

AFTER ALL!

Written by

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Dramatis Personæ

PENNYFATHER, *A Solicitor*

SELWORTHY, *His Friend*

MARIA, *Pennyfather's Servant*

AFTER ALL!

SCENE. PENNYFATHER'S *Drawing-room*. *French windows at back, opening on suburban garden. Table, R.C. Arm-chair, C. Another arm-chair, R. of table. Small table, L. Sideboard with clock, L.C. Door, L.*

(*As the curtain rises SELWORTHY enters L., followed by MARIA.*)

MARIA. What name shall I say, sir?

SELWORTHY. Oh, never mind the name; say "a gentleman from Mexico."

MARIA. Very well, sir. (*Exit MARIA, L.*)

SEL. (*seating himself, C.*) Well, this is better than a hut in the Terra Caliente, or the saloon of a Cunard boat in a gale. Here I am, back again in old England! I wonder if Pennyfather will know me? I wonder if he's much altered? At all events, I'll be bound he's the same dear, good fellow as ever, and the very man to assist me in my search for my Perdita — the dear girl whose image I have borne in my heart, and whose portrait I have carried in my breast-pocket through ten weary years of wandering and adventure. (*Takes out miniature.*) Here it is! (*Kisses it.*) And this flower — and this lock of hair that she gave me when we parted (*taking out paper parcel and kissing it*). (*Overcome by his emotions*). Oh, Perdita, my darling Perdita! I *must* clasp you in my arms, once again, and for ever!

BALLAD.— SELWORTHY.

My love I lov'd across the sea, ...
If you could know that I was nigh
Your spirit wafted on a sigh,
Would fly in rapture back to me.
Oh, pictured forms in time decay,
And flowers may wither, locks grow grey,
But love can never fade away
True, true love!

My love I loved across the sea!
Like swallow surely flying home,
Athwart the flash, across the foam,
I come, I come, again to thee!
For truant feet may go astray
And flowers and fancies fade away
But love with me is love for aye
True, true love!

(*Enter PENNYFATHER, L.*)

PEN. You'll excuse my keeping you waiting, sir, but the fact is —

SEL. Why, Pennyfather, old boy, don't you know me?

PEN. Oh, of course, yes; how d'ye do? (*Shaking hands.*) I say, though — who are you?

SEL. Don't you remember Harry Selworthy?

PEN. (*putting on pince-nez*) Why of course I do! (*Shaking hands.*) But — how much you're altered! Ah, yes, of course — it's the beard. Sit down, sit down; I've very glad to see you, very glad indeed. (SEL. *sits* C. PEN. *stands* R., *regarding him.*) And what have you been doing with yourself since I saw you?

SEL. You know I left England intending to invest that legacy of mine in cattle-farming in America.

PEN. And did you do so? (*Sitting* R. *of table.*)

SEL. (*with assumed indifference*). Yes. Went into partnership with a Western man; I found the capital, he the experience.

PEN. And how did you get on?

SEL. Oh, the old story. In six months *he* had the capital and *I* had the experience.

PEN. Dear me! What did you do next?

SEL. Bought a toothbrush and a revolver, and went down to Texas.

PEN. What did you do there?

SEL. The first thing I did was to shoot a sheriff. People were so delighted with my spirit of enterprise, that they offered me his berth.

PEN. Do you take it?

SEL. No. Played euchre same night with a silver-miner, my toothbrush against his boots; won his boots. Played him toothbrush and boots against his shirt; won that. Played him toothbrush, boots, and shirt against his braces; won again. Played toothbrush, boots, shirt and braces against his —

PEN. (*looking round*). S-s-s-h!

SEL. Well, I won the entire outfit.

PEN. What did you do then?

SEL. Crossed over the Rio Grande into Mexico. They were getting up a Revolution there, and, as I had two shirts, they made me Governor.

PEN. Did you govern long?

SEL. No. I collected the revenues as quickly as possible, and abdicated one night down the river in a canoe; invested in sheep-farming, made money, took ship for England, and — here I am!

PEN. Well, after doing all that, I dare say you'd like a brandy and soda. (*Going to bell on table, back of R.C.*)

SEL. I shouldn't mind. And what have *you* been doing?

PEN. Oh, the old drudgery. (*Rings.*)

SEL. Ah, you business-men always grumble at your professions, but I know you really love them.

PEN. We're obliged to stick to them; but there's no love lost between us. It's just like — but you know the ordinary routine of a solicitor's existence? (*Returning, and coming forward, R.C.*)

SEL. Not in the least. (*Rising*)

PEN. Then allow me to inform you.

THE SOLICITOR'S SONG

Up a little early, take a little tub,
Make a little splutter, do a little rub;

Have a little breakfast, make a little fuss.
All arrangements make fast, catch a little bus.
In a little chamber up a little stair,
When the clients clamber they always find me there.

That's the way from day to day, like a busy bee,
Making money, storing honey, by my indus-*tree*.

Coming in at ten o'clock, going out at four,
(Sometimes rather later, never much before),
Hearing little cases, taking little fees,
Finding out my clients imperfections by degrees;
Doing little dodges on an clever little plan,
Using opportunities like any other man:

That's the way from day to day, like a busy bee,
Making money, storing honey, by my indus-*tree*.

PEN. (*striking bell*). I wonder what has become of that girl? (*Returning, standing by chair, R.C.*) You must excuse the delay, but, ah, the fact is we have had a little trouble with our servants lately, and Mrs. Pennyfather has gone down to Brighton to stay with her mother, and enquire about the character of a new parlour-maid. She did not give herself too much time, by the way. (*SEL. sits C.*)

SEL. Mrs. Pennyfather? Then you're married?

PEN. I can't deny it.

SEL. How long have you been so?

PEN. Oh, about a hundred — I mean about ten years.

SEL. Ah, Pennyfather, if you only knew how I envy you; how a miserable bachelor, like the Peri outside Paradise, views with eager eyes the Eden he longs to enter!

PEN. Paradise is cheap. They'll tie you up anywhere for two guineas, and half-crown to the pew-opener.

SEL. (*still pensive*). I would gladly emulate your happiness. I, too, would pass the crystal bar.

PEN. (*puzzled*). Don't know it. Somewhere in Fleet Street, isn't it?

SEL. Pennyfather, don't be a brute! (*Rising.*) Can I confide in you?

PEN. Certainly, old man. Confide away.

SEL. (*earnestly*). For the last ten years I have been in love. (*Watches for the effect of his remark.*)

PEN. Well, I should say that you had had almost enough of it by this time. I've only been married five, and I — (*shudders.*)

SEL. The most charming, the loveliest of her sweet sex!

PEN. It always *is*.

SEL. Nature had formed us for each other, like — like two pieces of a dissected map.

PEN. Beautiful simile. Any more of them about you?

SEL. Her whole manner was so gentle, so timid, and retiring; shrinking, you know, from observation, like —

PEN. Like a snail.

SEL. And then her eyes, so sweet and liquid in expression ...(*Sighs.*)

PEN. It was her eyes that hooked you, evidently.

SEL. So dark and soft — like a gazelle's, you know.

PEN. No, I don't. Never knew a gazelle.

SEL. And then her voice, so sweet and melodious, and with that delicate *timbre* that you so seldom find in our Saxon races ... (*Overcome.*) O, Pennyfather — that girl!

PEN. (*rising, and going to bell.*) Yes, I wonder what's keeping her. (*Rings.*) Thank you for reminding me.

SEL. It has been the dream of my life to find her!

PEN. What, Maria? My servant?

SEL. No; my lost love. Will you assist me in my search?

PEN. Certainly, dear boy. (*SEL. rises and grasps his hand.*) But, let us begin at the beginning. Did you not correspond?

SEL. At first we did. Then came my misfortunes and was I, a penniless beggar, to hold a girl to a disadvantageous bargain? Afterwards, when I wrote, my letters were returned to me through the post. They must have changed their address.

PEN. Well, in the course of ten years you know; people do move occasionally — especially about Quarter Day.

SEL. It is the object of my existence to find her; to tell her that through all my vicissitudes the remembrance of her has never entirely faded from my heart.

PEN. Very good. If you'll excuse me a moment, I'll go and see after your brandy-and-soda. (*Going, L.*)

SEL. Tell me, Pennyfather; when you were in love, did you ever feel like this?

PEN. Well, not much. (*At door L., holding handle.*) You see, when I married Perdita Price (*SEL. starts and turns pale*), it was a matter of business on both sides. I wanted a wife, and she wanted a husband.

SEL. (*much agitated*). "Perdita Price"? Daughter of old Sam Price, the contractor, of Queen's Road, Chelsea?

PEN. That's the individual. Ah, to be sure, you knew her. — Excuse me I really must go and see what Maria's about. (*Exit L.*) Maria! Maria!

[*Air: "True, true Love," pianissimo in Orchestra.*

(*SELWORTHY'S head sinks upon his hands: he is utterly overcome. He rises suddenly.*)

SEL. (*passionately*). Married? My Perdita — married? And to my friend? Pennyfather — robber! You have stolen from me my treasure! (*More calmly.*) And yet he acted in ignorance: he knew not the misery he was destined to inflict. But ... (*More bitterly*) can I ever forgive him? Can I bear to think that he can bask day after day in that angelic presence, that he can press kisses at will upon those perfect lips, which I (*Catches wildly at hat and stick*) — the thought is madness? I will leave this accursed spot! I will go back to the Silent Prairie, back to my lonely hut in the Sierras! (*at French windows, C.*), and not a thought shall remain to mar *their* happiness, of the miserable wretch who loved her alas! Not wisely — but too well!! (*Exit, wildly, into garden.*) (*Music ceases.*)

(*Enter PENNYFATHER, L., followed by MARIA in a somewhat excited state, bearing tray with decanter of brandy and soda-water bottles.*)

MAR. (*agitated, putting down tray roughly on table*). It's only to please you, sir, as I'm doing this — and this I will say, that a more civil-spoken gentleman never stepped in shoes — but I says to missus this morning, and I say it again to you, sir,

not another stroke of work will I do in this blessed 'ouse, not if you send me to the Tower of London for it!

PEN. Come, come, Maria, what *is* the matter? I am sure the work is not hard, as for the wages —

MAR. (*forcibly*). Its not the work I care about, and its not the wages I care about — it's the way I'm treated! I've given missus notice to leave this morning, and leave her I will, come what may!

PEN. (*aside*). Given her notice to leave! I wish *I* could.

SONG. — MARIA

It's not the work I care about,
Or that one has to do without,
Excepting on one's Sundays out,
All blisses:
Its just the way I'm spoken to,
As if I was a black Hindoo!
The reason, sir, I'm leaving you,
It's missus, its missus
It's all along o' missus.

PEN. (*speaking*). Go and tell all that to the cook, Maria.

Untouched is beer, uneat cold meat,
Poor Robert starves upon his beat,
I can but throw him glances sweet,
And kisses!
Why she, she's at one day and night,
One never can't do nothing right!
The reason, sir, I'm taking flight,
It's missus, its missus
It's all along o' missus.

[*Exit* MARIA.]

(*Enter* SELWORTHY, *much dejected, from Garden*. PENNYFATHER *is opening soda-water at table*.)

SEL. (*aside*). The garden-gate is locked.

PEN. (*seeing him*). Oh, *there* you are. Been taking a look at the garden? Nothing but last year's holly-hocks, and an occasional ambulatory slug. Sit down, and make yourself comfortable.

SEL. (*aside, bitterly*). Comfortable!! (*Seats himself, C.*) Shall I tell him all? No, it would pain them both too deeply were they to know — but, can I ever forgive him?

PEN. (*bringing soda-water*). What's the matter? You seem unhappy.

SEL. Not at all. (*With hollow gaiety*.) Never felt jollier in my life. (*Aside*.) Can I forgive him? I must try and do so.

PEN. Well, you don't look very joyful. Try the brandy.

SEL. (*drinking*). Thanks. (*With effort*.) Besides, were I inclined to be gloomy, the sight of my old friend's happiness would be sufficient to cheer me.

PEN. (*puzzled*). Eh? My *what*?

SEL. Your happiness. Are you not (*sighs*) *married*?

PEN. (*enlightened*). Oh — ah — yes.

SEL. Is it *not* happiness to live beneath the same roof with one you love, to breathe the same air —

PEN. I should object to that arrangement most decidedly. Every human being requires a certain number of cubic feet of air, for his or her exclusive consumption. Mrs. Pennyfather consumes her own atmosphere; I consume mine. At present she is probably inhaling the exquisitely pure ether of the Underground Railway.

SEL. Pennyfather, you cannot deceive me.

PEN. Don't want to, dear boy.

SEL. You shrink from avowing your real happiness. You feel too keenly what a treasure you possess.

PEN. Well, that's true; sometimes I do.

SEL. Believe me, if anything *could* console me for my unhappy — I mean, my solitary — condition, it would be to see my old friend calmly peacefully happy.

PEN. It must be jolly to be like that.

SEL. What do you mean? Is it possible that (*earnestly*) — you are not happy altogether Pennyfather?

PEN. Oh, so-so. We lead a husband-and-wife sort of existence.

SEL. (*aside*). Perhaps he abuses her, tyrannises over her. Poor Perdita! (*Aloud, seriously.*) Tell me Pennyfather, as a friend, as one who would wish to see you and Per — Mrs. Pennyfather happy together — *do* you ever take advantage of your superior position as a man to be overbearing or tyrannical with your wife?

PEN. I never do. (*Aside.*) I wish I could.

SEL. Think, Pennyfather, what Woman is.

PEN. *Think!* By Jove, I *know*. (*Rises and crosses.*)

SEL. Think how delicate and fragile her organisation.

PEN. Mrs. Pennyfather certainly isn't delicate or fragile.

SEL. (*aside*). At least, then, she enjoys too health. But can I ever forgive him? (*Aloud.*) Pennyfather, tell me on your word of honour (*with great intensity*) if anyone had robbed you of Per — of your wife, of Mrs. Pennyfather ... *could you forgive him?*

PEN. (*taking his hand*). Upon my honour as a husband, Harry, I *could*.

SEL. (*aside*). Noble fellow! (*Aloud.*) Pennyfather, I have a trouble.

PEN. (*aside*). So have I. But it's well on its way to Brighton by this time.

SEL. But, situated as I am, I cannot confide it, even to you. My great want is Sympathy; and, situated as I am, I cannot obtain it.

PEN. Well, *our* great want is Servants; and situated as *we* are, we often have to do without 'em.

SEL. What, do *servants* ever trouble you?

PEN. Invariably. They pass through our household like the apparitions in *Macbeth*. We have a new house-maid every fortnight, and a fresh cook for every month in the year. In short, our kitchen is a sort of caravanserai, where the greater part of the female domestic population of London has made a short (but stirring) stay.

SEL. I daresay servants are tiresome sometimes.

PEN. You'd say so if you came home at seven, and found the cook hopelessly intoxicated in the back-kitchen, the housemaid in hysterics on the hearth-rug, no dinner, and Mrs. Pennyfather driving off at full gallop in a cab to the Registry Office.

SEL. The Registry Office? What's that?

PEN. Don't you know? It's a sort of breeding establishment, I believe, where they keep a stock of them on hand. I believe they give Mrs. Pennyfather the screws when they want to weed out the stud. If they do, it's a great shame, for she's a munificent patron on these establishments; in fact there's one in the next street which she keeps going by her patronage alone.

SEL. (*aside*). Poor Perdita! (*Aloud*.) And how does your wife bear all this?

PEN. Bear it. She positively revels in it! She is perpetually travelling from place to place enquiring from late mistresses the characters of late servants: in fact she might be called the female Vanderdecken of domestic service.

SEL. And is her voice what it is was?

PEN. Stronger and louder, if possible.

SEL. (*pensively*). Ah, I can imagine her developed. Tall, dignified, commanding.

PEN. She's certainly commanding.

SEL. And has she retained all those pretty little ways of hers?

PEN. Yes: she has a great many pretty little ways.

SEL. And does she enjoy good health?

PEN. Yes, pretty well. But she's getting fearfully fat.

SEL. Ah, I can imagine her a trifle — just a trifle inclined to *embonpoint*.

PEN. Here, I say You can hardly call thirteen stone "a little inclined to *embonpoint*."

SEL. Thirteen stone?

PEN. That's Mrs. Pennyfather's fighting-weight at present.

SEL. And is she *quite* well?

PEN. (*slightly annoyed*.) I say, what are you cross-examining me about my wife for? Yes, yes, she's quite well — no, though, lately she's suffered severely from —

SEL. (*excitedly*.) Don't say consumption?

PEN. Consumption? Nonsense! What's the matter with you?

SEL. (*confused*.) I know it was in the family.

PEN. Well, it isn't in *this* family. No, indigestion.

SEL. Indigestion?

PEN. Yes, she *will* eat too much.

SEL. "Eat too much?" Impossible!

PEN. She has an over-weening fancy for pork chops and porter. And just before going to bed, too. I always tell her it will ruin her digestive organs.

SEL. And does she look pale?

PEN. No, rather red and fat in the face than otherwise.

SEL. (*sinking into chair and with shaking hand filling out glass of brandy. Aside*.) "Fat" — "red-in-the-face" — "pork chops and porter!" (*Drinks a dram*.) Well, Pennyfather, miserable bachelor as I am, it's no use my giving way to the miserables.

PEN. Of course not. Why should you, dear boy? I'll tell you what. An idea has just struck me. Mrs. Pennyfather is out of the way — it's an opportunity that oughtn't to be lost — suppose we go and dine together somewhere, drop in at the Opera Comique and see part of the *Pinafore*, and finish up with a kidney — and something else just as we used to do in the good old times — you remember, eh?

DUET — PENNYFATHER *and* SELWORTHY.

Oh! The larks of long ago, —
Oh! The things we used to do, —
 You were such a dog,
 You were such a dog,
{You were/I was} such a dog, you know,
 Those happy times are past,
 We were gay, but never fast,
 What larks we had, —
 Oh the larks we had, —
And the pace we used to go.
 Though our Spring is now December,
And our hair is growing grey,
 At Paddy's, you remember,
Do you remember, eh?

Ha! Ha!

Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!
 But now we're getting very proper
 Very proper, strictly proper;
 We are so very proper,
 But you remember, eh?

 Recollect the "Bal Masquè," —
 And the lively "Pompadour." —
 You were such a dog,
 You were such a dog,
You never got home till four!
 You went as a "great Grandee," —
 And you as an "ancient Gaul." —
 And you were such a dog,
 You were such a dog,—
 You never came home at all!
 But our Spring is now December,
And our hair is growing grey,
 At Paddy's, you remember,
Do you remember, eh?

Ha! ha!

Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!
 But now we're getting very proper —
 Very proper, strictly proper;
 We are so very proper —
 But you remember, eh?

VOICE (*outside in passage, sharply*). George!

PEN. (*collapsing*). She's come back!

Enter MARIA, *excitedly*.

MARIA. Oh, please, sir, it's Missus! She's missed the train and she's in *such* a temper. She's having a row with the cabman, and she wants you to go out directly, please, sir!

CABMAN. (*outside*). You give me my proper fare.

VOICE (*more angrily and shrilly*). George!!

PEN. Coming! my dear, coming!

SEL. That voice! — My dear fellow, I really must go. (*Rises.*)

PEN. Yes, perhaps you'd better. Maria, let the gentleman out by the garden-gate. Help him on with his hat and coat, Maria. (*Excitement and confusion.*)

SELWORTHY *passes out by French windows, and pauses, looking at object outside.*)

CABMAN. (*outside*). You give me my proper fare! Call yourself a lady? Why I've druv you a matter of four miles o' ground, and here you offers me eighteen-pence!

VOICE (*exasperated to highest pitch*). G-e-o-r-g-e !!!

SEL. (*returning from windows and rushing to PENNYFATHER*). That my Perdita? Pennyfather, I forgive you AFTER ALL!

QUICK DROP.

[*The Prelude to the Duet is played as the Curtain falls, striking it smartly at the last word.*]