

NINE POINTS OF THE LAW

AN ORIGINAL COMEDIETTA

IN

ONE ACT

BY

TOM TAYLOR, Esq.

AUTHOR OF

The House or the Home; An Unequal Match; Victims; Still Waters Run Deep; Going to the Bad; A Nice Firm; A Blighted Being; A Trip to Kissengen; Diogenes and his Lantern; The Philosopher's Stone; The Vicar of Wakefield; To Parents and Guardians; Our Clerks; Little Red Riding Hood; Helping Hands Prince Dorus, &c., &c., &c. And one of the Authors of—Masks and Faces; Plot and Passion; Slave Life; Two Loves and a Life; The King's Rival, &c. &c. &c.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,

89, STRAND,

(Opposite Southampton Street, Covent Garden Market,)

LONDON.

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NINE POINTS OF THE LAW.

*First Produced at the Royal Olympic Theatre,
On Monday, April 11th 1859.*

CHARACTERS.

JOSEPH IRONSIDE*	Mr. ADDISON.
CUNNINGAME, <i>an Attorney</i>	Mr. H. WIGAN.
RODOMONT ROLLINGSTONE, <i>a Gentleman at Large</i>	Mr. G. Vining.
JOHN BRITTON	Mr. W. GORDON.
MRS. SMYLINE, <i>a Widow</i>	Mrs. STIRLING.
KATIE MAPLESON, <i>her Niece</i>	Miss COTTRELL.
SARAH JANE, <i>a Village School Girl</i>	Miss SEYMOUR.

SCENE.—A Cottage near a Kentish Village.

TIME.—1849.

TIME IN REPRESENTATION.—1 hour and 25 minutes.

COSTUMES.

IRONSIDE.—Dark body coat, drab waistcoat, black trousers, broad brimmed hat.

CUNNINGAME.—Old fashioned black body coat, black waistcoat, grey trousers, low crowned hat.

ROLLINGSTONE.—Blue jacket, fancy woollen shirt, extravagant plaid trousers and scarf round waist, Russia boots, straw hat.

JOHN BRITTON.—Plain modern walking dress.

MRS. SMYLINE.—Neat grey check silk morning dress and cap, black silk mantilla.

KATIE.—Neat white morning dress.

SARAH JANE.—Blue frock, white apron with bib, blue stockings, and white cap—complete charity schoolgirl's dress.

* This part may be played with a north country dialect, as assumed with admirable effect by Mr. Addison, at the Olympic.

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NOTE.—Mr. Savage's novelette, "Clover Cottage," supplied the idea on which this little piece is founded.

NINE POINTS OF THE LAW.

SCENE.—*A pretty morning room in Fairfield Cottage, with French windows, opening on lawn—in the distance a view of the village, with Church, Old Manor House, &c.—chintz furniture—doors, R. and L.—table, with writing materials, &c.—flowers in vases, and other signs of female occupancy—a portrait of Mrs. Smylie, L.*

As the curtain rises, JOHN BRITTON is discovered on his knees to KATIE.

JOHN. Yes, Katie, I adore you, and if you won't marry me, I'll join the Tower Hamlet's Militia—ship as stoker on board a Government Steam Transport—or do something equally desperate.

KATIE. Get up, John, do! if aunt were to catch you—you must ask her consent. Do get up!

Enter MRS. SMYLIE, L. D.

JOHN. Not till I've got yours—till then, here I stay, uncomfortable as this position is, for the rest of the morning.

KATIE. Then I'll leave you there all the afternoon.
(sees MRS. SMYLIE) Oh, dear, here comes my aunt!

MRS. S. (*seeing JOHN on his knees*) Bless me!

JOHN. No—bless me, Mrs. Smylie—bless both of us—kneel, Katie! (*he seizes KATIE's hand, and pulls her down to her knees*) I adore her, ma'am—she adores me—we implore your blessing!

MRS. S. (*getting above them, c., and waving her hands over their heads melo-dramatically*) Bless you, my children!

And now, you blessed full grown babies, get up, and tell me what the meaning of this is.

JOHN. (*getting up*) It means that we are in love, and mean to marry.

MRS. S. (c.) Mean to marry is all very well, John Britton, but means to marry is quite another matter. I have no objection to the match, but it must be when you can find a home for me, instead of expecting me to find one for you. (*sits*)

JOHN. Where can we be so happy as in this snuggest of all possible snuggeries? I do think the best thing old Mrs. Weathercock ever did, in her long and useless life, was to die and leave you this rural Elysium. (*sits L.—KATIE seats herself R. of table*)

MRS. S. Oh! so you are under the same impression as everybody else in Fairfield—that she left me the cottage.

JOHN. Didn't I draft her last will and testament in old Groper's office, in this very village?

MRS. S. I have no doubt she *meant* to leave it me; but a few days after her will was drawn, she quarrelled with me, as she generally did once a week, and revoked her legacy by a—a—what d'ye call it?

JOHN. A codicil!

MRS. S. Precisely! I needn't detail the steps by which this codicil, contrary to her intentions, remained in force at her death, so that Mr. Ironside, the residuary legatee, became legal owner of the cottage, and I have only the possession of it.

JOHN. Nine points to one in your favour! But has this barbarian—this intruder—this wretched Ironside, attempted to assert his rights?

MRS. S. By an extremely polite letter, in which, after setting out his claim, he said he would not willingly do anything to inconvenience me.

JOHN. Which you answered—

MRS. S. By one equally polite, in which I assured him that it would very much inconvenience me to leave Fairfield, so I would avail myself of his kindness, and remain where I was.

JOHN. And there the correspondence stopped?

MRS. S. For a couple of months, when he followed up

his own polite letter, by one much less polite, from his attorney, a Mr. Cunningame.

JOHN. I know—one of the sharpest practitioners in London. And how did you answer him?

MRS. S. By regretting that my ignorance of legal phraseology entirely precluded me from understanding, much less acting upon, his letter.

JOHN. But he wasn't satisfied with soft sawder like that?

MRS. S. He sent me a great many more letters, each more legal, and therefore more unintelligible than the other, which I didn't take the trouble of answering at all.

JOHN. That was right—didn't commit yourself. Have they served you with a declaration of ejectment? (MRS. SMYLINE appears not to understand) Have they served you with a declaration of ejectment?

MRS. S. I haven't the slightest idea. All I know is, that here I am, and here, convinced of my equitable, if not my legal rights, I mean to stay. (*folding her work*)

JOHN That's right—I'll act as your attorney; and if Cunningame and I don't manage to disgust old Ironside with law between us, say I'm unworthy of my certificate. I shouldn't wonder even if we manage to get the matter into chancery—and then you may stay in the court, and in the cottage, till you attain a green old age.

MRS. S. Young or old, John Britton, I trust I shall never be green enough to get into a chancery suit. Widow's weeds are bad enough, but one *does* find one's way out of them; but a chancery suit has that worst fault in a woman's eyes—it never wears out.

Enter SARAH JANE, R. D., with a letter—she bobs'.

SARAH. A letter for missus, please'm.

(goes c. to MRS. SMYLINE, *bobs*, gives her letter, makes another bob, and exit, R. D.)

MRS. S. (*reads letter*) What's this?—from Mr. Ironside! (*reading*) "Madam,—Finding that neither my own letters, nor those of my lawyer have been attended with any effect in inducing you to give up possession of Fairfield Cottage, I have taken the liberty of coming in person, with my

legal adviser, and trust to your respect for the intentions of the testatrix to grant us an early interview. Awaiting your answer, I am, madam, your obedient servant, Joseph Ironside." So, the enemy has advanced his parallels—close quarters at last!

JOHN. Don't see him, my dear Mrs. Smylie. Let me meet him in single combat, with legal, not lethal weapons.

(KATIE rises and goes up to window, c.)

MRS. S. Thank you, John Britton. But we poor, weak women have weapons of our own. What arms—offensive or defensive—can your legal arsenal supply, equal to our artillery of look, smile, and sigh—our armour of helplessness and innocence—our shield of weakness and submission? And when all these fail, think of that irresistible resource—a woman's tears! Like the old Dutch Burghers, we have but to open the sluices, and wash the enemy from the field. Yes, I'll try my woman's weapons—if they fail, I'll come to you for legal ones.

(goes over to table, l., and sits to write—KATIE comes down, r.—JOHN goes to her)

JOHN. (aside to KATIE) Wonderful woman, your aunt, Katie. I'm glad I fell in love with you before I knew her, or I should have popped to her, infallibly—notwithstanding the disparity of our ages. Don't be jealous.

KATIE. (r.) Of auntie! Oh, nobody can be jealous of her! She's the dearest, cleverest thing! Isn't everybody in love with her, from the old rector to that odious Mr. Rollingstone?—whom I saw just now coming through the garden.

JOHN. (c.) Ah, an extremely fishy party, Rollingstone—and such a thundering humbug! (goes up to window and looks out)

MRS. S. Give this to the messenger from the Red Lion, darling. It's to invite Mr. Ironside up to the cottage directly.

KATIE. What, the horrid man who wants to turn you out of this dear home?

MRS. S. (l.) Nothing like civility, my dear. Cats have remarkably soft paws, but the velvet doesn't prevent their scratching, you know.

KATIE. Oh, I'm sure you never scratch anybody, auntie. I'll give boots the note directly.

Runs off, R. D. 3 E.

JOHN. (*coming down, R. C.*) Here comes Don Whisker-andos. Now, my dear Mrs. Smylie, do pray be cool and distant with this fellow.

MRS. S. (*L.*) Oh, I must be civil to him. He's nephew of Mrs. Weathercock, you know.

JOHN. Who cut him off with a shilling. Depend upon it, he has designs upon your hand, or rather on Fairfield Cottage, which he thinks your property. Let me tell him the real state of the case—he'll quit the field directly.

MRS. S. (*aside*) That's precisely what I don't want. (*to BRITTON*) Oblige me by holding your tongue to him on the subject. Promise!

JOHN. Of course, if you wish it. But tell him the facts yourself, and send him about his business.

MRS. S. What, throw away a weapon just as I am going into battle?

JOHN. A weapon?

MRS. S. What weapon like an admirer? One can use him to draw the foe into an ambuscade, retreat behind him when the fire becomes too hot, or, as a last resource, fling him at the enemy's head. I shall take the liberty of employing *my* Rollingstone in any of the three ways I may find him most useful. Here he comes!

Enter ROLLINGSTONE, through window, from R., and down c.

RODOM. Ah, Mrs. Smylie! *a los pies de usted*, as we used to say in Mexico. Good morning Britton! Excuse my abrupt entrance, but I am one of those unhappily constituted individuals who never can go round to a door when they see a window open.

JOHN. (*R., aside*) And the spoons on the table!

MRS. S. (*L.*) Fairfield Cottage is Liberty Hall, you know.

RODOM. (*C.*) All the better suited to me! (*sits*) I got rid of my last vestiges of social propriety that summer I spent with the Yankee whalers in the South Sea Islands. Charming people the Fejee Islanders, and by no means so

wedded to cannibalism as is generally represented. (*rises*) By the way, I was just thinking, as I came through the garden, how capitally my Brazilian grass hammock would swing between those two sycamores on the lawn. I fancy I see you in it, *a la Mexicaine*, a cigarrito in your mouth.

MRS. S. Thank you, I don't smoke.

RODOM. I'll teach you; I give you *my* honour you'll take to it—one of my genuine *papelitos*, rolled in an Indian corn leaf—admire the perfume. (*takes a cigar case from his pocket, and presents it to Mrs. S.*) Pretty case, isn't it? Made for me by the fair hands of Mariquita, only daughter of the terrible Rosas, the dictator of Paraguay. Ah! if I had stayed in South America—

MRS. S. What a pity you didn't.

RODOM. Yes, it offered a noble field for my energies. By the way, Britton, I've a splendid idea.

JOHN. (*aside*) Then you never came honestly by it.

RODOM. I must talk over it with you one of these days.

JOHN. What is it?

RODOM. A railway company to develop the enormous cereal resources of the Entre Ríos. I would be secretary, you should be solicitor. There's everything to be done in shares.

JOHN. But not everybody—everybody has been done in shares already.

RODOM. Good, deuced good!

Re-enter KATIE, R. D.

Ah! Miss Mapleson!

KATIE. Oh, Mr. Rollingstone, good morning! I've given boots the note, auntie.

MRS. S. Then run away, darling, and see the blue room made very comfortable for our welcome visitor.

KATIE. Yes, auntie, directly. *Exit KATIE, L. D. 3 E.*

RODOM. (*R., aside*) Our welcome visitor! Oh, ho!

JOHN. (*c.*) Why, you don't mean you've invited him here?

MRS. S. (*L.*) In the relation we stand in, I hope you don't think I could leave him at the Red Lion!

RODOM. (*aside*) Relation she stands in, eh?

MRS. S. Go down to the Red Lion instantly, and show him the way.

JOHN. (*aside*) Invited into the lion's den! Poor old bear, I pity him! *Exit JOHN, R. D.*

MRS. S. (*who has seated herself at table, L., rings hand bell*) Will you excuse me for a moment, Mr. Rollingstone?

RODOM. (R.) A rival on the field for a hundred! I must lose no time—this cottage is worth a bold stroke—I've been heating the iron for a month—it must be hot—let me strike!

Enter SARAH, L. D., she curtseys.

MRS. S. (*seated*) Take care that everything is particularly neat and nice at luncheon, Sarah Jane.

SARAH. Please m'm, yes. (*curtseys*)

MRS. S. You will be very careful in cooking the chops.

SARAH. Please m'm, yes. (*curtseys*)

MRS. S. And don't forget the pickled walnuts.

SARAH. Please m'm, no. (*curtseys*)

(*SARAH JANE goes up to L. D., curtseys and exits—MRS.*

SMYLINE rises and crossing to table R., sits to work, R. C.)

RODOM. (*aside at back, c.*) Chops, pickled walnuts! It must be a rival! (*comes down, L. C.*) What a missionary's wife you would have made, my dear Mrs Smylie.

MRS. S. (*seated, R. C.*) Well, I do think my protégées of the village school afford about as good a field for missionary labour as your friends of the Fejee Islands.

RODOM. (L. C.) Ah, what pleasure to devote oneself, with a congenial female companion, to the spread of civilization. I once thought of turning missionary myself. It was after assisting at a dog feast among the Ojibbe-ways.

MRS. S. Unluckily you had not the congenial female companion.

RODOM. Precisely; my energies have been running to seed for want of one. Ah, Mrs. Smylie, what is life without sympathy! Man or woman single is like—like—(*stoops over her—she has her scissors in her hand, and nearly pricks his nose as she raises them to enforce her comparison—he starts*)

MRS. S. Like a single blade of a pair of scissors. It's a feminine simile, rather, but I think it expresses your meaning.

Rodo. Beautiful! I am a single blade—you—excuse me for saying so—are another; separate, we are both rusting in our sheathes—united we should cut our way through the world like a bowie knife through a buffalo hump. (*crosses at back to R.*)

Mrs. S. A charming simile—for my blade of the scissors.

Rodom. (R.) Ah, Mrs. Smylie! believe me, such rough experience as mine awakens one to the value of a home like this.

Mrs. S. (*still seated*) At per annum?

Rodom. No, no! (*comes down, R.*) I may have been weak and wayward—rash and reckless; but sordid I am not. I alluded to its value to the heart. Yes, since I knew you I have felt for the first time what woman is—in you—what man might be—in myself.

Mrs. S. Oh, Mr. Rollingstone! (*rises*) This is almost a declaration.

Rodom. Call it not almost—say quite—a declaration from the frankest of men to the most charming—the most bewitching of women. Yes, adorable Emilia, Rodomont Rollingstone has not been used to stoop, but behold him at your feet. (*kneels*)

Mrs. S. Mr. Rollingstone, you're the second full-grown man I've seen in that posture to-day, and it isn't becoming. Get up, pray! You can say what you have to say quite as well on your legs.

Rodom. You are right! (*rising*) We have both seen the world. In plain words, then, I love you—would marry you—would fain concentrate in this small but elegant abode energies for which, till now, two hemispheres have scarcely sufficed.

Mrs. S. Oh, dear! we should certainly have an explosion. It would be as bad as the gas blowing up.

Rodom. Do not mock my fervour. I have lived in the sunny south where life is a fever—language a cataract—and love a lava-flow.

Mrs. S. And I begin to feel uncommonly like Pompeii just before the eruption of Vesuvius. Suppose we adjourned to the garden! Only you must promise not to scorch up my poor flowers. Come, will you give me my mantilla?

RODOM. (*taking mantilla from sofa, R.*) Let me drape it, as I have often done for the sun-gilded Senoras under the shadow of Popocatapetl. (*he puts on her mantilla—she drapes herself coquettishly*)

MRS. S. Eh? Popo—what?

RODOM. Popo—cata—petl—the giant mountain that looks down on Mexico. Like him, the frost of conventionalism may rest upon my brow, but the fire of the volcano is latent at my core.

MRS. S. But mind, no explosions, or I shall positively send for the parish engine. Come, you shall be my Popo-patch-a-kettle.

Exeunt into garden by window, c. and off, L.

Enter KATIE, R. D., she looks after them.

KATIE. There goes aunty, with Mr. Rollingstone. Oh! how ever can she bear to leave dear Fairfield? We have been so happy here. There's nowhere the birds sings so sweetly, and the sun shines so bright. I declare when I get up of a morning, I feel like a bird myself, and sing, because I can't help it.

INTRODUCED SONG—KATIE.*

Enter JOHN BRITTON, at R. D.

JOHN. This way, Mr. Ironside—don't stand upon ceremony.

Enter IRONSIDE, R. D.—he crosses down to L.

JOSEPH. Thank you, young man! I'm not much used to stand upon ceremony at any time, (*to himself*) and least of all in coming into my own house. (*to KATIE*) Good morning, Mrs.—eh? no! you can't be Mrs. Smylie!

KATIE. (R.) Oh dear no, sir, I'm her niece.

JOHN. (C.) Miss Mapleson—Mr. Ironside. (*introducing them*) That was Mrs. Smylie we saw in the lime walk, as we came through the garden.

JOSEPH. (L.) I suppose you take charge of the garden, young lady? I congratulate you upon it. I know something about gardens.

* This song had better be omitted, unless it can be sung at the piano-forte, as young ladies *do* sing, and not as is usually done on the stage in a bravura style, at the foot-lights, to an orchestral accompaniment.

KATIE. My aunt sees to the garden herself.

JOSEPH. Come, I'm glad she looks after the property, at all events. (*after pacing the room*) A nicely proportioned room—don't like this bed-curtain style of thing though. (*pointing to chintz furniture*) Give me honest horse hair—nothing like it for wear. (*sits L.*) Are you a relative of Mrs. Smylie's, young man? (*to JOHN*)

JOHN. (R. C.) Only a friend, Mr. Ironside, as yet.

JOSEPH. As yet, eh? (*rises, looking first at KATIE, then at him*) Oh, I see. Turtle doves! pairing, eh? (*KATIE turns away confused*) Don't blush, young lady. Too many old fools fall into it for the young ones to be ashamed of themselves. Tell your aunt, young lady, that I have only a few minutes to spare, and my time is precious.

JOHN. Mrs. Smylie is in the garden! we'll send her to you. Come, Katie! (*aside*) He is a hyæna! but if your aunt doesn't tame him, call me spooney.

Exeunt JOHN and KATIE by window, c., and off, L.

JOSEPH. (*calling after them*) Mind, no kissing behind the bushes! Silly things! like young bears, with all their troubles before them. Thank my stars, I've never put my head under any woman's apron-string. A female tenant is bad enough, but a female tenant for like—oh, lord! (*shrugs his shoulders*) Well, why doesn't she come? I wonder what she's like. (*goes to R. C., and sits*) A busy, notable woman, I suppose, from what they told me at the Red Lion—with a brassy face, a bright eye, and a tongue like a mill-clack. Well, she shan't look me down, or talk me down either, that I promise her.

Enter MRS. SMYLINE, L. D., she has on a very becoming cap, looks demure and resigned, and in expression and manner presents a studied contrast to what she was in the former scene.

I've been put off long enough, but now we have come to a meeting, I'll stand no nonsense—out she goes! (*turns and sees MRS. SMYLINE*) Eh? (*aside*) Who's this?

MRS. S. (L. C.) Mr. Ironside, I believe. I am Mrs. Smylie!

JOSEPH. You? eh? oh, yes, I thought as much—ahem! (*embarrassed*)

MRS. S. Pray be seated, Mr. Ironside. (*they sit*) I regret extremely that the agitation naturally caused by your arrival should have precluded my receiving you in person—I am stronger now. I hope my niece has done the honours of my poor cottage.

JOSEPH. (*aside*) That's an opening. I beg your pardon, ma'am, you said *my*—

MRS. S. Did I? (*mildly*) Forgive me if the associations of the many years I have lived here so happily (*sighs*) should have caused me to forget for a moment that—I—am a trespasser on your most gentlemanlike consideration.

JOSEPH. (*aside*) Hang it! I wish she'd bounce a little. Why, you see, ma'am, law is law, and right is right. I hope you don't mean to persuade me that I'm a ruffian for desiring to enter into possession of my own house?

MRS. S. (*faintly smiling*) Such harshness of construction is very, very foreign to my nature, sir, as you will admit when you know me better; but when you take into consideration my unfriended position, how the mind, left to create its own occupations, its own pleasures, clings to every little memento of happier times, I am sure you will make some allowance for a poor weak woman, suddenly summoned to quit the scene of her many sorrows, the shrine of the few consolations which time has spared her.

(she turns away and wipes her eyes.)

JOSEPH. (*aside*) Confound her sentimentality! but she shan't wheedle me. I can make every allowance for your feelings, ma'am, as you call 'em, but when you talk of being "suddenly summoned," remember you've had nearly four months to make your arrangements.

MRS. S. Is it possible? can it be four months since you wrote me that letter, so full of indulgence? I have, indeed, sadly encroached on your good nature.

JOSEPH. Pretty well, I think, ma'am. I hope I know what's due to a woman, though I haven't had much experience of the sex. However, ma'am, time is too precious a commodity with me to be wasted, so the sooner we enter on business the better.

MRS. S. With all my heart, but you will find me a sad, helpless creature.

JOSEPH. Helpless ! why, they tell me at the " Red Lion," you're gardener, schoolmistress, pickle-maker, and brewer —no, don't say helpless.

MRS. S. I mean in matters of business. I believe I have some feminine accomplishments, and what accomplishments are so feminine as those that contribute to the comfort of a home and the improvement of the poor?

JOSEPH. Sensibly spoken. I am sure so sensible a woman won't take long to understand that her staying here any longer is out of the question.

MRS. S. I admit that at once.

JOSEPH. That my rights are as clear as the sun at noon-day.

MRS. S. Believe me, my dear sir, nothing is further from my intention than to question them.

JOSEPH. Confound it, ma'am, I don't want you to admit everything—I want you to be satisfied. I've brought my lawyer with me with a copy of the will. The law, you know, is no respector of persons, Mrs. Smylie, nor of sexes either. Justice is blind and ought to be deaf.

MRS. S. Happily you are not justice. You listen to me, I see you do.

JOSEPH. Hang it ! I can't help listening to a lady in her own house—that is—(*pauses embarrassed*)

MRS. S. Still less in your own. Nay, I but interpret your generous thought. (*a pause*) My dear sir, your past kindness makes your wishes law to me. I will see your attorney.

JOSEPH. That's right—then I may as well go for him ; (*rising*) and deuced glad I am to get away—she'd soft sawder a Poor Law Guardian. Eh ? where's my hat ?

MRS. S. One moment, my dear Mr. Ironside. Come, (*winningly*) you will not refuse me one little moment, (*he pauses irresolutely*) I am sure you will not. (*coaxingly*) I am not so very formidable. I have had so few friends, is it any wonder I should cling to those whom kind fortune offers me ?

JOSEPH. (*aside*) Confound her coaxing look ! Well, ma'am, what is it ? (*sits down again*) I'm at your service !

MRS. S. (*sits*) Oh, I'm sure you are, in spite of the affected roughness of your voice and manner. You feel for me, dear Mr. Ironside ! Indeed—indeed, I have need

of sympathy! (*clasps her hands, and looks tearfully in his face*)

JOSEPH. Well, ma'am, I'll give you what I have got—sorry I'm so short of the article. What do you want?

MRS. S. Only a little time to prepare myself for a great struggle. When do you wish me to go?

JOSEPH. Whenever you please—but I should say the sooner the better—nothing like short partings.

MRS. S. True—too true. How well you know the secrets of the heart!

JOSEPH. (*aside*) The deuce I do!

MRS. S. I hope you will not think a week too long. I have so many things to wean myself from—the birds I have trained to come at my call—the flowers I have planted—the bees I have watched at their summer labours—even the hens in the poultry yard have become as friends to me.

JOSEPH. I'll give you time enough for a good cry over every new laid egg in the roost.

MRS. S. Ah, if you knew what deep roots even trees and flowers, and dumb things can strike into a female heart, you would pity me, instead of laughing at me! Indeed—indeed, you would! (*turns away as in tears*)

JOSEPH. (*soothingly*) There—don't cry, my dear Mrs. Smylie—I can't bear to see a woman cry! Hang it—I'm not used to it! Come, dry your eyes, do. You shall have a fortnight.

MRS. S. (*through her tears*) Oh, thanks—thanks!

JOSEPH. A month.

MRS. S. (*through her tears, as before*) Oh, this is too much!

JOSEPH. Confound it! Well, now—I'll give you to the end of the quarter.

MRS. S. Most generous—kindest—best of men! Forgive the emotion that chokes the expression of my gratitude. I shall be better soon, and then you will let me thank you as I ought. Promise me you will.

JOSEPH. Yes, yes. (*rises*) Compose yourself! There, go and dry your eyes, and wash your face—and—

(MRS. SMYLINE indulges in a fresh burst of emotion, and suddenly retires into room, L., after pantomime expressive of her inability to speak)

Confound the woman ! She fairly threw me off my balance ! Who would have thought it would have affected her so much ? Perhaps I have been too rough with her ! After all the good she's done in the place too—and she certainly admitted my rights at once ! I was in hopes she would have stormed—or at least, argued the point ! How is a man to hit at a petticoat, when it offers no resistance ? She's a very pretty woman, too ! (*shaking his head*) Joe Ironside, I think you'd better have stayed away, and trusted this business to your lawyer. (*pauses, and looks at MRS. SMYLINE's portrait, L.*) I'll go and fetch Cunningame.

(*going, R.—sees ROLLINGSTONE.*

Enter ROLLINGSTONE, through window, c., and down, L.
Eh ? Whom have we here ? (*goes down, R.*)

RODOM. (*L., aside*) So, the welcome guest ! Eh ?—if it isn't old Ironside, of Rochdale !

JOSEPH. (*R., aside*) I've seen that face before ! Yes, it's the rascal that tried to do me out of that lot of grey shirtings.

RODOM. (*aside*) Nothing like brass ! (*going up to him*) My dear Mr. Ironside—you recollect me—Rollingstone, you know. Who would have thought of seeing you south of the Trent ?

JOSEPH. Eh, Master Rollingstone ?—better than meeting you north on't, when it comes to ordering goods, at all events.

RODOM. Ah, you allude to that affair of the shirts for the body guard of his Majesty, the King of the Mosquito Shore—a large order, which your fatal want of confidence prevented you from executing. My dear sir, if you knew what you had lost—

JOSEPH. Any way, lad—it's something to know what I haven't lost—and that's the price of the goods.

RODOM. (*seating himself on back of chair*) But my dear sir, consider the splendid opening for trade—a fine, athletic population, in a state of absolute nudity, shrieking for shirts and unmentionables—the mills of Rochdale crying aloud for customers.

JOSEPH. (*R.*) And the millowners crying louder for brass down, good bills, or a satisfactory reference. Now, as you didn't offer brass down—as your bills were queer,

and your references t'other side of satisfactory, I thought it best to decline the order.

RODOM. (L.) Which has since been executed to my entire satisfaction by a more enterprising firm.

JOSEPH. I wish 'em joy of their customer. I hope his Mosquito Majesty was pretty well when you heard of him last!

RODOM. Thank you, he's as well as a potentate with British protectors on the one side, and American fillibusters on the other, can be expected to be. But I had no idea you were a friend of our excellent hostess, Mrs. Sinylie—that it was for you she was making such preparations! I shall scold her for not letting me into the secret.

JOSEPH. Do lad, do !

RODOM. Charming woman, isn't she ?

JOSEPH. D'ye think so, lad? d'ye think so?

RODOM. Nice, snug little property this! (*surveying it.*)

JOSEPH. Uncommon.

RODOM. Improvable, isn't it?

JOSEPH. Well, I do think it is, lad.

RODOM. Ah, close files, you north countrymen.

JOSEPH. Well, we arn't counted fools in a general way!

RODOM. Don't think I'm curious—but as I'm a very particular friend of hers, may I inquire what you're up to? (*standing with his hands on his knees*)

JOSEPH. (*imitating his manner*) Well, you may inquire as you're a particular friend of hers—but as you ain't a particular friend of mine, I shan't tell you. (*rises*) So good morning! (*going up, R.*) And give my best respects to the King of the Musquitos the next time you write to him.

Exit, R. D.

RODOM. (*follows him up to door, then returns to c.*) Confound his low-bred familiarity! He's after the widow—I know he is—I see it in the grin of triumph on his mahogany figurehead. But I flatter myself I know when I've sent home my harpoon—and it shan't be this lubberly cotton-spinner that shall prevent me from hauling my fish safe alongside.

Enter JOHN BRITTON, R. D.

Well, Britton! I've seen the welcome guest—turns out to be an old acquaintance of mine.

JOHN. (*down R.*) My dear fellow, he's come after the widow!

RODOM. Trust an old digger to nose any rascal that means to stick a spade into his claim.

JOHN. Ah, you're terrible chaps, you diggers! What do you mean to do?

RODOM. If we were at Ballarat, I could show you two short cuts. (*imitates action of stabbing and shooting*)

JOHN. You don't mean—

RODOM. Bowie knife or revolver! "You stakes your carcase, my little dear, and you takes your choice!" But in this confounded old country there's society and law, besides an infernally inquisitive police. But if I can't lynch him, at least I can bully him off the premises. I'll challenge him—you shall take the message!

JOHN. Done! I know nothing about challenges except challenging a jury—but you'll put me up to it—I dare say you've fought a duel before this.

RODOM. Fought a duel! I don't think there's a weapon used in single combat, from pen knives to six-shooters, but I have employed with deadly effect. I'm not a boastful man, John Britton, but if there is one thing I pride myself upon, it is the affair of honour. (*aside*) He'll never stand fire—cotton is notoriously incombustible! (*to JOHN*) Come along! I'll put you up to delivering a cartel.

Exit by window, c., to garden, off L.

JOHN. (*R—putting on his gloves*) Capital! If we can only make Ironside beat a retreat! In law, as in war, time's everything! Then if Ironside turns out a fire eater, by Jove, I believe Rollingstone will make himself scarce—or best of all, suppose each frightened away the other! It would be a case of the Kilkenny Cats, minus the fighting.

Exit by window, c., and off L.

Enter SARAH JANE, R. D., shewing in MR. IRONSIDE.

JOSEPH. Tell Mrs. Smylie Mr. Cunningame is here.

SARAH. Please sir—yes!

Exit L. D.

JOSEPH. Now, this way, Cunningame.

Enter CUNNINGAME, R. D.

I want you to explain the will to her. You say it makes out my rights as clear as daylight?

CUNNING. (R.) Ah! I hope so—but do you know, Mr. Ironside, I heard something at the Red Lion just now—

JOSEPH. (L. C.) Eh?

CUNNING. It appears testatrix's next of kin has turned up—the vagabond nephew, Rollingstone—you remember she once said something about a will in his favour.

JOSEPH. A nephew, eh? The chap I met this morning—this accounts for his pumping me.

CUNNING. Bless me, Mr. Ironside! you never allowed yourself to be pumped?

JOSEPH. Working the handle is one thing—getting water is another! Trust me for keeping my own council.

CUNNING. Perhaps, while I am with the widow, you might as well try and find out what this nephew is really after.

JOSEPH. I will—don't be harsh with her, Cunningame. (*pauses*) She's a poor, helpless sort of body, and the least bullying upsets her. (*pauses again*) So be gentle—but firm—firm—and don't let her wheedle you.

CUNNING. Wheedle me! Mr. Ironside, I've had a large experience of the sex in general, and widows in particular. The late Mrs. Cunningame was a widow when I married her! That estimable woman spent the best part of our wedded life in trying to wheedle me, (*pauses*) but without effect. I have reason to think the disappointment accelerated her end.

JOSEPH. Well, the proverb says—"Where there's a will there's a way"—you've got the will! (*tapping Cunningame's papers*) find the way as you best can.

Exit R. D.

CUNNING. Now for a formidable array of papers! (*unfolds his papers*) I have observed the sex have a horror of documents.

Enter MRS. SMYLIE, L. D., with a paper in her hand—her manner throughout this scene is a contrast from that assumed during her interview with IRONSIDE—she is alert, brisk, and determined—CUNNINGAME places chair L. of R. table, for MRS. SMYLIE—she sits—he then goes to R. of table, and sits.

MRS. S. Ah, Mr. Cunningame! Mr. Ironside prepared me for a very formidable interview. But I can't

think there can be anything in this case really difficult for two clear heads.

CUNNING. Why, my dear madam, as you expressed in your letters such a total inability to comprehend the commonest legal phraseology—

MRS. S. Oh, I've been studying the law of wills since then, Mr. Cunningame! I've found it so entertaining you can't think!

CUNNING. No—really—

MRS. S. Do you know, I fancy the law must be the most delightful of professions!

CUNNING. So I always say, my dear madam, when silly people talk of it as dull and dry—so the sooner we go into the papers, the better. (*opens his papers*)

MRS. S. I have a copy of the will and codicil, you know—I've noted a few points here, on which I think we may require a little discussion. (*looks at paper*)

CUNNING. (*aside*) A helpless sort of a body! What could Mr. Ironside be thinking of? She's evidently a most superior woman! Our title, my dear madam, as you are probably aware, rests on the will of the late Mrs. Jane Weathercock, duly executed and dated August 18th, one thousand eight hundred and forty-eight.

MRS. S. I may have a word to say about that, bye and bye—but let me hear your case.

CUNNING. There is—*inter alia*—a devise by the testatrix to her dear and faithful friend, Mrs. Emilia Smylie, widow, &c., &c., of a certain messuage or tenement, called or known by the name of "Fairfield Cottage," with the curtilage, yards, gardens, tenements—

MRS. S. Pass over the pigstyes!

CUNNING. Which devise is, as you are aware, revoked by a codicil—

MRS. S. I admit execution of codicil—go on!

CUNNING. Then we come to the revocation of the entire will!

MRS. S. I admit that, too!

CUNNING. Then the next step in the case is the revival of the will, without express declaration of intention to revive gift to legatee, so that the codicil revoking your legacy still remains operative, and you are thus, by clear course of law, ousted of all right to Fairfield Cottage.

MRS. S. Your exposition of the case is most masterly—at the same time you are aware that this revocation was against the intention of testatrix.

CUNNING. Oh, intention—(*contemptuously*) that is quite admitted.

MRS. S. So that my claim being defeated by technical operation of law, you will grant I am justified in employing the technicalities of law to defend myself.

CUNNING. My dear madam, I admit that at once—nothing can be fairer. (*aside*) She's a most superior woman, and uncommonly good-looking into the bargain.

MRS. S. Now, suppose, Mr. Cunningame—I say suppose—it were my intention to dispute the will altogether.

CUNNING. Dispute the will? But how, my dear madam—on what point?

MRS. S. The statute 1 Vic. cap. 25. directs that testator's name is to be signed at the foot or end of the will. Now, if you examine the original document at Doctors' Commons, as I have done, you will see there is at least two inches between the last word of the will and the signature. You are aware it has been held in the leading case of *Quillet v. Quirk*, that the leaving such a space was not in compliance with the statute, and the will was therefore void.

CUNNING. (*aside*) She's hit the blot! Really, my dear madam, I was not prepared for this. But suppose you do defeat the will, the heir-at-law would step in, as in case of intestacy. *You won't take anything.*

MRS. S. He would probably be too glad to carry out the intentions of the testatrix by leaving me in quiet possession of the cottage.

CUNNING. My dear madam, I can only say, if he did, it would be a most proper return for your acuteness in taking the point.

MRS. S. You admit there's something in it, then?

CUNNING. Something in it! if I were not acting as attorney for Mr. Ironside, I should say that it was a monstrous strong point indeed.

MRS. S. Ah, Mr. Cunningame, why are you Mr. Ironside's solicitor, instead of mine—not for this suit as to

the validity of the will, merely—though that would be a long business.

CUNNING. I believe you! why, it would be in the Ecclesiastical Court, you know. (*aside*) Costs enormous, and payable out of the estate—a thousand pounds, at least in my pocket.

MRS. S. We should probably have other legal proceedings growing out of this.

CUNNING. Not a doubt of it! a whole harvest of issues raised, perhaps—who knows, a bill in chancery, perhaps.

MRS. S. Nothing more likely. *I* should certainly set up an equitable claim to the cottage, if the nephew failed to acquiesce in my possession. Need I say how gladly I would avail myself of your services as my solicitor?

CUNNING. My dear madam—(*aside*) A chancery suit! my fortune would be made!

MRS. S. Our business intercourse would be so different from the usual dry, distant dealing of attorney and client. With our congeniality of disposition, our relish for legal discussion—but I forget, the difference of our sexes makes any further dwelling on this aspect of the case unbecoming.

CUNNING. By no means, my dear Mrs. Smylie. On the contrary, there is nothing in the prospect you have so suddenly opened which so much tempts me as the intimate relations it would establish between us. (*drawing his chair a little closer*)

MRS. S. Oh, Mr. Cunningame! you mustn't flatter a poor weak woman—our heads are so soon turned.

CUNNING. It would take a deal of flattery to turn your head, my dear madam. But you really have put this business, in which I have been acting for Mr. Ironside, in quite a new light. I see now how odious his position is—how much you are to be pitied, as well as admired. (*moves his chair still closer, after looking cautiously round*) Between ourselves, the position of the signature of testatrix is not the only flaw in the will. I have reason to believe, it could be proved that the testatrix turned round in bed just as the last witness signed, so that the will wasn't signed in her presence, as the law most properly requires. I have no

doubt I shall be able to find out other weak points, on careful inspection.

MRS. S. Ah, if you were not hampered by your confidential position with regard to Mr. Ironside--

CUNNING. (*rising*) Madam, the tie of attorney and client, happily for the interests of justice and humanity, is not indissoluble. I owe something to Mr. Ironside, but more to my own conscience--more to my feeling for you, my dear madam--something even to my professional interests, which may be so much advanced by acting for the defendant, if I may be allowed the expression, instead of the plaintiff. In short, my dear Mrs. Smylie, (*Mrs. SMYLINE rises*) if I only felt that you would smile approval on my efforts, that the services of the attorney might not be unavailing to plead for the man--

MRS. S. (*blushing and looking down*) Really, my dear Mr. Cunningame--

CUNNING. I understand that blush, my dear madam. (*she smiles*) That smile--what could it not accomplish with Nathaniel Cunningame! (*seizing up his papers*) Let what has passed between us be considered strictly confidential--I will look over the papers again, and let you know of any *more* defects I may discover in Mr. Ironside's most iniquitous title.

MRS. S. You'll find a retired summerhouse in the garden, Mr. Cunningame--

CUNNING. Till then, adieu, most intelligent, most interesting, most ill-used of women! (*goes up towards window, c., then aside*) The third Mrs. Cunningame--and worth the other two put together! *Exit c., and off L.*

MRS. S. Victory! Thanks to mother wit, and John Britton's lesson, never was so little law made to go such a long way. Cerberus has bolted his sop--his bark is silenced, and his bite disarmed! The treacherous old monster! And he positively ventures to engrave love on law too. No, no, Mr. Cunningame. I demur to your declaration decidedly. Poor dear Mr. Ironside; with all his roughness, his heart is in the right place. I quite pity him. With Mr. Cunningame for his friend and Mrs. Smylie for his enemy, he's between two fires, and I hardly know which is the hottest.

Enter SARAH JANE, R. D.

SARAH. Mr. Ironside, please m'm—

MRS. S. Very well! (*looking out of window*) Yonder sits the old fox in the arbour. Shall I unmask him at once? Ah! here comes Mr. Rollingstone—what shall I do? I can't receive him and Mr. Ironside together—their two Mrs. Smylies are such very different people. Still there would be no harm if the one saw the other in the act of adoration. (*to SARAH JANE, who is up at back, R.*) Show in Mr. Ironside!

SARAH. Yes, please, m'm.

Exit R. D.

Enter ROLLINGSTONE from the garden c. from L.

MRS. S. (L.) Ah, Rod—Mr. Rollingstone!

RODOM. (*coming down R.*) Say Rodomont, and let me say Emilia. Yes, hear me renew the vows which the arrival of that intruder interrupted this morning—thus at your feet—(*he kneels*)

Enter IRONSIDE, R. D.

MRS. S. (*seeing IRONSIDE*) Oh, goodness gracious!

(*she gives a faint scream, and runs off into her room,*
L. D.—ROLLINGSTONE rises and sits with his chair reversed, L. C.)

JOSEPH. (*up the stage R.—aside*) The nephew on his knees to the widow—the impudent rascal! (*coming down, R.*) Sorry to interrupt your *tête à tête*, young man—I expected to find Mrs. Smylie in conversation with a lawyer, not a lover.

RODOM. (L., aside) My rival! You must perceive, Mr. Ironside, you are rather too late in the field. I think when you know what are my pretensions in this quarter—

JOSEPH. I've just been making inquiry, (*a pause*) and know all about 'em.

RODOM. In that case, I think the best thing you can do is to quit the field.

JOSEPH. D'ye think so? And give you up possession, eh? (*sits, R. C.*)

RODOM. Precisely my meaning.

JOSEPH. Then I tell you I shan't do anything of the kind—I don't value your pretensions that—

(*snapping his finger and thumb*)

RODOM. Beware, old man ! The party who interferes in my diggins must take the consequences.

JOSEPH. I'm ready for 'em, We'll see which cries peccavi first.

RODOM. Then I beg to refer you to my friend, John Britton. Doomed cotton spinner, you little know the man you have defied ! *Exit c., and off L.*

JOSEPH. Doomed puppy ! John Britton ? That's the young lawyer I met here this morning. So, the nephew means to contest the will, does he—very well ! Ah, here comes Cunningame !

Enter CUNNINGAME, c. and down L.

JOSEPH. (R.) Just the man I wanted. Well, this Rollingstone means to fight us. He's to send his lawyer. You reeeeive him here ? (*rises*)

CUNNING. (L.) Hadn't you better stay and hear their ease ?

JOSEPH. No ; set a thief to catch a thief, you know—lawyer to lawyer's all fair. You talk to him ; I'll go and walk in the garden till you've had your palaver out.

(*going up c., CUNNINGAME crosses to R.*

Re-enter JOHN BRITTON, c. from L., meeting IRONSIDE.

JOHN. (L. C.) Mr. Ironside, I come, as Mr. Rollingstone's friend—

JOSEPH. (C.) I know your business ; talk to my friend, here, (*pointing to CUNNINGAME*) I leave everything to him. *Exit c., off L.*

CUNNING. (R.—*aside*) The nephew's legal adviser.

JOHN. (C.—*aside*) Mr. Ironside's friend. So, sir, it seems you have full authority to settle everything for Mr. Ironside—so have I for Mr. Rollingstone. Where two directly contrary claims are set up, I'm afraid apology, compromise or arrangement is quite out of the question.

CUNNING. I'm quite of your opinion, sir ; the matter must be settled by action.

JOHN. Exactly my friend's wish, and the sooner the better.

CUNNING. Of course you'll take the first step, as you mean to contest the lady's will.

JOHN. On the contrary, we say the lady's will is distinctly in our favour.

CUNNING. I have the instruments all ready.

(goes up to table, and opens his bag.)

JOHN. Why he can't have got the pistols in that blue bag.

CUNNING. You don't mean to pretend you've an instrument anterior to this of the eighteenth of August, one thousand eight hundred and forty-eight, on which my client rests his claim?

JOHN. Mr. Ironsides rests his claim to Mrs. Smylie's hand on an instrument dated the 18th of August, 1848?

CUNNING. His claim to Mrs. Smylie's hand?

JOHN. Yes, that claim which my friend is determined to resist; for which purpose he sent me here to settle with you the time and place.

CUNNING. Of a trial at law?

JOHN. No, of a trial by battle.

CUNNING. A duel! and you a lawyer? Oh, sir, I blush for you.

JOHN. What—you won't fight?

CUNNING. Won't we, though? but it must be with the proper legal instruments—as much parchment as you like, but no powder and shot.

JOHN. But who ever heard of two rivals settling their claims to a lady's hand by an action at law?

CUNNING. But we don't set up any claim to the lady's hand. It's the cottage we want, with curtilage, lands, gardens, closes, orchards, tenements, and hereditaments thereunto appertaining and belonging.

JOHN. And it's the lady *we* want—with the caps, bonnets, flounces, fallals, and crinolines, thereunto appertaining and belonging. I must explain this mistake to my principal.

CUNNING. Do, sir, by all means. I'll manage to satisfy him out of my blue bag. (*goes to table, and rummages bag*)

JOHN. (*aside*) I promised Mrs. Smylie I wouldn't tell Rollingstone the cottage wasn't hers—Cunningham shall, and then he'll vanish, I know. Here he comes!

Enter ROLLINGSTONE, through window, from L., down L.

(c.) My dear Rollingstone, we're in error here. Mr. Ironside's friend and legal adviser has just explained to

me that that gentleman has no pretensions to the hand of Mrs. Smylie.

CUNNING. (R.) Certainly not! We only wish to get possession of this cottage.

RODOM. (L.) Possession of this cottage—eh? By what right?

CUNNING. The right of ownership. My client claims the cottage as residuary legatee under your aunt's will.

RODOM. Why, you don't mean to say that this cottage is not Mrs. Smylie's property?

CUNNING. Certainly not.

RODOM. (*aside*) Eh, John—is this true?

JOHN. I'm afraid it is! I thought you knew all about it!

RODOM. (*aside*) A precious fool I've been making of myself! Pray what did Mrs. Smylie inherit from the elderly Weathercock?

JOHN. Nothing at all. Mrs. Smylie's fortune is six hundred pounds a-year, derived from property left in trust for her by her late husband.

RODOM. (*aside*) Six hundred a-year! Come, that's not bad, neither.

CUNNING. (*aside*) A nice little income!

JOHN. But which she forfeits if she marries again.

CUNNING. (*aside*) Oh, dear!

RODOM. (*aside*) The deuce she does!

CUNNING. (*aside*) But there's the connection.

RODOM. (*aside*) My dear Britton, are you certain of that?

JOHN. Yes, she showed me the clause in the will of the late lamented Smylie. Ah, how gratifying it must be to know that no one can attribute your advances to a mercenary motive.

RODOM. Yes, highly gratifying—amazingly gratifying! But still, a fellow should think twice before he compromises the future of such a woman. You know money-making has not been my object in life, Britton. I have been where the dross is dug, my dear fellow—and I know how much dirt you must go through to get at it. Inclination says "Marry her," but duty—duty—duty shakes its head, and—I'll just smoke a cigar, till duty and inclination have settled the point between them.

Exit into garden, L. C.

JOHN. (*crossing to R., aside*) Bravo! We've got rid of Don Whiskerandos.

CUNNING. (L. C.) A mercenary party that, I'm afraid, Mr. Britton.

JOHN. Decidedly. Mrs. Smylie may be grateful for her escape!

Enter IRONSIDE, through window, L. C.

JOSEPH. (*coming down, c.*) Well, have you two lawyers had your wrangle out?

CUNNING. (L.) It's all a mistake, sir. Mr. Rollingstone doesn't set up any claim to the property. He was after the widow, and thought you were his rival.

JOSEPH. (*awkwardly*) Me—his rival—me! Pooh-pooh! Poor woman! I saw how matters were, when I caught him at her feet just now. Why, the fellow's little better than a swindler! Somebody should open her eyes—it would be a thousand pities such a kind, good, amiable creature, should throw herself away on a vagabond like this!

CUNNING. So it would.

JOSEPH. (*to JOHN*) Do you think she likes him?

JOHN. I hope not—but there's no saying, with ladies of a certain age—(*shaking his head*) you know. Ah, sir, if you would only speak to her—she has such a respect for you.

JOSEPH. (*interested*) Has she?

JOHN. I never heard a woman speak of a man in terms of more regard than she did of you this afternoon—of your kindness—your considerateness.

JOSEPH. Well, well, well! (*flattered*) No occasion to repeat all her nonsense, poor thing! But if I can expose this fellow—

Enter MRS. SMYLIE, L. D.

JOHN. Here is Mrs. Smylie. Come along, Mr. Cunnингame—let's leave Mr. Ironside to deal with her.

CUNNING. (*aside*) Oh, there can't be any danger from him!

Exeunt JOHN BRITTON and CUNNINGAME through window, off L. C.

MRS. S. (L.) Oh, Mr. Ironside, what must you think of me? I blush to see you, after—(*she pauses embarrassed*).

JOSEPH. (R.) After being caught with a man kneeling at your feet, eh? It's not the lady who ought to blush on

these occasions. Make no apologies, ma'am—men will make fools of themselves—and what's worse—men will make fools of you!

MRS. S. Ah, Mr. Ironside—we are the slaves of our affections!

JOSEPH. And the victims of our rascality. My dear Mrs. Smylie—we are but recent acquaintances, and perhaps you may think my interference in your affairs impertinent.

MRS. S. Oh, no—believe me—I take it as a proof of your interest in me.

JOSEPH. Then will you allow me to ask if that young man has proposed to you?

MRS. S. (*blushingly*) Yes.

JOSEPH. And you have accepted him?

MRS. S. You came in at such a critical moment.

JOSEPH. I'm glad of it, if it stopped your "Yes!" Depend upon it, my dear Mrs. Smylie, you had better not let this matter go further—this man will not make you happy.

MRS. S. Do not say that, dear Mr. Ironside—do not add weight to the ominous whispers of my own heart.

JOSEPH. Eh? Then you have had your doubts of him?

MRS. S. Alas! too many.

JOSEPH. Then may I ask how you came to encourage him—to let him go so far?

MRS. S. Oh, sir, need you ask the question? Am I not a woman—without a friend—without a counsellor—without a home.

JOSEPH. Don't say without a friend. Sit down—I beg of you—sit down—I'm a rough man—but I can assure you that you will always find a friend in me. (*he places chair, c.—they sit*) And as for a home—lord save us! you're very comfortable here!

MRS. S. (L.) Yes, while you generously allow me the shelter of your roof. But in a week from this time I must go forth alone, to battle with the world—to take root as best I may, in cold and unfamiliar soil. It's a chilly prospect to a woman, Mr. Ironside, to one who needs a strong arm to lean on—a clear head to guide—a loving voice to counsel her. These are what we look for in a husband.

JOSEPH. And do you suppose you'll find them in this vagabond?

MRS. S. We women have a power of hoping, even against hope—at least, he will give me a home—and I will try to make it so cheerful, and so bright for him, that he must needs love me—a—little. (*timidly*)

JOSEPH. (*moving closer to her*) By Jove, if he isn't a scoundrel he'll love you a great deal. But I'm afraid he's a mercenary dog—that he seeks you for your fortune—

MRS. S. I forfeit it by marriage. But I am willing to risk poverty for a home and a husband.

JOSEPH. A home—which, do what you will, he may make miserable, squalid, and comfortless.

MRS. S. It will still be home.

JOSEPH. A husband who may turn out selfish, sulky, a swearer, a sot—

MRS. S. He will still be my husband.

JOSEPH. But consider, my dear madam—you're throwing yourself away, and on a fellow who won't appreciate, much less repay, the sacrifice. If you must marry, madam surely, with your good looks—your attractiveness—your intelligence, you might get a better husband than this vagabond. Wait, ma'am, wait—look about you—you'll see—(*rises*) something will turn up.

MRS. S. Ah! do not flatter me! at my age the chance does not come so often that we can hope to choose. But you have kindly given me a warning, (*rises*) let me give you one in return. Beware of your attorney!

JOSEPH. Cunningame!

MRS. S. He is ready to betray *your* interest whenever and wherever he may think it *his* interest to so.

JOSEPH. The deuce he is! (*slapping his thigh*) I always hated law and lawyers! But how did you find this out?

MRS. S. In my interview with him just now. You know we women are quick to read characters. By addressing myself to his cupidity, his hopes of litigation, I drew him on till he not only admitted all the weak points my lawyer had pointed out in your case, but set himself diligently to work to find out new ones.

JOSEPH. The rascal! why, he said there were no weak points in my case.

MRS. S. I fear there are.

JOSEPH. Fear? you mean you are glad of it?

MRS. S. Why should I be? I do not intend to avail myself of them. I have already trespassed long enough on your generosity, without putting you to the costly delays of law. No, no, in a week from this, I will go forth—homeless, but hopeful; and whether alone, or on a husband's arm, now and ever grateful to you, my dear Mr. Ironside, for all your past kindness, and for your present counsel: so now we are quits—warning for warning. Good-bye, good-bye!

(offers him her hand—he takes it mechanically, and holds it a moment, grasping it hard.)

JOSEPH. Good bye! (pauses)

MRS. S. Have you anything more to say?

JOSEPH. No, no! (MRS. SMYLINE looks towards her hand, which he is still holding, he kisses it—she goes up towards L. D., stops, and turns) But, Mrs.—

MRS. S. Eh?

JOSEPH. No—nought. Exit MRS. SMYLINE, L. D. (after a pause, and looking at Mrs. Smylie's picture, L.) Oh, if I only durst! Was there ever such a noble, disinterested creature! instead of taking advantage of this fellow's rascality, she puts me on my guard against it! And how touching it was to hear her talk of home in that way. What a home she'd make. What a charming place she has made of this, though she hadn't a husband to work for! Oh, dear! oh, dear! why didn't I know her ten years ago? It is too late now—for me, I mean—not for her. I wouldn't have her a day younger. And to think of a jewel like this being thrown away upon a swine like Rollingstone! At all events, she shan't be driven to it by want of a home. (striking table) I'll settle this cottage upon her, and the Elmhurst Farm, besides. (sits R. C.) It's a big gift, but it mun be done.

Enter KATIE, R. D.

My dear, go and find young Britton—bring him here directly.

KATIE. Yes, Mr. Ironside—he's in the garden. (aside) How very kindly he spoke to me.

Exit KATIE through window and off, L.

JOSEPH. Yes, he shall draw a deed of gift—short and simple—if the law will allow of such a thing.

Re-enter KATIE, with JOHN BRITTON, from L. C.

Sit down here and draw me a deed of gift of this cottage and the Elmhurst Farm, as brief as you can make it. I suppose you lawyers can be short sometimes.

JOHN. (*sits at table, l. c.*) I'll turn you out a conveyance that would delight the Law Amendment Society, and throw an old equity draughtsman into convulsions. (*writes*)

KATIE. (*L. C.*) Giving away the cottage! (*fiercely*) Well, but, sir, it isn't yours to give.

JOSEPH. (*seated, R. C.*) What, do you mean to dispute my rights, wench?

KATIE. No, but auntie does.

JOSEPH. Before you get into a passion, my dear young lady, whom do you think I mean to give it to? Guess!

KATIE. Oh, I shan't do anything of the kind.

JOSEPH. Try—try!

KATIE. I shan't!

JOHN. What name shall I insert?

JOSEPH. This young lady's aunt—Mrs. Smylie—I don't know her christian name.

KATIE. Auntie! what, do you really mean to give auntie the cottage. Oh, how dear—how darling of you. Oh, I wish you'd let me give you a hearty smack.

JOSEPH. Do, my dear! come along, I've no objection.

(KATIE leaps on his neck and kisses him.)

JOHN. Katie! now, sir! (*remonstrating*) Here you are, short and sweet.

JOSEPH. (*taking paper, and reading it*) This is the first piece of lawyer's writing I ever understood in my life.

JOHN. Now, if you'll execute the deed, put your finger here, and say, "I deliver this as my act and deed."

JOSEPH. (*signs, &c.*) "I deliver this as my act and deed." (*goes to c.*)

JOHN. We'll witness it! (*JOHN and KATIE sign paper*) —JOHN gives paper to JOSEPH)

JOSEPH. You give Mrs. Smylie the deed—say it was Joe Ironside's parting present.

JOHN. (c.) But you'll see her—you'll let her thank you?

JOSEPH. No, no I'd rather not. (*crosses to R. c.*) The sooner I'm out of this, the better, (*aside*) or I shall be sticking here for life. (*shakes hands with JOHN, goes up, c., then stops—to KATIE*) You may take another smack, if you like. (*she does so*) She's very like her aunt.

Exit hastily by window, off R.

KATIE. (*hugging JOHN BRITTON*) Oh, my dear John! I am so happy!

JOHN. (*L. c.*) Yes! and happiness with you seems at once to translate itself into hugging! It's all very well when I'm the huggee, but the promiscuous practice is objectionable.

KATIE. Oh! but I am so happy—I could hug anybody—(*ROLLINGSTONE appears at window, c. from R., and listens*) Even that horrid Mr. Rollingstone!

JOHN. Mind, he mustn't know that old Ironside has given the Cottage and Elmhurst Farm to your aunt, or he'll be renewing his addresses to her—I've had no end of trouble in getting rid of him!

KATIE. The mercenary wretch! I hate him!

JOHN. Let's take the deed to your aunt—how happy it will make her—and I say, Katie, we can get spliced directly!

Exeunt JOHN BRITTON and KATIE, L. D.

Enter ROLLINGSTONE, C.

RODOM. So the widow will have the Cottage after all—and a farm into the bargain! I wonder how she gammoned old Ironside out of the deed! So, Master John, you flatter yourself Rodomont Rollingstone is out of the betting, eh? I'll show you this chief is still upon the hunting path. Everything's open—I may still pop with a disinterested countenance. (*he retires up, R. c.*) Here she is!

Enter MRS. SMYLIE, L. D., and crosses to R.

MRS. S. How little I expected this! And this is the man I thought it a pleasant sport to trifle with in masquerade—the man I imagined a sordid and selfish enemy! How much the nobler he is of us two.

RODOM. (*aside, up L. c.*) Come—I can't stand any more of this! (*comes forward, L.*) My Emilia!

MRS. S. Mr. Rollingstone!

RODOM. Mr—what has become of the Rodomont of this morning? Why this coldness—this constraint?

MRS. S. John Britton has informed me of what passed between you a quarter of an hour ago—your discovery that I was not mistress of this Cottage—and your very intelligible change of tone thereupon. It was natural—you thought you were courting a substantial freeholder—

RODOM. Emilia, can you believe your Rodomont influenced by motives so sordid? No! He asked your hand when he believed you rich—he asks it still, now he knows you are poor.

MRS. S. (*aside*) I'll test him! You are sincere in this?

RODOM Does not this renewal of my offer prove it? Oh, grant my request, and make me the happiest of men!

MRS. S. Rodomont, I am not so poor as you think me. I hold a deed of gift of this Cottage, and a farm besides, from Mr. Ironside. Look! here it is. (*takes out deed*)

Enter IRONSIDE, from garden, r. c., and remains at back.

JOSEPH. (*aside*) I can't leave the place without seeing her. Eh! that vagabond still here!

RODOM. (l.) Is it possible! (*looking at deed*) Signed—sealed—witnessed! Ah, it's lucky I was not informed of this sooner! Now, none can call me sordid. Emilia, I love you not for house or land, I love you for yourself alone!

MRS. S. Oh, how glad I am to know it! Yes, Rodomont, you wooed me poor—you must win me penniless! None shall be able to throw doubt on the unselfishness of your love. (*about to tear up deed*)

JOSEPH. (*aside, at back*) Bravo!

RODOM. (*aside*) Confound it! Don't, Emilia! don't be rash—what are you about? Would you deprive yourself of a valuable property in this absurd way?

MRS. S. Yes! Thus do I renounce Mr. Ironside's gift! (*tears up deed into small pieces*)

RODOM. Do you mean this?

MRS. S. I do!

RODOM. Honour—bright?

MRS. S. Yes, my Rodomont! for your sake.

RODOM. But I won't take advantage of your sacrifice! I, too, have some generosity about me. By what right should I link a gentle, delicately nurtured woman to my

wild and wandering fortunes? No! With the Cottage to reside in—a farm to cultivate—perhaps you might have fettered me; but once loose upon the world, and the torrent will have its rush, the wild horse his boundless prairie, and his free pasturage. No, Emilia! take an older—a tamer—a less romantic mate. There's old Ironside—you've torn up his deed of gift—but you might find it a good spec to invest your affections in his three per cents.

MRS. S. Mr. Rollingstone, you will oblige me by not ridiculing a generosity you cannot comprehend, and indulging your very questionable wit upon qualities we might, both of us, with greater advantage, have more of. (*crosses to L. C.*) I respect Mr. Ironside's name too much to allow it to be bandied between us.

RODOM. As you please—only I thought as you had evidently hooked the old gentleman, you couldn't do better than land him.

MRS. S. Mr. Rollingstone, you are impertinent! Mr. Ironside has no affection for me. (*IRONSIDE comes forward, L.*) Mr. Ironside! you here!

JOSEPH. (*L.*) That's the first wrong thing you've said since I've been listening to you. Joe Ironside has an affection for you, more than he thought he ever could have for any woman. You began—

MRS. S. By an unworthy deception—by assuming a weakness and helplessness I did not feel.

JOSEPH. (*L. C.*) I was a rhinoceros! Nothing less would have gone through my hide. But, however you began, you have ended in earnest, and in earnest Joe Ironside offers you his hand. I'm rough, and hard—

MRS. S. But not hard *here!* (*indicating his heart*)

JOSEPH. You accept? (*MRS. SMYLIE takes his hand*) I say, young chap, don't you think you had better go and offer your valuable services to the King of the Mosquitos?

RODOM. (*R., seated on table*) I go to the happy hunting grounds—there are widows as fat and as fair in other prairies! I will strike one, and eat meat!

Enter CUNNINGAME from window, L. C., and down R. with will in his hand.

CUNNING. (*R.*) Now to put the widow up to our weak

points! Eh! (*sees IRONSIDE with MRS. SMYLIE on his arm*) What's the meaning of this?

JOSEPH. It means that plaintiff and defendant have agreed to a friendly compromise.

CUNNING. Without consulting your legal adviser?

JOSEPH. On the contrary, I *have* consulted my legal adviser—here he comes!

Enter JOHN BRITTON and KATIE, L. D. and down, L.

John Britton, vice Cunningame, cashiered for a rogue.
Oh, you rascally old snake in the grass!

CUNNING. Snake in the grass! that's actionable. I'll have my action for libel.

JOHN. We'll justify, plead it's true, and that it's for the public benefit the character of the reptile should be known.

CUNNING. I'll upset the will!

JOSEPH. I'll upset you!

CUNNING. I'll upset the will! Mr. Rollingstone, put yourself in my hands—you have the law in your favour, sir.

RODOM. Then sound the war-whoop! (*imitates war-whoop*) Let the strife begin!

JOSEPH. Pooh, pooh! You've brass enough, but where's your tin?

CUNNING. (*aside*) I'll even give up costs, so keen my hate is.

(*to ROLLINGSTONE*) My dear sir, I'll conduct your action gratis!

JOHN. That's unprofessional! Be on your guard;

Only *good* actions are their own reward.

MRS. S. Take my advice. (*all seem surprised*) You stare?
Rely on't, few men

Can equal us in lawyer-like acumen.

KATIE. I'm sure there's not a lawyer of the crew
Can plead, dear auntie, half as well as you.

MRS. S. Reflect, your declaration 'ere you draw
That we've possession—"Nine Points of the Law."
Only one point remains—(*to audience*)—that's your applause.

You give it? Good! Then we have won our cause.

CUNNING, RODOM. MRS. S. JOSEPH. KATIE. JOHN.
R.

CURTAIN.

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