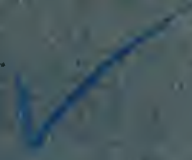


S 3537
T475
8
912
copy 1



STAGE GUILD PLAYS

RYLAND · A COMEDY
IN ONE ACT



STAGE GUILD PLAYS
RYLAND · A COMEDY

RYLAND, A COMEDY

THOMAS WOOD STEVENS
& KENNETH SAWYER
GOODMAN



THE STAGE GUILD
CHICAGO

© 1912

PS 3537
T 17572
1912

Copyright, 1912, by Thomas Wood Stevens
and Kenneth Sawyer Goodman.
All rights reserved.

NOTICE. Application for permission to perform this play may be made to The Stage Guild, 1527 Railway Exchange Building, Chicago; no performance of it can take place without consent of the owners of the acting rights.

RYLAND

A Comedy in One Act

CHARACTERS :

William Wynne Ryland, Engraver.

The Gaoler.

Henry Fielding, Ryland's pupil.

Mary, Ryland's wife.

Mr. Hadrill, a printseller.

Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Angelica Kauffman.

NOTE. The first performance of the Stage Guild production of this play is to be given in February, 1912, for the Chicago Society of Etchers.

“The most remarkable of these cases . . . is that of Ryland the engraver, who in 1783 forged a bill for £7,114 on the East India House, . . . described as the most extraordinary piece of deceptive art ever produced. . . . Ryland was convicted, chiefly through the evidence of a paper manufacturer, and sentenced to death; but a respite was granted that he might finish, for the benefit of his family, a fine engraving he had just begun—the last of a series from the pictures of Angelica Kauffman.”

—*Side Lights on the Georgian Period*, by George Paston.

RYLAND

A Comedy in One Act

SCENE: Ryland's cell in Newgate. R, window, with an engraving screen; a table and stool; engraving tools, etc., on the wall a composition by Angelica Kauffman. L, a bench and a barred door, leading to the corridor. R. C., a small table with breakfast tray.

[*Ryland and the Gaoler discovered.*]

THE GAOLER. Your breakfast, Mr. Ryland. Your last breakfast, God help us all! Many's the good man I've seen go out of here to Tyburn, housebreakers and murderers and thieves, but never a great artist, Mr. Ryland—never till you.

RYLAND. So I'm to be hanged to-morrow morning, eh?

GAOLER. Yes, sir. To-morrow at six.

RYLAND. Well . . . No more of this, [*Indicating the engraving*] and good-bye to that, eh? [*With a gesture at the composition.*]

GAOLER, [*gloomily*]. To-morrow at six, sir.

RYLAND. Buck up, man. It's I, not you. You will breakfast to-morrow.

GAOLER. It has been very pleasant, having you here, sir. And profitable, too.

RYLAND. I dare say.

GAOLER. Yes, Mr. Ryland, I've had a tidy bit from the gentlemen who have come in to see you. Some bacon, sir—I can recommend it—none of the prison fare, that. And you've been most comfortable to deal with. No howling, no shaking the bars, no cursing at night.

RYLAND. No, none of that, I hope.

GAOLER. It's because you've been busy with the plate, there. The picture-making has been a blessing to you. Then, you've never given up hope—

RYLAND. I find myself hungry. That's strange.

GAOLER. Not at all, sir. Many of them are so. [*Pause.*] Mr. Ryland, might I make so bold as to say, it would be a great service to me, if you would get another reprieve; work a week longer on the plate. It can't be anything to you, sir, so near the end, or I wouldn't be asking it.

RYLAND. It would be a service to you, would it?

GAOLER. You could work at your engraving—

RYLAND. I've overworked it now.

GAOLER. Oh, I'm sorry to hear that, sir.

[*A knock outside.*]

[*Enter Fielding outside the grating.*]

FIELDING. May I speak with Mr. Ryland?

GAOLER. I don't know; it's against the rules. [*Fielding gives him money.*] Who shall I say, sir?

FIELDING. Mr. Fielding. You've seen me often enough.

GAOLER. To be sure, Mr. Fielding, but I likes to observe the formalities. It'll be five shillings, sir.

FIELDING. Yesterday it was only two.

GAOLER. He'll be leaving me soon—I've got to make the best of him while he lasts, God help him. [*He takes the money, unlocks the grating, and calls to Ryland.*]

GAOLER. Mr. Fielding's compliments to Mr. Ryland. [*Exit Gaoler.*]

RYLAND. My dear Henry, this is kind of you.

FIELDING. Oh, Mr. Ryland, I came directly I could get word of Lord Wycombe's decision on your appeal—

RYLAND. Oh, the pardon?

FIELDING. Yes sir—

RYLAND. You'll forgive me if I finish my breakfast. I can't offer you a chair—

FIELDING. Oh, Mr. Ryland!

RYLAND. Well—well?

FIELDING. I went to Lord Wycombe's Secretary as soon as he was out of his bed. . . . Oh, Mr. Ryland!

RYLAND. Out with it! Am I pardoned, or only reprieved for another week?

FIELDING. Neither.

RYLAND. Come, come—

FIELDING. Neither, sir. Lord Wycombe denies both your appeals.

RYLAND. I've lost my appetite. . . .

FIELDING [*leaning over him; Ryland looking over his breakfast.*] He said you had been three times reprieved, that you might finish this plate; that his lordship had been more than merciful, considering the nature of your crime—

RYLAND. I beg you not to mention it, Henry. I had committed no crime.

FIELDING. Never before, he said, had the statute in so grave a matter as forgery been stayed, and in your case only that your wife might not be left unprovided for.

RYLAND. I understand his lordship's mercy. . . .

FIELDING. And now, he says, if the plate is still unfinished, it must be carried on by another hand.

RYLAND. That will not be necessary.

FIELDING. He said that your wife—Oh, Mr. Ryland! . . . where else shall I go? That other appeal is there?

RYLAND. [*Gets up and puts his hand on Fielding's shoulder.*] My poor boy! You have been more than faithful. I can't be altogether worthless, to have you stick to me like this. Tell me—you will take care of her? You will be as devoted to her as you have been to me?

FIELDING. My life, Mr. Ryland, shall be spent in her service.

RYLAND. I dare say. [*Moving up stage.*] Well, after all, there's a satisfaction in knowing the next day's work. It might have ended three week's ago. . . . The ride in the cart will be pleasant. The air, man! I've not had a full breath since—since the minions of the law broke in upon my seclusion. . . . But for these reprieves, I should have had it over and done with, and you and my wife would be already half comforted . . . shall I say? It's a miserable business, this shrinking back from the verge.

FIELDING. Oh, sir, you must see that we are on the verge—

RYLAND. I am on the verge, Fielding.

FIELDING. For God's sake, sir, drop this pretense. It's one thing to jest at death when you're safe at home. It's another when you're— . . . Until to-day I never dreamed that you . . . that you could not escape. We must make some last effort.

RYLAND. So you actually expect to see me kicking my heels at the end of a rope?

FIELDING. Oh, sir, you must see it too. You must think. You must give me orders. If you sit and jest, I am helpless. It will all be over —

RYLAND. My dear boy, what is there you can do? You tell me to drop the pretense. . . . What have I left? I admit I never thought it would come to this. I still believed in my destiny. It's an ignominious end, it seems, . . . and I must meet it with what grace I may. In faith, it matters little: a wasted life gone out: a slender ghost of a talent strangled. . . . [*Moves over to the table where the plate is.*] I'm not sorry I've had this respite, Fielding. I've made a good plate here, and in this have paid a last courtesy to Mistress Angelica. I hope she will like it . . . if she ever comes back to see it. She's a dem'd fine woman, Angelica Kauffman, and this is as good a thing as ever she painted. I hope she likes it. . . .

FIELDING. Could Mistress Kauffman do nothing to save you, sir?

RYLAND. She's a white moon, lad! She rides high on the winds of fame these days. It takes a long time for a cry of pain to mount that far, Fielding. . . .

FIELDING. But have you tried? Have you written?

RYLAND. I can be proud on occasion . . . even with a rope around my neck. Once she wasn't so far, so cold. . . . But that's another matter, a matter that's closed. Tomorrow . . . tush, I'm content. I'm tired. I'm ready to step off.

FIELDING. But, sir, she might—

RYLAND. No. I had it from Sir Joshua at the trial. She's in Italy.

FIELDING. She's here in London! I saw her only this morning.

RYLAND. Say that again!

FIELDING. She's here in London.

RYLAND. You fool! Why didn't you tell me? You stand there and blither about Lord Wycombe's secretary, when Angelica Kauffman's in London. . . . In London! Why didn't I know it? I did know it. I felt it through these stifling walls. I was a dolt . . . I thought it was only Spring in the air, April in my blood. It was hope, it was life. A moment ago you had me seeing myself on Tyburn Hill! And all the time I knew it could never come to that.

FIELDING. What am I to do?

RYLAND. Bring her here. Hunt her from one end of the town to the other. Bring her here, lad; I must talk to her. She can twist the Queen around her little finger. Through the Queen she can get me a royal pardon.

FIELDING. The time is short.

RYLAND. Time enough if she still cares!

[*The Gaoler knocks at the door.*]

GAOLER. A lady to see you, sir.

FIELDING. Ah!

RYLAND. Who is she?

GAOLER. Your wife, sir.

RYLAND. Show her in. [*Fielding goes to the door and pays the Gaoler; Mary Ryland comes in, and runs across to Ryland.*]

MARY RYLAND. William— . . .

RYLAND. Good morning, my dear.

MARY RYLAND. Aren't you glad to see me?

RYLAND. Why shouldn't I be glad to see you?

MARY RYLAND. You look disappointed. You haven't kissed me.

RYLAND. I beg your pardon! [*He kisses her hand, and turns to Fielding.*] Well, why don't you go?

FIELDING. Where shall I look for her?

RYLAND. Her house is in Golden Street. If you fail there, go to Sir Joshua. Spend what you need, but lose no time.

MARY RYLAND. Has something happened? Where is he to go?

RYLAND. He is to bring Angelica Kauffman here. He has my orders.

MARY RYLAND. No, I say. I'll not have her here. I'll not have you see her. I'll not allow— . . .

RYLAND. Pardon me, my dear. He shall bring her.

MARY RYLAND. [*Weeping.*] And I've come day after day, and you've treated me like a stranger . . . and now you're sending for her.

FIELDING [*Taking a step toward her.*] It's all as it should be, Mistress Ryland.

MARY RYLAND. You tell me that, Henry. Do you know? . . .

FIELDING. I know there is need for her.

MARY RYLAND. Then do as you think right.

FIELDING. It's not that, Mistress Ryland. It's necessary, now that Lord Wycombe— . . .

RYLAND. Sst! Go. [*Fielding goes out.*] My dear, I'm not flattered by your jealousy, I assure you. There is no need for you to question me—and Mistress Kauffman is a great artist. I must have her see this plate—to-day. That should be enough.

MARY RYLAND. But, William, you knew her before you ever saw me, and it hurts me to think— . . .

RYLAND. There, there, my dear.

[*The Gaoler knocks at the door.*]

GAOLER. Mr. Hadrill, on important business with Mr. Ryland.

RYLAND. Ask Mr. Hadrill to sit down outside. You can squeeze an extra shilling out of him for a chair.

MARY RYLAND. But William, you can't keep Mr. Hadrill waiting.

RYLAND. To-day it is my privilege to keep anybody waiting.

MARY RYLAND. But Mr. Hadrill's your publisher.

RYLAND. He's a tradesman to whom I'm doing a favor. A favor by which you are to profit, not I.

MARY RYLAND. Don't make it harder for me.

RYLAND. Mary, I want a few moments alone with you.

MARY RYLAND. I thought you'd rather be rid of me . . . that you'd rather—

RYLAND. My poor child. You seem to forget that my last plate, the thing I've let them stretch out my life, week by week, to finish—for your benefit; the only profitable thing I can leave you, in this world, is a copper mirror fashioned to reflect the genius of Angelica Kauffman.

MARY RYLAND. It's for her pleasure, her fame, you've been working, not for me. You've sent Fielding to fetch her. . . .

RYLAND. The plate's finished. It must have her approval before . . . I go.

MARY RYLAND. Don't! Don't speak of the end. . . . I can't bear it. I'm your wife.

RYLAND. Poor child. Poor little creature. I think you pity yourself more than you pity me.

MARY RYLAND. How can you? How can you?

RYLAND. Why all this snivelling about so simple a thing as death? A little jaunt from here to somewhere else . . . a step off into the empty air. My dear, it's I that take the step, not you.

MARY RYLAND. Oh! Oh, how can you go on about it this way?

RYLAND. Because I want to see you smile again. Because you're young. Because I've wasted a year of your life, and I'm sorry for it. . . . Because I want you to understand that if it happens I've come to the end of my lane, you are only turning into yours, . . . and the hedgerows are white with hawthorn bloom. You'll see the green trees in the Mall, the red sun over the chimney pots, the silver river when you walk on the embankment at night.

MARY RYLAND. But the loneliness, the separation!

RYLAND. [*Losing patience a little.*] Tush! Such separations are only terrible when two people love each other.

MARY RYLAND. But I love you.

RYLAND. No, I dazzled you. . . . And now I want to make it easy for you.

HADRILL. [*Heard outside.*] I won't wait any longer, Ryland. This business is urgent. [*He comes in, stops on seeing Mistress Ryland, and bows to her rather curtly.*] Your servant, madam.

RYLAND. To what am I indebted, Mr. Hadrill?

HADRILL. In Mistress Ryland's presence— . . .

MARY RYLAND. I pray you not to consider my feelings, Mr. Hadrill.

HADRILL. Egad, madam, it's for you to say. [*Turns to Ryland.*] Here you've put me in a fix! They say you've no more reprieve, no chance of pardon. That you hang at sunrise to-morrow. You should have considered my interest. You should have given me more time.

MARY RYLAND. No reprieve . . . no pardon!

HADRILL. [*Paying no attention to her.*] Is the plate done, signed, ready to print? Don't you see I've only the day for the edition, and the advertisement and all, or I'll miss the big sale at the stalls along the Tyburn road?

RYLAND. Ah, that would be a pity. It's ready, you see. [*Holds up plate.*]

HADRILL. Ready! . . . But the ink won't be dry before they have the halter on you. And I'd planned to make it a great day in

the trade,—a great day, sir, for the art of England. It's a wonderful opportunity for a pushing man—the last plate and the artist hanged to-day. . . . I had made some very striking preparations, Ryland.

RYLAND. Hadn't you forgotten something, Mr. Haddrill?

HADDRILL. Not a thing. . . . But you give me so little time. I plan to sell the prints at my shop, in Saint Paul's Churchyard, at Temple Bar, at stalls along the way to Tyburn; and I have six most lugubrious looking fellows—picked them out for their woebegone faces—all with crepe on their hats, sir, to sell them at Tyburn. Then I've got out broadsides, sir; and I've had a ballad written to sell at the hanging—all about you and your crime, and the prints for sale at my shop. Here it is, sir—like to look at it? [*He hands Ryland a ballad.*] And now there's so little chance to get 'em out. I take it very hard, Ryland.

RYLAND. This is miserable stuff.

HADDRILL. I'd have you know, sir, the same author wrote one last month for the celebrated highwayman, Jack Sparrow. It took the town by storm.

RYLAND. My name will go down in illustrious company. . . .

HADDRILL. Perhaps a little revision, with your help?

RYLAND. No, let it serve as it is. I've a bargain to strike with you, Haddrill.

HADDRILL. I thought you'd struck a pretty stiff bargain already, Ryland. I'm to pay your wife five shillings to the pound more than I'd give any living engraver. I've even advanced you ten pounds. I call it sharp practice— . . .

RYLAND. These are my final conditions, Mr. Haddrill. You offer five shillings. That won't do. You must double it.

HADDRILL. Double it!

RYLAND. All proofs must be numbered in the presence of Mr. Fielding.

HADDRILL. You mean you don't trust me, Ryland?

RYLAND. Remember, I shan't be here. I trust Fielding.

You've advanced ten pounds. Before the plate leaves my hands she must have fifty.

HADDRILL. Egad, you're driving it altogether too hard.

RYLAND. No, Haddrill, but I understand my position. I'm a public figure to-day. London will stand tiptoe all night to see me hanged in the morning. Another condition. I must see the contract you sign with my relict widow, Mary Ryland here. I must see you sign it in the presence of Fielding and Sir Joshua. They'll hold you to it.

HADDRILL. Look you, Mr. Ryland, I agree to the double royalty. But this goes too far, too dem'd far! I'm a man of my word, sir. I'll not be treated like a shuffling huckster, like a cheating fishmonger, like a dem'd criminal. I'm a communicant of the Church of England, sir! I won't be bound hand and foot.

RYLAND. I thought not.

HADDRILL. Deuce take you, sir! Blast your eyes, sir! What do you mean by that, sir?

RYLAND. Only this. You promise quickly enough, but I mean to see that you perform.

HADDRILL. [*Taking up his hat.*] Very well, sir. Very well. I'm sorry you're so headstrong.

RYLAND. You know how many printsellers there are in London. . . . All waiting for this chance.

HADDRILL. You won't abate your conditions?

RYLAND. Not a penny.

HADDRILL. I'm sorry I can't take you. . . . And I had it all planned.

RYLAND. You had it planned! A clumsy, niggardly plan you had. I know what the town will think. I know how the town will buy. Six hang-dog hucksters with crepe on their hats! That's like you, Haddrill; no taste whatever. Twelve young gentlemen, dressed in the height of fashion—veritable macaronis,—that's what you should have, and them selling the prints like mad, and all for the sake of charity to a pretty widow. . . . Flowers! My cart to be loaded with violets when

it stops at St. Sepulchre's. It's an occasion, sir, when the King's Engraver rides to Tyburn! At Holborn Bar you will have them fetch me a flagon of old port—

HADDRILL. But think of the expense, man, the expense!

RYLAND. Will you stick at a few pounds at a time like this? I wouldn't deal in sixpences on a great day for the art of England.

HADDRILL. You dealt in thousands, and see where it brought you. Think of me.

RYLAND. Why should I think of you! I'm the one to be hanged, Haddrill, not you. Broadsides, and a ballad! I can make a speech from the scaffold that'll ring through the town until this plate's worn thin as paper. Where will your ballad and your broadsides be then?

HADDRILL. You'll make a speech?

RYLAND. Aye, that I will. But it depends on you, Haddrill, what sort of speech.

HADDRILL. You're a genius, Ryland.

RYLAND. The speech will cost you twenty pounds extra to Mistress Ryland—mentioned in the contract.

HADDRILL. [*Writing.*] Mentioned in the contract. Violets at Saint Sepulchre's; a flagon of port at Holborn Bar; twenty pounds extra for a speech on the scaffold; twelve young gentlemen—no crepe on their hats. You're a genius, Ryland—but you bargain like a Jew.

RYLAND. I must protect Mistress Ryland's interests.

MARY RYLAND. Oh, oh!

HADDRILL. You'll give me the plate immediately?

RYLAND. When you bring me the contract.

HADDRILL. I give you my oath I'll treat your wife handsomely. I had something else in mind. . . . A very pretty idea, and quite genteel, too; quite up to your tone. If Mistress Ryland would sit in my shop for a week after the hanging and sell the prints herself— . . .

MARY RYLAND. Oh! the shame of it.

RYLAND. How much will you pay her?

MARY RYLAND. William, William, how can you? . . .

RYLAND. Hush, my dear. Mr. Haddrill will think you are over-sensitive. This is a matter of business.

HADDRILL. It would have a great effect. You might mention it in your speech. . . .

MARY RYLAND. This is monstrous. . . . This is terrible. I'll have nothing to do with it. I won't listen. I—

RYLAND. You see, Haddrill, there is still some delicacy of feeling left in England.

HADDRILL. I thought it most genteel, most suitable. Very—well, touching. But it's for Mistress Ryland to say.

RYLAND. She appears to object.

HADDRILL. At least she'll be at Tyburn . . . dressed in black, when the young gentlemen sell the prints. She'll be where the crowd can see her? It would help amazingly.

RYLAND. Surely, my dear, you can't refuse him that much. It's only what any dutiful wife would be expected to do, under the circumstances. . . . You'll have everyone's sympathy.

HADDRILL. Very fitting, very proper, I'm sure. Have you a black dress, Mistress Ryland?

MARY RYLAND. William, this is a nightmare. . . . Tell me I'm not awake, William.

RYLAND. There, there child! Go with Mr. Haddrill. He'll take you to a draper's. Be sure you get a becoming frock—he has no taste.

MARY RYLAND. No, no!

HADDRILL. Come, madam. I'll bring you back when I fetch the contract.

RYLAND. Yes, child, go. I'm expecting other visitors. . . . Go on with your preparations, Mr. Haddrill.

[Haddrill and Mistress Ryland start to go out; as they turn away, Ryland laughs aloud, and Haddrill faces about.]

RYLAND. But what if I shouldn't be hanged?

HADDRILL. Good Lord!

RYLAND. Do you think there's a reasonable doubt?

HADDRILL. [*Thinking it over and smiling grimly.*] No, Ryland, I don't. . . . But I confess you gave me a turn.

RYLAND. Au revoir, Mr. Haddrill.

[*Haddrill again turns toward the door, finds it barred, the Gaoler with his hand on the lock. Haddrill steps toward the door, but the Gaoler makes no move to open it.*]

HADDRILL. Den of thieves.

[*He pays the Gaoler and goes out. Ryland hums a line of song, and moves about the table, putting his proofs and materials in order. Fielding's voice is heard outside the door.*]

FIELDING. Mr. Ryland, Mr. Ryland. I've seen her. . . .

RYLAND. She's coming?

FIELDING. Yes.

RYLAND. Alone?

FIELDING. No. . . . She's bringing Sir Joshua.

RYLAND. The devil!

GAOLER. I don't call this fair to me, Mr. Ryland.

RYLAND. My dear man, you've spoken yourself of the generous treatment you've had from me and my friends. Let this pass, don't be grasping. . . . Besides, there's a lady coming—and a gentleman. They'll pay handsomely. In fact, it would be worth your while to bring in another chair.

GAOLER. I've no wish to be hard with you, Mr. Ryland, but there are rules.

RYLAND. I know. You make them yourself.

FIELDING. [*Outside.*] Am I to come in, Mr. Ryland?

RYLAND. [*Putting on his coat.*] No. You've done your share. Wait and see that this . . . butler welcomes them properly.

[*The Gaoler brings in the chair, and goes out. Ryland moves the chair so that Angelica and Sir Joshua must sit far apart, and hums the song again. The door opens.*]

GAOLER. Sir Joshua Reynolds. Mistress Angelica Kauffman.

[*The Gaoler goes out, smiling broadly, as the visitors have been generous.*]

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. I trust you'll pardon my intrusion, Mr. Ryland. But ladies of fashion . . . gentleman's apartment . . . you understand. Even in so irreproachable place as Newgate.

ANGELICA KAUFFMAN. [*Crossing Sir Joshua.*] It grieves me deeply, Mr. Ryland— . . .

RYLAND. [*To Angelica.*] Couldn't you have trusted me enough to come alone?

SIR JOSHUA. [*Adjusting his ear trumpet.*] Eh, what's that?

ANGELICA. Mr. Ryland spoke of his sense of the honour you do him in coming, Sir Joshua.

SIR JOSHUA. Ah, did he say that? Well, well, where's the plate? We came to see the plate you've engraved from Mistress Kauffman's picture.

[*Ryland holds up the plate, bows Sir Joshua to the chair, extreme right, and goes over to Angelica, handing her the plate.*]

RYLAND. [*To Angelica.*] It was more, much more than the plate. . . .

SIR JOSHUA. Eh, what's that? A little more distinctly sir.

RYLAND. [*To Angelica.*] Confound your dragon. [*To Sir Joshua.*] I wish to consult Mistress Kauffman about the drawing of the arm.

SIR JOSHUA. Eh? Oh. . . . Ah, the drawing. I shouldn't examine it. Better let it pass.

ANGELICA. Oh, lud, sir, I scarcely know how to take you.

SIR JOSHUA. Always said, dear lady, your art . . . transcends mere drawing.

ANGELICA. Ah, the kind lies he tosses to the vanity of his friends. Dear Sir Joshua.

SIR JOSHUA. Well, sir, have you nothing to show? No trial proofs? Let me see the work, sir, and I'll toss you no kind lies. I've an engagement.

RYLAND. Give it to him, madam, and for God's sake grant me a moment's speech with you apart.

SIR JOSHUA. If you desire my criticism, Mr. Ryland, you must speak more distinctly.

ANGELICA. [*Hands a proof to Sir Joshua.*] Do me the honor, sir.

ANGELICA. [*Referring to the plate.*] This is all my intention in the cartoon, Mr. Ryland. You have a wonderful gift of patience.

RYLAND. Not patience, Mistress, but an exquisite pleasure. . . . to follow your fancy, your sentiment. . . .

SIR JOSHUA. It does you credit, sir—and the lady as well. Admirable. . . . Though I see nothing in it to stay the course of justice.

RYLAND. [*With lofty resignation.*] So you believe it to be justice, sir?

SIR JOSHUA. My belief has no weight, Ryland. . . . But now that this is done, and the legal pother over with, what are you going to do with it?

RYLAND. If it has Mistress Kauffman's approval, what do I care—what they do with it?

SIR JOSHUA. You take it too lightly. The plate must be worth money, and your obligations to your—

RYLAND. [*Glancing toward Angelica.*] Spare me that, Sir Joshua, I beg you. What is money, to a man who lodges here for the last night?

SIR JOSHUA. Rubbish! Your affairs should be left in order. . . . That is the least you can do for—

RYLAND. Do you not understand, sir, that this pains me deeply. Money has been the shadow, the strain of discord, the flaw in the metal. . . . Money has been my ruin . . . and you ask me to spend my last hours haggling—

SIR JOSHUA. Calm yourself, sir. Haddrill, I suppose, brings it out. I'll look to this for you.

RYLAND. That is more than I have a right to ask of you, Sir Joshua.

SIR JOSHUA. Tush, tush. I'm not speaking of your rights, but in the interest of your—

RYLAND. Haddrill will attend to everything. He's bringing me a contract. He's a very generous fellow, Haddrill. I shall sign it, Sir Joshua, without reading.

SIR JOSHUA. Not without *my* reading. . . . Must take care of you, even if you choose to hang yourself.

ANGELICA. [*Protesting at the word.*] Oh, Sir Joshua.

RYLAND. I thank you for that, Mistress.

GAOLER. [*At the door.*] Mr. Haddrill is back. Says he's forgotten something. Shall I admit him, Mr. Ryland?

SIR JOSHUA. Very fortunate. . . . Show him in. I'll arrange this matter now . . . take care of all the quibbles before they come up.

RYLAND. Sir Joshua, I beg you not to afflict me. I have only a few hours . . . and this is torture. If you are inflexible in your kindness toward me, go to Haddrill and do what you can in my behalf. It's more than I ought to ask . . . and I hope you will not find I have been too heedless.

SIR JOSHUA. It should be done in your presence, but you're so dem'd improvident.

RYLAND. I am not so improvident as to be ungrateful, sir. [*He bows Sir Joshua out and turns to face Angelica.*] You at least have a sympathy for me, Mistress; you who understand so well the delicacy of my feelings in an hour like this.

ANGELICA. I hardly know. This is all so shocking, so terrible. I am . . .

RYLAND. Dear lady, I have been a brute to drag you here, you, who live in the glow and the music . . . to see a man in this hopeless gloomy cell, a poor devil who is about to die—

ANGELICA. Please don't. . . . I shall faint.

RYLAND. I beg you not to faint. I will speak of other days, and you shall listen—out of charity. It doesn't so much matter to me now; I've done with it all. But it was hard to face the end without seeing you again. Now I can go. . . . I'm not unready.

ANGELICA. What difference can seeing me make?

RYLAND. What difference? . . . I ride to Tyburn with a vision of you in my eyes, the sound of your voice in my ears, the touch of your pity on my defeated heart. . . . What difference? . . . If you had not come, I should have gone out of here with the gallows swinging before me, and my misspent years blowing in my face.

ANGELICA. This is very sentimental, Ryland. I hardly imagined that you . . . that I—

RYLAND. That it meant so much to me, when you last refused me?

ANGELICA. There, there, Ryland. You knew it was impossible.

RYLAND. I know. . . . You thought you loved—

ANGELICA. I beg you not to speak of him. He was unworthy, and he is gone . . . out of my life.

RYLAND. [*Suddenly hilarious.*] And out of England! Egad, why shouldn't I speak of him. The town talked on nothing else: The distinguished Count de Horn shows an interest in the incomparable Mistress Kauffman; he is accepted; he isn't; he is. . . . They are married; they are not; they are. . . . He is an impostor; he is a prince in disguise; he is the son of his father's cook! and then . . . pouf! He's gone.

ANGELICA. You can not imagine, sir, this is pleasant to me.

RYLAND. Nor was it pleasant to me. The Count de Horn . . . the son of his father's cook . . . and a bigamist! Mistress Kauffman will prosecute; she will not; she will. . . . He was a criminal. He had imposed upon your faith, your heart, your honour. You could have let him hang. . . . But instead of that you gave him his freedom and five hundred pounds.

ANGELICA. Three hundred.

RYLAND. Generous soul!

ANGELICA. I will not remain here, sir, to be taunted with my past misfortunes.

RYLAND. Nothing was further from my intention.

ANGELICA. Then why do you recall this?

RYLAND. I'm sure I don't know. . . . It's my whim to marvel, just for the moment, at the charity which gives a scoundrel,

who had wronged you, his freedom and three hundred pounds, while you see a man who has devoted his life to the spreading of your fame, a man who has loved you, and who still loves you, go to the gallows without the compliment of a tear.

ANGELICA. This is most unjust. You have given me neither time nor proper occasion for weeping, Ryland.

RYLAND. [*Coming close to her.*] And it does not occur to you; now that you see me again? . . .

ANGELICA. [*She backs toward the door.*] Nothing occurs to me; I'm all upset by your impudence.

RYLAND. Unkind, unkind! When this is my last living day, and you could, if you chose . . .

ANGELICA. If you come a step nearer, I shall call Sir Joshua.

RYLAND. [*Stops and looks at her, his eyes filled with admiration.*] The winter in Italy has agreed with you. . . . I've never seen you look so . . . dangerous, Angelica.

ANGELICA. You mustn't call me that. . . . My name—

RYLAND. That was what I called you when we danced together at Tunbridge, the night you laughed with me over Fuseli's proposal; Angelica I called you when we sat together on Richmond Hill, and watched the moon trace out the Thames with silver fingers; Angelica I called you that divine day in Windsor Forest,—the day I first told you I loved you;—Angelica—

ANGELICA. You play upon the word, Ryland, as though it were a refrain.

RYLAND. The refrain of a living love, dearest . . . in the song of a dead life.

ANGELICA. Is it a dead life, William? . . .

RYLAND. It dies at sunrise . . . and all for a few pounds unwisely borrowed, a few creditors inhumanly clamorous, and the lies of a paper-maker who hated me.

ANGELICA. What is it they accuse you of?

RYLAND. Forgery.

ANGELICA. And you are not guilty.

RYLAND. Guilty? . . . I have borrowed unwisely, I tell you. I was hungry for the sight of . . . Italy. Is that guilt? There was a matter of a note—an India company note. Thirty men had

signed it, and not one of them at the trial could say the hand was not his own. [*She makes a gesture of inquiry.*] This paper-maker . . . he swore he had made the paper on which it was written a year after the date of the note. Guilty? . . . That would have been criminally stupid, and of stupidity no one has ever accused me. . . . For all that, the court passed sentence.

ANGELICA. And is there no appeal?

RYLAND. What need of appeal, if it no longer touches you?

ANGELICA. But if it does touch me?

RYLAND. We have tried what we could. . . . I have been three times reprieved, to finish this plate. It is done. His Majesty is inexorable. But with you in England, with the lure of you—

ANGELICA. Don't tell me you would not make the effort except as I inspired it.

RYLAND. Why?

ANGELICA. I could not believe you.

RYLAND. The truth, then: you can reach the Queen. Through her, King George. Till you came, I had no voice to reach him. You can have what you ask. Let it be . . . my life.

ANGELICA. You want me to go the Queen?

RYLAND. Yes!

ANGELICA. This would compromise me more deeply than you can imagine.

RYLAND. [*Sardonically.*] You have not imagined how high it will hang me . . . if you refuse.

ANGELICA. And if I fail?

RYLAND. I shall not murmur. . . . But I do not believe you can fail.

ANGELICA. William. William. . . . No, don't come near me. I will go. This must be secret—

RYLAND. You can trust me.

ANGELICA. And there must be no more talk of love . . . no notes, messages, flowers, tokens. You are to be merely a man—an artist—in whose work I take a great interest . . . an innocent man whom I endeavor to deliver from an unjust death—

RYLAND. Stop. I agree to the secrecy, but I do not pledge myself not to love you.

ANGELICA. You must.

RYLAND. I will not take life on these terms. Secrecy—discretion—yes. . . . You can not require that I forget you.

ANGELICA. It cuts me . . . you have been faithful to a memory so long. Perhaps, when this is over, I may permit you to remember again.

RYLAND. [*Seizing her hand and kissing it.*] Better to blot out my life than the memories of Richmond Hill!

ANGELICA. You must keep them deep hidden, William. . . . These are perilous things, these memories.

RYLAND. They have been my stay, my comfort, since these ungentle days came upon me. A faith like mine, Angelica, a love that endures unshaken . . . it must be something, even to you. Tell me you go to the Queen because you too remember—

ANGELICA. It is enough that I go.

RYLAND. No. . . . That you go out of love for me.

ANGELICA. You must content yourself, William. . . . For you I go to the Queen.

[*She starts toward the bars when the Gaoler opens them quietly and Mary Ryland comes in. Mistress Ryland pauses, glances at Angelica, and goes over to Ryland, who waves her away and sinks back against the table. Mary comes down, L., hesitates a moment, then comes down above Angelica, L. C., and falls on her knees, clasping Angelica's hand.*]

MARY RYLAND. Oh madam, madam!

ANGELICA. What's this? . . . Let go my hand, girl.

RYLAND. What brings you back? . . .

MARY RYLAND. Mr. Haddrill says . . . Oh, Madam, you could do something, you could help us—

ANGELICA. Help us? Who are you, child?

MARY RYLAND. I'm the unhappiest woman . . . I've been a jealous fool . . . But I know he's too proud, too honourable. He would die rather than be too heavily beholden to you. But I have no pride: I can beg you to plead for him; I can beseech you on my knees. If you are not moved to do your utmost for him, at least you must look with pity on me . . .

ANGELICA. Is this lady your wife, Mr. Ryland?

RYLAND. Yes.

ANGELICA. [*With menace.*] I regret that you omitted to mention her.

[*Mary Ryland moves away from her, and Ryland sinks back in despair.*]

SIR JOSHUA. [*Heard outside.*] Well, I must say, Haddrill, he's driven a sharp bargain with you.

HADDRILL. Sharp bargain! Dem'd close to robbery, I call it.

[*Enter Sir Joshua and Haddrill, Fielding following them.*]

ANGELICA. [*To Sir Joshua.*] So you've not found him so simple?

SIR JOSHUA. Simple! He has bound this poor fellow to support his wife for the rest of her days.

HADDRILL. I'm a man of my word, Ryland. If you're satisfied, I'll trouble you for the plate. [*Ryland hands over the plate, bowing.*] I shall live up to my part of the contract.

RYLAND. You may rest assured as to my part of it.

SIR JOSHUA. I'm sorry, Ryland. I tell you frankly, I wished to think well of you. But this contract . . . a man capable of such a document, sir—I spare you my opinion, in your wife's presence.

ANGELICA. [*Joining Haddrill and Sir Joshua.*] Your presumption, sir; your lack of candour— . . .

RYLAND. My best friends . . . it grieves me exceedingly that the confidence of one's best friends should be turned aside by a man's natural efforts to save his neck and to provide for his family.

MARY RYLAND. [*To Angelica.*] Madam, is there nothing you can do?

ANGELICA. Nothing I care to do.

FIELDING. Oh, Mr. Ryland, if you would only—

RYLAND. Let me alone. You won't grieve long. You'll get your reward.

MARY RYLAND. Oh, William, William!

RYLAND. Tush, child, go with Fielding. He'll take care of you. You've done enough . . . for me.

ANGELICA. For shame, Ryland! [*She gathers Mary Ryland under her arm.*] When you need to see her, Mr. Haddrill, come to me.

HADDRILL. [*From the door, where he and Sir Joshua are about to go out.*] Your servant, madam.

SIR JOSHUA. Come, Mistress Angelica. Remember, Ryland, I wished to think well of you.

RYLAND. I have not long to remember. Sir, your very humble servant.

[*Exeunt Sir Joshua, Haddrill and Fielding. Angelica stops at the door and turns back, Mary Ryland with her.*]

ANGELICA. She goes under my protection, Ryland.

[*Mistress Ryland leaves Angelica for a moment, and goes slowly over to Ryland who kisses her forehead and leads her back to Angelica.*]

RYLAND. I am filled with gratitude, Mistress. Mary, you will find it most pleasant I am sure. . . . A gay household, Mary—you'll like that.

ANGELICA. Not so gay as it has been, Ryland. You see, I have my husband to consider.

[*Ryland draws himself up, swiftly.*]

RYLAND. Your husband? . . . I'm sorry you omitted to mention him. My compliments, madam. [*Exeunt Angelica and Mistress Ryland. Ryland speaks to the Gaoler, who is about to close the door.*] It won't be necessary to admit any more visitors.

GAOLER. No, sir. But there's the chaplain to see you, sir.

RYLAND. What's that?

GAOLER. The chaplain of the prison, Mr. Ryland, to see you.

RYLAND. [*Rising and fumbling with his cravat.*] The chaplain. . . . Oh, God, yes! . . . Yes, yes, yes! I suppose I shall have to see the chaplain.

[*Curtain.*]

MAY 16 1912

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 018 394 442 3

