

ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN

a farce

by W.S. Gilbert

CHARACTERS:

MR CADDERBY
BOKER
JOHN SMITH
WAITER (JAMES)
MRS ANNA MARIA CADDERBY
AMELIA ANN
MRS SIMPKINS

SCENE: *A Corridor in an hotel.*

Doors numbered 12 , 13, 14.

(Enter MRS SIMPKINS, meeting JAMES carrying Luggage)

MRS S: Where is that going to, James?

JAMES: *(reading label)* This, ma'am? It's for "Mr. John Smith", m'm. "Simpkins Commercial and Family Hotel, Borough."

MRS S: Very good. Then it goes into 13. Mr. Smith is in there.

JAMES: *(frightened)* Yes, m'm. *(aside)* Oh, lor! that rampagious customer again!

(Exit into 13)

MRS S: It's extraordinary the quantity of letters and luggage that have just arrived for that particularly seedy young man. I can't understand it at all. He hasn't a penny in the world to my certain knowledge, and when I send in my bill, he always offers me his at three months date in return. Fortunately I know something of his family, so I'm pretty sure not to lose by him; besides, I must confess the quantity of luggage that has just arrived for him is reassuring. He's a nice young man; but, oh Lor! he's so dreadfully headstrong and impetuous, my waiter's absolutely afraid to venture into his room.

(JAMES bursts in from no. 13 as if kicked out. Luggage etc falling about him.)

MRS S: Why, what's the matter now?

JAMES: Please'm—Mr. Smith is pained to think you should have had the trouble of sending the luggage up to him. He says it's for the other Mr. John Smith, ma'am, in 11.

MRS S: The other Mr. John Smith! (*Refers to Day book*) Of course—there is one in 11. Two John Smiths!

(*Exit JAMES R.*)

That's the second time this week that John Smith in 13 has kicked James Cumming out of 13. I'm sure I do wish his uncle, the Master Mariner, would arrive from Barbadoes and clear my house of him.

(*Enter JAMES R. as if kicked out as before.*)

JAMES: If you please'm, the other Mr. John Smith sends his respectful compliments, and it's not for him, it's for the third John Smith in 15.

MRS S: (*Referring to book*) Three Mr. John Smiths! Why, so there are, I declare! Why, there must be a gathering of the clan of John Smith in the Boro'—and they've made my house their headquarters.

(*Enter MR. CADDERBY.*)

CAD: I beg your pardon, Ma'am. May I ask if you have such a thing as a John Smith stopping at this hotel?

MRS S: John Smith? Yes, I should rather think I had! How many of them might you happen to want?

CAD: How many might I happen to want, ma'am?

MRS S: Because I've got no fewer than three of 'em, one in 11—one in 13—and one in 15.¹

CAD: Three John Smiths? Rapture! One of them is certain to be my man! (*Calling*) Anna Maria! Amelia Ann! Ferdinand Boker! It's all right, come in! Three John Smiths, my dears—think of that!

(*Enter AMELIA, ANNA MARIA, and BOKER.*)

ALL: Three John Smiths!

CAD: Yes. No less than three John Smiths. (*To MRS. SIMPKINS*) We stop here, if you please, Ma'am. Three rooms as soon as you can get them ready.

MRS S (*calling*) 25, 26 and 27!

¹ The License Copy has "1 in 9—one in 11—and 1 in 13."

CAD: Very good! My daughter Amelia Ann will occupy 25. This is my daughter Amelia Ann, without exception *the* most modest and bewitching little rosebud.

AMELIA: Oh, papa dear, don't!

CAD: There, didn't I tell you so? There's a blush for you! My nephew Ferdinand Boker will occupy 27. This is my nephew Ferdinand Boker, without exception *the* strongest and pluckiest young dog in Middlesex!

BOKER: Come, I say, you know, uncle!

CAD: And my wife—my second wife—Anna Maria and myself will occupy 26. This is my second wife Anna Maria, without exception *the* loveliest, and most entrancingly delightful little wife in England!

ANNA: Oh, nonsense, Cadderby! Go along with your nonsense, do!

MRS S: Well, this seems to be altogether an unexceptional family party. Want the rooms for long, Sir?

CAD: Well, that's the very question of all others that I'm anxious to have satisfactorily settled. I don't know.

MRS S: Oh, I see, Sir. Business!

CAD: Just so—Business! Allow me to explain.

AMELIA: Dear, dear! Now Papa's going to begin one of his interminable explanations.

(*The Ladies and BOKER sit down and gradually doze off.*)

CAD: In the first place, you must know that I am a tenant *pour autre vie* of certain property bringing me in three hundred a year, do you understand?

MRS S: Well, no, Sir, I can't say I do exactly.

CAD: Allow me to explain. I'll put a case. Mrs. Simpkins, I want to settle three hundred a year on you.

MRS S: You don't mean that, sir?

CAD: No, no, of course I don't mean it. Don't I tell you that I'm putting a case? Very good! I want to settle three hundred a year on you. Well, I do it, and there's an end of it, that's the simplest way of settling it. But suppose that instead of settling it on you absolutely, I settle it on you during the life of (say) your head waiter? Don't you see?

MRS S: I think I do, Sir.

CAD: Very good. Now one Smith, a distant relation of mine, has settled on me property worth 300 a year during the life of his nephew, one John Smith.

MRS S: But what did he want to do that for?

CAD: Precisely the identical question that I'm asking myself every day of the week. Every day? Every hour! Every minute, I ask myself—What in the devil's name did one Smith, a distant relation of mine, want to make my

income dependant on the life of his confounded nephew for? He'd much better have left me alone! Poor, I was happy! Rich, I am miserable. How to ensure the perpetual safety of this infernal John Smith is a problem that haunts me night and day! It's a hideous Nemesis, Ma'am, dressed in five pound notes!

MRS S: And an uncommonly pretty dress too!

CAD: Now, of course, before I can claim the money in question, it is absolutely necessary I should prove John Smith existing beyond a doubt, because if he's dead, I don't get it.

MRS S: Of course—I see.

CAD: But I don't know John Smith, and John Smith don't know me—there's my difficulty! However, I happened to hear last night that a certain John Smith, answering to my John Smith's description, was stopping at this hotel—so here I am to identify him, if possible, and get him to prove his own existence. Now you understand!

MRS S: Perfectly, sir. Well, as I said before, I've three John Smiths. One in no.11, one in no. 13² and one in—

CAD: I'll begin with number 11.³ (*Sees his wife, daughter and nephew asleep.*) Hullo! Why, they're all asleep!

MRS S: Poor things! Quite tired out with the fatigue of the journey!

CAD: No. I don't think it can be that, for it's a week since they made it. They came to London, ma'am, before me, in order to purchase my daughter's trousseaux. She's going to be married to my nephew, ma'am, without exception the strongest and— But now for number 9!

(*Exit SIMPKINS and CADDERBY R.*)

(*ANNA MARIA, AMELIA and BOKER awake.*)

ANNA: Why, I do believe I was half asleep!

AMELIA: Well, that's very odd—so was I.

BOKER: Yaw-w-w.

ANNA: Why, Ferdinand Boker, you don't mean to say that you've actually been to sleep in the society of your Amelia Ann! For shame, Sir!

BOKER: My dear Aunt, when Uncle Cadderby begins to explain, crowbars wouldn't open my eyes. Besides, Amelia Ann can feast her eyes on me as I sleep, with less reserve than if I were awake. Can't you, Amelia Ann?

AMELIA: (*aside*) Insufferable puppy! Oh, how different to the devoted young man with the black moustache who paid such attention to me at the

² License Copy: "One in No.9, one in No.11 and one in—"

³ License Copy: "number 9."

Licensed Victuallers' Ball, and who has been following us about for the last twelve months!

(The door of No. 13 opens and JOHN SMITH crosses the stage and exit without seeing them.)

AMELIA & ANNA: Good Heavens! 'tis he!

BOKER: Eh!

AMELIA: Oh, nothing!

BOKER: You said "Good heavens, 'tis he!"

AMELIA: I? Oh, quite a mistake!

BOKER: *(to ANNA MARIA)* And so did you!

ANNA: I'm sure I don't know what you mean. *(aside to AMELIA)* It's the handsome unknown!

AMELIA: Undoubtedly!

ANNA: Can he have had the impertinence to follow us here, the wretch!

BOKER: *(Furiously)*: This may be enquired into! They said: "Good heavens, 'Tis he!" Who? Ha! Ha! But no matter!

(Enter CADDERBY very much tumbled.)

CAD: Well, here's a pretty mess! I went to No.11 and soon found out that No.11 wasn't my man.

BOKER: Well, what of that?

CAD: Allow me to explain. The curious part of the business is that the man whom I mistook for my John Smith, mistook me for a Sheriff's officer who's in pursuit of him; so he threatened to throw me out of the window, and in point of fact had almost got me comfortably over the Area Spikes before he discovered his mistake. Thereupon we shook hands, and the scoundrel and I had a good laugh over the matter. Funny, wasn't it! But now I'm off to No. 15.—I shall be back in a minute.

(Exit CADDERBY L.H. and E.)

(Enter MRS SIMPKINS R.H.)

MRS S: Now, Ladies, your rooms are quite ready.

ANNA: Very well, Mrs Simpkins. Come along, Amelia Ann.

MRS S: Would you like to see your room, Sir?

BOKER: *(Furiously—up and down)* I'll have it cleaned up, ma'am.

MRS S: It's quite clean, Sir. Would you like to see it?

BOKER: No, Ma'am.

MRS S: Rather stop here, Sir?

BOKER: Yes, Ma'am.

MRS S: Waiting for the old gentleman, I suppose. Singular old gentleman, sir.

BOKER: Eh?

MRS S: Singular old gentleman, Sir.

BOKER: *(taking up a chair)*⁴ Do you see that, Ma'am? Feel that arm! Now then, if you dare to speak disrespectfully of any of my relations, I'll wring your head waiter's neck, Ma'am.

(Enter CADDERBY with clothes still more disarranged)

CAD: Another adventure!

MRS S: An adventure, Sir!

CAD: Allow me to explain. I went to No. 15, and, rushing into his room, clasped him in my arms—when to my surprise I found that, instead of a hale and active young fellow of eight and twenty, I was embracing an irascible old madman of sixty, who thought that I was a keeper sent to bring him back to the Asylum.

MRS S: A madman! And did he resist, sir?

CAD: Resist! I should think he did! He flew upon me like a tiger, and wanted me to sit down upon his grate. However, an explanation set it all right, and here I am again.

MRS S: Dear me! I'm very sorry you should have had so much trouble about it. Perhaps you'd like to try No.13.

CAD: No, thank you. I've had enough of rushing uninvited into rooms occupied by John Smiths. No, I'll wait in the Coffee Room till I see him pass. Come along, Ferdinand—we'll wait in the Coffee Room.

(As they go out L, CADDERBY runs up against JOHN SMITH who is entering.)

CAD: Hullo, sir!

SMITH: Now then, sir!

CAD: Where are you going to, sir?

SMITH: Well, if it comes to that, where are *you* shoving to, Sir?

CAD: You're a clumsy fellow, Sir!

SMITH: You're a fool, Sir!

CAD: You are impertinent, Sir!

SMITH: I meant to be, Sir!

⁴ i.e. picking up the chair as a show of strength.

- CAD: Are you aware that I am 54 years old sir?—and you are a mere boy, Sir, a mere boy!
- SMITH: Then you ought to know better. There's some excuse for a mere boy; but disrespectful conduct in an old fellow of 54 is inexcusable. Go along, I'm ashamed of you!
- CAD: You shall answer to me for this language, sir!
- SMITH: Oh, go to the devil!
- CAD: Sir!
- SMITH: Get out! Don't bother! (*Goes up*)
- CAD: You shall give me satisfaction, Sir!
- SMITH: Eh!
- CAD: In the person of my nephew, sir.
- BOKER: There! I say—come, you know—
- CAD: Ferdinand! You shall thrash him!
- BOKER: But I say—hang it, you know!
- CAD: You shall! No thanks--you shall!
- BOKER: But this gentleman hasn't insulted me!
- CAD: (*aside*) Remember Amelia Ann. She is not yours yet. (*aloud.*) Yes, Ferdinand—you are fairly matched.
- SMITH: Fairly matched! Don't insult me by comparing me with such a thing as that!
- CAD: There, Ferdinand, you hear? he calls you a thing!
- BOKER: Well, so I am!
- CAD: Ferdinand! You a coward! Remember Amelia Ann.
- BOKER: Oh, lor! I suppose I'm in for it. (*To SMITH*) Sir!
- SMITH: Sir.
- BOKER: It's only fair to tell you, sir, that I am remarkably powerful—my strength, sir, is absolutely prodigious.
- SMITH: Well—I don't care!
- BOKER: Don't care? Why, I could knock your head off your shoulders at a single blow!
- SMITH: What, you?
- BOKER: Yes, Sir—I.
- SMITH: Go along with you! (*Bonnets him*)⁵
- BOKER: Confound it!
- CAD: Ferdinand!—this is too serious a matter to be comfortably settled. He has insulted the honour of the whole family in the person of your hat! Ferdinand!—Cold steel alone will set it straight.
- BOKER: Cold steel? A hot iron is all that's necessary.

⁵ i.e. whacks BOKER over the head pushing his hat down over his eyes.

CAD: (aside) Ha! you quail! Remember Amelia Ann.

BOKER: But hang it! I may be killed!

CAD: Of course you may. In the event of that disaster, Amelia Ann shall carve your epitaph upon your tomb with her own fair hand! What more could you want?

BOKER: But still I don't see—

CAD: And if that isn't enough, I will myself plant a willow over your grave, and water it with my tears! Come!

BOKER: You will?

CAD: I will!

BOKER: That decides me! (to SMITH) Time, place, and weapons, Sir!

SMITH: Whenever, wherever, and with whatever you like, Sir!

BOKER: Very good; this day month, sir!

SMITH: This day month! Oh, bosh! Say to-day!

BOKER: To-day be it then. Where?

SMITH: Wherever you like.

BOKER: Oxford Street at three!

SMITH: Better make it Wimbledon Common.

BOKER: Very good ; Wimbledon Common. Weapons?

SMITH: Oh, anything!

BOKER: Very good; pistols.

SMITH: I'm agreeable!

BOKER: At a hundred paces!

SMITH: A hundred? Nonsense—Twenty!

BOKER: Good; at twenty paces with swords.

SMITH: Nonsense! Pistols! In one hour I shall call for you!

BOKER: In an hour I shall be ready.

(Exit SMITH L.H.)

CAD: Well, that's comfortably settled! (going L.H.)

BOKER: Very much so. But where are you going to?

CAD: Why, I'm off to find my John Smith, to be sure!

BOKER: (aside) Ah! I see a plan of escape! (aloud) I'll come too!

CAD: No, no, no. You must stop here, and take a last farewell of Amelia Ann!

BOKER: What do you mean by a last farewell?

CAD: Well, it's impossible to say what may happen, and if you should unfortunately—

BOKER: Come, I say. Don't talk like that, you know.

CAD: It's absurd to blind yourself to the possibility that you may be dead in an hour from this. So stop here, and dry your Amelia's tears.

(Exit CADDERBY L.H. 1st. E.)

BOKER: Cold blooded old scarecrow! He's nice fellow to risk one's life for! Well, after all it's not so much for him⁶ as for Amelia Ann; for her hand appears to depend upon my meeting this fire-eating devil! But perhaps I shan't be hit after all; my adversary isn't such a very formidable fellow to look at; and I'm a pretty good shot too. I daresay I shall manage to get a pop at him when nobody's looking. (*noise without*) Hullo! Old Cadderby's voice again!—It is old Cadderby, and that assassin of a fellow with him! Why, they can't have come for me already!

(Enter CADDERBY and SMITH.)

CAD: No, young man, I shall not leave you until I have absolutely overwhelmed you with the abundance of my gratitude.

BOKER: His gratitude! Why, Hey-day! what's all this?

SMITH: Don't mention it—it's nothing at all!

CAD: Nothing at all! Why, if it hadn't been for you, I might have had my neck broken!

BOKER: Had your neck broken? How?

CAD: Yes. I'm all in a tremble still! Allow me to explain. As soon as I got into the street, I called a four-wheeled Cab. Well, I got into the four-wheeler and we had hardly started, when by a misfortune unprecedented in the history of four-wheelers the horse got the bit between his teeth! The beast started off, and in an agony of terror I implored the driver to restrain his infuriated animal. All in vain—the more he pulled, the faster the beast ran. In short, a catastrophe was imminent, when all at once the intrepid youth seized the reins at the peril of his life and stopped the cab! I alighted and once more found myself on the pavement, out of breath but otherwise uninjured.

BOKER: (*R.*) Oh—then this is the gentleman who—

CAD: This, Ferdinand, is the gentleman who performed that miracle of daring.

SMITH: My dear fellow, don't excite yourself; I'd have done the same for any other fool.

CAD: Noble preserver! But that don't diminish the debt of gratitude I owe you. If I happened to have such a thing as a die striking machine about me I'd strike you a Commemorative Medal on the spot. But if, in the absence of that instrument, a modest steak and half a pint of port—

SMITH: Thanks, I've dined.

⁶ License Copy has "her".

CAD: Disinterested youth.

SMITH: What a confounded bore this fellow is with his gratitude; I almost wish I'd allowed him to break his infernal old neck!

(Enter MRS. SIMPKINS⁷ R. and exit SMITH into 13.)

CAD: But at least tell me the name of my preserver! Gone! Without telling me his name!

MRS S: His name, sir? Oh, I can tell you that. It's Mr. John Smith.

CAD: John Smith!

MRS S: Yes, John Smith in No. 13, the nephew of—

CAD: Of James Smith, Master Mariner, who made a fortune at the diggings?

MRS S: Of James Smith, Master Mariner, who made a fortune at the diggings!

CAD: It's he!

MRS S: Who's he?

CAD: It's my Smith! My John Smith! The John Smith I've been looking for—found at last! But, good gracious!, he might have been killed! John Smith might have been killed, and I have escaped!

MRS S: Well now, I call that real generosity, sir, but lor bless you, Sir, Mr Smith's always at it!

CAD: Always at what? Always stopping runaway four-wheelers?

MRS S: Well, not exactly that, but he's such a hare-brained fellow that he's always risking his life in one way or other. The other day he undertook to drive a four-wheeler blindfolded down Cheapside in the middle of the day, and to-morrow he is going to climb down the Monument from the outside, head first, for a wager.

CAD: Is he! Not if I can prevent it!

MRS S: Lor, Sir, he don't set a pin's value on his life, he don't.

(Exit MRS SIMPSON 1 E.L.)

CAD: Don't he! But I do—a good many pins' value! However, fortunately I'm living under the same roof, and I'll take good care that. But gracious goodness!

BOKER: Why, what's the matter now?

CAD: The duel! That infernal duel!

BOKER: Well, you know you got me into that mess!

CAD: Then I'll get you out of it. That's only fair!

BOKER: But I'm committed to it now.

⁷ License copy has "SIMPSON"

CAD: It shall not—must not take place. (*aside*) Remember Amelia Ann.

BOKER: Oh, but come, you know—I say!—

(*Enter SMITH with pistols from No. 13*)

SMITH: Now, gentlemen, if you are ready I am.

CAD: One minute, my dear Sir. (*To BOKER*) You'll apologise, I suppose.

BOKER: What, apologise, because he knocked my hat over my eyes? Not exactly! Why, he bonneted me.

CAD: Well, what of that? Ha! ha! a joke! a good joke! Ferdinand, I'm sorry to see you can't take a joke. Why, people bonnet me about three times a day and ha! ha! I like it! ha! ha!

SMITH: Now gentlemen, are you coming, or are you not?

BOKER: I'm ready, sir. Lead on!

CAD: Ferdinand! at your peril! (*to SMITH*) One moment, young man. I think it's just possible that this may be arranged.

SMITH: Impossible!

BOKER: Out of the question!

CAD: Allow me to explain. You mustn't mind my nephew—he's one of those unreflecting hot-headed young devils who are always getting into hot water— But he sees the enormity of his behaviour, and he deeply regrets it. Don't you, Ferdinand: you deeply regret it.

BOKER: What! Come, I like that!

CAD: Yes—there, you hear! He likes that. He says so.

BOKER: No, uncle; I regret it very much, but—

CAD: He regrets it very much—don't you hear that he regrets it very much?

BOKER: Not a bit of it—I don't at all regret it! Come along, Sir!

SMITH: Come along, sir!

CAD: Gracious heavens! How shall I prevent this? Ha! an idea! (*to SMITH, aside*) My dear Sir, it's only right to put you in possession of a fact of which you are not aware. My unfortunate nephew is—

SMITH: Well, sir?

CAD: Most melancholy thing, Sir. (*Tapping forehead*) Weak here—decidedly weak, always was—not unaccountable—runs in the family.

SMITH: So I see.

CAD: He's only just out of Colney Hatch.

BOKER: Come, you know—I say—

CAD: You know you're only just out of Colney Hatch, Ferdinand. Remember Amelia Ann!

BOKER: Confound it! Well, I suppose I must! (*to SMITH*) Yes, Sir, it's only too true. I'm just out of Colney Hatch, Sir. Melancholy thing, but I'm a gibbering idiot, Sir.

(Behaves idiotically)

SMITH: Well, I said you were from the first, and since you are, as you say, a gibbering idiot, there is no more to be said.

CAD: Then that's all right. *(To BOKER)* Fetch my wife and Amelia Ann—my poor boy. *(aside)* I must get her away, or they'll be quarrelling again. *(aloud)* Come, Ferdinand—look alive!

BOKER: But, I say—it's rather hard to allow him to suppose—

CAD: Go along—Never mind him.

BOKER: Very well—I go. *(To SMITH)* Take care, Sir: I'm a gibbering idiot just now and you won't fight me—but, mind, a lucid interval may come—and then—

(Exit R.H.)

CAD: Thank Heaven I've got rid of him at last.

SMITH: 'Pon my soul, it's very good of you to take so much trouble with that idiot of a nephew of yours.

CAD: Trouble? Not at all, my dear boy! Haven't you saved my life, and do you think I'd allow you to risk yours if I could help it?

SMITH: Well, that's very kind of you—but to tell you the truth, I only accepted the challenge as a means of legitimately ending a miserable life.

CAD: Eh—what?

SMITH: It's now three o'clock. At four precisely I blow out my brains.

CAD: Blow out your brains! Not if I— Miserable young man, what is the reason of this insane determination?

SMITH: Why, the fact is— But why should I bore you with the details of my woe?

CAD: Come, come— Tell me all about it. To tell you the truth, I've conceived a gigantic affection for you. You've saved my life!

SMITH: Very good, here goes. You must know that it results from a love affair.

CAD: A love affair! Oh, oh, sly dog! In love, eh!?

SMITH: Yes, with a woman!

CAD: Nonsense!

SMITH: Fact! For the last week I've been in a condition bordering on distraction.

CAD: And all for one woman! My dear Sir, I thought you a man of the world.

SMITH: Well, so I am now. But I shan't be a man of the world long. At four I die!

CAD: Now, my dear Sir, don't be rash! Let me intercede with the lady. I'll undertake to bring her to her senses.

SMITH: What, you?

CAD: Yes, I. Give me her address. I'll call on her—she shall be yours. In one month I'll undertake to dance at your wedding.

SMITH: Ah, but unfortunately—

CAD: Well?

SMITH: She's a married woman!

CAD: A married woman? Agony!

SMITH: So you see you've undertaken more than you can manage. (*goes up C.*) Yes, unless Anna Maria meets me here—

CAD: Anna Maria?

SMITH: Yes, Anna Maria Cadderby; that's her name—Unless she meets me here before four o'clock, I blow out my brains!

(*Exit SMITH No. 13*)

CAD: My wife! There's a pretty position! My wife on the one hand and my annual income on the other! Now how the deuce am I to get over this?

(*Enter ANNA MARIA L.H.*)

CAD: Oh, here you are, Mrs Cadderby!

ANNA: Why, Cadderby dear, what in the world is the matter?

CAD: Matter, Ma'am? Matter enough, Ma'am! I know all! Mr John Smith, Ma'am! You see I am acquainted with your heartless behaviour. He has written to you appointing a meeting—

ANNA: Which I have refused to keep.

CAD: Yes, confound it!—that's just it!—I don't mean that!—Hang it—I mean that that was quite right.—But don't you know who this John Smith is?

ANNA: Not I indeed!⁸ I only know that for the last week, he has bothered me by following me everywhere! His persecutions are intolerable!

CAD: Anna Maria—Are you aware that this John Smith is the young man on whose life depends our annual income?

ANNA: Well, and what is that to me?

CAD: Why, he loves you.

ANNA: I know.

CAD: And threatens to blow his brains out—unless you meet him.

ANNA: Oh, he threatens, but he'll never do it. People who intend to commit suicide, don't talk about it.

CAD: But he will, I tell you. I've examined his head, and his destructiveness is absolutely colossal!

⁸ License Copy has "No I indeed"

ANNA: Really? Well now, that's very unfortunate. What shall I do?
 CAD: Well, if you could only manage to see him, and in the course of the interview contrive to instil into his mind a hope—a very faint hope—that won't be realised, you know—that you—that he—in short that both of you—
 ANNA: I see—I understand. (*Suddenly*) Ha! An idea!
 CAD: Yes—what is it?
 ANNA: Never mind; leave it all to me. I'll answer for it that I'll send him about his business, and with the usual allowance of brains in his skull, too!
 CAD: You will? Then I trust implicitly to you! Ah, he comes! (*aside*) Where can I listen? Behind the door.

(*Conceals himself behind door.*)

(*Enter SMITH, with pistol in one hand and watch in the other.*)

SMITH: The hour has struck, and no Anna Maria! I die!
 ANNA: Good heavens—John!
 SMITH: Ha! At last!
 ANNA: Then I was not deceived—you really intended to—
 SMITH: To blow out my brains? Undoubtedly, Madam!
 ANNA: But you must not die! I cannot allow—
 SMITH: Ha! Then you consent to love me?
 ANNA: Oh! I didn't say that!
 SMITH: Very good! Then I die!

(*Puts pistol to head*)

ANNA: Oh, Mr Smith!
 SMITH: Eh!
 ANNA: Such devoted love could not fail to affect me! Your infatuation has conquered my resolution and I cannot help acknowledging that your affection is returned.
 SMITH: Ecstasy! (*Clasping her in his arms*)
 CAD: Oh, you infernal ruffian! (*cross to R.*)
 ANNA: But you must know that when I love, I do not love as other people do! My love is resistless, overwhelming!
 SMITH: So is mine!
 ANNA: A love that can brook no indifference, that stops at no obstacle!
 SMITH: Precisely the very kind of love that I have always longed for!
 ANNA: We must run away!
 SMITH: We must!

ANNA: We will leave London!
 SMITH: We will!
 ANNA: We will fly to—
 SMITH: Putney!
 ANNA: Putney! Nonsense. Petroleum!
 SMITH: Petroleum!
 SMITH: Yes—the Oil City!
 CAD: Oh, this is going too far!—I shall go and lock up her clothes.

(Exit.)

SMITH: But do you insist on Petroleum?
 ANNA: I do!—Does the length of the journey alarm you?
 SMITH: Deuce take it, my dear girl; allow me to remark that I'm only a lawyer's clerk, and that I haven't a penny in the world!
 ANNA: What of that? No more have I. We start to-night.
 SMITH: But I say!
 ANNA: We will travel on foot hand in hand!
 SMITH: But how about the Atlantic?
 ANNA: Love will lend us his wings. Remember to-night! *(aside)*⁹ He wanted unreflecting, uncalculating love: well, now he's got it—and I hope he likes it.

(Exit ANNA MARIA R.H.)

SMITH: Confound it, I didn't expect this! What an enthusiastic Amazon of a woman! Petroleum! I who only thought of a quiet elopement to Putney!—What the devil am I to do about it?

(Enter AMELIA ANN R.H.)

AMELIA: Papa, papa.—Good heavens, a Man!
 SMITH: A young lady! Good gracious!
 AMELIA: Oh, I believe I have the pleasure of addressing—
 SMITH: Mr. John Smith. Miss Amelia Ann Cadderby, I believe, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at the Licensed Victuallers Ball last winter?
 AMELIA: Oh, I remember perfectly!
 SMITH: What a delightful evening that was.

⁹“(aside)” is not in License Copy.

AMELIA: Ah! (*sighs*)

SMITH: Eleven waltzes, I think!

AMELIA: Twelve!

SMITH: Twelve—so it was! Ah! (*sighs*)

AMELIA: Ah! (*sighs*)

SMITH: And all the intermediate dances we sat out together!

AMELIA: So we did! It was a delightful evening.

SMITH: How kind of you to say so. And now we meet once more! There is a destiny in this.

AMELIA: It seems so indeed. (SMITH *places arm round her waist.*) Oh, don't, here is Papa!

(*Enter CADDERBY.*)

SMITH:¹⁰ Then I'll speak to him.—shall I?

AMELIA: Oh, Mr Smith!

SMITH: Mr Cadderby—I want to be your Son-in-Law!

CAD: Eh! The Devil!

SMITH: I love your daughter, Sir!

CAD: The deuce you do! But how about my wife?

SMITH: Eh?

CAD: No, no—I don't mean that—I mean how about the young lady you were going to Petroleum with? Ha! ha! sly dog! (*aside*) The unscrupulous monster!

SMITH: What that overgrown, over-blown, uncalculating demi-dowager? No, thank you. I prefer something small and compact. Now, your Amelia Ann is the very incarnation of everything that is exquisite in woman. Aren't you, Amelia Ann?

CAD: But how about Boker?

SMITH: Oh, bother Boker!

AMELIA: Yes Papa, bother Boker.

CAD: Yes. I rather think that between you you'll contrive to bother Boker pretty effectually. But allow me to enquire how you come to know one another?

SMITH: How?—Why, we danced twelve waltzes together at the Licensed Victuallers Ball last winter; and in the course of those waltzes we felt that our hearts beat for one another!

CAD: But I tell you that she is engaged to Boker!

¹⁰ License Copy has "CAD"

SMITH: Very well; break it off with Boker! If I don't have your daughter, my blood will be upon your head!

CAD: Well, I suppose I must! Poor Boker! How the deuce shall I get out of it? There, take her! Take her!

(*Enter BOKER*)

BOKER: Take her?—Take who? Amelia?

CAD: No, no. There. Never you mind. It's a little affair between me and Smith.

BOKER: But she is engaged to me—you have given me your word!

CAD: Yes, I've given my word to you and my daughter to him. Hang it all, you can't have everything.

BOKER: Well, if I don't have Amelia Ann I shall shoot this gentleman.

CAD: Good heavens!

SMITH: And if this gentleman marries Amelia Ann, I shoot myself!

CAD: Confusion! But, my friends, my dear young friends! What the devil did one Smith—a distant relation of mine—mean by making my income depend on the life of his confounded nephew!

(*Enter MRS SIMPKINS.*)

MRS S: There is a letter which has just arrived from Jas. Smith, Mariner—for it's well I know his handwriting—and perhaps it may help to set that question at rest.

CAD: From James Smith, Master Mariner? Give it to me, and send my wife here.

MRS S: Here is your wife, Sir.

(*Enter ANNA MARIA.*)

SMITH: What! My Anna Maria his wife! Confound it—here's a mess!

ANNA: Well, Mr Smith, I'm quite ready to start for Petroleum!

SMITH: Hold your tongue, for goodness sake. Don't you hear you're his wife?

CAD: My dear, here's a letter from one Smith, a distant relation of mine. (*Reads.*) "My dear friend. Knowing, as I do, that my nephew is a very headstrong hare-brained young fellow, I made your income depend upon his life in order that you might have an interest in looking after him and preserving him from danger."

SMITH: Oho! This accounts for all his solicitude on my behalf!

CAD (*reading*) "But I have now returned to England for good, and that must henceforth be my special care. So I have determined to transfer the contingency upon which your income depends from my nephew John

Smith to your daughter Amelia Ann, who is much more likely to survive you. So you distinctly understand that you enjoy my income of £300 a year, so long as Amelia Ann shall live, and at her death it reverts to my nephew." Thank Heaven, I've at last escaped from the toils of that Vampire! (*To SMITH*) My dear fellow, you don't have my daughter. Boker—take her!

BOKER: Mine! Ecstasy!

AMELIA: Oh dear, oh dear! Whatever shall I do?

CAD: Aha! Cry away, my dear—I don't care now!

AMELIA: Am I to understand distinctly that this is your irrevocable determination?

CAD: You are to understand distinctly that this is my irrevocable determination.

AMELIA: Then my mind is made up.—I drown myself tonight!

CAD: Eh! Miserable girl!—Why—Confound it—do you want to ruin me?

AMELIA: Unless I marry John, I die tonight!

CAD: Well—there there, take her, take her! I've no help for it! (*Suddenly*) What the devil did one James Smith want to—

BOKER: Well, what about me? I shall expire!

CAD: Why, have I not arranged that Amelia Ann shall herself carve your epitaph with her own fair hands?

BOKER: Well, you certainly have—

CAD: And have I not promised to plant cypresses about your tomb and to water them with my own tears?

BOKER: I had certainly forgotten that. It is true, and, Uncle, I thank you; it more than reconciles me to my fate. (*To SMITH*) Smith, take her—Amelia, take him!

CAD (*To Audience*): There's only one matter which I think requires to be distinctly cleared up. You are entitled, Ladies and Gentlemen, to know how it happened that one Smith, a distant relation of mine, came to make my income dependant upon the life of my daughter, who is not headstrong and impulsive, instead of settling absolutely on myself.—Allow me to explain—

(SMITH and BOKER expostulate and pull him back. He struggling to address the audience as

CURTAIN FALLS.

END.