Mrs. Warren's Profession - Act I

di George Bernard Shaw (1898)

ACT I

Summer afternoon in a cottage garden on the eastern slope of a hill a little south of Haslemere in Surrey. Looking up the hill, the cottage is seen in the left hand corner of the garden, with its thatched roof and porch, and a large latticed window to the left of the porch. A paling completely shuts in the garden, except for a gate on the right. The common rises uphill beyond the paling to the sky line. Some folded canvas garden chairs are leaning against the side bench in the porch. A lady's bicycle is propped against the wall, under the window. A little to the right of the porch a hammock is slung from two posts. A big canvas umbrella, stuck in the ground, keeps the sun off the hammock, in which a young lady is reading and making notes, her head towards the cottage and her feet towards the gate. In front of the hammock, and within reach of her hand, is a common kitchen chair, with a pile of serious-looking books and a supply of writing paper on it.

A gentleman walking on the common comes into sight from behind the cottage. He is hardly past middle age, with something of the artist about him, unconventionally but carefully dressed, and clean-shaven except for a moustache, with an eager susceptible face and very amiable and considerate manners. He has silky black hair, with waves of grey and white in it. His eyebrows are white, his moustache black. He seems not certain of his way. He looks over the palings; takes stock of the place; and sees the young lady.

THE GENTLEMAN: *taking off his hat* I beg your pardon. Can you direct me to Hindhead View—Mrs Alison's?

THE YOUNG LADY: *glancing up from her book* This is Mrs Alison's. *She resumes her work*

THE GENTLEMAN: Indeed! Perhaps—may I ask are you Miss Vivie Warren?

THE YOUNG LADY: *sharply, as she turns on her elbow to get a good look at him* Yes.

THE GENTLEMAN: *daunted and conciliatory* I'm afraid I appear intrusive. My name is Praed. *Vivie at once throws her books upon the chair, and gets out of the hammock* Oh, pray don't let me disturb you.

VIVIE: *striding to the gate and opening it for him* Come in, Mr Praed. *He comes in* Glad to see you. *She proffers her hand and takes his with a resolute and hearty grip. She is an attractive specimen of the sensible, able, highly-educated young middle-class Englishwoman. Age 22. Prompt, strong, confident, self-possessed. Plain business-like dress, but not dowdy. She wears a chatelaine at her belt, with a fountain pen and a paper knife among its pendants*

PRAED: Very kind of you indeed, Miss Warren. *She shuts the gate with a vigorous slam. He passes in to the middle of the garden, exercising his fingers, which are slightly numbed by her greeting* Has your mother arrived?

VIVIE: *quickly, evidently scenting aggression* Is she coming?

PRAED: *surprised* Didn't you expect us?

VIVIE: No.

PRAED: Now, goodness me, I hope I've not mistaken the day. That would be just like me, you know. Your mother arranged that she was to come down from London and that I was to come over from Horsham to be introduced to you.

VIVIE: *not at all pleased* Did she? Hm! My mother has rather a trick of taking me by surprise—to see

how I behave myself while she's away, I suppose. I fancy I shall take my mother very much by surprise one of these days, if she makes arrangements that concern me without consulting me beforehand. She hasnt come.

PRAED: *embarrassed* I'm really very sorry.

VIVIE: *throwing off her displeasure* It's not your fault, Mr Praed, is it? And I'm very glad you've come. You are the only one of my mother's friends I have ever asked her to bring to see me.

PRAED: *relieved and delighted* Oh, now this is really very good of you, Miss Warren!

VIVIE: Will you come indoors; or would you rather sit out here and talk?

PRAED: It will be nicer out here, don't you think?

VIVIE: Then I'll go and get you a chair. *She goes to the porch for a garden chair*

PRAED: *following her* Oh, pray, pray! Allow me. *He lays hands on the chair*

VIVIE: *letting him take it* Take care of your fingers; theyre rather dodgy things, those chairs. *She goes across to the chair with the books on it; pitches them into the hammock; and brings the chair forward with one swing*

PRAED: *who has just unfolded his chair* Oh, now do let me take that hard chair. I like hard chairs.

VIVIE: So do I. Sit down, Mr Praed. *This invitation she gives with a genial peremptoriness, his anxiety to please her clearly striking her as a sign of weakness of character on his part. But he does not immediately obey*

PRAED: By the way, though, hadnt we better go to the station to meet your mother?

VIVIE: *coolly* Why? She knows the way.

PRAED: *disconcerted* Er—I suppose she does *he sits down*

VIVIE: Do you know, you are just like what I expected. I hope you are disposed to be friends with me.

PRAED: *again beaming* Thank you, my dear Miss Warren; thank you. Dear me! I'm so glad your mother hasnt spoilt you!

VIVIE: How?

PRAED: Well, in making you too conventional. You know, my dear Miss Warren, I am a born anarchist. I hate authority. It spoils the relations between parent and child; even between mother and daughter. Now I was always afraid that your mother would strain her authority to make you very conventional. It's such a relief to find that she hasnt.

VIVIE: Oh! have I been behaving unconventionally?

PRAED: Oh no: oh dear no. At least, not conventionally unconventionally, you understand. *She nods and sits down. He goes on, with a cordial outburst* But it was so charming of you to say that you were disposed to be friends with me! You modern young ladies are splendid: perfectly splendid!

VIVIE: *dubiously* Eh? *watching him with dawning disappointment as to the quality of his brains and character*

PRAED: When I was your age, young men and women were afraid of each other: there was no good fellowship. Nothing real. Only gallantry copied out of novels, and as vulgar and affected as it could be. Maidenly reserve! gentlemanly chivalry! always saying no when you meant yes! simple purgatory for shy and sincere souls.

VIVIE: Yes, I imagine there must have been a frightful waste of time. Especially women's time.

PRAED: Oh, waste of life, waste of everything. But things are improving. Do you know, I have been in a positive state of excitement about meeting you ever since your magnificent achievements at Cambridge: a thing unheard of in my day. It was perfectly splendid, your tieing with the third wrangler. Just the right place, you know. The first wrangler is always a dreamy, morbid fellow, in whom the thing is pushed to the length of a disease.

VIVIE: It doesn't pay. I wouldn't do it again for the same money.

PRAED: *aghast* The same money!

VIVIE: Yes. Fifty pounds. Perhaps you don't know how it was. Mrs Latham, my tutor at Newnham, told my mother that I could distinguish myself in the mathematical tripos if I went in for it in earnest. The papers were full just then of Phillipa Summers beating the senior wrangler. You remember about it, of course.

PRAED: *shakes his head energetically!!!*

VIVIE: Well, anyhow, she did; and nothing would please my mother but that I should do the same thing. I said flatly that it was not worth my while to face the grind since I was not going in for teaching; but I offered to try for fourth wrangler or thereabouts for fifty pounds. She closed with me at that, after a little grumbling; and I was better than my bargain. But I wouldn't do it again for that. Two hundred pounds would have been nearer the mark.

PRAED: *much damped* Lord bless me! Thats a very practical way of looking at it.

VIVIE: Did you expect to find me an unpractical person?

PRAED: But surely it's practical to consider not only the work these honors cost, but also the culture they bring.

VIVIE: Culture! My dear Mr Praed: do you know what the mathematical tripos means? It means grind, grind, grind for six to eight hours a day at mathematics, and nothing but mathematics.

VIVIE: I'm supposed to know something about science; but I know nothing except the mathematics it involves. I can make calculations for engineers, electricians, insurance companies, and so on; but I know next to nothing about engineering or electricity or insurance. I don't even know arithmetic well. Outside mathematics, lawn-tennis, eating, sleeping, cycling, and walking, I'm a more ignorant barbarian than any woman could possibly be who hadn't gone in for the tripos.

PRAED: *revolted* What a monstrous, wicked, rascally system! I knew it! I felt at once that it meant destroying all that makes womanhood beautiful!

VIVIE: I don't object to it on that score in the least. I shall turn it to very good account, I assure you.

PRAED: Pooh! In what way?

VIVIE: I shall set up chambers in the City, and work at actuarial calculations and conveyancing. Under cover of that I shall do some law, with one eye on the Stock Exchange all the time. I've come down here by myself to read law: not for a holiday, as my mother imagines. I hate holidays.

PRAED: You make my blood run cold. Are you to have no romance, no beauty in your life?

VIVIE: I don't care for either, I assure you.

PRAED: You can't mean that.

VIVIE: Oh yes I do. I like working and getting paid for it. When I'm tired of working, I like a comfortable chair, a cigar, a little whisky, and a novel with a good detective story in it.

PRAED: *rising in a frenzy of repudiation* I don't believe it. I am an artist; and I can't believe it: I refuse to believe it. It's only that you havn't discovered yet what a wonderful world art can open up to you.

VIVIE: Yes I have. Last May I spent six weeks in London with Honoria Fraser. Mamma thought we were doing a round of sightseeing together; but I was really at Honoria's chambers in Chancery Lane every day, working away at actuarial calculations for her, and helping her as well as a greenhorn could. In the evenings we smoked and talked, and never dreamt of going out except for exercise. And I never enjoyed myself more in my life.

VIVIE: I cleared all my expenses and got initiated into the business without a fee in the bargain.

PRAED: But bless my heart and soul, Miss Warren, do you call that discovering art?

VIVIE: Wait a bit. That wasn't the beginning. I went up to town on an invitation from some artistic people in Fitzjohn's Avenue: one of the girls was a Newnham chum. They took me to the National Gallery—

PRAED: *approving* Ah!! *He sits down, much relieved*

VIVIE: *continuing—to the Opera—*

PRAED: *still more pleased* Good!

PRAED: VIVIE.—and to a concert where the band played all the evening: Beethoven and Wagner and so on. I wouldn't go through that experience again for anything you could offer me. I held out for civility's sake until the third day; and then I said, plump out, that I couldn't stand any more of it, and went off to Chancery Lane. N o w you know the sort of perfectly splendid modern young lady I am. How do you think I shall get on with my mother?

PRAED: *startled* Well, I hope—er—

VIVIE: It's not so much what you hope as what you believe, that I want to know.

PRAED: Well, frankly, I am afraid your mother will be a little disappointed. Not from any shortcoming on your part, you know: I don't mean that. But you are so different from her ideal.

VIVIE: Her what?!

PRAED: Her ideal.

VIVIE: Do you mean her ideal of ME?

PRAED: Yes.

VIVIE: What on earth is it like?

PRAED: Well, you must have observed, Miss Warren, that people who are dissatisfied with their own bringing-up generally think that the world would be all right if everybody were to be brought up quite differently. Now your mother's life has been—er—I suppose you know—

VIVIE: Don't suppose anything, Mr Praed. I hardly know my mother. Since I was a child I have lived in England, at school or at college, or with people paid to take charge of me. I have been boarded out all my life. My mother has lived in Brussels or Vienna and never let me go to her. I only see her when she visits England for a few days. I don't complain: it's been very pleasant; for people have been very good to me; and there has always been plenty of money to make things smooth. But don't imagine I know anything about my mother. I know far less than you do.

PRAED: *very ill at ease* In that case—[He stops, quite at a loss. Then, with a forced attempt at gaiety] But what nonsense we are talking! Of course you and your mother will get on capitally. *He rises, and looks abroad at the view* What a charming little place you have here!

VIVIE: *unmoved* Rather a violent change of subject, Mr Praed. Why won't my mother's life bear being talked about?

PRAED: Oh, you mustn't say that. Isn't it natural that I should have a certain delicacy in talking to my

old friend's daughter about her behind her back? You and she will have plenty of opportunity of talking about it when she comes.

VIVIE: No: she won't talk about it either. *Rising* However, I daresay you have good reasons for telling me nothing. Only, mind this, Mr Praed, I expect there will be a battle royal when my mother hears of my Chancery Lane project.

PRAED: *ruefully* I'm afraid there will.

VIVIE: Well, I shall win because I want nothing but my fare to London to start there to-morrow earning my own living by devilling for Honoria. Besides, I have no mysteries to keep up; and it seems she has. I shall use that advantage over her if necessary.

PRAED: *greatly shocked* Oh no! No, pray. Youd not do such a thing.

VIVIE: Then tell me why not.

PRAED: I really cannot. I appeal to your good feeling. *She smiles at his sentimentality* Besides, you may be too bold. Your mother is not to be trifled with when she's angry.

VIVIE: You can't frighten me, Mr Praed. In that month at Chancery Lane I had opportunities of taking the measure of one or two women v e r y like my mother. You may back me to win. But if I hit harder in my ignorance than I need, remember it is you who refuse to enlighten me. Now, let us drop the subject. *She takes her chair and replaces it near the hammock with the same vigorous swing as before*

PRAED: *taking a desperate resolution* One word, Miss Warren. I had better tell you. It's very difficult; but—

Mrs Warren and Sir George Crofts arrive at the gate. Mrs Warren is between 40 and 50, formerly pretty, showily dressed in a brilliant hat and a gay blouse fitting tightly over her bust and flanked by fashionable sleeves. Rather spoilt and domineering, and decidedly vulgar, but, on the whole, a genial and fairly presentable old blackguard of a woman.

Crofts is a tall powerfully-built man of about 50, fashionably dressed in the style of a young man. Nasal voice, reedier than might be expected from his strong frame. Clean-shaven bulldog jaws, large flat ears, and thick neck: gentlemanly combination of the most brutal types of city man, sporting man, and man about town.

VIVIE: Here they are. *Coming to them as they enter the garden* How do, mater? Mr Praed's been here this half hour, waiting for you.

MRS. WARREN: Well, if you've been waiting, Praddy, it's your own fault: I thought youd have had the gumption to know I was coming by the 3.10 train. Vivie: put your hat on, dear: youll get sunburnt. Oh, I forgot to introduce you. Sir George Crofts: my little Vivie.

Crofts advances to Vivie with his most courtly manner. She nods, but makes no motion to shake hands.

CROFTS: May I shake hands with a young lady whom I have known by reputation very long as the daughter of one of my oldest friends?

VIVIE: *who has been looking him up and down sharply* If you like.

She takes his tenderly proferred hand and gives it a squeeze that makes him open his eyes; then turns away, and says to her mother Will you come in, or shall I get a couple more chairs? She goes into the porch for the chairs.

MRS. WARREN: Well, George, what do you think of her?

CROFTS: *ruefully* She has a powerful fist. Did you shake hands with her, Praed?

PRAED: Yes: it will pass off presently.

CROFTS: I hope so. *Vivie reappears with two more chairs. He hurries to her assistance* Allow me.

MRS. WARREN: *patronizingly* Let Sir George help you with the chairs, dear.

VIVIE: *pitching them into his arms* Here you are. *She dusts her hands and turns to Mrs Warren* Youd like some tea, wouldn't you?

MRS. WARREN: *sitting in Praed's chair and fanning herself* I'm dying for a drop to drink.

VIVIE: I'll see about it. *She goes into the cottage*

Sir George has by this time managed to unfold a chair and plant it by Mrs Warren, on her left. He throws the other on the grass and sits down, looking dejected and rather foolish, with the handle of his stick in his mouth. Praed, still very uneasy, fidgets around the garden on their right.

MRS. WARREN: *to Praed, looking at Crofts* Just look at him, Praddy: he looks cheerful, don't he? He's been worrying my life out these three years to have that little girl of mine shewn to him; and now that Ive done it, he's quite out of countenance. *Briskly* Come! sit up, George; and take your stick out of your mouth. *Crofts sulkily obeys*

PRAED: I think, you know—if you don't mind my saying so—that we had better get out of the habit of thinking of her as a little girl. You see she has really distinguished herself; and I'm not sure, from what I have seen of her, that she is not older than any of us.

MRS. WARREN: *greatly amused* Only listen to him, George! Older than any of us! Well she has been stuffing you nicely with her importance.

PRAED: But young people are particularly sensitive about being treated in that way.

MRS. WARREN: Yes; and young people have to get all that nonsense taken out of them, and good deal more besides. Don't you interfere, Praddy: I know how to treat my own child as well as you do. *Praed, with a grave shake of his head, walks up the garden with his hands behind his back. Mrs Warren pretends to laugh, but looks after him with perceptible concern. Then, she whispers to Crofts* Whats the matter with him? What does he take it like that for?

CROFTS: *morosely* Youre afraid of Praed.

MRS. WARREN: What! Me! Afraid of dear old Praddy! Why, a fly wouldn't be afraid of him.

CROFTS: You're afraid of him.

MRS. WARREN: *angry* I'll trouble you to mind your own business, and not try any of your sulks on me. I'm not afraid of you, anyhow. If you can't make yourself agreeable, youd better go home. *She gets up, and, turning her back on him, finds herself face to face with Praed* Come, Praddy, I know it was only your tender-heartedness. Youre afraid I'll bully her.

PRAED: My dear Kitty: you think I'm offended. Don't imagine that: pray don't. But you know I often notice things that escape you; and though you never take my advice, you sometimes admit afterwards that you ought to have taken it.

MRS. WARREN: Well, what do you notice now?

PRAED: Only that Vivie is a grown woman. Pray, Kitty, treat her with every respect.

MRS. WARREN: *with genuine amazement* Respect! Treat my own daughter with respect! What next, pray!

VIVIE: *appearing at the cottage door and calling to Mrs Warren* Mother: will you come to my room before tea?

MRS. WARREN: Yes, dearie. *She laughs indulgently at Praed's gravity, and pats him on the cheek as*

she passes him on her way to the porch Don't be cross, Praddy. *She follows Vivie into the cottage*

CROFTS: *furtively* I say, Praed.

PRAED: Yes.

CROFTS: I want to ask you a rather particular question.

PRAED: Certainly. *He takes Mrs Warren's chair and sits close to Crofts*

CROFTS: Thats right: they might hear us from the window. Look here: did Kitty every tell you who that girl's father is?

PRAED: Never.

CROFTS: Have you any suspicion of who it might be?

PRAED: None.

CROFTS: *not believing him* I know, of course, that you perhaps might feel bound not to tell if she had said anything to you. But it's very awkward to be uncertain about it now that we shall be meeting the girl every day. We don't exactly know how we ought to feel towards her.

PRAED: What difference can that make? We take her on her own merits. What does it matter who her father was?

CROFTS: *suspiciously* Then you know who he was?

PRAED: *with a touch of temper* I said no just now. Did you not hear me?

CROFTS: Look here, Praed. I ask you as a particular favor. If you do know *movement of protest from Praed—*only say, if you know, you might at least set my mind at rest about her. The fact is, I feel attracted.

PRAED: *sternly* What do you mean?

CROFTS: Oh, don't be alarmed: it's quite an innocent feeling. Thats what puzzles me about it. Why, for all I know, I might be her father.

PRAED: You! Impossible!

CROFTS: *catching him up cunningly* You know for certain that I'm not?

PRAED: I know nothing about it, I tell you, any more than you. But really, Crofts—oh no, it's out of the question. Theres not the least resemblance.

CROFTS: As to that, theres no resemblance between her and her mother that I can see. I suppose she's not your daughter, is she?

PRAED: *rising indignantly* Really, Crofts—!

CROFTS: No offence, Praed. Quite allowable as between two men of the world.

PRAED: *recovering himself with an effort and speaking gently and gravely* Now listen to me, my dear Crofts. *He sits down again*

PRAED: I have nothing to do with that side of Mrs Warren's life, and never had. She has never spoken to me about it; and of course I have never spoken to her about it. Your delicacy will tell you that a handsome woman needs some friends who are not—well, not on that footing with her. The effect of her own beauty would become a torment to her if she could not escape from it occasionally. You are probably on much more confidential terms with Kitty than I am. Surely you can ask her the question yourself.

CROFTS: I h a v e asked her, often enough. But she's so determined to keep the child all to herself that

she would deny that it ever had a father if she could. *Rising* I'm thoroughly uncomfortable about it, Praed.

PRAED: *rising also* Well, as you are, at all events, old enough to be her father, I don't mind agreeing that we both regard Miss Vivie in a parental way, as a young girl who we are bound to protect and help. What do you say?

CROFTS: *aggressively* I'm no older than you, if you come to that.

PRAED: Yes you are, my dear fellow: you were born old. I was born a boy: Ive never been able to feel the assurance of a grown-up man in my life. *He folds his chair and carries it to the porch*

MRS. WARREN: *calling from within the cottage* Prad-dee! George! Tea-ea-ea-ea!

CROFTS: *hastily* She's calling us. *He hurries in*

Praed shakes his head bodingly, and is following Crofts when he is hailed by a young gentleman who has just appeared on the common, and is making for the gate. He is pleasant, pretty, smartly dressed, cleverly good-for-nothing, not long turned 20, with a charming voice and agreeably disrespectful manners. He carries a light sporting magazine rifle.

THE YOUNG GENTLEMAN: Hallo! Praed!

PRAED: Why, Frank Gardner! *Frank comes in and shakes hands cordially* What on earth are you doing here?

FRANK: Staying with my father.

PRAED: The Roman father?

FRANK: He's rector here. I'm living with my people this autumn for the sake of economy. Things came to a crisis in July: the Roman father had to pay my debts. He's stony broke in consequence; and so am I. What are you up to in these parts? do you know the people here?

PRAED: Yes: I'm spending the day with a Miss Warren.

FRANK: *enthusiastically* What! Do you know Vivie? Isn't she a jolly girl? I'm teaching her to shoot with this *putting down the rifle* I'm so glad she knows you: youre just the sort of fellow she ought to know. *He smiles, and raises the charming voice almost to a singing tone as he exclaims* It's ever so jolly to find you here, Praed.

PRAED: I'm an old friend of her mother. Mrs Warren brought me over to make her daughter's acquaintance.

FRANK: The mother! Is she here?

PRAED: Yes: inside, at tea.

MRS. WARREN: *calling from within* Prad-dee-ee-ee-eee! The tea-cake'll be cold.

PRAED: *calling* Yes, Mrs Warren. In a moment. I've just met a friend here.

MRS. WARREN: A what?

PRAED: *louder* A friend.

MRS. WARREN: Bring him in.

PRAED: All right. *To Frank* Will you accept the invitation?

FRANK: *incredulous, but immensely amused* Is that Vivie's mother?

PRAED: Yes.

FRANK: By Jove! What a lark! Do you think she'll like me?

PRAED: I've no doubt youll make yourself popular, as usual. Come in and try *moving towards the house*

FRANK: Stop a bit. *Seriously* I want to take you into my confidence.

PRAED: Pray don't. It's only some fresh folly, like the barmaid at Redhill.

FRANK: It's ever so much more serious than that. You say you've only just met Vivie for the first time?

PRAED: Yes.

FRANK: *rhapsodically* Then you can have no idea what a girl she is. Such character! Such sense! And her cleverness! Oh, my eye, Praed, but I can tell you she is clever! And—need I add?—she loves me.

CROFTS: *putting his head out of the window* I say, Praed: what are you about? Do come along. *He disappears*

FRANK: Hallo! Sort of chap that would take a prize at a dog show, ain't he? Who's he?

PRAED: Sir George Crofts, an old friend of Mrs Warren's. I think we had better come in.

On their way to the porch they are interrupted by a call from the gate. Turning, they see an elderly clergyman looking over it.

THE CLERGYMAN: *calling* Frank!

FRANK: Hallo! *To Praed* The Roman father. *To the clergyman* Yes, gov'nor: all right: presently. *To Praed* Look here, Praed: youd better go in to tea. I'll join you directly.

PRAED: Very good. *He goes into the cottage*

The clergyman remains outside the gate, with his hands on the top of it. The Rev. Samuel Gardner, a beneficed clergyman of the Established Church, is over 50. Externally he is pretentious, booming, noisy, important. Really he is that obsolescent phenomenon the fool of the family dumped on the Church by his father the patron, clamorously asserting himself as father and clergyman without being able to command respect in either capacity.

REV. S.: Well, sir. Who are your friends here, if I may ask?

FRANK: Oh, it's all right, gov'nor! Come in.

REV. S.: No, sir; not until I know whose garden I am entering.

FRANK: It's all right. It's Miss Warren's.

REV. S.: I have not seen her at church since she came.

FRANK: Of course not: she's a third wrangler. Ever so intellectual. Took a higher degree than you did; so why should she go to hear you preach?

REV. S.: Don't be disrespectful, sir.

FRANK: Oh, it don't matter: nobody hears us. Come in. *He opens the gate, unceremoniously pulling his father with it into the garden* I want to introduce you to her. Do you remember the advice you gave me last July, gov'nor?

REV. S.: *severely* Yes. I advised you to conquer your idleness and flippancy, and to work your way into an honorable profession and live on it and not upon me.

FRANK: No: thats what you thought of afterwards. What you actually said was that since I had neither brains nor money, I'd better turn my good looks to account by marrying someone with both. Well, look here. Miss Warren has brains: you can't deny that.

REV. S.: Brains are not everything.

FRANK: No, of course not: theres the money—

REV. S.: *interrupting him austerely* I was not thinking of money, sir. I was speaking of higher things. Social position, for instance.

FRANK: I don't care a rap about that.

REV. S.: But I do, sir.

FRANK: Well, nobody wants y o u to marry her. Anyhow, she has what amounts to a high Cambridge degree; and she seems to have as much money as she wants.

REV. S.: *sinking into a feeble vein of humor* I greatly doubt whether she has as much money as you will want.

FRANK: Oh, come: I havn't been so very extravagant. I live ever so quietly; I don't drink; I don't bet much; and I never go regularly to the razzle-dazzle as you did when you were my age.

REV. S.: *booming hollowly* Silence, sir.

FRANK: Well, you told me yourself, when I was making every such an ass of myself about the barmaid at Redhill, that you once offered a woman fifty pounds for the letters you wrote to her when—

REV. S.: *terrified* Sh-sh-sh, Frank, for Heaven's sake! *He looks round apprehensively Seeing no one within earshot he plucks up courage to boom again, but more subduedly* You are taking an ungentlemanly advantage of what I confided to you for your own good, to save you from an error you would have repented all your life long. Take warning by your father's follies, sir; and don't make them an excuse for your own.

FRANK: Did you ever hear the story of the Duke of Wellington and his letters?

REV. S.: No, sir; and I don't want to hear it.

FRANK: The old Iron Duke didn't throw away fifty pounds: not he. He just wrote: "Dear Jenny: publish and be damned! Yours affectionately, Wellington." Thats what you should have done.

REV. S.: *piteously* Frank, my boy: when I wrote those letters I put myself into that woman's power. When I told you about them I put myself, to some extent, I am sorry to say, in your power. She refused my money with these words, which I shall never forget. "Knowledge is power" she said; "and I never sell power."

REV. S.: Thats more than twenty years ago; and she has never made use of her power or caused me a moment's uneasiness. You are behaving worse to me than she did, Frank.

FRANK: Oh yes I dare say! Did you ever preach at her the way you preach at me every day?

REV. S.: *wounded almost to tears* I leave you, sir. You are incorrigible. *He turns towards the gate*

FRANK: *utterly unmoved* Tell them I shan't be home to tea, will you, gov'nor, like a good fellow? *He moves towards the cottage door and is met by Praed and Vivie coming out*

VIVIE: *to Frank* Is that your father, Frank? I do so want to meet him.

FRANK: Certainly. *Calling after his father* Gov'nor. Youre wanted. *The parson turns at the gate, fumbling nervously at his hat. Praed crosses the garden to the opposite side, beaming in anticipation of civilities* My father: Miss Warren.

VIVIE: *going to the clergyman and shaking his hand* Very glad to see you here, Mr Gardner. *Calling to the cottage* Mother: come along: youre wanted.

Mrs Warren appears on the threshold, and is immediately transfixed, recognizing the clergyman.

VIVIE: *continuing* Let me introduce—

MRS. WARREN: *swooping on the Reverend Samuel* Why it's Sam Gardner, gone into the Church! Well, I never! Don't you know us, Sam? This is George Crofts, as large as life and twice as natural. Don't you remember me?

REV. S.: *very red* I really—er—

MRS. WARREN: Of course you do. Why, I have a whole album of your letters still: I came across them only the other day.

REV. S.: *miserably confused* Miss Vavasour, I believe.

MRS. WARREN: *correcting him quickly in a loud whisper* Tch! Nonsense! Mrs Warren: don't you see my daughter there?

Le note di scena sono tra parentesi *quadre* o *(tonde).*

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