

# DR. TANNHAUSER

LUDWIG. I see. The man who draws the lowest card—

NOTARY. Dies, *ipso facto*, a social death. He loses all his civil rights—his identity disappears—the Revising Barrister expunges his name from the list of voters, and the winner takes his place, whatever it may be, discharges all his functions and adopts all his responsibilities.

ERNEST. This is all very well, as far as it goes, but it only protects one of us. What's to become of the survivor?

LUDWIG. Yes, that's an interesting point, because *I* might be the survivor.

NOTARY. The survivor goes at once to the Grand Duke, and, in a burst of remorse, denounces the dead man as the moving spirit of the plot. He is accepted as King's evidence, and, as a matter of course, receives a free pardon. To-morrow, when the law expires, the dead man will, *ipso facto*, come to life again—the Revising Barrister will restore his name to the list of voters, and he will resume all his obligations as though nothing unusual had happened.

JULIA. When he will at once be arrested, tried, and executed on the evidence of the informer! Candidly, my friend, I don't think much of your plot.

NOTARY. Dear, dear, dear, the ignorance of the laity! My good young lady, it is a beautiful maxim of our glorious Constitution that a man can only die once. Death expunges crime, and when he comes to life again, it will be with a clean slate.

ERNEST. It's really very ingenious.

LUDWIG (*to NOTARY*). My dear sir, we owe you our lives!

LISA (*aside to LUDWIG*). May I kiss him?

LUDWIG. Certainly not: you're a big girl now. (*To ERNEST.*) Well, miscreant, are you prepared to meet me on the field of honour?

ERNEST. At once. By Jove, what a couple of fire-eaters we are!

LISA. Ludwig doesn't know what fear is.

LUDWIG. Oh, I don't mind this sort of duel!

ERNEST. It's not like a duel with swords. I hate a duel with swords. It's not the blade I mind—it's the blood.

LUDWIG. And I hate a duel with pistols. It's not the ball I mind—it's the bang.

NOTARY. Altogether it is a great improvement on the old method of giving satisfaction.