

Trial by Jury

The curtain rises on the Court of the Exchequer, where a jury and the public assemble to hear a case of breach of promise of marriage ("Hark, the Hour of Ten is Sounding"). After a biased introduction to the proceedings by the Usher ("Now, Jurymen, Hear My Advice"), it soon becomes clear that the jurymen's sympathies are with the plaintiff, Angelina. They greet the defendant, Edwin, with hostility. He tries to persuade them that his position is reasonable ("When First my Old, Old Love I Knew"), but as they are respectable gentlemen, they refuse to make any allowances for the fickleness of youth ("Oh, I Was Like That When a Lad").

The Judge enters with great pomp ("All Hail, Great Judge"), and starts the proceedings by describing how he rose to his position ("When I, Good Friends, Was Called to the Bar"): "But I soon grew tired of third-class journeys / And dinners of bread and water; / So I fell in love with a rich attorney's / Elderly, ugly daughter." Preliminaries dispensed with, the jury is sworn in and the plaintiff summoned into court: she arrives in full wedding dress, accompanied by all

her bridesmaids ("Comes the Broken Flower"), and instantly captures the heart of both the jury and the Judge.

Counsel for the plaintiff makes a moving speech detailing Edwin's betrayal ("With a Sense of Deep Emotion").

Angelina feigns distress, and sobs, first in the arms of the foreman of the jury, and then of the Judge.

Edwin suggests that he will marry both women ("Oh Gentlemen, Listen, I Pray"), but the counsel points out that

this would be "burglaree". Perplexed, everyone in court ponders the difficulty of the situation ("A Nice Dilemma We Have Here"). Angelina says that she still loves Edwin, and deplors the loss of his love ("I love him, I love him"), and so substantial damages should be awarded to her. But Edwin says that he is a smoker, a drunkard, and a bully, and that she would surely have been unhappy with him, and so the damages should be small. The Judge suggests making Edwin tipsy to see if he would really "thrash and kick" the plaintiff, but everyone else objects (except Edwin, who seems quite willing). Impatient at the lack of progress, the Judge resolves the case by proposing to marry Angelina himself.

This is quite satisfactory, and the opera is concluded "With Joy Unbounded".