

Despard: (C.) Poor children, how they loathe me— me whose hands are certainly steeped in infamy, but whose heart is as the heart of a little child. But what *is* a poor baronet to do, when a whole picture gallery of ancestors step down from their frames and threaten him with an excruciating death if he hesitate to commit his daily crime? But ha! ha! I am even with them! (*mysteriously*) I get my crime over the first thing in the morning, and then, ha! ha! for the rest of the day I do good! I do good— I do good! (*melodramatically*) Two days since, I stole a child and built an orphan asylum. Yesterday I robbed a bank and endowed a bishopric. Today I carry off Rose Maybud and atone with a cathedral! This is what it is to be the sport and toy of a Picture Gallery! But I will be bitterly revenged upon them! I will give them all to the Nation, and nobody shall ever look upon their faces again!

(Enter Richard R.)

Richard: Ax your honour's pardon, but —

Despard: Ha! observed! And by a mariner! What would you with me, fellow?

Richard: Your honour, I'm a poor man-o'-war's man, becalmed in the doldrums —

Despard: I don't know them.

Richard: And I make so bold to ax your honour's advice. Does your honour know what it is to have a heart?

Despard: My honour knows what it is to have a complete apparatus for conducting the circulation of the blood through the veins and arteries of the human body.

Richard: Aye, but has your honour a heart that ups and looks you in the face, and gives you quarter-deck orders that it's life and death to disobey?

Despard: I have not a heart of that description, but I have a Picture Gallery that presumes to take that liberty.

Richard: Well, your honour, it's like this— your honour had an elder brother—

Despard: It had.

Richard: Who should have inherited your title and, with it, its cuss.

Despard: Aye, but he died. Oh, Ruthven!

Richard: He didn't.

Despard: He did *not*?

Richard: He didn't. On the contrary, he lives in this here very village, under the name of Robin Oakapple, and he's a-going to marry Rose Maybud this very day.

Despard: Ruthven alive, and going to marry Rose Maybud? Can this be possible?

Richard: Now the question I was going to ask your honour is—ought I to tell your honour this?

Despard: I don't know. It's a delicate point. I think you ought. Mind, I'm not sure, but I think so.

Richard: That's what my heart says. It says, "Dick," it says (it calls me Dick acos it's entitled to take that liberty), "that there young gal would recoil from him if she knowed what he really were. Ought you to stand off and on, and let this young gal take this false step and never fire a shot across her bows to bring her to? No," it says, "you did *not* ought." And I won't ought, accordin'.

Despard: Then you really feel yourself at liberty to tell me that my elder brother lives — that I may charge him with his cruel deceit, and transfer to his shoulders the hideous thralldom under which I have laboured for so many years! Free— free at last! Free to live a blameless life, and to die beloved and regretted by all who knew me!