

TRELAWNY OF THE “WELLS”

By Arthur Wing Pinero

Adapted in two acts for a cast of twelve
By Phil Willmott

Order of appearance:

1. James Telfer – Senior Leading actor at Saddlers Wells Theatre
& later Charles – Butler at Sir William Gowers
2. Violet Telfer – Senior Leading Lady
& later Trafalgar Gower
3. Rose Trelawney – Juvenile leading actress
4. Arthur Gower – Sir William Gower’s grandson, Rose’s fiancé
5. Ferdinand Gadd – Leading Romantic Tragedian
6. Avonia Bunn – Young character actress
7. Augustus Colpoys – Slapstick Comedian
8. Sarah – Maid of all works at Saddlers Wells Theatre
And later Clara De Foenix – Sir William’s grand daughter
9. Imogen Parrot – Star of the Olympic Theatre (20s)
10. Tom Wrench – a playwright and bit part player
11. Captain De Foenix – Clara’s husband (a military gentleman)
12. Vice Chancellor, Sir William Gower

Scene One

The cast as the Saddlers Wells acting company gather in the theatre to greet Rose with a surprise send off.

ALL: SURPRISE!

LOTS OF NOISE, CRYING, COMMOTION, MUSIC.

TELFER. Ladies and gentlemen of the Sadler’s Wells Company, your attention, please! - on this tragic occasion - the day when we must bid farewell forever to that

flower of the Wells, Miss Rose Trelawny, who leaves us today for respectable married life. Charge your glasses please. (*All do*) Our first toast is, naturally, that of The Queen. Suffice to say, both Mrs. Telfer and I have had the honour of acting before Her Majesty upon no less than two occasions.

GADD. (BORED OF THE STORY) Gawd, Not again!

TELFER. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the Queen, coupling with that toast the name of my dear wife — Mrs. Telfer who has so frequently impersonated the various queens of tragedy that I cannot but feel she is a fitting person to acknowledge our expression of loyalty. (*Raising his glass.*) The Queen! And Mrs Telfer!

ALL. The Queen! And Mrs Telfer!

MRS. TELFER (*Grandly*). Ladies and gentlemen, I have played fourteen or fifteen queens in my time——

TELFER. Thirteen, Violet my love, to be exact; I was calculating this morning.

MRS. TELFER. Very well, I have played thirteen of 'em. I remember each and every one as if -

SARAH. (RUSHING IN) It's Miss Parrott! Miss Parrott's arrived!

TOM. Jenny Parrott ? Has Jenny condescended—— ?

AVONIA. “Jenny” ! (*Passing him.*) Where are your manners, Tom. Wrench ?

TOM (*Announcing Imogen grandiloquently*). Miss Imogen Parrott, of the Olympic Theatre.

IMOGEN ENTERS

MRS. TELFER. Vulgar fellow! Jenny Parrott, I am obliged to you for this response to my invitation. It struck me as fitting that at such a time you should return for a brief hour or two to the company of your old associates——

IMOGEN. Thank you Mrs T. You've been crying, 'Vonia.

AVONIA. No, I haven't. If I have I can't help it. Rose and I have chummed together—— all this season——and part of last——and——it's a hateful profession ! The moment you make a friend——! (INDICATING ROSE) There ! isn't she a dream ? I dressed her—— I dare say high society life has advantages over the Profession in some respects but...

GADD. Gawd Avonia! In a month-or-two's time she'll be ordering about her own powdered footman, and playing on her grand piano. How many actresses do that, I should like to know!

ROSE. Dear Imogen! To think of you coming all the way over here to see me make my exit from Saddlers Wells! Let me introduce my intended, Mr. Gower. Mr. Arthur Gower— Miss Imogen Parrott, formally of the Saddler's Wells company now star of the Olympic Theatre.

ARTHUR. I know. I've seen Miss Parrott as Jupiter, and as—I forget the name—in the new comedy

ROSE. He forgets everything but the parts I play, and the pieces I play in—poor child ! Don't you, Arthur ?

ARTHUR. Yes—no. Well, of course I do! How can I help it, Miss Parrott? I hope you won't think the worse of me for that—will you, Miss Parrott?

ROSE. I've so much to say to you. Imogen, the brilliant hits you've made! How lucky you have been -

IMOGEN. My luck ! What about yours ?

ROSE. Yes, isn't this a wonderful stroke of fortune for me ! Fate, Jenny! that's what it is—Fate ! Fate ordains that I shall be a well-to-do fashionable lady, instead of a popular but toiling actress. Mother often used to stare into my face, when I was little, and whisper, " Rosie, I wonder what is to be your—fate." Poor mother, I hope she sees. I'm sure she'd adore Arthur. Isn't he a handsome?

COLPOYS. He'll grow jowls in time, and have moustaches, and whiskers out to here.

IMOGEN. How did you two —— ?

ROSE. He saw me act Blanche in " The Pedlar of Marseilles," and fell in love. The next thing was he began sending bouquets and coming to the stage-door. Of course, I never spoke to him, never glanced at him.

MRS TELFER. Quite right too.

IMOGEN. And now you're going to live with his people for a time, aren't you ?

ROSE. Yes—on approval.

IMOGEN. You don't mean that!

ROSE. Well, in a way—just to reassure them, as they put it. The Gowers have such odd ideas about theatres, and actors and actresses.

IMOGEN. Do you think you'll like the arrangement?

ROSE. It'll only be for a little while. I fancy they're prepared to take to me, especially Miss Trafalgar Gower——

IMOGEN. Trafalgar!

ROSE. Sir William's sister; she was born Trafalgar year, and christened after it——

AVONIA. I'm afraid I couldn't give up the stage, not for all the Arthurs——

ROSE. Your mother wasn't an actress.

AVONIA. No.

ROSE. Mine was, and I remember her saying to me once, " Rose, if ever you have the chance, get out of it."

AVONIA. The Profession ?

ROSE. Yes. "Get out of it"; Mother said, " If ever a good man comes along, and offers to marry you and to take you off the stage, seize the chance—get out of it."

IMOGEN (*shivering*). Oh, lor', doesn't it make one feel depressed !

ROSE. Poor Mother! Well, I hope she sees.

SARAH. (*Entering breathlessly*). The carriage has just drove up!

TELFER. Dear me, dear me! Before a single speech has been made.

ROSE. I'm in no hurry; I shall see that carriages often enough. Oh, I'm so sorry, now.

TOM. Are you ? I'm glad.

ROSE. Glad! That is hateful of you, Tom Wrench!

ARTHUR. The carriage is certainly two or three minutes before its time, Mr. Telfer.

SARAH. The footman, a nice-looking young man with hazel eyes, says the carriage and pair can wait for a little bit. (*Leaves*)

TELFER. Ahem! Then I shall continue with the toasts! Ladies and gentlemen. The toast I 'd next intended to propose was Our Immortal Bard, Shakespeare, and I had meant, myself, to have offered a few remarks in response but with my young friend's chariot at the door, horses pawing restlessly and fretfully upon the stones, I am prevented from enlarging upon the merits of this toast and to give you now what we may justly designate the toast of the hour. Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to lose, to part with, one of our companions.

COLPOYS. (*with a comedy sob into a prop handkerchief*). I detested her at first.

(*LAUGHTER*)

COLPOYS. Order!

GADD. Be quiet, Colpoys !

TELFER. Miss Trelawny is the stuff of which great actresses are made.

ALL. Hear, hear!

TELFER. Rose is a good girl—— A good girl——

MRS. TELFER (*rising and clutching a knife*). Yes, and I should like to hear anybody, man or woman—— !

TELFER. She is a good girl, and will be long remembered by us as much for her private virtues as for the commanding authority of her genius. And now, what has happened? I will tell you—

MRS TELFER. (*impressively*) a man has crossed her path.

COLPOYS. Shame!

GADD. Colpoys!

TELFER. A man—ah, but also a gentle-man.

(Applause.)

May they be rich in each other's society, in each other's love ! May they—I can wish them no greater joy—be as happy in their married life—as Mrs Telfer and I have been in ours ! (Raising his glass.) Miss Rose Trelawny—Mr. Arthur Gower !

(*The toast is drunk by the company*)

TELFER. Miss Trelawny. A farewell speech?

ROSE (*weeping*). No, no, Mr. Telfer.

MRS. TELFER (*to TELFER, softly*). Let her be for a minute, James.

TELFER. Mr. Gower?

ARTHUR. Ladies and gentlemen, I—I would I were endowed with Mr. Telfer's flow of—of—of splendid eloquence.

TELFER. No, no!

ARTHUR. But I am no orator, no speaker, and therefore cannot tell you how highly—how—how deeply I appreciate the—the compliment——

COLPOYS. You deserve it, Mr. Gower!

ALL. Hush!

ARTHUR. All I can say is that I regard Miss Trelawny in the light of a—a solemn charge, and I—I trust that, if ever I have the pleasure of—of meeting any of you again, I shall be able to render a good—a—a—satisfactory—— satisfactory——

TOM (*In an audible whisper*). Account.

ARTHUR. Account of the way—of the way—in which I—in which——Before I bring these observations to a conclusion, let me assure you that it has been a great privilege for me to meet—to have been thrown with—a band of artists—whose talents—whose striking talents—whose talents——

TOM (*kindly, behind his hand*). Sit down.

ARTHUR (*helplessly*). Whose talents not only interest and instruct the—the more refined residents of this district, but whose talents——

IMOGEN (*aside to COLPOYS*). Get him to sit down.

ARTHUR. The fame of whose talents, I should say——

COLPOYS. He's to sit down. Tell Mother Telfer.

ARTHUR. The fame of whose talents has spread to—to regions

GADD (*Aside to MRS. TELFER*). They say he's to sit down.

ARTHUR. To—to quarters of the town—to quarters——

MRS. TELFER (*Booming at ARTHUR*). SIT DOWN!

ARTHUR. Eh ?

MRS. TELFER. You finished long ago. Sit down.

ARTHUR. Thank you. I'm exceedingly sorry. Great heavens, how wretchedly I've done it!

(*Good natured applause.*)

TELFER. Rose, my child.

ROSE. Mr. Telfer, Mrs. Telfer ! My friends ! Boys ! Ladies and gentlemen " Ever of thee I'm fondly dreaming." You remember! The song I sang in " The Pedlar of Marseilles "—which made Arthur fall in love with me ! Well, I know I shall dream of you—— of all of you, very often, as the song says. Don't believe, oh, don't believe that, because I shall have married a swell, you and Saddler's Wells Theatre — the dear old " Wells " You and the old "Wells " will have become nothing to me ! No, many and many a night you will see me in the house, looking down at you from the Circle—me and my husband——

ARTHUR. Yes, yes, certainly!

ROSE (*with open arms*). And if you send for me I'll come behind the curtain to you, and sit with you and talk of bygone times, these times that end to-day. And shall I tell you the moments which will be the happiest to me in my life, however happy I may be with Arthur? Why, whenever I find that I am recognized by people, and pointed out—people in the pit of a theatre, in the street, no matter where; and when I can fancy they're saying to each other, (*pointing*), " Look ! that was Miss Trelawny ! You remember—Trelawny ! Trelawny of the ' Wells! " ——

ALL. (RAISING THEIR GLASSES) "Trelawny of the ' Wells !"

SARAH ENTERS

SARAH. Miss Trelawny, ma'am. The coachman says he can't wait no longer.

ROSE (weakly). Oh!

BLACKOUT.

MUSIC.

Scene 2

The drawing room in a house in Cavendish Square. It is twilight.

SIR WILLIAM GOWER and Miss TRAFALGAR GOWER are asleep in their chairs. MISS. CLARA DE FOENIX, ROSE, & ARTHUR, sit and CAPTAIN DE FOENIX lean in apprehensive silence.

ARTHUR (*to ROSE.—in a whisper*). Quiet, isn't it ?

ROSE (*In a whisper*). Quiet! Arthur——! Oh, this dreadful half-hour after dinner, every, every evening !

ARTHUR. Grandfather and Aunt Trafalgar must wake up soon. They're longer than usual to-night.

ROSE. Your sister Clara, over there, and Captain de Foenix—when they were courting, did they have to go through this?

ARTHUR. Yes.

ROSE. And now that they are married, they still endure it!

ARTHUR. Yes.

ROSE. And we, when we are married, Arthur, shall we—— ?

ARTHUR. Yes. I suppose so.

ROSE. Lord!

(DE FOENIX, fast asleep, is now swaying, and in danger of toppling over. CLARA grasps the situation and rises.)

CLARA. Ah, Frederick ! no, no, no !

(As CLARA reaches her husband, He lurches forward into her arms.)

DE FOENIX *(Waking)*. Oh ! who—— ?

CLARA. Frederick dear, wake !

DE FOENIX *(dazed)*. How did this occur ?

CLARA. You were tottering, and I caught you.

DE FOENIX *(collecting his senses)*. I remember. I placed myself in an upright position, dearest, to prevent myself dozing.

CLARA. How you alarmed me !

DE FOENIX *(Seeing that ROSE is laughing.)*. Might have been a very serious accident, Miss Trelawny.

ROSE. Never mind. *(Pointing to the chair she has vacated.)* Sit down and talk.

(He glances at the old people and, shakes his head.)

(Piteously.) Oh, do, do, do ! do sit down, and let us all have a jolly whisper.

(He sits.)

Thank you, Captain Fred. Go on ! tell me something—anything ; something about the military——

DE FOENIX. I know ; you want to get me into a row. Horrid girl!

ROSE *(despairingly)*. Oh—h—h !

(There is a brief pause and then the sound of a street-organ, playing in the distance, is heard. The air is " Ever of Thee.")

(Excitedly.) Listen!

CLARA, ARTHUR & DeFEONIX . Hush!

ROSE *(heedlessly)*. The song I sang in " The Pedlar "—" The Pedlar of Marseilles ! " The song that used to make you cry, Arthur __ I

(They attempt vainly to hush her)

(Dramatically enacting a piece from the play, in hoarse whispers.) And then Raphael enters— comes on to the bridge. The music continues, softly. " Raphael, why have you kept me waiting ? Man, do you wish to break my heart—*(thumping her breast)* a woman's heart, Raphael ? "

(SIR WILLIAM and Miss GOWER suddenly wake and sit erect. SIR WILLIAM is a grim, gentleman; Miss GOWER a spare, prim lady.)

SIR WILLIAM. What a hideous riot, Trafalgar !

MISS GOWER. Rose dear, I hope I have been mistaken—but through my sleep I fancied I could hear you shrieking at the top of your voice.

SIR WILLIAM. Trafalgar, it is becoming impossible for you and me to obtain repose. Ha ! is not that a street-organ ? An organ !

MISS GOWER. Undoubtedly. An organ in the Square, at this hour of the evening— singularly out of place !

SIR WILLIAM. Well, well, well, does no one stir ?

ROSE. Oh, don't stop it!

(CLARA goes out quickly)

SIR WILLIAM *(peering down at ROSE)*. What are ye upon the floor for, my dear ? Have we no cheers ? *(To MISS GOWER)* Do we lack cheers here, Trafalgar ? *(Goes c.)*

MISS GOWER *(crossing to ROSE)*. My dear Rose ! *(Raising her.)* Come, come, come, this is quite out of place ! Young ladies do not crouch and huddle upon the ground—do they, William ?

SIR WILLIAM. A moment ago I should have hazarded the opinion that they do not.

(CLARA returns. The organ-music ceases abruptly.)

CLARA. Charles was just running out to stop the organ when I reached the hall, Grand-pa.

SIR WILLIAM. Ye'd surely no intention, Clara, of venturing, yourself, into the public street—the open Square——?

CLARA *(c., faintly)*. I meant only to wave at the man from the door——

MISS GOWER. Oh, Clara, that would hardly have been in place !

SIR WILLIAM. In mercy's name, Trafalgar, what is befalling my household ?

At least, my dear sister, I am perfectly aware that I possess in you the woman above all others whose example should compel such a transformation. And now, before Charles sets the card-table, don't you think we had better—eh, Trafalgar ?

MISS GOWER. Yes, yes—our disagreeable duty. Let us discharge it. Rose dear, be seated. The Vice-Chancellor has something to say to us. Let us all be seated.

SIR WILLIAM. What I desire to say is this. When Miss Trelawny took up her residence here, it was thought proper, in the peculiar circumstances of the case, that you, Arthur—(*pointing a finger at ARTHUR*) you—

ARTHUR. Yes, sir.

SIR WILLIAM. That you should remove yourself to the establishment of your sister Clara and her husband in Holies Street, round the corner—

ARTHUR. Yes, sir.

CLARA. Yes, Grand-pa.

DE FOENIX. Certainly, Sir William.

SIR WILLIAM. Taking your food in this house, and spending other certain hours here, under the surveillance of your great-aunt Trafalgar.

MISS GOWER. Yes, William.

SIR WILLIAM. This was considered to be a decorous, and, towards Miss Trelawny, a highly respectful, course to pursue.

ARTHUR. Yes, sir.

MISS GOWER. Any other course would have been out of place.

SIR WILLIAM. And yet, what is reported to me ?

ARTHUR. I don't know, sir.

SIR WILLIAM. I hear that ye have on several occasions, at night, after having quitted this house with Captain and Mrs. De Foenix, been seen on the other side of the way, your back against the railings, gazing up at Miss Trelawny's window; and that you have remained in that position for a considerable space of time. Is this true, sir ?

ROSE (*boldly*). Yes, Sir William.

SIR WILLIAM. I venture to put a question to my grandson, Miss Trelawny.

ARTHUR. Yes, sir, it is quite true.

SIR WILLIAM. Then, sir, let me remind you that these are not the manners, nor the practices, of a gentleman.

ARTHUR. No, sir ?

SIR WILLIAM. No, sir, they are the manners, and the practices, of a Troubadour.

MISS GOWER. A troubadour in Cavendish Square ! Quite out of place!

ARTHUR. I—I'm very sorry, sir; I—I never looked at it in that light.

SIR WILLIAM (*snuffing*). Ah—h—h—h ! ho ! pi—i—i—sh !

ARTHUR. But at the same time, sir, I daresay—of course I don't speak from precise knowledge—but I daresay there were a good many—a good many—

SIR WILLIAM. Good many—what, sir ?

ARTHUR. A good many very respectable troubadours, sir——

ROSE (*heroically and defiantly* Arthur and I have had many lengthy interviews while he has been stationed against those railings over there; I murmuring to him softly from my bedroom window, he responding in tremulous whispers -

SIR WILLIAM. You—you tell me such things.... I -

MISS GOWER. The Square, in which we have resided for years——! Our neighbours——!

SIR WILLIAM (*shaking*) The—the character of my house——!

ARTHUR. Again I am extremely sorry, sir—but these are the only confidential conversations Rose and I now enjoy.

SIR WILLIAM. And you, Captain de Foenix—an officer and a gentleman ! And you, Clara ! This could scarcely have been without your cognisance, without, perhaps, your approval——!

CHARLES – The Butler, enters:

CHARLES. The card-table, Sir William ?

MISS GOWER (*to SIR WILLIAM*). Yes, yes, by all means, Charles; the card-table, as usual. A game will comfort you, soothe you——

(As the game is set up ROSE and ARTHUR manage a whispered private conversation)

CLARA and CAPTAIN DeFEONIX take advantage of the distraction to flirt with each other.

ARTHUR. Be calm, Rose dear, be calm!

ROSE. I cannot endure them a moment longer.

ARTHUR. They mean well, dearest but they are rather old-fashioned people

ROSE. Old-fashioned !—they belong to the time when men and women were put to the torture. I am being tortured—mentally tortured——

ARTHUR. They have not many more years in this world——

ROSE. Nor I, at this rate, many more months. They are killing me—like Agnes in "The Spectre of St. Ives." She expires, in the fourth act, as I shall die in Cavendish Square, painfully, of no recognized disorder——

ARTHUR. And anything we can do to make them happy——

ROSE. To make the Vice-Chancellor happy I won't try! I will not! He's a fiend, a vampire——!

ARTHUR. Oh, hush!

ROSE (*snatching up SIR WILLIAM'S snuff-box which he has left upon a table*). His snuff-box ! I wish I could poison his snuff, as Lucrezia Borgia would have done. She would have removed him within two hours of my arrival—I mean, her arrival. (*Opening the snuff-box and mimicking SIR WILLIAM.*) And here he sits and lectures me, and dictates to me ! " I venture to put a question to my grandson, Miss Trelawny !" Ha, ha ! (*Taking a pinch of snuff in imitation of Gower, thoughtlessly but vigorously.*) " Yah—h—h—h ! pish ! " (*Comes down a little towards table.*) "Have we no cheers? Do we lack cheers here, Trafalgar ?" (*Suddenly.*) Oh——!

ARTHUR. What have you done ?

ROSE (*About to sneeze*). The snuff——!

ARTHUR. Rose dear! (*He gives her his handkerchief.*)

ROSE (*putting her handkerchief to her nose, and rising*). Ah—— !

(*CHARLES, having prepared the card-table, and arranged the candlesticks upon it, has withdrawn*)

MISS GOWER. The table is prepared, William. (*Coming down c., followed by SIR WILLIAM.*) Arthur, I assume you would prefer to sit and contemplate Rose—— ?

ARTHUR. Thank you, Aunt.

(*ROSE sneezes violently, and is led away, SIR WILLIAM looks surprised and annoyed.*)

MISS GOWER (*to ROSE*). Oh, my dear child! (*Looking round.*) Where are Frederick and Clara?

DE FOENIX (*Jolted out of his attentions to Clara*) Here.

(*The intending players cut the pack, and seat themselves. CAPTAIN DE FOENIX deals.*)

ARTHUR (*while this is going on, to ROSE*). Are you in pain, dearest ? Rose !

ROSE. Agony!

ARTHUR. Pinch your upper lip——

(*She sneezes twice, loudly, and sinks back upon the couch up C.*)

SIR WILLIAM (*rising—testily*). Sssh ! sssh ! sssh ! This is to be whist, I hope.

MISS GOWER. Rose, Rose ! young ladies do not sneeze quite so continuously,

(*DE FOENIX is dealing.*)

SIR WILLIAM (*leaning over table—with gusto*). I will thank you, Captain de Foenix, to exercise your intelligence this evening to its furthest limit.

DE FOENIX. I'll try, sir.

SIR WILLIAM (*laughing unpleasantly*). He, he, he ! Last night, sir——

CLARA. Poor Frederick had toothache last night, Grandpa.

SIR WILLIAM (*tartly*). Whist is whist, Clara, and toothache is toothache. We will endeavour to keep the two things distinct, if you please. He, he!

MISS GOWER. Your interruption was hardly in place, Clara dear —ah!

(*The deal is finished.*)

DE FOENIX. Hey ! what—— ?

MISS GOWER. A misdeal.

CLARA (*faintly*). Oh, Frederick !

SIR WILLIAM (*partly rising*). Captain de Foenix!

DE FOENIX. I—I'm frightfully grieved, sir——

(*The cards are re-dealt by MISS GOWER. ROSE now gives way to a violent paroxysm of sneezing..*)

Miss GOWER. William—— !

SIR WILLIAM (*angrily—to the players*). Is this whist, may I ask ? Miss Trelawny—
—

ROSE (*weakly*). I—I think I had better—what d'ye call it ?— withdraw for a few moments.

SIR WILLIAM. Do so.

(*ROSE exits, ARTHUR is leaving the room with her*)

MISS GOWER (*sharply*). Arthur ! where are you going ?

ARTHUR (*returning promptly*). I beg your pardon, Aunt.

MISS GOWER. Really, Arthur——!

SIR WILLIAM (*rapping upon the table*). Tsch, tsch, tsch !

MISS GOWER. Forgive me, William.

(*They play. SIR WILLIAM leads. The others play quickly, and the trick is taken by CLARA, who leads the second card quickly ; and this MISS GOWER trumps.*)

SIR WILLIAM. My snuff-box, Arthur; be so obliging as to search for it.

ARTHUR (*brightly*). I'll bring it to you, sir. It is on the——

SIR WILLIAM. Keep your voice down, sir. We are playing— (*emphatically throwing down a card, as fourth player*) whist. Mine.

MISS GOWER (*picking up the trick*). No, William.

SIR WILLIAM (*glaring*). No !

MISS GOWER. I played a trump.

DE FOENIX. Yes, sir, Aunt Trafalgar played a trump—the seven——

SIR WILLIAM. I will not trouble you, Captain de Foenix, to echo Miss Gower's information.

DE FOENIX. Very sorry, sir.

MISS GOWER (*gently*). It was a little out of place, Frederick.

SIR WILLIAM. Sssh ! whist.

(MISS GOWER leads. ARTHUR is now on SIR WILLIAM'S R., with the snuff-box.)

(To ARTHUR.) Eh ? what ? (Taking the snuff-box.) Oh, thank ye. Much obliged, much obliged. Arthur.

ARTHUR. Excuse me, Grandfather.

SIR WILLIAM. Ye—you're a troublesome young man, Arthur.

ARTHUR. I—I don't mean to be one, sir.

SIR WILLIAM. As your poor father was, before ye. And if you are fool enough to marry, and to beget children, doubtless your son will follow the same course. (Taking snuff.) Y—y—yes, but I shall be dead 'n' gone by that time, it's likely. Ah—h—h—h ! pi—i—i— sh ! I shall be sitting in the Court Above by that time—

(From the adjoining room, comes the sound of ROSE'S voice singing " Ever of Thee " to the piano. There is great consternation at the card-table.)

(with deadly calmness.) No, no, let her go on, I beg. Let her continue. We will suspend our game while this young lady performs her operas.

MISS GOWER (Scared). William——!

SIR WILLIAM (in the same tone). I fear this is no longer a comfortable home for ye, Trafalgar; no longer the home for a gentlewoman. I apprehend that in these days my house approaches somewhat closely to a theatrical boarding house. (Suddenly taking up the cards, in a fury, and flinging them across the room over his head.) And this is whist—whist——!

ARTHUR. Rose ! Stop ! Rose !

(The song ceases and ROSE appears.)

ROSE. Did anyone call ?

ARTHUR. You have upset my grandfather.

MISS GOWER. Miss Trelawny, how—how dare you do anything so—so out of place ?

ROSE. There's a piano in there, Miss Gower.

MISS GOWER. You are acquainted with the rule of this household —no music when the Vice-Chancellor is within doors.

ROSE. But there are so many rules. One of them is that you may not sneeze.

MISS GOWER. You must never answer——

ROSE. No, that's another rule.

MISS GOWER. Oh, for shame !

ARTHUR. You see, Aunt, Rose is young, and— and—you make no allowance for her, give her no chance——

MISS GOWER. Great Heaven ! what is this you are charging me with ?

ARTHUR. I don't think the " rules " of this house are fair to Rose ! Oh, I must say it—they are horribly unfair!

MISS GOWER. Brother!

SIR WILLIAM. Trafalgar ! (*to ARTHUR.*) Oh, indeed, sir ! And so you deliberately accuse your great-aunt of tyranny towards ye and Miss Trelawny —— ?

ARTHUR. Grandfather, what I intended to——

SIR WILLIAM. I will afford ye the opportunity of explaining what ye intended to convey, downstairs, at once, in the library. (*A general shudder.*) Oblige me by following me, sir. (*To CLARA and DeFEONIX.*) Captain de Foenix. I see no prospect of any further social relaxation this evening. You and Clara will do me the favour of attending in the hall, in readiness to take this young man back to Holies Street. (*Going up and giving his arm to MISS GOWER.*) My dear sister—— (*To ARTHUR.*) Now, sir.

(*SIR WILLIAM and MISS GOWER go out. ARTHUR comes to ROSE and kisses her.*)

ARTHUR. Good night, dearest. Oh, good night! Oh, Rose——!

SIR WILLIAM (*outside the door*). Mr. Arthur Gower!

ARTHUR. I am coming, sir——

(*He goes out quickly.*)

DE FOENIX (*approaching ROSE and taking her hand sympathetically*). I... I... I...

ROSE. Yes, I know what you would say. Thank you, Captain Fred.

(*CAPTAIN DE FOENIX goes out.*)

CLARA (*coming across quickly and, embracing ROSE*). Never mind ! We will continue to let Arthur out at night as usual. I am a married woman ! - and a married woman will turn, if you tread upon her often enough——!

(*She exits*)

ROSE (*pacing the room up, shaking her hands in the air desperately*). Oh—h—h !
ah—h—h !

(*CHARLES appears.*)

CHARLES (mysteriously). Miss Rose-

ROSE. What—— ?

CHARLES. I see Sir William and the rest have descended the stairs. I been awaiting' the chance of handing you this, Miss Rose.

(*He produces a dirty scrap of paper, wet and limp, with writing upon it, and, gives it to her.*)

ROSE (*handling it daintily*). Oh, it's damp !——

CHARLES. Yes, miss; a little gentle shower have been taking' place outside——

ROSE (*reading. Delighted*). Ah ! from some of my old friends!

CHARLES. Professional types, Miss Rose ?

ROSE (*intent upon the note*). Yes—yes——

CHARLES. I was reprimanding' the organ, miss, when I observed them lolling' against the square railings examining our premises, and they ventured for to beckon me. An extremely affable party, miss. One of them caused me to laugh!

ROSE (*excitedly*). They want to speak to me—(*referring to the note*) to impart something to me, of an important nature. Oh, Charles, I know not what to do.

CHARLES Whatever friends may loll against them railings opposite, Miss Rose, you have one true friend in this house—(*touches his breast*) Charles Gibbons——

ROSE (*nodding*). Thank you, Charles. When Sir William and Miss Gower have retired, do you think you could let me go forth ; and wait at the front door while I run across and grant my friends a hurried interview ?

CHARLES. Certainly, Miss.

ROSE. If it reached the ears of Sir William, or Miss Gower, you would lose your place, Charles !

CHARLES (*haughtily*). I'm aware, miss; but Sir William was extremely rood to me during dinner, over that mishap to the soup ——

(*A bell rings violently.*)

Sir William!

(He goes out. The rain is heard pattering against the window-panes. ROSE looks out. It is now almost black outside the windows.)

ROSE *(Seeing her friends)*. Ah ! yes, yes ! ah—h—h—h !

(She stand on a chair and waves frantically to those outside.)

The dears ! the darlings ! the faithful creatures——! *(Listening.)* Oh——!

(She descends, in a hurry, as MISS GOWER enters. At the same moment there is a vivid flash of lightning.)

MISS GOWER *(startled)*. Oh, how dreadful! *(to ROSE, frigidly.)* The Vice-Chancellor has felt the few words he has addressed to Arthur, and has retired for the night.

(There is a roll of thunder.)

Mercy on us ! Go to bed, child, directly. We will all go to our beds, hoping to awake to-morrow in a meeker and more submissive spirit. Good night.

(Another flash of lightning.)

Oh——! Don't omit to say your prayers, Rose—and in a simple manner. I always fear that, from your peculiar training, you may declaim them. That is so out of place—
(clinging to chair) oh——!

(Another roll of thunder. CHARLES, enters carrying a lantern. He and Rose exchange significant glances.)

CHARLES *(to MISS GOWER)*. I am now at liberty to accompany you round the house, ma'am——

(A flash of lightning.)

MISS GOWER. Ah——! *(Her hand to her heart.)* Thank you, Charles—but tonight I must ask you to see that everything is secure, alone. This storm—so very seasonable ; but, from girlhood, I could never——

(A roll of thunder.) Oh, good night.

(She flutters away)

ROSE Charles !

CHARLES. Miss ?

ROSE. Miss Gower has gone to bed.

CHARLES. Yes, miss!

ROSE. Oh ! my friends ! my poor friends !

CHARLES Really, I should 'hardly advise you to venture out, miss——

ROSE. Out! No ! Oh, but get them in !

CHARLES. In, Miss Rose ! indoors !

ROSE. Under cover——

(A roll of thunder.)

Oh ! They are my friends ! Is it a rule that I am never to see a friend, that I mayn't even give a friend shelter in a violent storm ? Are you the only one up ?

CHARLES. I believe so, miss. Any how the women servants is quite under my control.

ROSE. Then tell my friends to be deathly quiet, and to creep— to tiptoe——
Make haste!

(He hurries out. She talks to herself excitedly)

My friends ! my own friends ! ha ! I'm not to sneeze in this house ! nor to sing ! or breathe, next! wretches ! oh, my ! wretches! " Ever of thee I'm fondly dreaming——
"" What are ye upon the floor for, my dear ? Have we no cheers ? Do we lack cheers here, Trafalgar—— ? "

(CHARLES returns.)

CHARLES *(to those who follow him)*. Hush ! *(to ROSE.)* I discovered 'em clustered in the doorway——

(There is a final peal of thunder as AVONIA, GADD, COLPOYS, and TOM WRENCH enter, soaked to their skins.)

ROSE. 'Vonia !

AVONIA *(embracing her fervently)*. Oh, ducky, ducky, ducky ! Oh, but what a storm !

ROSE. Hush ! How wet you are ! *(Shaking hands with GADD)* Ferdinand—*(crossing to COLPOYS,)* Augustus—*(shaking hands with TOM, R.)* Tom, Wrench——

AVONIA *(to CHARLES, up the stage)*. Be so kind as to put my umbrella on the landing, will you ? Oh, thank you very much, I'm sure.

(CHARLES withdraws with the umbrella. GADD and COLPOYS shake the rain from their hats on to the carpet and furniture.)

TOM (*to ROSE.*). It's a shame to come down on you in this way. But they would do it, and I thought I'd better stick to 'em.

GADD Ha! I shall ever remember this accursed evening.

AVONIA. Oh, Ferdy——!

ROSE. Hush ! you must be quiet. Everybody has gone to bed, and I—I'm not sure I'm allowed to receive visitors——

AVONIA. Oh!

GADD. Then we are intruders ?

ROSE. I mean, such late visitors.

(*COLPOYS has taken off his coat, and is shaking it vigorously.*)

AVONIA. Stop it, Augustus ! Ain't I wet enough ? (*To ROSE.*) Yes, it is latish, but I so wanted to inform you—here—— (*She beckons to GADD.*) Allow me to introduce—my husband. (*She takes his arms.*)

ROSE. (*delighted*) Oh, no!

AVONIA (*laughing merrily*). Yes ! ha, ha, ha!

ROSE. Sssh, sssh, sssh !

AVONIA. I forgot. (*More quietly*) Yes, dearie, Ferdy and I were married yesterday.

ROSE. Yesterday !

AVONIA. Yesterday morning. We're on our honeymoon now. (*Suddenly serious*) You know, the " Wells "... The fact is, business isn't what it was when you was with us, Rose.

ROSE. I'm sorry to hear that.

AVONIA. There's talk the season'll terminate abrupt, and then we'll all be out on our ear. Neither Ferdy nor me could put-by during the season—you know it never struck us to put-by during the season— So we thought we'd get married. Ferdy says, a man and his wife can live almost on what keeps one, rent and cooking for two; and so, we went off to church and did the deed. Oh, it will be such a save. (*To GADD.*) Oh, darling Ferdy, you're positively soaked ! (*Indicating COLPOYS*) Take your coat off, like Gussy ——

GADD (*Jealously*). 'Vonia, not so much of the Gussy! You're a married woman now. It ain't respectable.

AVONIA. There you are, flying out again ! As if Mr. Colpoys wasn't an old friend !

GADD. Old friend or no old friend——

ROSE (*diplomatically*). Certainly, take your coat off, Ferdinand.

COLPOYS (*to Gadd's annoyance*). Avonia, I confess I adore you.

TOM. Enough of that, Colpoys !

COLPOYS. What!

ROSE (*rising*). Hush !

TOM (*under his breath*). If you've never learnt how to behave——

COLPOYS. Don't you teach behaviour, sir, to a gentleman who plays a superior line of business to yourself! (*Muttering.*) 'Pon my soul! rum start——!

ROSE. Mr Wrench, how are you?

TOM. (*affectionately*) Thank you, much the same as when you used to call me Tom.

ROSE. (*Playful banter*) Oh, but I have turned over a new leaf, you know. I sit on nothing nowadays but down pillows covered with cloth of gold. In my present exalted station I don't hear much of what goes on at the "Wells," Are your abilities still—still——?

TOM. Still unrecognised, still confined within the almost boundless and yet repressive limits of walk on parts with no lines. For instance, my current share in the interpretation of Sheridan Knowles's immortal work does not necessitate my remaining after the first act.

ROSE. Another poor part?

TOM. Another, and to-morrow yet another, and on Saturday two others—all equally, damnably rotten.

AVONIA. Well, somebody must play the bad parts in this world.

TOM. On and off the stage.

ROSE. What about your plays? Aren't you trying to write any plays just now?

TOM. Trying! I am doing more than trying to write plays. I am writing plays. I have written plays. My cupboard is choked with 'em.

ROSE. Won't anyone take a fancy——?

COLPOYS. Not a sufficiently violent fancy.

ROSE. You know, the speeches were so short, and had such ordinary words in them, in the plays you used to read to me—no big opportunity for the leading lady!

TOM. I strive to make my people talk and behave like live people. To fashion heroes out of actual, dull, everyday men—the sort of men you see smoking cheroots in the club windows in St. James's Street; and heroines from simple maidens in muslin frocks. Naturally, the managers won't stand that.

ROSE. Why, of course not.

TOM. If they did, the public wouldn't.

ROSE. I wonder!

ROSE. Wonder—what?

ROSE. Whether they would. The plays of Tom Wrench might cause something of a sensation.

TOM. If everyone gave up laughing at me now, I believe I—I believe I should—miss it.

ROSE (*with sincerity*). I'm sure I didn't intend to hurt your feelings, Tom.

TOM. You! You hurt my feelings! Nobody can hurt my feelings! I have no feelings—
—!

GADD. Don't go on so, Wrench.

AVONIA. Rose, Ferdy's been making quite the splash lately. Haven't you my love?

GADD. Tomorrow night, I give my Sir Thomas Clifford. They're simply waiting for my Clifford.

ROSE. But who on earth will play your Julia?

COLPOYS. Ha! Mrs. Telfer goes on for it.

ROSE. The venerable stop-gap.

GADD. Absurd, of course; but we daren't keep my Clifford from them any longer. You, heartless deserter, you were to have played my Rosalind this season. Instead Miss Fitzhugh joins on Monday; I must pull her through it somehow because the public are waiting for my Orlando, waiting for it.

(*Colpoys yawns at the prospect*)

Colpoys is not nearly as funny as he was last year. Everybody's saying so. We want a low-comedian badly.

COLPOYS (*To Rose.*). My love! My life !

ROSE. Hello, Augustus.

COLPOYS (*ridiculously*). She speaks! She hears me!

GADD. It makes me sick to watch Colpoys in private life. He'd stand on his head in the street, if he could get a ragged infant to laugh at him. What I say is this. Why can't an actor, in private life, be simply a gentleman?

ROSE. Mr Colpoys, what do you think! You were mixed up in a funny dream I dreamt one night lately.

COLPOYS. Highly complimented.

ROSE. It was after a supper which rather—well, I'd had some strawberries sent me from Hertfordshire.

TOM. Indigestion levels all ranks.

ROSE. It was a nightmare. I found myself on the stage of the Wells in that wig of yours.

COLPOYS. The wig with the ringlets?

ROSE. Yes.

COLPOYS. I wear that very wig tomorrow night!

ROSE. Heavens! It is still in existence then?

COLPOYS. And long will be, I hope. I've only three wigs, and that one accommodates itself to so many periods.

ROSE. Oh, how it used to amuse the gallery-boys!

COLPOYS. They still enjoy it. If you looked in tomorrow evening at half-past seven you would hear the same glad, rapturous murmur in the gallery when the presence of that wig is discovered. Not that they fail to laugh at my other wigs, at every article of adornment I possess, in fact! To-night, by-the-by, I also assume that beast of a felt hat—the grey hat with the broad brim, and the imitation wool feathers. You remember it?

ROSE. (*Home sick for her old life*) Yes.

COLPOYS. I see you do. Well, that hat still persists in falling off, when I most wish it to stick on. It will tilt and tumble tomorrow -night— during one of Gadd's pet speeches; I feel it will.

GADD. Beastly creature.

ROSE laughs.

COLPOYS. And those yellow boots; I wear them tomorrow night——

ROSE. No!

COLPOYS. Yes! And the spurs—the spurs that once tore your satin petticoat! You recollect—— ?

ROSE (*her mirth suddenly checked with longing*). Recollect!

TOM. You would see those spurs to-night too, if you patronized us——

COLPOYS. - and the red-worsted tights. The worsted tights are a little thinner, a little more faded and discoloured, a little more darned.

ROSE. Oh, how I miss you all.

AVONIA (*going to ROSE, down*). Of course I ought to have written to you, dear, properly, but you remember the weeks it takes me to write a letter——
And so I said to Ferdy, over tea, " Ferdy, let's spend a bit of our honeymoon in doing the West End thoroughly, and going and seeing where Rose Trelawny lives." And we thought it only nice and polite to invite Tom Wrench and Gussy——

GADD. 'Vonia, much less of the Gussy!

AVONIA (*kissing GADD*). Jealous boy! (*Beaming.*) Oh, and we have done the West End thoroughly. There, I've never done the West End so thoroughly in my life ! And when we got outside your house I couldn't resist —— (*Her hand on GADD'S shirt-sleeve.*) Oh, gracious ! I'm sure you'll catch your death, my darling —— !

ROSE. Let me get you all some wine. (*To GADD.*) Will you take some wine, Ferdinand ?

GADD. I thank you. (*With a wave of the hand.*) Anything, anything ——

AVONIA (*to ROSE*). Anything that goes with stout, dear.

ROSE (*at the door*). 'Vonia — boys — be very still. Quiet as mice if you please.

AVONIA. Trust us !

(ROSE tiptoes out. COLPOYS is now at the card-table, cutting a pack of cards.

COLPOYS (*to GADD*). Gadd, I'll see you for pennies.

GADD (*loftily*). Done, sir, with you !

(They seat themselves at the card table,. TOM is walking about, surveying the room.)

AVONIA. Well, Thomas, what do you think of it ?

TOM). This is the kind of chamber I want for the second act of my comedy ——

AVONIA. Oh, lor', your head's continually running on your comedy. Half this blessed evening ——

TOM. I tell you, I won't have doors stuck here, there, and everywhere ; no, nor windows in all sorts of impossible places!

AVONIA. Oh, really ! Well, when you do get your play accepted, mind you see that Mr. Manager gives you exactly what you ask for — won't you ?

TOM. You needn't be satirical, if you are wet. Yes, I will !

(ROSE re-enters with food, followed by CHARLES, who carries a decanter of sherry and some wine-glasses.)

ROSE. Here we are.

(CHARLES places the decanter and the glasses on the table.)

GADD *(to Colpoys, whose luck has been against him at card)*, You cheating Mountebank! Rapscaillon dog!

COLPOYS *(rising and going toe.)*. Just because you lose sevenpence in coppers you go on like this! *(Tearing his hair, and glaring wildly.)* Ah—h—h, I am ruined ! I have lost my all! my children are beggars——!

CHARLES. Ho, ho, ho ! he, he, he !

ROSE. Hush, hush!

(CHARLES goes out, laughing, quietly.)

(To everybody.) Refreshments.

GADD. Don't mind if I do.

(They help themselves.)

ROSE. Tom, won't you——?

TOM *(watching GADD anxiously)*. No, thank you. The fact is, we—we have already partaken of refreshments, once or twice during the evening——

GADD *pours himself a sherry—singing.*

ROSE (*coming to him*). Be quiet, Gadd !

COLPOYS (*raising his glass*). The Bride !

ROSE Yes, yes. The Bride!

GADD. My Bride !

(*TOM, unperceived, takes the decanter and hides it*)

AVONIA. Well, Rose, my darling, we've been talking about nothing but ourselves. How are you getting along here ?

ROSE. Getting along ? Oh, I—I don't fancy I'm getting along very well, thank you.

VISITORS: (*mouths full*) Not———!

ROSE No, boys ; no, 'Vonia. The truth is, it isn't as nice as you'd think it. I suppose the Profession had its drawbacks—mother used to say so—but one could fly. Yes, at Saddlers Wells one was a dirty little London sparrow perhaps; but here, in this grand square——.' Oh, it's the story of the caged bird, over again.

AVONIA. A love-bird, though.

ROSE. Poor Arthur ? Yes, he's a dear. But the Gowers—the old Gowers ! the Gowers ! the Gowers !

COLPOYS. Gowers ! What does she mean by " the Gowers " ?

(*ROSE gradually becomes loud and voluble. The others, following her lead, chatter noisily—excepting TOM, who sits, thoughtfully, looking before him.*)

ROSE. The ancient Gowers ! the venerable Gowers ! The very mention of 'em makes something go " tap, tap, tap, tap " at the top of my head.

AVONIA. Oh, I am sorry to hear this. Well, upon my word—— !

ROSE. Would you believe it ? 'Vonia—boys—you'll never believe it! I mayn't walk out with Arthur alone, nor see him here alone. I mayn't sing; no, nor sneeze even——

AVONIA (*shrilly*). Not sing or sneeze !

COLPOYS (*indignantly*). Not sneeze !

ROSE. No, nor sit on the floor—the floor !

AVONIA. Why, when we shared rooms together, you were always on the floor!

GADD. In heaven's name, what kind of house can this be!

AVONIA. I wouldn't stand it, would you, Ferdinand ?

GADD. Gad, no !

AVONIA (*to COLPOYS*). Would you, Gus dear ?

GADD. Here ! not so much of the Gus dear——

AVONIA (*to COLPOYS*). Would you ?

COLPOYS. No, I'm blessed if I would, my darling.

GADD. Mr. Colpoys ! less of the darling !

AVONIA (*rising*). Rose, don't you put up with it! I say, don't you stand it! You're an independent girl, dear ; they came to you, these people, not you to them, remember.

ROSE. Oh, what can I do ? I can't do anything.

AVONIA. Can't you! Ferdinand, advise her. You tell her how to——

GADD. Avonia Gadd, you have been all over Mr. Colpoys this evening, ever since we——

AVONIA. Oh, don't be a silly !

GADD. Madam !

AVONIA. Gus, Ferdinand's foolish. Come and talk to Rose, and advise her, there's a dear boy——

(*GADD advances to COLPOYS and slaps his face violently.*)

COLPOYS. Hey—— !

GADD. Miserable viper!

The two men fight. AVONIA, shrieks. The house-bells are heard ringing violently

The fight escalates.

Finally SIR WILLIAM enters closely followed by MISS GOWER. They are both in dressing-gowns and slippers;

SIR WILLIAM. Miss Trelawny——!

MISS GOWER. Rose...? Men !

SIR WILLIAM. Who are these people ?

ROSE Some friends of mine, who used to be at the " Wells," have called upon me, to inquire how I am getting on.

(*ARTHUR enters., quickly.*)

ARTHUR. Oh ! Rose——!

SIR WILLIAM (*turning upon him*). Ah! How come you are still here?

ARTHUR. I was outside the house. Charles let me in, knowing something was wrong.

SIR WILLIAM. Troubadouring—— ?

ARTHUR. Troubadouring; yes, sir. (*To ROSE.*) Rose, what is this?

SIR WILLIAM (*fiercely*). No, sir, this is my affair. Stand aside! (*Raising his stick furiously.*) Stand aside !

MISS GOWER. William——

SIR WILLIAM. What?

MISS GOWER. Your ankles——

SIR WILLIAM (*adjusting his dressing-gown to cover them*). I beg your pardon. (*To ARTHUR.*) Yes, I can answer your question. Some friends of that young woman's, connected with—the play-house, have favoured us with a visit, for the purpose of ascertaining how she is—getting on. In brief, a drunken debauch. (*To the group.*) So ye see, gentlemen—(*to AVONIA*) and you, madam; (*to ARTHUR*) and you, sir; you see, all of ye, exactly how Miss Trelawny is getting on.

MISS GOWER William——

SIR WILLIAM. What is it ?

MISS GOWER. Your ankles——

SIR WILLIAM (*in a frenzy*). Bah !

MISS GOWER. They seem so out of place !

SIR WILLIAM (*flourishing his stick—to the group*). Begone ! A set of gairish, dissolute gipsies ! Begone !

(*GADD, AVONIA, COLPOYS, and WRENCH gather up their belongings*)

AVONIA. Where's my umbrella ?

GADD. A hand with my coat here !

COLPOYS. Pon my soul ! And us, London artists —— !

AVONIA. We don't want to remain where we're not heartily welcome, I can assure everybody.

SIR WILLIAM. Open windows ! Let in the air !

AVONIA (*to ROSE*) Good-bye, my dear ——

ROSE. No, no, 'Vonia. Oh, don't leave me behind you !

ARTHUR. Rose —— !

ROSE. Oh, I'm very sorry, Arthur. (*To SIR WILLIAM.*) Indeed I am very sorry, Sir William. But you are right — gipsies — gipsies ! (*To ARTHUR.*) Yes, Arthur, if you were a gipsy, as I am — as these friends o' mine are, we might be happy together. But I've seen enough of your life, my darling, to know that I'm no wife for you. I should only be wretched, and would make you wretched ; and the end, when it arrived, as it very soon would, would be much as it is to-night —— !

ARTHUR. You'll let me see you, talk to you, tomorrow, Rose ?

ROSE. No, never !

SIR WILLIAM (*sharply*). You mean that?

ROSE (*facing him*). Oh, don't be afraid. I give you my word.

SIR WILLIAM (*gripping her hand*). Thank ye. Thank ye.

TOM (*aside to Arthur*). Mr. Gower, come and see me to-morrow

ROSE (*turning to AVONIA, GADD, and COLPOYS*)
I'm ready ——

MISS GOWER. Not to-night, child, not to-night ! Where will you go ?

AVONIA To her old quarters in Brydon Crescent. Send her things after her, if you please.

MISS GOWER. And then —— ?

ROSE. Then back to the " Wells " again, Miss Gower ! — back to the " Wells " —— !

(*The CURTAIN falls.*)

Scene 3

Back Stage at Saddlers Wells.

Incongruous pantomime clutter litters the stage.

Avonia is singing.

SARAH. You're very cheerful this morning, Avonia!

AVONIA. It's the pantomime. I'm always stark mad as the pantomime approaches, I don't grudge letting the rest of the corn-have their fling at other times—but with the panto comes my turn. Ha, ha ! the turn of Avonia Bunn ! I hope Miss Trelawny won't rush off after her meeting upsrairs, after rehearsal. I want to borrow her gilt belt. My dress has arrived. Management are coming down from the office to see me in it.

SARAH I'm sure I'm not in the least inquisitive ; no one could accuse me of it—but I should like to know just one thing.

AVONIA. What's that ?

SARAH. Why has management been and cut down Miss Trelawny's salary.

AVONIA (*hesitatingly*). I shouldn't say but.... well, everybody's chattering about it; you could get to hear easily enough.

SARAH. Oh, I daresay.

AVONIA. So I don't mind. Poor Rose! They tell her she can't act now, Sarah.

SARAH. Can't act!

AVONIA (*turning to SARAH*). No, dear old girl, she's lost it; it's gone from her—the trick of it——

(*TOM enters*)

AVONIA. I say, Tom, I wonder if I've done wrong——

TOM. It all depends upon whether you've had the chance.

AVONIA. I've told Sarah the reason they've reduced Rose's salary.

TOM. You needn't.

AVONIA. She had only to ask any other member of the company——

TOM. To have found one who could have kept silent. Besides, it isn't true.

AVONIA. What—— ?

TOM. That Rose Trelawny is no longer up to her work.

AVONIA. Oh, Tom !

TOM. It isn't the fact, I say!

AVONIA. Isn't it the fact that ever since Rose returned from Cavendish Square—— ?

TOM.. She has been reserved, subdued, lady -

AVONIA. She was always lady-like !

TOM. I'm aware of that!

AVONIA. Well, then, what do you mean by—— ?

TOM. She was always a lady-like actress, on the Stage and off it, but now she has developed into a—(*at a loss*) into

AVONIA. What!

TOM. Into a lady-like human being. These fools at the " Wells " ! Can't act? Can't she ? No, she can no longer spout, she can no longer ladle, the vapid trash, the — the—the turgid rodomontade——

AVONIA. Language, Wrench.

TOM. You're a married woman, 'Vonia ——

AVONIA. I know, but still——

TOM. Yes, deep down in the well of that girl's nature there has been lying a little, bright, clear pool of genuine refinement, girlish simplicity. And now the bucket has been lowered by love; experience has turned the handle ; and up comes the crystal to the top, pure and sparkling. Why, her broken engagement to poor young Gower has really been the making of her ! It has transformed her! Can't act, can't she ! How she would play Dora in my comedy!

AVONIA. Ho, that comedy !

TOM. How she would murmur those love-scenes!

AVONIA. Murder—— !

TOM (testily). Murmur. (Partly to himself.) Do you know 'Vonia, I had Rose in my mind when I imagined Dora;

AVONIA You astonish me.

TOM. And Arthur Gower when I wrote the character of Gerald, Dora's lover. Gerald and Dora—Rose and Arthur— Gerald and Dora——

Sarah leaves, bored.

'Vonia, I wish you could keep a secret.

AVONIA. Why, can't I ?

TOM. Haven't you just been gossiping with Sarah?

AVONIA. A secret, Tom ?

TOM. I should like to share it with you, because—you are fond of her too.

AVONIA. Ah——!

TOM. And because the possession of it is worrying me. But there, I can't trust you.

AVONIA. Mr. Wrench !

TOM.. No, you're a warm-hearted woman, 'Vonia, but you're a sieve.

AVONIA. I swear ! By all my hopes, Tom Wrench, of hitting 'em as Prince Charming in the coming pantomime, I swear I will not divulge, leave alone tell a living soul, any secret you may entrust to me, or let me know of, concerning Rose Trelawny of the " Wells." Amen !

TOM 'Vonia, I know where Arthur Gower is.

AVONIA. Is ! Isn't he still in London ?

TOM. No. When Rose stuck to her refusal to see him—listen—mind, not a word—— !

AVONIA.. By all my hopes—— !

TOM. All right, all right! (Reading.) " Theatre Royal, Bristol, Friday——"

AVONIA (*sitting on her heels*). Theatre Royal, Br——!

TOM. Be quiet! (*Reading—leaning towards her.*) " My dear Mr. Wrench. A whole week and not a line from you to tell me how Miss Trelawny is. When you are silent I am sleepless at night and a haggard wretch during the day. Young Mr. Kirby, our Walking Gentleman, has been unwell, and the management has given me temporarily some of his business to play——"

AVONIA. Arthur Gower——!

TOM. Will you...? (*Reading.*) " Last night I was allowed to appear as Careless in ' The School for Scandal.' Miss Mason, the Lady Teazle, complimented me, but the men said I lacked vigour " —the old cry!—"and so this morning I am greatly depressed. But I will still persevere, as long as you can assure me that no presuming fellow is paying attention to Miss Trelawny. Oh, how badly she treated me !——"

AVONIA (*following the reading of the letter*). " How badly she treated me—— ! "

TOM. " I will never forgive her—only love her——"

AVONIA. " Only love her——"

TOM. " Only love her, and hope I may some day become a great actor, and, like herself, a gipsy. Yours very gratefully, Arthur Gordon."

AVONIA. In the Profession !

TOM. Bolted from Cavendish Square — went down to Bristol ——

AVONIA. How did he manage it all ?

(*Tom taps his breast proudly.*)

But isn't Rose to be told ? Why shouldn't she be told?

TOM. She has hurt the boy, stung him to the quick, and he's proud.

AVONIA. But she loves him now that she believes he has forgotten her. She only half-loved him before. She loves him !

TOM. Serve her right.

AVONIA. Oh, Tom, is she never to know ?

TOM. Some day, when he begins to make strides.

AVONIA. Strides ! He's nothing but a bit part player at present? And how long have you been that ?

TOM. Ten years.

AVONIA. She ought to be told !

TOM. Woman, you won't —— !

AVONIA. I swear by all my hopes of the pantomime!

TOM. All right, I believe you —— But if Rose ever finds out that –

Rose enter, pale and troubled.

ROSE. Finds out what?

AVONIA. I was wondering whether you'd lend me that belt you bought for Ophelia ; to wear during the first two or three weeks of the pantomime ——

ROSE Certainly, 'Vonia, to wear throughout ——

AVONIA. No, it's too good ; I'd rather fake one for the rest of the time. (*Looking into her face.*) What's the matter ?

ROSE. I will make you a present of the belt, 'Vonia, if you will accept it. I bought it when I came back to the " Wells," thinking everything would go on as before. But — it's of no use ; they tell me I cannot act effectively any longer ——

TOM. Effectively —— !

ROSE. First, as you know, they reduced my salary ——

TOM.. Yes !

ROSE. And now, this morning — (*pause —; she looks at each of them in turn*) you can guess ——

AVONIA. Got your notice ?

ROSE. Yes.

ROSE. Poor mother ! I hope she doesn't see. (*She buries her face in her hands*) Management say I'm too tame, since I returned to my old part in " The Pedlar of Marseilles," It is true I was doing it tamely, but — it is such nonsense.

TOM. Hear, hear !

ROSE. And then, that poor little song I used to sing on the bridge ——

AVONIA. " Ever of thee I'm fondly dreaming —— "

TOM. "Thy gentle voice my spirit can cheer."

ROSE (*nods*). I told them they should cut it out. It's so ridiculously inappropriate !

TOM. And that — did it ?

ROSE. That did it.

AVONIA. My ducky ! Oh, but there are other theatres besides the " Wells "

TOM. Only where the same trash is acted.

AVONIA. But a few months ago you !—— you liked your work.

ROSE. Yes, and then I went to Cavendish Square, engaged to Arthur——
How badly I behaved in Cavendish Square ! How unlike a young lady ! What if the old folks were overbearing and tyrannical, Arthur could be gentle with them. " They

have not many more years in this world," he said—dear boy!—" and anything we can do to make them happy——" And what did I do ? There was a chance for me—to be patient, and womanly; and I proved to them that I was nothing but—an actress.

AVONIA (*hurt.*). It doesn't follow, because one is a——

ROSE. Yes, 'Vonia, it does ! We are only dolls, partly human, with mechanical limbs that will fall into stagey postures, and heads stuffed with sayings out of rubbishy plays. It isn't the world we live in, merely a world—such a queer little one ! I was less than a month in Cavendish Square, and very few people came there ; but they were real people—real! For a month I lost the smell of gas and oranges, and the hurry and noise, and the dirt and the slang, and the clownish joking, at the " Wells." I didn't realize at the time the change that was going on in me ; I didn't realize it till I came back. And then, by degrees, I discovered what had happened—— Oh, Tom ! Oh, 'Vonia—— !

(*From the next room comes the sound o of GADD'S voice uttering loud imprecations.*)

GADD, Blood and Thunder! I will not endure it! I will not!

(*Alarmed.*) Oh—— !

(*Another sound outside.*)

AVONIA (*Embarrassed. The Obvious*). Sounds like Ferdy. Ferdy! ain't you well, darling?

GADD (*on the other side of the door*). Avonia!

AVONIA. Now, what's put Ferdy out ?

(*GADD enters with a wild look.*)

Ferdinand !

TOM. Anything wrong, Gadd ?

GADD. Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! What d'ye think ?

AVONIA. Tell us !

GADD. I have been asked to appear in the pantomime.

AVONIA (*shocked*). Oh, Ferdy !—you !

GADD. I, a serious actor, if ever there was one; a poetic actor—— !

AVONIA. What part, Ferdy ?

GADD. The insult, the bitter insult! the gross indignity!

AVONIA. What part, Ferdy ?

GADD. I who have not been seen in pantomime for years, not since I shook the dust of the Theatre Royal Stockton from my feet.

AVONIA. Ferdy, what part ?

GADD. I simply looked at management, when he preferred his request, and swept out of the office.

AVONIA. What part, Ferdy ?

GADD. A part, too, which is seen for a moment at the opening of the pantomime, and not again till its close.

AVONIA. Ferdy.

GADD. Eh?

AVONIA. What part ?

GADD. A character called the Demon of Discontent.

(ROSE and TOM try to suppress laughter.)

AVONIA *(indignantly)*. Oh ! Oh, it's a rotten part ! Rose dear, I assure you, as artist to artist, that part is absolutely rotten. You won't play it, darling ?

GADD. Play it! I would see the " Wells " in ashes first.

AVONIA. We shall lose our engagements, Ferdy. We shall be out, both of us.

GADD. Of course we shall. D'ye think I have not counted the cost?

AVONIA. I don't mind, dear—for the sake of your position—*(struck by a sudden thought)* oh—— !

GADD. What—— ?

AVONIA. But we haven't put anything by !

COLPOYS approaches

COLPOYS. Is Gadd here, Miss Trelawny ?

ROSE. Yes.

COLPOYS. I want to see him.

GADD. Wrench, I'll trouble you. Ask Mr. Colpoys whether he approaches me as a friend, an acquaintance, or in his capacity of toady at the " Wells "—the tool of management?

TOM (*to COLPOYS, solemnly*). Colpoys, are you here as Gadd's bosom friend, or as a mere tool of management?

(An inaudible colloquy follows between TOM and COLPOYS.)

GADD. Well, well ?

TOM He is here as the tool of management.

GADD. I will receive him.

(COLPOYS carries a mean-looking " part," and a letter.)

COLPOYS. Oh, Gadd, management instructs me to offer you this part in the pantomime. *(Handing the part to GADD.)* Demon of Discontent.

(GADD takes the part and flings it to the ground, AVONIA picks it up and reads it.)

You refuse it ?

GADD (*towering over him*). I do. *(With dignity.)* Acquaint management with my decision, and add that I hope this pantomime will prove an utterly mirthless one. May Boxing-night, to those unfortunate enough to find themselves in the theatre, long remain a dismal memory; and may it find succeeding audiences, scanty and dissatisfied——!

(COLPOYS presents GADD with the letter. GADD opens it and reads.)

(Heavily.) I leave. The Romeo, the Orlando, the Clifford— *(Deflates)* leaves!

GADD. 'Vonias ! *(Taking the part from AVONIA, with mingled surprise and pleasure.)* Ho, ho ! no, that's not bad. *(Reading.)*

" I'm Discontent! from Orkney's isle to Dover To make men's bile bile-over I endover——"" Tempers, though sweet, I whip up to a lather, Make wives hate husbands, sons wish fathers further." 'Vonias, there's something to lay hold of here ! I'll think this over. Nothing put by, you say? *(addressing COLPOYS.)* Gus, I have thought this over. I play it.

(They all gather round him, and congratulate him. AVONIA embraces and kisses him.)

ROSE. I'm very pleased, Ferdinand.

AVONIA *(tearfully)*. Oh. Ferdy !

GADD (*in high spirits*). Egad, I'll play it ! Gus, I'll stroll round with you to the "Green Lion" (*Shaking hands with ROSE.*) Miss Trelawny —— ! (*Flourishing the part.*) 'Vonia, I see myself in this ! (*Kissing her.*) Steak for dinner !

(*GADD and COLPOYS go out.*)

(*TOM, shrieks with laughter.*)

AVONIA It's a pity, Mr. Wrench, you can't find something better to do than making fun of Gadd ! — an artist to the roots of his hair ! There's more talent in Gadd's little finger —— !

ROSE. 'Vonia, 'Vonia !

AVONIA (*continuing*). And if Gadd is to play a demon in the pantomime, what do you figure as, Tom Wrench, among half a dozen other things ? Why, as part of a cow ! Yes, and which end —— ?

ROSE (*quietly to TOM*). Apologize to 'Vonia at once, Tom.

TOM (*meekly*). Mrs. Gadd, I beg your pardon.

AVONIA. Granted, Tom; but you should be a little more considerate——

ROSE. Vonia, let us go and fetch that belt of mine and see how it is with your new costume.

AVONIA. (*As they leave*) A little more considerate——

(*IMOGEN is heard.*)

IMOGEN (*outside*). Is that you, Wrench ?

TOM (*brightening up*). Hullo !

(*IMOGEN, , enters breathlessly.*)

IMOGEN (*Rapidly and excitedly*). They said you were with Rose.

TOM. She'll be back in a few minutes.

IMOGEN. It's you I want. Let me sit down. Oh, Tom Wrench ! perhaps my fortune's made !

TOM Then I congratulate you, Jenny.

IMOGEN. Do be quiet; don't make such a racket. You see, things haven't been going at all satisfactorily at the Olympic lately. There's Miss Puddifant——

TOM. I know—no lady.

IMOGEN. How do you know ?

TOM. Guessed.

IMOGEN. Quite right; and a thousand other annoyances. And at last I took it into my head to consult Mr. Clandon, who married an aunt of mine and lives at Streatham - and he'll lend me five hundred pounds.

TOM. What for ?

IMOGEN. Towards taking a theatre

TOM. Five hundred——

IMOGEN. It's all he's good for, and he won't advance that unless I can get a further five, or eight, hundred from some other quarter.

TOM. What theatre ?

IMOGEN. Why this one of course! After the Pantomime. Don't throw wet blankets—I mean—(*referring to a note book*) I've got it all worked out in black and white. There's a deposit required on account of rent— two hundred pounds. Cleaning the theatre— (*looking at TOM*) what do you say ?

TOM. Cleaning this theatre?

IMOGEN. I say, another two hundred.

TOM. That would remove the top layer——

IMOGEN. Cost of producing the opening play, five hundred pounds. Balance for emergencies, three hundred. You generally have a balance for emergencies.

TOM. You generally have the emergencies, if not the balance.

IMOGEN. Now the question is, will five hundred produce the play ?

TOM. What play ?

IMOGEN. Your play.

TOM. My——

IMOGEN. Your comedy.

TOM. Rubbish !

IMOGEN. Well, Mr. Clandon thinks it isn't. I gave it to him to read, and he—well, he's quite taken with it.

TOM. Clandon—Landon—what's his name—— ?

IMOGEN. Tony Clandon—Anthony Clandon——

TOM. He's a—he's a——

IMOGEN. He's a hop-merchant.

TOM. No he's not. He's a god amongst men!

IMOGEN. So you grasp the position. Theatre—manageress—author—play, found; and eight hundred pounds wanted I...

TOM. Oh, lord!

IMOGEN. Who's got it ?

TOM (*wildly*). The Queen's got it! Miss Burdett-Coutts has got it!

IMOGEN. Don't be a fool, Wrench. Do you remember old Mr. Morfew, of Duncan Terrace ? He used to take great interest in us all at the " Wells." He has money.

TOM. He has gout; we don't see him now.

IMOGEN. Gout!—how lucky ! That means he's at home. Will you run round to Duncan Terrace—— ?

TOM (*looking down at his clothes*). I!

IMOGEN. Nonsense, Wrench ; we're not asking him to advance money on your clothes.

TOM. The clothes are the man, Jenny.

IMOGEN. And the woman—— ?

TOM. The face is the woman.

IMOGEN. I'll go ! Is my face good enough ?

TOM. I dare say it'll do! It has been in your possession longer than I've had my oldest coat! Make haste, Jenny!

IMOGEN. It will last till I get to Duncan Terrace. Tom, you may have to read your play to Mr. Morfew. Have you another copy ? Uncle Clandon has mine.

TOM. I think I have—I don't know——

IMOGEN. Look for it! find it! If Morfew wants to hear it, we must strike while the iron's hot.

TOM. While the gold's hot !

(they laugh)

(SARAH enters showing some signs of excitement.)

IMOGEN *(pushing her aside)*. Oh, get out of the way, Sarah——

SARAH. A visitor for Miss Trelawny ! Where's Miss Trelawny ?

TOM. With Mrs. Gadd in wardrobe. Tell her, Miss Parrott and I will return with great news for her!

TOM and IMOGEN exit

SARAH. *(calling)*. Miss Trelawny! Miss Trelawny!

(Rose returns)

ROSE. Why, what a clatter you're making, Sarah.

SARAH *(in awe)*. Sir William Gower is at stage door!

ROSE. Sir William!

SARAH. Don't be vexed with me. " I'll see if she's here," I said. " Oh yes, woman, Miss Trelawny's at the Wells," said he, and hobbled straight in. I've shut him in Mr Telfer's' room——

(There are three distinct raps, with a stick, at a door.)

ROSE and SARAH. *(frightened)* oh

ROSE *(faintly)*. Let him out.

(SARAH, after some hesitation, goes, and soon SIR WILLIAM enters.)

SARAH. Ah, and a sweet thing Miss Trelawny is——!

SIR WILLIAM. Are you a relative ?

SARAH. No, I am not a relative——

SIR WILLIAM. Then disappear.

(She departs ; he stands looking at ROSE for a moment, then quietly removes his hat.)

My mind is not commonly a wavering one, Miss Trelawny, but it has taken me some time—months—to decide upon calling on ye.

ROSE. Won't you sit down ? (*with quiet dignity*). Have we no chairs ? Do we lack chairs here, Sir William ?

SIR WILLIAM (*with violence*). My grandson ! my grandson ! Where is he ?

ROSE. Arthur—— !

SIR WILLIAM (*Irritably*). I had but one.

ROSE. Isn't he—in Cavendish Square—— ?

SIR WILLIAM. Isn't he in Cavendish Square! No, he is not in Cavendish Square, as you know well.

ROSE. Oh, I don't know——

SIR WILLIAM. Tsch !

ROSE. When did he leave you ?

SIR WILLIAM. Tsch !

ROSE. When ?

SIR WILLIAM. He made his escape during the night, twenty-second of August last—as you know well.

ROSE. Sir William, I assure you——

SIR WILLIAM. How often does he write to ye ?

ROSE. He does not write to me. He did write day after day, two or three times a day, for about a week. That was in June, when I came back here. He never writes now.

SIR WILLIAM. Visits ye—— ?

ROSE. No.

SIR WILLIAM. Comes troubadouring—— ?

ROSE. No, no, no. I have not seen him since that night. I refused to see him— Why, he may be -

SIR WILLIAM (*fumbling in his pocket*). Ah, but he's not. He's alive; (*producing a small packet of letters*) Arthur's alive, and full of his tricks still. His great-aunt Trafalgar receives a letter from him once a fortnight, posted in London——

ROSE (*holding out her hand for the letters*). Oh—— !

SIR WILLIAM (*putting them behind his back*). Hey!

ROSE (*faintly*). I thought you wished me to read them.

(*He yields them to her grudgingly.*)

(*Taking his hand.*) Ah, thank you.

SIR WILLIAM (*withdrawing his hand with a look of disrelish*). What are ye doing, madam ? What are ye doing ?

ROSE (*reading a letter*). " To reassure you as to my well-being, I cause this to be posted in London by a friend——"

SIR WILLIAM (*pointing a finger at her again, accusingly*). A friend !

ROSE (*looking up, with simple pride*). He would never call me that. (*Reading.*) " I am in good bodily health, and as contented as a man can be who has lost the woman he loves, and will love till his dying day——"

SIR WILLIAM. Read no more ! Return them to me!

(*She holds the letters to her breast.*) Give them to me, ma'am !

She restores the letters, meekly, holding the letters on fingers of both hands, so that he can take them easily.)

What's come to ye ? You are not so much of a vixen as you were.

ROSE. No.

SIR WILLIAM. Less of the devil—— ?

ROSE. Sir William, I am sorry for having been a vixen, and for all my unruly conduct, in Cavendish Square. I humbly beg your, and Miss Gower's, forgiveness.

SIR WILLIAM (*taking snuff, uncomfortably, he turns and looks at her*). Pi—i—i—sh ! extraordinary change.

ROSE. Aren't you changed, Sir William, now that you have lost him ?

SIR WILLIAM. I!

ROSE. Don't you love him now, the more ?

(*His head droops a little, and his hands wander to the brooch which secures his plaid.*)

Let me take your shawl from you. You would catch cold when you go out—

(He allows her to remove the plaid, protesting during the process)

SIR WILLIAM. I'll not trouble ye, ma'am. Much obliged to ye, I'll not but I'll not trouble ye. trouble ye— *(In an altered tone.)* My dear, gipsying doesn't seem to be such a good trade with ye, as it used to be by all accounts——

(AVONIA enters boldly, in the dress of a pantomime prince—cotton-velvet shirt, edged with bullion trimming, a cap, white tights, ankle boots, etc.)

AVONIA *(unconsciously)*. How's this, Rose—— ?

SIR WILLIAM. Ah—h—h—h !

ROSE. Oh, go away, 'Vonia !

AVONIA. Sir Gower! *(To SIR WILLIAM.)* Good morning.

SIR WILLIAM *(Again very violent)*. Yes ! and these are the associates you would have tempted my boy —my grandson—to herd with !

ROSE. That young lady doesn't live in that attire. She is preparing for the pantomime——

SIR WILLIAM. And now he's gone ; lured away, I suspect, by one of ye—by one of these harridans—— !

AVONIA. Look here, Sir Gower——

ROSE. Go, 'Vonia !

AVONIA *(to SIR WILLIAM)*. We've met before, if you remember, in Cavendish Square——

ROSE. Oh, Mrs. Gadd——!

SIR WILLIAM. Mistress! a married lady !

AVONIA. Yes, I spent some of my honeymoon at your house——

SIR WILLIAM. What!

AVONIA. Excuse my dress; it's all in the way of my business. Just one word about Rose.

ROSE. Please, 'Vonia—— !

AVONIA *(to SIR WILLIAM, who is glaring at her in horror)*. Now, there's nothing to stare at, Sir Gower. If you must look anywhere in particular, look at that poor thing. A nice predicament you've brought her to !

SIR WILLIAM. Sir——! (*Correcting himself.*) Madam !

AVONIA. You've brought her to beggary, amongst you ! you've broken her heart; and, what's worse, you've made her genteel. She can't act, since she left your mansion; she can only mope about the stage with her eyes fixed, like a person in a dream—dreaming of him, I suppose, and of what it is to be a lady. And first she's put upon half-salary; and then, to-day, she gets the sack— the entire sack, Sir Gower! So there's nothing left for her but to starve, or to make artificial flowers. Miss Trelawny I'm speaking of! Our Rose ! our Trelawny ! (*To ROSE, breaking down.*) Excuse me for interfering, ducky. (*Retiring, in tears.*) Good day, Sir Gower.

SIR WILLIAM (*after a pause, to ROSE*). Is this—the case ?

ROSE. Yes. As you have noticed, fortune has turned against me, rather.

SIR WILLIAM. I—I'm sorry, ma'am. I—I believe you've kept your word to us concerning Arthur. I—I——

ROSE. My mother knew how fickle fortune could be to us gipsies. One of the greatest actors that ever lived warned her of that——

SIR WILLIAM. Miss Gower will also feel extremely—extremely——

ROSE. Kean once warned mother of that.

SIR WILLIAM (*in an altered tone*). Kean ? Which Kean ?

ROSE. Edmund Kean. My mother acted with Edmund Kean, when she was a girl.

SIR WILLIAM (*approaching her slowly, speaking in a queer voice*). With Kean ? with Kean !

ROSE. Yes.

SIR WILLIAM (*In a whisper*). My dear, I—I've seen Edmund Kean.

ROSE. Yes ?

SIR WILLIAM. A young man then, I was ; quite different from the man I am now—impulsive, excitable. Kean! (*Drawing a deep breath.*) Ah, he was a splendid gipsy!

ROSE. This little broach here, my mother wore as Cordelia to Kean's Lear——

SIR WILLIAM. I may have seen your mother also. I was somewhat different in those days——

ROSE. And the Order and chain, and the sword, he wore in Richard. He gave them to my father; I've always prized them.

(She gives him the broach to hold)

SIR WILLIAM *(handling it tenderly)*. Kean! God bless me !

ROSE. My poor mother's.

SIR WILLIAM. I may have seen her. I was a young man then. Lord bless us ! How he stirred me ! how he——!

SIR WILLIAM *(looking at her)*. Cordelia ! Cordelia—with Kean ! Kean ! *(To her, in a whisper.)* I'll tell ye ! I'll tell ye ! When I saw him as Richard—I was young and a fool—*(he picks up a prop sword and belt)* I'll tell ye— he almost fired me with an ambition to—to—— *(Fumbling with the belt.)* How does one...?

ROSE *(fastening the bell, with the sword, round him)*. In this way- This should hang so.

SIR WILLIAM. Ah!

(he paces the stage, growling and muttering, and walking with a limp and one shoulder hunched, muttering, " Now is the winter of our discontent " "How sharper then a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child" etc. She watches him.

Ah ! he was something! I remember him, as if it were last night! I remember—— My dear, your prospects in life have been injured by your unhappy acquaintanceship with my grandson.

ROSE. Poor Arthur's prospects in life—what of them ?

SIR WILLIAM. Tsch!

ROSE. If I knew where he is——!

SIR WILLIAM. Miss Trelawny, if you cannot act, you cannot earn your living.

ROSE. How is he earning his living ?

SIR WILLIAM. And if you cannot earn your living, you must be provided for.

ROSE. Provided for ?

SIR WILLIAM. Miss Gower was kind enough to bring me here in a cab. She and I will discuss plans for making provision for ye, while driving home.

ROSE. Oh, I beg you will do no such thing, Sir William. I could not accept any help from you or Miss Gower.

SIB WILLIAM. You must! You shall!

ROSE. I will not.

SIR WILLIAM (*touching the sword and belt*). Well then - Yes, I—I'll buy these of ye, my dear——

ROSE. Please take them off!

(*voices approach.*)

SIR WILLIAM (*startled*). Who's that ? (*Struggling with the chain and belt.*) Remove these—— !

(*SIR WILLIAM disappears behind a screen*)

(*IMOGEN arrives*)

IMOGEN. Rose darling, where is Tom Wrench ?

ROSE. He was here not long since - Is anything amiss ?

IMOGEN (*shrilly*). Tom!

ROSE. Imogen!

IMOGEN (*returning to ROSE*). Oh, my dear, forgive my agitation——!

(*TOM enters, buoyantly, flourishing the manuscript of his play.*)

TOM. I've found it! At the bottom of a box—" deeper than did ever plummet sound——" ! (*To IMOGEN.*) Eh ? What's the matter ?

IMOGEN. Oh, Tom, old Mr. Morfew——!

TOM. Isn't he willing—— ?

IMOGEN. I don't know. He's dead.

TOM. No!

IMOGEN. Three weeks ago. Oh, what a chance he has missed !

ROSE. What is it, Tom ? Imogen, what is it ?

IMOGEN. I can think of no one else ——

TOM. Done again!

IMOGEN. We shall lose it, of course——

ROSE. Lose what ?

TOM. The opportunity—her opportunity, my opportunity, your opportunity, Rose.

ROSE. My opportunity, Tom !.

TOM. My play—my comedy— Jenny wants to take over the Wells— and could do — has five hundred towards it, put down by a man who believes in my comedy, God bless him— ! the only fellow who has ever believed—— !

ROSE. Oh, Tom ! Oh, Imogen !

IMOGEN. My dear, five hundred ! We want another five, at least.

ROSE. Another five!

IMOGEN. Or eight.

TOM. And you are to play the part of Dora. Isn't she, Jenny — I mean, wasn't she ?

IMOGEN. Certainly. Just the sort of simple little Miss you could play now, Rose. And we thought that old Mr. Morfew would help us in the speculation. Speculation !—it's a dead certainty !

TOM. Dead certainty ? Poor Morfew !

IMOGEN. And here we are, stuck fast——!

TOM. And they'll expect me to rehearse half a cow tomorrow with enthusiasm.

ROSE. Never mind, Tom.

TOM. No, I won't— Oh, Rose— !

(SIR WILLIAM, divested of his theatrical trappings, emerges.)

IMOGEN. Oh——!

TOM. Eh ?

ROSE. Sir William Gower, Tom.

SIR WILLIAM. I have been a party, it appears, to a consultation upon a matter of business. *(To TOM.)* Do I understand, sir, that you have been defeated in some project which would have served the interests of Miss Trelawny?

TOM. Y—y—yes, sir.

SIR WILLIAM. Mr. Bench——

TOM. Wrench——

SIR WILLIAM. Sir, it would give me pleasure—it would give my grandson, Mr. Arthur Gower, pleasure—to be able to aid Miss Trelawny at the present moment.

(TOM and IMOGEN look at each other.)

TOM. S—s—sir William, w—w—would you like to hear my play—— ? My comedy ?

SIR WILLIAM. So ye think I might be induced to fill the office ye designed for the late Mr.—Mr.—

IMOGEN *(shrilly)*. Yes!

SIR WILLIAM *(after a short pause, quietly)*. Then I would have you read your play, sir. *(Pointing to the chair above table.)* Sit down. *(To ROSE and IMOGEN.)* Sit down.

(MISS GOWER'S voice is heard.)

MISS GOWER *(Off)*. William !

(MISS GOWER enters.)

Oh, William, what has become of you ? Has anything dreadful happened ?

SIR WILLIAM. Sit down, Trafalgar. This gentleman is about to read a comedy. A cheer! *(Testily.)* Are there no cheers here ?

(ROSE brings a chair and places it for MISS GOWER beside SIR WILLIAM'S chair.)

Sit down.

MISS GOWER *(sitting, bewildered)*. William, is all this—quite—— ?

SIR WILLIAM *(by table)*. Yes, Trafalgar, quite in place—quite in place—

(IMOGEN sits as COLPOYS and GADD swagger in,

(TOM, referring to GADD and COLPOYS.) Friends of yours ?

TOM. Yes, Sir William.

SIR WILLIAM *(to GADD and COLPOYS)*. Sit down. *(Imperatively.)* Sit down and be silent!

(GADD and COLPOYS seat themselves)

AVONIA *approaches*.

AVONIA. Rose——!

SIR WILLIAM. Sit down, sit down, ma'am.

(*AVONIA sits beside ROSE, next to MISS GOWER.*)

MISS GOWER (*using her smelling-bottle—in horror*). On—h —h—h!

SIR WILLIAM (*restraining her*). Quite in place, Trafalgar ; quite in place. (*He sits—to TOM.*) Now, sir !

TOM (*opening his manuscript and reading*). " Life, a comedy, by Thomas Wrench—
—"

The CURTAIN falls.

Scene 4

the company are about to gather for rehearsal of TOM's Play.

First in are MR AND MRS TELFER.

TELFER. My part is confined to the latter 'alf of the second act ;

MRS. TELFER. It affords you no opportunity, James ?

TELFER A mere fragment,

MRS. TELFER Well, a man of your stamp needs but a few good speches to make his mark.

TELFER. Yes, but what d'ye think the character is described as ?

MRS TELFER. What

TELFER. " An old, stagey, out-of-date actor."

(They stand looking at each other for a moment, silently.)

MRS. TELFER (*falteringly*). Will you—be able—to get near it, James ?

TELFER. I daresay——

MRS. TELFER. That's all right, then.

TELFER. And you—what have they called you for, if you're not in the play ? They have not dared to suggest understudy ?

MRS. TELFER. They don't ask me to act at all, James.

TELFER. Don't ask you—— !

MRS. TELFER. Miss Parrott offers me the position of Wardrobe-mistress.

TELFER. Violet——!

MRS. TELFER. Hush!

TELFER. Let us both go home.

MRS. TELFER (*restraining him*). No, let us remain. We've nothing put by, and I can't bear to see you without your watch and all your comforts about you.

TELFER. And so this newfangled stuff, and these dandified people, are to push us, and such as us, from the stage!

MRS. TELFER. Yes, James, just as some other new fashion will, in course of time, push them from their stage.

IMOGEN, TOM and CAPTAIN DeFEONIX ENTER

DeFEONIX (*to TOM*). Mr. Wrench, I congratulate ye ; I have that honour, sir. Your piece will do, sir; it will take the town, mark me. Can't think why the old boy wants me overseeing his investment.

TOM. Thank you, Captain DeFeonix.

DeFEONIX Did you see the sunshine this morning ! There's a good omen, at any rate.

TOM. Oh, sunshine's nothing. But did ye observe the gloomy faces whilst we were reading' ?

IMOGEN. Yes, they did look glum,

TOM. Glum!—it might have been a funeral! There's a healthy prognostication for a new comedy! It's infallible.

ROSE enters.

ROSE (*shaking hands with TELFER*). Oh Mr. Telfer? (*Crossing to MRS. TELFER and kissing her.*) Fancy our being together again, and at the Wells ! (*To TELFER.*) Do you like the play ?

TELFER. Like it! There's not a speech in it, my dear—not a real speech ; nothing to dig your teeth into—— And my part is so. But perhaps there has been an error. Your lover in the play? Who is to play your lover?

ROSE. I don't know. There arc some people not here to-day, I believe.

MRS TELFER. Mr. Hunston, perhaps!

ROSE. Oh he would be too old. Hasn't he gone a little bandy ?

TELFER. One of the finest Hotspurs I ever fought with was bow-legged.

TOM (*To TELFER, awkwardly.*) I—I hope the little part of Poggs appeals to you, Mr. Telfer. Only a sketch, of course ; but there was nothing else—quite—in your——

TELFER. Nothing ? To whose share does the Earl fall ?

TOM. Oh, Mr. Denzil plays Lord Parracourt.

TELFER. Denzil ? I've never 'eard of 'im. Will you get to me to-day ?

TOM. We—we expect to do so.

TELFER. Very well. (*Stiffly.*) Let me be called in the street.

(*He stalks away.*)

MRS. TELFER (*relieved*). Thank heaven! I was afraid James would break out.

ROSE (*to MRS. TELFER*). But you, dear Mrs. Telfer—you weren't at the reading—what are you cast for ?

MRS. TELFER. I ? I am to be the Wardrobe-mistress of this theatre.

ROSE. You ! (*Embracing her.*) Oh ! oh !

MRS. TELFER. Miss Trelawny—Rose—my child, if we are set to scrub a floor—and we may come to that yet— let us make up our minds to scrub it legitimately—with dignity——

(*She disappears, and is seen no more.*)

GADD and COLPOYS Enters

GADD (*to TOM*). I say, Gussy, who plays Gerald ?

COLPOYS. Gerald ?

GADD. The man I have my only scene with in the third act—the hero——

COLPOYS. Oh, a young gentleman from the country.

GADD. From the country!

COLPOYS. He is coming up by train this morning, Miss Parrott tells me ; from Bath or somewhere——

GADD. Well, whoever he is, if he can't play that scene with me decently, my part's not worth rags.

DeFEONIX. Er—h'm— shall we begin rehearsals, Miss Parrott ?

IMOGEN. Certainly, Captain DeFeonix.

TOM. We'll begin.

COLPOYS attempts some slapstick to the amusement of the others.

DeFEONIX (*violently*). Clear the stage there ! I'll not have it! Upon my honour, this is the noisiest theatre I've ever set foot in !

(The stage is cleared, the characters, other than DeFEONIX, IMOGEN and TOM, disappearing into the Green-room.)

I can't hear myself speak for all the riot and confusion!

TOM (*to DeFEONIX*). My dear DeFeonix, there is no riot, there is no confusion——

IMOGEN (*to DeFEONIX*). Except the riot and confusion you are making.

TOM. You know, you're admirably earnest, DeFeonix, but a little excitable.

DeFEONIX (*calming himself*). Oh, I beg your pardon, I'm sure. (*Emphatically.*) My system is, begin as ye mean to go on.

IMOGEN. But we don't mean to go on like that.

TOM. Of course not; of course not. Now, let me see—(*pointing to the table in the c.*) We shall want another chair here,

DeFEONIX. Another chair ?

TOM. A garden chair.

DeFEONIX (*excitably*). Another chair ! Now then, another chair ! Properties ! where are ye ? do ye hear me callin' ? must I raise my voice to ye—— ?

(SARAH appears with a card for TOM)

SARAH. Mr Wrench, A visitor.

DeFEONIX (*furiously*). Now then ! Are we to be continually interrupted in this fashion ? Have I, or have I not, given strict orders that nobody whatever—— ?

TOM. Hush, hush ! see whose card it is ; give me the card——

DeFEONIX. (*handing the card to TOM*). I'll make rules here. In a week's time you'll not know this for the same theatre——

(TOM has passed the card to IMOGEN without looking at it.)

IMOGEN (*staring at it blankly*). Oh——!

TOM (*to her*). Eh ?

IMOGEN. Sir William !

TOM. Sir William !

IMOGEN. What can he want ? what shall we do ?

TOM (*after referring to his watch—to the SARA*). Bring this gentleman on to the stage.

(*SARAH withdraws.*)

(*To DeFEONIX.*) Make yourself scarce for a few moments, DeFeonix. Some private business——

DeFEONIX. Right ho! I've plenty to occupy me. I'll start licking some of your company into shape.

(*He disappears.*)

IMOGEN (*to TOM*). Not here——

TOM (*to IMOGEN*). The boy can't arrive for another twenty minutes. Besides, we must, sooner or later, accept responsibility for our act.

IMOGEN. Heavens ! I foretold this!

TOM (*grimly*). I know——" said so all along."

IMOGEN. If he should withdraw his capital!

TOM. At least, that would enable me to write a melodrama.

IMOGEN. Why ?

TOM. I should then understand the motives of Crime !

SARAH reappears, showing the way to SIR WILLIAM GOWER and exits.

How d'ye do, Sir William ?

SIR WILLIAM. Hmm!

TOM. These are odd surroundings for you to find yourself in——

(*IMOGEN advances.*)

Miss Parrott——

SIR WILLIAM. Good morning, ma'am.

IMOGEN. This is perfectly delightful.

SIR WILLIAM. What is ?

IMOGEN (*faintly*). Your visit.

SIR WILLIAM. Pah! Give me a cheer. (*Looking about him.*) Have ye no cheers here?

TOM. Yes.

SIR WILLIAM. Thank ye; much obliged. (*Producing his snuff-box.*) You are astonished at seeing me here, I daresay ?

TOM (*boldly*). Not at all.

SIR WILLIAM (*glancing at TOM*) Addressing the lady. (*To IMOGEN.*) You are surprised to see me ?

IMOGEN. Very.

SIR WILLIAM (*to TOM*). The truth is, I am beginning to regret my association with ye.

IMOGEN (*piteously*). You—you don't propose to withdraw your capital, Sir William ?

SIR WILLIAM. That would be a breach of faith, ma'am——

IMOGEN. Ah !

TOM (*walking about, jauntily*). Ha !

IMOGEN (*seizing SIR WILLIAM'S hand*). Thank you, Thank you!

SIR WILLIAM (*withdrawing his hand sharply*). I'll thank ye not to repeat that action, ma'am. But I—I find myself unable to sleep at night. (*To TOM.*) That comedy of yours— it buzzes continually in my head, sir.

TOM. It was written with such an intention, Sir William —to buzz in people's heads.

SIR WILLIAM. Ah, I'll take care ye don't read me another, Mr. Wicks ; at any rate, another which contains a character resembling a member of my family—a late member of my family. I don't relish being reminded of late members of my family in this way, and being kept awake at night, thinking—turning over in my mind——

IMOGEN (*soothingly*). Of course not.

SIR WILLIAM (*taking snuff*). Pa—a—a—h ! pi—i—i—sh ! When I saw Kean, as Richard, he reminded me of no member of my family. Shakespeare knew better than that, Mr. Wicks. (*To IMOGEN.*) And therefore, ma'am, upon receiving your letter last night, acquainting me with your intention to commence rehearsing your comedy— (*glancing at TOM*) his comedy——

IMOGEN (*softly*). Our comedy——

SIR WILLIAM. To-day at noon, I determined to present myself here with Captain DeFeonix and request to be allowed to—to——

TOM. To watch the rehearsal ?

SIR WILLIAM. The rehearsal of those episodes in your comedy which remind me of a member of my family—a late member.

IMOGEN. Oh, certainly——

TOM. By all means.

SIR WILLIAM (*rising, assisted by TOM*). I don't wish to be steered at by any of your—what d'ye call 'em ?—your gipsy crew——

TOM. Ladies and Gentlemen of the Company, we call 'em.

SIR WILLIAM. I don't care what ye call 'em. I shall retire where I can hear, and see, and not be seen ; and when I've heard and seen enough, I'll return home— and—and obtain a little sleep ; and to-morrow I shall be well enough to sit in Court again.

IMOGEN (*to SIR WILLIAM, falteringly*). And if you are pleased with what you see this morning, perhaps you will attend another—— ?

SIR WILLIAM. Not I. After to-day I wash my hands of ye. What do plays and players do, coming into my head, disturbing my repose! Your comedy has merit, sir. You call it Life. There is a character in it—a young man—not unlike life—not unlike a late member of my family.

(*He hides himself away*)

TOM (*Calling to off*) Let us begin rehearsal. Begin rehearsal! Miss Trelawny!

(*DeFeonix enters*)

DeFEONIX. Miss Trelawny! Miss Trelawny! (*Rushing to up*) Miss Trelawny ! how long am I to stand here shoutin' myself hoarse—— ?

ROSE (*gently*). Am I called ?

DeFEONIX (*instantly calm*). You are, Now then ! (*Reading from the manuscript.*) " At the opening of the play Peggy and Dora are discovered——" Who's Peggy ? (*Excitedly.*) Where's Peggy ? Am I to—— ?

IMOGEN. Here I am ! here I am ! I am Peggy.

DeFEONIX (*calm*). Of course ye are, lovely—ma'am, I should say——

IMOGEN. Yes, you should.

DeFEONIX. " Peggy is seated upon the Right, Dora on the Left——"

(*ROSE and IMOGEN seat themselves accordingly.*)

(*In a difficulty.*) No—Peggy on the Left, Dora on the Right. (*Violently.*) This is the worst written scrip I've ever held in my hand——

(*ROSE and IMOGEN change places.*)

So horribly scrawled over, and interlined, and—no—I was quite correct. Peggy is on the Right, and Dora is on the Left.

(*IMOGEN and ROSE again change seats.*)

(*Reading from the manuscript.*) " Peggy is engaged in—in——" I can't decipher it. A scrip like this is a disgrace to any well-conducted theatre. (*To IMOGEN.*) I don't know what you're doin'. " Dora is—is——" (*To ROSE.*) You are also doin' something or another. Now then ! When the curtain rises, you are discovered, both of ye, employed in the way described——

(*TOM returns.*)

Ah, here ye are! (*Resigning the manuscript to TOM, and pointing out a passage.*) I've got it smooth as far as there.

TOM. Thank you.

DeFEONIX. You're welcome.

TOM. Now, The curtain rises. (*To IMOGEN.*) Miss Parrott—— you yawn.

IMOGEN (*yawning, in a perfunctory way*). Oh—h !

TOM. As if you meant it, of course.

IMOGEN. Well, of course.

DeFEONIX (*jumping up*). This sort of thing. (*Yawning extravagantly.*) He—oh !

TOM (*irritably*). Thank you, DeFeonix ; thank you.

DeFEONIX (*sitting again*). You're welcome.

TOM (*to ROSE*). You speak.

ROSE " What are you reading, Miss Chaffinch ? "

IMOGEN " A novel."

ROSE. " And what is the name of it ?

IMOGEN. " The Seasons."

ROSE. " Why is it called that ? "

IMOGEN. " Because all the people in it do seasonable things."

ROSE. " For instance—— ? "

IMOGEN. " In the Spring, fall in love."

ROSE. " In the Summer ? "

IMOGEN. " Become engaged. Delightful! "

ROSE. " Autumn ? "

IMOGEN. " Marry. Heavenly! "

ROSE. " Winter ? "

IMOGEN. " Quarrel. Ha, ha, ha ! "

TOM (*to IMOGEN*). Close the book—with a bang——

DeFEONIX (*bringing his hands together sharply by way of suggestion*). Bang !

TOM (*irritably*). Yes, yes, DeFeonix. (*To IMOGEN.*) Now rise

DeFEONIX. Up ye get!

TOM. And walk about, discontentedly.

IMOGEN (*walking about*). " I've nothing to do; let's tell each other our ages."

ROSE. " I am nineteen."

TOM (*to IMOGEN*). In a loud whisper——

IMOGEN. " I am nineteen."

DeFEONIX (*speaking to TOM*). Hadn't ye better make that six-and-twenty ?

IMOGEN. Why! ?

TOM. No, no, certainly not. Go on.

IMOGEN (*angrily*). Not till Captain DeFeonix retires.

TOM. Sir?

(*DeFEONIX, with the air of martyrdom, leaves*)

ROSE. " I shall think, and feel, the same when I am twenty-two, I am sure. I shall never wish to marry."

(*AVONIA interrupts*)

AVONIA: Now Tom, Now!

ROSE: Now, what!

TOM: You must go to your costume fitting.

ROSE: But. I'm rehearsing.

TOM: Then let us cut to your exit. Go Rose, quickly. Do not keep Mrs Telfer waiting.

ROSE. " Why do Miss Chaffinch and her girl-friends talk of nothing, think of nothing apparently, but marriage ? Ought a woman to make marriage the great object of life ? Can there be no other ? I wonder——"

(*She goes off*)

TOM (*reading from his manuscript*). " The piano is heard; and Peggy's voice singing. Gerald enters——"

(*ARTHUR appears. TOM and IMOGEN hasten to him and shake hands with him vigorously.*)

How are you ?

ARTHUR (*breathlessly, getting between the two*). Miss Parrott! Mr. Wrench ! forgive me if I am late ; my cab-horse galloped from the station——

TOM. We had just reached your entrance. Have you read your part over ?

ARTHUR. Read it! (*Taking it from his pocket.*) I know every word of it! It has made my journey from Bristol like a flight through the air ! Why, Mr. Wrench, (*turning over the leaves of his part*) some of this is almost me !

(TOM and IMOGEN laugh)

TOM. Come you enter! There! You stroll on, looking about you !

ARTHUR *(occasionally glancing at his part)*. " A pretty place. I am glad I left the carriage at the lodge and walked through the grounds."

(There is an exclamation, proceeding from SIR WILLIAM, who, seated behind a curtain, is in the stage-box in the auditorium, and the sound of the overturning of a chair,)

IMOGEN. Oh!

DeFEONIX *(appearing, looking into the auditorium)*. What's that ? This is the noisiest theatre I've ever set foot in——!

TOM. Don't heed it! *(To ARTHUR.)* Go on, Mr. Gordon.

ARTHUR. " Somebody singing. A girl's voice. Lord Parracourt made no mention of anybody but Ms hostess—the dry, Scotch widow.

TOM. Dora returns. *(Calling.)* Rose!

DeFEONIX. Dora ! where are ye ?

AVONIA. Dora! Dora!

(ROSE appears.)

ROSE *(to TOM)*. Mrs Telfer knows nothing of -

TOM. On, with the rehearsal, please !

(There is another sound, nearer the stage, of the overturning of some object.)

DeFEONIX. What——?

TOM. Don't heed it!

ROSE *(coming face to face with ARTHUR)*. Oh——!

ARTHUR. Rose!

TOM. Go on, Mr. Gordon !

ARTHUR *(to ROSE)*. " I beg your pardon — was it you I heard singing at the window?"

ROSE. " Yes, I—I—I——" Oh, Mr. Gower, why are you here ?

ARTHUR. Don't you know ?

ROSE. No.

ARTHUR. Why, Miss Trelawny, I am trying to be—what you are.

ROSE. What I am——?

ARTHUR. Yes—a gipsy.

ROSE. A gipsy—a gip——Oh, Arthur !

(SIR WILLIAM returns)

SIR WILLIAM. Arthur! ARTHUR *(going to him)*. Grandfather !

(Members of the company slowly and silently gather to watch)

SIR WILLIAM. What's this ? What is it—— ?

ARTHUR *(bewildered)*. Sir, I—I—you—and—and Rose—are the last persons I expected to meet here——

SIR WILLIAM. Ah—h—h—h !

ARTHUR. Perhaps you have both already learnt, from Mr. Wrench or Miss Parrott, that I have—become—a gipsy, sir ?

SIR WILLIAM. Not I ; *(pointing to TOM and IMOGEN)* these— these people have thought it decent to allow me to make the discovery for myself.

TOM *(to SIR WILLIAM)*. Sir William, the secret of your grandson's choice of a profession——

SIR WILLIAM *(scornfully)*. Profession !

TOM. Was one that I was pledged to keep as long as it was possible to do so. And pray remember that your attendance here this morning is entirely your own act. It was our intention——

SIR WILLIAM. Where is the door ? the way to the door ?

TOM. And let me beg you to understand this, Sir William—that Miss Trelawny was, till a moment ago, as ignorant as yourself of Mr. Arthur Gower's doings, of his movements, of his whereabouts. She would never have thrown herself in his way, in this manner. Whatever conspiracy——

SIR WILLIAM. Conspiracy ! The right word—conspiracy !

TOM. Whatever conspiracy there has been is my own—to bring these two young people together again, to make them happy——

(*ROSE holds out her hand to TOM ; he takes it. They are joined by IMOGEN.*)

SIR WILLIAM (*looking about him*). The door ! the door !

ARTHUR (*going to SIR WILLIAM*). Grandfather, may I, when rehearsal is over, venture to call in Cavendish Square—— ?

SIR WILLIAM. Call——!

ARTHUR. Just to see Aunt Trafalgar, sir? I hope Aunt Trafalgar is well, sir.

SIR WILLIAM (*with a slight change of tone*). Your Great-Aunt Trafalgar ? Ugh, yes, I suppose she will consent to see ye——

ARTHUR. Ah, sir——!

SIR WILLIAM. But I shall be out; I shall not be within doors.

ARTHUR. Then, if Aunt Trafalgar will receive me, sir, do you think I may be allowed to—to bring Miss Trelawny with me—— ?

SIR WILLIAM. What! ha, I perceive you have already acquired the impudence of your vagabond class, sir; (*looking round at the company.*) the brazen effrontery of a set of——!

ROSE (*facing him*). Oh, Sir William, why may not Arthur become, some day, a splendid gipsy ?

SIR WILLIAM. Never!

ROSE. Like——

SIR WILLIAM (*peering into her face*). Like—— ?

ROSE. Like——

TOM. Yes, sir, a gipsy, though of a different order from the old order which is departing—a gipsy of the new school!

SIR WILLIAM (*to ROSE*). Well, Miss Gower is a weak, foolish lady; for aught I know she may allow this young man to—to— I'll go to my carriage.

ARTHUR. Sir, if you have the carriage here, and if you would have the patience to sit out the rest of the rehearsal, we might return with you to Cavendish Square. Grandfather, we are not rich people, and a cab to us——

SIR WILLIAM (*Full of love for his grandson*). Oh Arthur——!

TOM. Captain DeFeonix, would you be so kind as to fetch Sir William a chair from which he may observe the rest of the rehearsal. Shall we proceed with the rehearsal, Sir William, or wait till you are seated ?

SIR WILLIAM (*violently*). Wait! Confound ye, d'ye think I want to remain here all day !

TOM. Then let us go on with the rehearsal! Mr. Gower and Miss Rose Trelawny! Miss Trelawny -

ARTHUR. Miss Trelawny — of the " Wells "!

(They kiss amidst much celebration)

The CURTAIN falls.

The End

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