mr. Noel Ross, and I had it from his own lips, after Arthur Redmayne's departure, that he had solemnised this marriage.

THURSBY (TURNING TO RUTH): Madam, is this true?

RUTH (UP STAGE): It is true. [THURSBY GRASPS HER HAND.]

RALPH: It is impossible for me to approach Lord Saxmundham on the subject, so I have brought my repentance to you, in the belief that you will be willing to turn it to this blameless lady's advantage. I beg you most earnestly, in the name of common justice, to communicate with Mr. Noel Ross, that my statement may be corroborated.

THURSBY: Now, if any one will show me how to treat an infernal rascal who has done an uncommonly fine thing, I shall be personally indebted to him! [CROSSES TO R.]

RALPH: I put forth no plea for consideration. I have most deeply wronged this lady, and I will leave nothing undone until I

have atoned. [GOING L.]

RUTH: Mr. Crampton - before you go, will you let me tell you that, from my heart, I pity and pardon you? It will, perhaps, comfort you in the days to come to remember this.

RALPH: Mrs. Redmayne, I believe there is no act of generosity of which you are not capable. From my very heart I thank you.

[EXIT RALPH CRAMPTON.]

THURSBY: Now, there's a fellow I should like to knock down with one hand and pick up with the other! [TO RUTH, TAKING HER HAND IN HIS.] My dear young lady - my very dear young lady, I deserve to be kicked for having believed you. If you're an average sample of Australian produce, the sooner a ship-load of you is shot into London society the better! Parfit, Lord Saxmundham is a stickler for nobility. Let us go and prove to him that Heaven has blessed him with the noblest daughter in England!

[EXEUNT THURSBY AND PARFIT.]

RUTH: Ralph Crampton, your heart was slow to turn; your eyes were closed. To open them it needed that a woman should clothe herself with shame. That has been done; and now, you see!

[ENTER PARKER WITH CARD.]

PARKER: A gentleman wishes to see you, ma'am.

RUTH: To see me! Who can wish to see me? [READS CARD.] Noel Ross! Noel Ross in England! Oh, let me go to him at once.
[GOING TO R.C.]

[ENTER NOEL ROSS.]

ROSS: No need, my dear Ruth. He is here.

RUTH: Noel Ross! Noel Ross! My dear old friend! I never thought to see you again. [TAKING HIS HANDS AND KISSING THEM.]

You will not wonder that the tears come into my eyes, for I am weak and ill, and you recall the happiness that is gone!

ROSS: Yes, yes; it's gone, my dear - yes, it's gone!

RUTH: And you have come to England to stay?

ROSS: Yes. I've a year's leave of absence.

RUTH: A whole year?

ROSS: A whole year.

RUTH: And shall you live in London?

ROSS: No, my dear. Dangerous place, London. Can't trust myself in London. No; I've taken a solitary cottage in the Isle of Gabba - one of the outer Hebrides. A little shooting, plenty of fishing, and no female society of any kind whatever. Oh, a man's uncommonly safe in the Isle of Gabba!

RUTH (TAKING HIM TO SOFA. HE SITS R., SHE SITS L.): And you must tell me all about the Station, and the farm people, and all about your voyage; and - oh, Noel Ross, I cry for very joy at seeing you again!

ROSS: My dear child, it's very kind of you, but if you cry I shall make a fool of myself. Now let's talk of something else. The voyage: well, Ruth, we had a rough time of it - a very rough time of it. For many days the sky was dark, and the winds howled, and the sun went down, and we scarcely knew it; and the sun rose again, and it mattered little, for there was darkness everywhere. For six weary days we battled with the fierce sea, but on the seventh, when we were preparing for the great change, a streak of grey light shone in the dark horizon, and we watched this rift very eagerly, for it was our only chance of life. And the rift spread and widened, and the sullen clouds rolled away before it, and the wind was hushed, and the sea fell, and hope grew into certainty, for the sky was now blue and bright with the promise of life. [SOFT MUSIC TO END OF THE PIECE.] And this taught us that hope should not die while there is a chance of life - be it never so remote - never so faint; and we called to mind stories of shipwrecked men who had been cast away for months on desert islands, and had been counted as dead, but who nevertheless had lived - under great privations and great sufferings - but had nevertheless lived, to rejoice the souls and brighten the lives of their fathers - and their mothers - and their children - and their loving, faithful, mourning wives!

RUTH (WHO HAS BECOME HYSTERICAL DURING THE LATTER PART OF THIS SPEECH): Noel Ross! Noel Ross! Why do you speak of mourning wives to me? [RISING.]

ROSS (RISING): Now, my dear, be calm; bear this like a good and brave woman.

RUTH: Tell me all! You speak in parable! You could not tell me of such things, unless - Oh speak - speak!

ROSS: My dear child, there is a happiness so overwhelming, that it calls for all our strength to bear it!

[ARTHUR REDMAYNE RUSHES IN, AND FOLDS RUTH IN HIS ARMS. ROSS CROSSING BEHIND HIM.]

REDMAYNE: Ruth, my own Ruth!

RUTH: My husband! my husband! Oh, my husband!

REDMAYNE: Ruth, my darling, look up - I am alive and well! I have come to be with you, my own! to love, to cherish, and to comfort you until death comes to us in very deed! Look up, my darling, we will never part again! [PUTS HER OVER TO R.]

[RUTH SHOWS SYMPTOMS OF FAINTING - RECOVERS - LOOKS AT HER HUSBAND - THEN SEEMS LIKELY TO FAINT AGAIN. SHE STEADIES HERSELF WITH AN EFFORT, TURNS TO NOEL ROSS, AND KNEELS.]

RUTH: Let us pray!

[THE END]