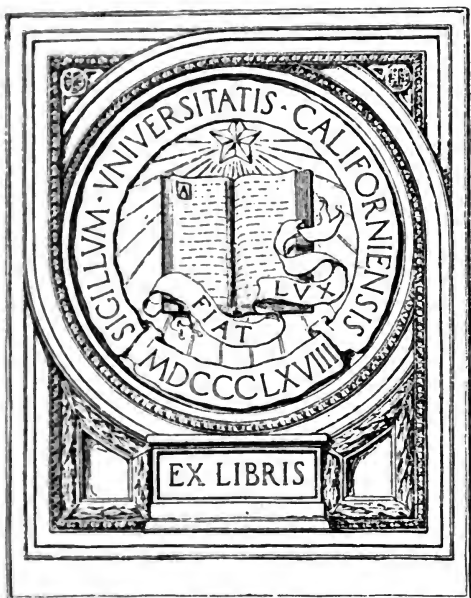
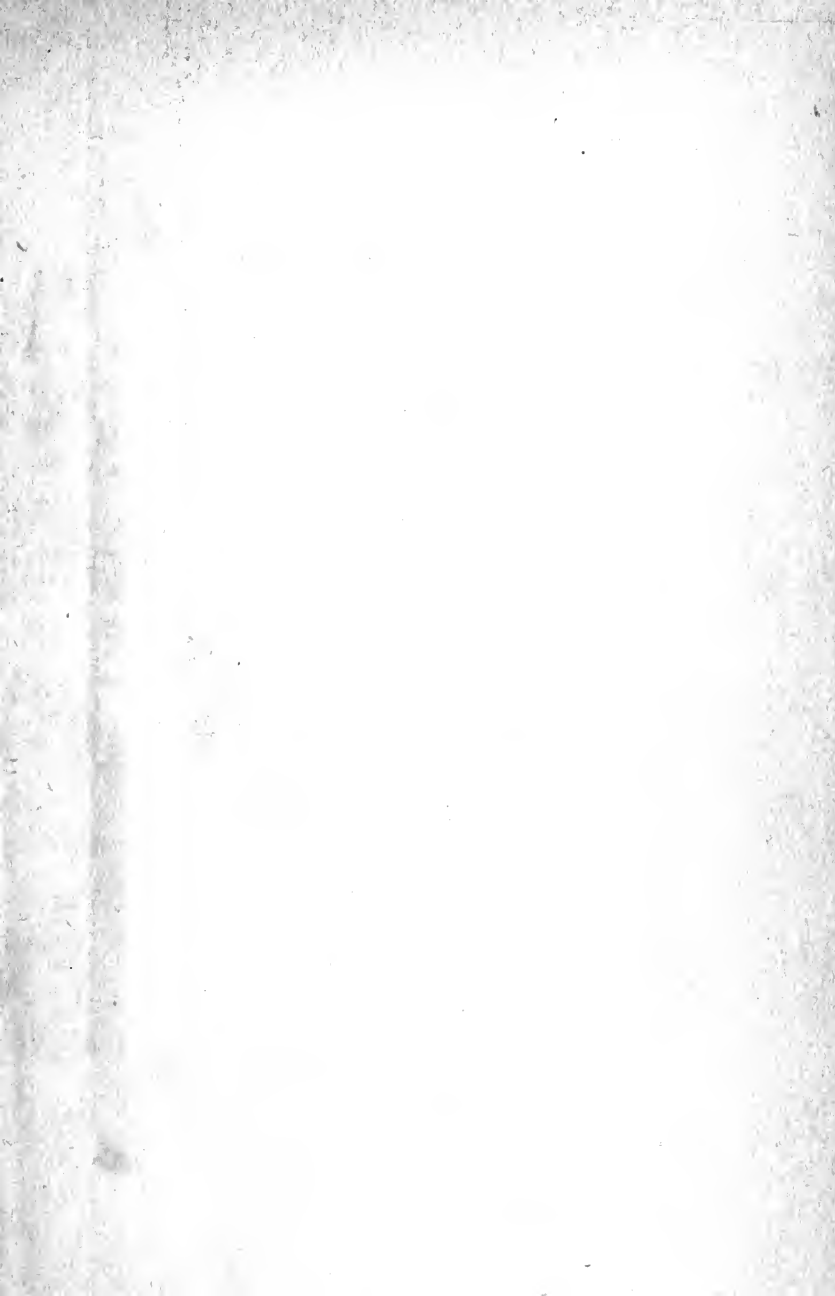


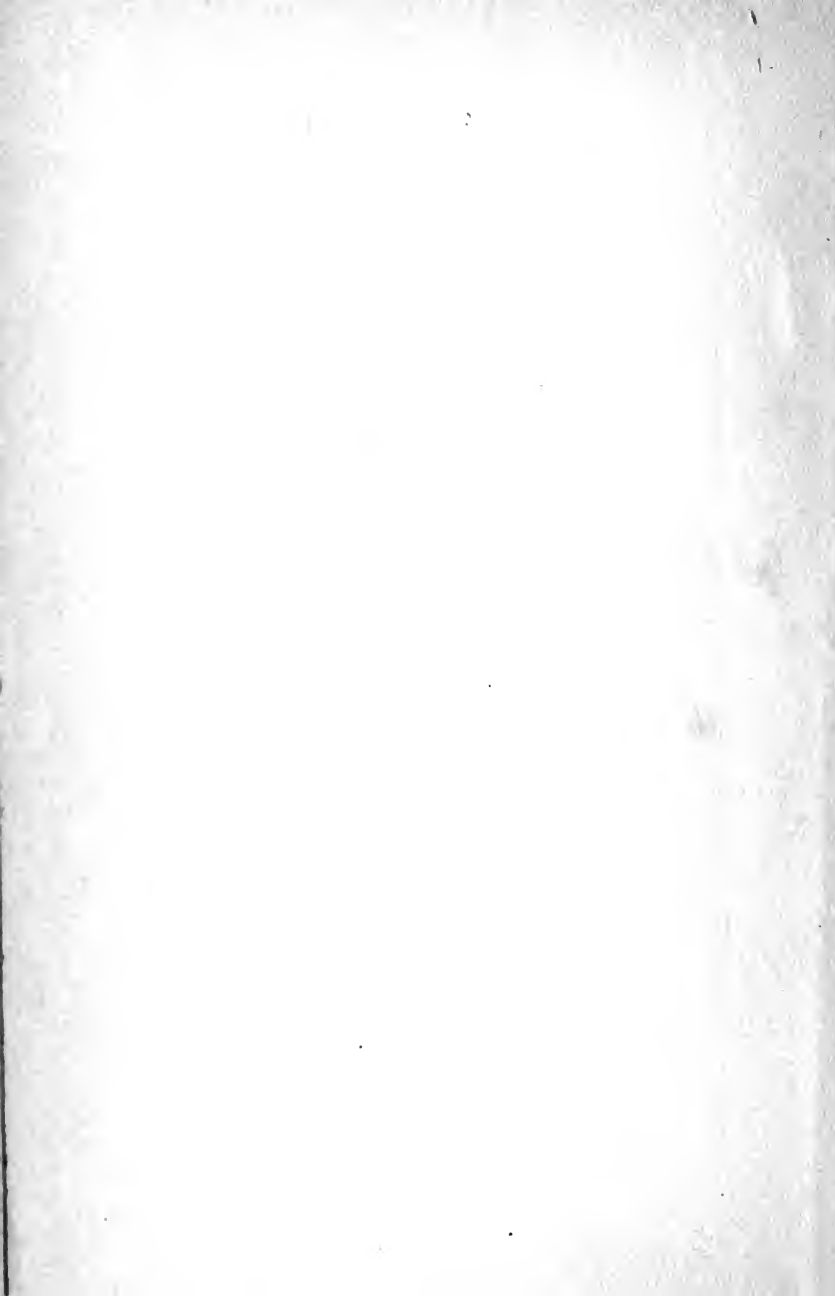


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BRIDALS OF BLOOD



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KING CHARLES IX., King of France.

HENRY, KING OF NAVARRE AND BÉARN (betrothed to Margaret),
a Huguenot.

HENRY OF ANJOU,
FRANCIS OF ALENÇON, } brothers of King Charles.

HENRY OF GUISE, enamoured of Margaret.

CARDINAL OF LORRAINE, Guise's Uncle.

ADMIRAL COLIGNI, Huguenot General.

RIOUX, Henry of Navarre's Aide-de-camp.

POLTROT, Captain of the Guard—an assassin.

RUGGIERI, Queen Catherine's confidant—a magician.

MARSHAL TAVANNES,
MARSHAL GONDI-RETZ, } in the Catholic Army.

PRINCE CONDE,
COUNT TELIGNI, } young Huguenot Chiefs.

CATHERINE DE MEDICI, the Queen-Mother.

FRANÇOISE, MARQUISE DE FONTANGES, Lady-in-Waiting to
Margaret.

MARGARET OF VALOIS, sister to King Charles, betrothed to
Navarre.

A Chancellor, a Herald, Chamberlains, Gentlemen, and
Ladies-in-Waiting, Guards, and Pages.

In the Louvre, in Paris. August 1572.

* * This play is founded on Ludwig Fulda's *Die Blutbochzeit*. For most of the perversions of history the original author is responsible.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY

ACT I

HALL IN THE LOUVRE.

ACT II

SCENE 1.—GARDEN OF THE LOUVRE.

SCENE 2.—CATHERINE'S ROOM.

ACT III

STATE-ROOM IN THE LOUVRE.

ACT IV

SCENE 1.—IN THE QUEEN'S ROOM.

SCENE 2.—ANTE-CHAMBER TO QUEEN'S ROOM.

SCENE 3.—TURRET-CHAMBER OF HENRY OF NAVARRE.

The action of the piece occupies a few days at the end of the month of August 1572.

The third Act is in the evening of August 23rd (St. Bartholomew's Day), and early hours of Sunday, August 24th (St. Bartholomew's Day).

* * The acting rights of this play are in the hands of Mr. H. B. Irving and Mr. Laurence Irving, to whom they were bequeathed by Sir Henry Irving.

BRIDALS OF BLOOD

ACT I

SCENE.—*A Reception Hall in the Louvre.* ALENÇON and ANJOU. ALENÇON is the curled, empty-headed fop, ANJOU is the soldier. Act I

ALENÇON

[*Entering one door, while ANJOU enters from another.*] Well, is he coming?

ANJOU

Who? The Huguenot?

Ay, he is here. To-day he makes his entry,
Clad like a conqueror, to woo his bride,
And celebrate this cursed peace-making
'Twiixt Catholic and heretic.

ALENÇON

'Tis strange,

I know not what it means.

ANJOU

Nor I, young brother.

Why comes he here, this Henry of Navarre,
Within our courts and in our merry Paris,
Bringing his sullen face of Huguenot
To mar our festivals? I like it not!

ALENÇON

'Tis the Queen's policy——

Act I

ANJOU

Oh, ay, the Queen's !

The crafty Catherine gives our sister's hand
 To this young hypocrite of Gascony,
 And signs a lasting peace. I know not why
 My sister Margaret should change her faith
 And welcome to the Louvre our country's foes
 To please the passing fancy of our mother.

ALENÇON

Nor I, in sooth. Why may not Margaret wed
 An honest Catholic, the Duke of Guise,
 Our princely cousin, whom, they say, she loves,
 And who has loved her long ?

ANJOU

I cannot tell.

This policy's too crafty for my wit
 To compass all its meaning. I can draw
 A gallant sword to serve my country's cause—
 I'll fight the Bourbon when and where he wills,
 Catholic with Huguenot, on any field
 To which he bids me come, in open war ;
 But all this smooth-tongued cant of love and peace,
 This new-formed amity of ancient foes,
 This marriage with a cursed Protestant—
 'Fore God, it sickens me !

ALENÇON

I would I knew

What the Queen-Mother wills.

ANJOU

Here's Ruggieri ;

Mayhap, he'll tell us of those midnight spells
 He whispers in our mother's private ear.

Enter RUGGIERI, the Magician.

Ruggieri !

RUGGIERI

My lords ?

ANJOU

Come hither, master,

We fain would know——

RUGGIERI

I pray you, pardon me.

I am in haste—the Queen desires my presence.

ALENÇON

[*Stopping him.*] Come, come, old Florentine—not quite so fast !

You are a potent wizard—as we know
 Much to our cost—worker of miracles,
 Italian sorcerer to Her Majesty,
 And keeper of her secrets, fair and foul ;
 Grant us a scanty minute of your time
 To solve a problem which, believe me, sir,
 Much weighs upon our hearts.

RUGGIERI

What troubles you,

My Lord Alençon ?

ANJOU

[*Interrupting ALENÇON.*] Why, master, it stands thus.
 France has a foe, whom all the sons of France
 Must needs abhor ; the Church an enemy
 Whom every Catholic must hate, perforce.
 He comes to Paris. In how many ways
 Can one receive him, graciously and well,
 With courteous hospitality and love,
 Such as a foe deserves ?

RUGGIERI

I know not, sire,
 How I should answer such strange questioning.

Act I

ALENÇON

Nor I, i'faith.

RUGGIERI

I pray you, let me go. [*Is going.*]

ANJOU

One moment, Ruggieri. There's a man—
 Alençon here, my brother, we'll suppose—
 Who finds himself supplanted in his love
 By some infernal villain.

ALENÇON

And, in sooth,
 I am not always fortunate in love.

ANJOU

He fain would rid him of his enemy—
 What is the secret method of despatch
 Taught in the foreign schools? What tricks of art,
 What subtle vengeance do Italians use
 To end their quarrels and lay low their foes?

RUGGIERI

My lords, I fear you mock me.

ANJOU

Nay, not so.
 We know your mastery, we applaud your skill;
 We fain would learn a lesson for ourselves.
 Is it not so, Alençon?

ALENÇON

Ay, God's truth.
 I love a maid, and much it doth perplex me
 Why she doth love another.

ANJOU

Hear you that ?

Come, Ruggieri, you can help indeed :
What is the latest mode of alchemy,
Of witchery or poison ?

RUGGIERI

Oh, my lord,

If you be serious—nay, I know you are not—
Still—as a matter of mere pastime—I
Could teach you strange devices, which of late
I learnt in Florence. We can make a man
Wither in torment o'er the witches' fire.
A waxen image of the foe you hate
May melt itself away, and he, the while,
Be sickening to his death. Or else a letter,
A simple letter, may convey his doom.
He may be poisoned by a scented flower,
A glove—a taper—nay, it matters not
How small the implement—there is a way
To make it perilous.

ALENÇON

Say you so, indeed ?

It is a wondrous art.

ANJOU

[*Musingly.*] It is, in truth.
I thank you, Ruggieri ; fare you well,
You are a useful friend. Well, brother mine,
To-day we welcome Henry of Navarre,
To wed our Princess, Margaret of Valois—
A Huguenot to wed a Catholic—
By order of the Queen.

RUGGIERI

The Queen, my lord,
Hath doubtless a wise counsel in all this.

Act I

ANJOU

Ay, and she keeps her counsel to herself,
No doubt as wisely.

RUGGIERI

Very true, my lord.

I humbly take my leave. [POLTROT *crosses the stage.*]

Poltrat, the Queen

Desires your presence. She has work for you.

POLTROT

Whate'er her Queenship pleases.

[*Exit RUGGIERI, followed by POLTROT.*]

ANJOU

Marked you that?

The Captain of the Guard is wanted too—

The paid assassin of our royal mother—

With Ruggieri, at this private council.

'Tis passing strange. I know not what it means.

Well, brother mine, we needs must wait th' event.

Come, we will to our duty, and receive

This new-found cousin, Henry of Navarre,

As the Queen bids.

ALENÇON

I follow, brother.

[ANJOU and ALENÇON *exeunt. From R. U. E. enter MARGARET of VALOIS, with the MARQUISE OF FONTANGES, her lady-in-waiting. She comes down musingly, with an abstracted air.*]

MARGARET

Fontanges!

FONTANGES

Your Majesty?

MARGARET

I would I knew !

FONTANGES

What troubles you, Princess ?

MARGARET

I cannot tell.

My royal consort, Henry of Navarre,
Calls himself Protestant. What does this mean ?
What is the secret difference of soul
Which makes him heretic ? I ought to know,
I am his future wife. What is the bar
Which keeps his heart from mine ?

FONTANGES

[*Astonished.*]

Has no one ever told you——

Alas, dear lady,

MARGARET

All the shame,

The base reproach, with such a name can bear
For Christian ears ? Oh yes, they've told me that !
But do they speak the truth ? I cannot trust
The doctrines they instil, I want the truth,
The truth, d'ye hear ? and priestly hate hath none.
For see how strong must be the faith of those
Who give up all they have—their best, their dearest,
With willing hearts ! Can such a faith be false ?
I fear I am deceived by priestly talk.
Did Luther fail ?—the monk who stirred this storm ?
And if he failed—was it a fall from grace ?

FONTANGES

[*Looking off.*] Your Majesty !

MARGARET

Who comes ?

Act I

FONTANGES

The Prince of Guise!

Enter HENRY OF GUISE [hastily].

GUISE

What, Margaret? And is the story true
 That in the council of the royal mother
 They wrung to-day a hesitating "yes"
 From out your lips? Did you consent at last?
[Exit FONTANGES.]

MARGARET

[*Looking down.*] They pledged my troth to Henry of
 Navarre
 Early this morning.

GUISE

And your pretty vows,
 All the sweet bonds which linked your soul with mine,
 Torn into shreds and blown into thin air!

MARGARET

My country—'tis my country!

GUISE

Country—bah!
 The change has other reasons. 'Tis a play,
 A comedy for patriots, with the Guise
 To give his blessing, as the curtain falls!
 But tell me this—if "country" be the reason,
 Must France ally herself with heretics?

MARGARET

I hope so, Henry. When I gave my hand,
 Tearing the memories of an early love
 From out my heart, and pledged myself away,
 Ah, then it was no queen who urged her will

On a princess, nor mother on her child,
 But 'twas a nation's voice, the voice of France,
 Which sounded in my ears and made me listen.
 From all the thousand wounds her body bore,
 From all the bleeding scars and desperate rents
 Dealt in these holy wars, my country cried :
 "Take for thy chosen spouse a Huguenot,
 The Huguenot King, and stay this flow of blood.
 Accept the bond which puts an end to hate :
 Give the land peace, e'en tho' the price may be
 The peace of thine own heart." My brother signed
 The treaty of St. Germain——

GUISE

What ! the King,
 Thy brother Charles ? I warrant in his mind
 There was more thought of sonnets, ritornels,
 Of hawks and hounds, and all his other frippery
 Than of the Calvinists ! A pretty King !

MARGARET

You ever mock at him—yet well I know
 That such a peace needs sanction by my hand.
 I give myself, I make my sacrifice,
 I wring it from myself with tears. Henry,
 I pray thee do the same ! As Guise doth stand
 Next to the King, the highest son of France,
 Be thou the noblest Frenchman of them all !
 Make my task lighter ! Help me to forget !

GUISE

[*With a sneer.*] And Catherine told you that she sought
 the peace
 With such a purpose ?

MARGARET

'Twas the only plea
 Which made me yield——

Act I

GUISE

[*With a bitter laugh.*] That I can well believe !

MARGARET

Why do you laugh ? If not for such a purpose
What other could she have ?

GUISE

[*Still bitterly.*] I was not there
To read her inmost soul, but this I know—
When she speaks soft, 'tis then we dread her most !

MARGARET

Because of France she gives away her child,
She gives her willingly, despite her grief,
And with as good a heart her child obeys.

GUISE

Is't so indeed ? Well, then, Queen Catherine
Has an obedient and submissive child !
And Margaret has a mother whom she loves
Doubtless as much as—France—or as myself !
Nay, say no more. A Guise is not so pliant,
He loves his friend and hates his enemy,
And cannot change at will his love and hatred
For a mere whim or stratagem of state !
No more, no more—I am not apt at words.
Farewell, and blame me not ! From head to foot
I loathe this Bourbon with the hate of hell ! [Exit.]

MARGARET

[*Strikes bell and calls.*] Fontanges !

[*Flourish of trumpets heard.*

Hark ! 'Tis the trumpet of the King, my brother,
Who gives his escort to Navarre.

[*Goes to window.*]

They come.

[*Calls again.*] Fontanges !

Re-enter FONTANGES.

FONTANGES

You called me, Princess ?

MARGARET

You saw the Duke ? What is this madness named
Which he can feel so keenly ?

FONTANGES

If not love,

What else ?

MARGARET

I know not. Will he always hold
My heart within the hollow of his hand ?

[*Looking off.*] The bridegroom comes and I await my king.
[*Exeunt MARGARET and FONTANGES.*]

A flourish is heard. Enter a detachment of Guards, Courtiers, and Gentlemen-in-Waiting, followed by KING CHARLES IX. and HENRY OF NAVARRE. KING CHARLES signs to the Attendants and Guards to retire, and comes down to the front of the stage, where he sinks into a chair. HENRY OF NAVARRE, gallant, loud-voiced, and martial in his bearing, remains standing.

NAVARRE

What, King of France—and therefore, of the world—
You in the Louvre, in merry-hearted Paris,
Living a life of gloom ? Are we to bring
To men who dream at ease on Champagne slopes
Sunshine and happiness from Gascony ?
Nay—nay—in wit and beauty, wine and women,
You have no rivals from the Pyrenees !
Where lurks the silent grief, my kingly coz ?

CHARLES

Ah, but, my friend, all's well enough for you !
The wine can bring the blood into your cheek ;
The women smile, and then your heart's aflame.

Act I I am not merry. In this sombre court
 There is a cloud which broods in gloom above ;
 We move within the shadow of some ill—
 Some woe, disaster, doom—I know not what,
 Which our sad hearts presage. And you, my cousin,
 Come with that face of yours, that merry wit
 Which sets our spirits jiggling—by St. Denis,
 Look on my face and yours ! Why, you are strong,
 Well-favoured, handsome, made for love, a man
 Fashioned and wrought in Nature's kindest mould—
 And I ? You see the old man's wrinkled face
 Peering from eyes of youth ; in age a boy,
 In heart, a grey-beard. And there's something else,
 Listen ! [*Drawing him aside.*] I have a mother in this
 Louvre— [Pauses.
 Have you a mother ? Nay, I know you have,
 Joanna d'Albret, whom your people worship !

NAVARRE

Worship ? 'Tis true. Oh, what a mother, Sire !
 I would you knew her and her tender love.
 As shines the sun of May upon the world,
 So from her soft eyes springs a fount of joy
 For all who suffer and are tired. It makes
 Them love their life again, and thank their God
 For what He gave them.

CHARLES

[*Astonished.*] St. Denis ! How you preach !
 What are you, Henry ? Are you fool or knave ?
 You seem light-hearted—and anon you change
 All of a sudden, at a mother's name,
 And rant and mouth—like priests at Christmastide.
 What is my grief ? you asked. Well, I will tell you.
 I have a mother, Henry, and I fear her !
 Hush, do not speak too loud ! Here in the Louvre
 She sees and hears and spies o'er everything !
 I fear her, Henry, she can haunt my dreams,

She meets me when I wake, watches my sleep,
Dogs me from room to room—I hear her voice
And cannot help but tremble !

NAVARRE

Ah, poor King !

CHARLES

Now, by the Cross, I would I were a King !

NAVARRE

And if you were, what would your kingship choose ?
What would you do ?

CHARLES

[Smiling.] Why, cut off all their heads
Whose faces wore a fairer look than mine !

NAVARRE

What, mine among the rest ?

CHARLES

No doubt of that !

NAVARRE

I thank you, Sire. I'm glad you are not King.
At least I live, until you claim your crown.
Well—and what else ?

CHARLES

A thousand other things !

Whate'er my wondering fancy drove me to !
I'd play at chess, or hunt with all my hounds
Here through these palace rooms ; work at my forge,
Eat candied almonds, write some honeyed rhymes,
Some sonnets, pastorals—I know not what—
And my good mother, if she dared reproof—
I'd shut her in a cage, where she might fret,
And storm and rage, until her spirit failed
To see how happy Charles was !

Act I

NAVARRE

Who would be King of France ?
 And your land ?

CHARLES

Whoever liked !

NAVARRE

Good, Cousin Charles ! Then give the crown to me !

CHARLES

No, no ; that may not be ! You are my fool,
 My own Court fool, remember !

NAVARRE

Then Folly becomes monarch—nothing else !
 That's no odds.

CHARLES

Oho, let's see ! And how would you begin
 Your foolish rule ?

NAVARRE

I'd marry Margaret.

CHARLES

What, is that folly ?

NAVARRE

Then I would invite
 Huguenot and Catholic—whoever pleased—
 To come as favoured guests of mine to Paris—
 A splendid masquerade throughout the land !
 And we, meanwhile, would sit and watch the sport
 Like foxes clad in lambs' skins—you and I——

CHARLES

Why, Henry, 'twould be royal sport indeed !
 But stay a minute—for you puzzle me—

You are already come as bridegroom, pledged
To Margot's hand. The Huguenots are here
As guests of ours to celebrate this wedding.
It was my mother's thought, to which I gave
My own assent in writing ; for, my cousin,
'Tis she designs, I add my signature.
That is the way we govern !

NAVARRE

Is it so ?

Then may the masquerade begin forthwith ;
And we will to our sheepskins. Oh, 'tis sport,
—Sport fit for kings—to sit and watch the world
From out some hiding-place, ourselves unseen !

Enter GUISE, ANJOU, ALENÇON.

CHARLES

Here comes the Prince of Guise to give you greeting,
Together with Alençon and Anjou,
My brothers. They would bid you welcome, Henry.
[CHARLES *retires and takes out his tablets,*
only half listening.

ALENÇON

[*Aside.*] Yes, and to see what heretics are like.
Why he's for all the world like other men !

NAVARRE

My Lord of Anjou, we met last, methinks, on the
bloody day of Jarnac.

ANJOU

[*Indifferently.*] I did not see you.

NAVARRE

Nay, think again. I stood near Coligni on the battle-
field——

Act I

ANJOU

Where is Coligni? Has he not come among the guests? Where are the Chatillons?

NAVARRE

They're all coming. Coligni comes, my old warrior, and my mother comes from La Rochelle. What! did you think that fear would make us hesitate to accept the King's most gracious invitation? Nay, we heretics are jealous of our honour, even if you keep none with us. Catholics, mayhap, don't need it. Your faith will have none of it.

ALENÇON

That's true enough.

NAVARRE

Well, let me see, where was I. Oh, at Jarnac. When the fortune of the day was yours, and Prince Condé, my uncle, surrendered himself to you, we stood, do you remember, face to face, to discuss the terms of peace. Just behind you there was a drunken rascal—may Heaven confound him for a knave!—playing with his matchlock. Off went the gun—a most regrettable accident, of course—and my good uncle got a ball right through his body. You hewed the fool to the ground—no fault of yours—but might not the shot just as well have struck Coligni, who was standing hard by? A most annoying accident, was it not?

ANJOU

[*To GUISE.*] Is this joke or earnest? I know you manage your sword better than your tongue, prince—
[*Lays his hand upon his sword.*]

GUISE

Anjou, patience! [*To NAVARRE.*] And if that shot had robbed you of your great leader, would it not have struck down my father's murderer?

CHARLES

[*Coming down.*] Hold, peace, I say! No more of this! We did not sign the peace of St. Germain in order to recall these stale old stories; are you going to quarrel because I give my sister's hand to my enemy? God's death, you anger me to my grave! Navarre! Guise! take your hands off your sword-hilts! 'Tis my command—the King's!

GUISE

[*Aside.*] A pretty king, forsooth!

NAVARRE

Will he tell me to my face that Coligni was a common murderer? That it was he who killed Francis of Guise before Orleans? Why, I know that the rascal, Poltrot de Méré, was taken red-handed in the act and dragged to Paris. Where is he?

GUISE

What do I know of the man?

ANJOU

Or I?

ALENÇON

There I can help you.

ANJOU

[*In a low voice.*] Hold your tongue!

ALENÇON

Poltrot was appointed Captain of the Guard.

NAVARRE

What! Guise's murderer made a captain? And by you?

ANJOU

He means his brother.

Act I

ALENÇON

No, I mean the murderer, Poltrot de Méré.

NAVARRE

Captain, is he? Well, you have strange customs in Paris. We barbarians have a different way with murderers. We hang them to the nearest tree. Well, well, noble princes, perhaps wine will help us to compose our differences. Let the dead bury their dead. Let the living live!

CHARLES

Silence, gentlemen, no brawling here! *I made the peace, I asked the Prince of Navarre to this Court, I gave him my sister's hand. I will be King here. Whoever dares to contravene my wishes—* [*With a sudden change of manner.*] Ah, here comes the Queen, my mother!

[*CHARLES goes to the background.*]

NAVARRE

[*Aside.*] A cordial welcome truly! Here are friends, True friends of mine, who love me—to my death! I must be cunning, where such guile abounds, And take no step too far to be recovered— Must watch and wait, and wait and watch again!

Enter CATHERINE OF MEDICI. With her the CARDINAL OF LORRAINE, and her magician, RUGGIERI. After her enter MARGARET, FONTANGES, and other Court ladies and gentlemen. Finally POLTROT and guards of honour, who remain in the gallery. CATHERINE is apparently praying, the CARDINAL whispering the words in her ear. She comes down without raising her eyes. NAVARRE bends his knee and awaits her speech. CHARLES furtively watches in the distance with some restlessness.

NAVARRE

[*Aside.*] Margaret! I dare not look upon her face,
Or my heart fails me. I must play my game.

CARDINAL

[*Presenting* NAVARRE.] The Lord Prince Henry of
Navarre and Bëarn
Offers his homage to your Majesty.

CATHERINE

[*Looking up.*] Welcome, my Prince.
[*Gives him her hand to kiss.* NAVARRE rises from
his knees.

We have with all our hearts
Longed for this day to heal the gaping wounds
With which for thirteen years our country suffers,
And find at last the welcome boon of peace.

NAVARRE

Oh, pardon me, my Queen. Grim politics
Are all my uncle's. Let me be the bridegroom.

CARDINAL

[*Presenting* MARGARET.] This is the bride, the Princess
Margaret.

CATHERINE

So please you, my Lord Prince, salute your bride,
Daughter of France, fair Margaret of Valois.

NAVARRE

[*Somewhat pompously.*] O Queen of Beauty, deign to look
on me
The lowest of thy slaves. Naught is my life,
Empty and meaningless, save that thy hand
Lend it some grace and meaning. [*Aside.*] In good
sooth,
This formal love will end in deadly earnest,
For my heart fails me when I look on her!

Act I

MARGARET

[*Coldly.*] I will for ever serve and do thy will,
As in the sight of God, in all the claims
A husband makes upon a faithful wife.

NAVARRE

Good sense and well delivered. But no love ?

MARGARET

I pray you, ask my mother. She, who gave,
Will stand, I doubt not, proxy for the gift.

NAVARRE

[*Earnestly.*] You love me not ?

MARGARET

[*Startled.*] I know not what you mean.

CATHERINE

[*To NAVARRE.*] Coligni comes ? And is your mother
here ?

NAVARRE

Ay, ay, my Queen. How could a day like this
Without my mother please me ? She's at Tours—
Her chair was not so fast as I could ride.

CATHERINE

With open arms I wait to greet her, Prince,
That noble Queen, who, like another Joan,
Great Joan of Arc, made all her warriors brave
Because her presence filled the camp with courage.
Now surely war is over—peace is signed.
Whate'er the issue, let all evil deeds
On both sides be forgiven.

RIOUX

[*Outside.*]

My lord, my lord !

CATHERINE

What noise is that ?

RIOUX *comes hastily through the gallery to NAVARRE.*

NAVARRE

[*Going to meet him.*] Rioux—my mother ? Where's my mother, Rioux ?

RIOUX

My lord—I cannot speak—Queen Joan is dead !

NAVARRE

[*Stunned.*] Dead ? Joan of Albret ? Is my mother dead ?

CATHERINE

[*With a glance at RUGGIERI.*] Dead ! [*After a pause.*] Knight, tell us how she died.

RIOUX

It was at Vaudemont, your Majesty,
We found your messenger. No one was near
When the Queen talked with him—yet I could see
By her bright eyes how joyfully she learned
Your royal welcome, and received your gift.
She could not well be merrier, as she pulled
The gloves you gave her on her eager hand.
Then on a sudden—ere an hour had fled
Her face had changed. I saw her press her hand
Upon her heart, she sank back with a groan,
And in their arms her ladies held—a corpse !

[*During these words ANJOU and ALENÇON exchange glances. CATHERINE'S and NAVARRE'S eyes meet, and they remain staring fixedly at each other.*]

NAVARRE

Your messenger, my Queen—may he be seen ?

Act I

CATHERINE

I fear me, no—he's on his way to Rome
Upon another errand.

NAVARRE

[*Aside to RIOUX.*] Ah, my good Rioux,
Mark well her words. Is she not—wonderful?
Oh, for the man who owns a mother still!

CHARLES

[*Nervously.*] I pray you, cousin, cease—you loved your
mother?

NAVARRE

[*With unconcealed warmth.*] Oh, could you look into my
heart, my Prince!

[*Then more bluntly, remembering himself.*

I loved her—that is all. A noble woman.
O Cousin Charles, you have a mother still,
Whate'er her mind may be!

CHARLES

Hush, cousin, hush!
What, my Court fool—and in his eye a tear!
I pray thee be a man!

NAVARRE

I must indeed!
I have no right to mourn on wedding-days.
Be merry, lords and ladies. By our law
This is the bridegroom's day. We'll let the dead
Bury their dead, or bury them ourselves
With song and laughter. By your leave, Princess.
[*Offers his hand.*]

MARGARET

You are not what you seem.

NAVARRE

What would you wish?

MARGARET

I wish as much as France may ask from you.

NAVARRE

I never knew that gloomy politics
 Could turn into a woman—Ventre St. Gris!—
 With kiss-inviting lips, like yours, sweet wife!
 I am no grave-digger. Come, nobles all,
 We'll to the feast—and, Rioux, shut your eyes
 And close your mouth. Should that which happens
 come

Not to your liking, then like all that comes! [Sings.

Le Prince de Condé

Il a été tué :

Mais Monsieur l'Amiral

Est encore à cheval—

[NAVARRE *exit* with MARGARET, followed by
 the Court ladies and gentlemen. CHARLES
 looks after them, and then falls into a seat.
 CATHERINE, with CARDINAL, RUGGIERI,
 and POLTROT, prepare to go out.

CATHERINE

Come, Charles, your hand!

CHARLES

I'll follow you, Queen-Mother!

[*Exeunt* CATHERINE, etc.

[*Left alone, after pause bursts out boisterously singing with a
 laugh.*]

“Le Prince de Condé,” etc.

[*Air taken up by Orchestra.*

ACT II

Act II SCENE I.—*In the Garden, outside the walls of the Louvre.*

*Enter NAVARRE, a wreath upon his head, and ALENÇON.
The latter is drunk, the former only simulates drunkenness.*

NAVARRE

Hillo, my gallant Prince, steady! Stand still!

ALENÇON

Easy enough to say that, but who can stand still, with the ground spinning round!

NAVARRE

Ventre St. Gris! If I had known before what good men and true Alençon, Guise, and Anjou were, when the cups circle and the knives and forks are clattering—

ALENÇON

And Condé, Teligni, and all the other damned heretics—Navarre, too, of course—

NAVARRE

We should never have got bloody coxcombs in twenty battles! Cousin, tell me—if you can possibly stand still. They say that the Louvre is a conundrum, a building full of mystery. What is hidden in these cellars?

ALENÇON

[*Solemnly.*] Powder-casks!

NAVARRE

Diantre! I should have thought it was sack and malvoisie! And what is behind the wainscoting and these walls? The black eyes of witching maidens?

ALENÇON

Black gun-barrels!

NAVARRE

H'm—not the most pleasant house for a marriage-feast. Our liveries will be blood-red before we've done. And this wing has been newly furnished, I hear, for the chiefs of the "damned heretics"?

ALENÇON

Look you here, friend. There's no hole or corner in this Louvre but has its miracle! The Medici—don't speak too loud—has her magic everywhere. Here it laughs and gibbers—there it groans and thunders—and scares you out of your wits, before you know where you are. And the Master Magician, Ruggieri, helps her at the game—so they tell me. I saw him to-day slink into the Queen's room with a picture in his hand—a picture which, by the way, resembled you!—only at a distance, mind, only at a distance!

NAVARRE

[Laughs.] Will the old witch be trying her love charms on me?

ALENÇON

I don't know. I can't stand being questioned. What the devil are you, cousin—a dolt or a philosopher? I can't make you out!

NAVARRE

Don't bother your head about it, my young friend! Time enough for that when you are sober. [Points off.]

Act II

ALENÇON

[*Staggers away.*] All right! [*Aside.*] A proper kind of bridegroom for you! Why, he even wanted to draw secrets out of me—and that I couldn't stand! [*Exit.*]

NAVARRE

[*Sinks into a garden seat.*] So, in the very lap of threatening Fate,
 We play a silly game of hide-and-seek,
 And while we tremble at the storm, we smile.
 The distant thunder rumbles 'mid the blue,
 The lightning quivers at the sunset's edge—
 And I, a truant bridegroom, from the feast
 Where beauty waits me, lurk and linger here,
 Afraid to taste the rapture of those lips
 Which seem to whisper of some fatal doom
 To me—and her—and France!
 I came not to your side, sweet Margaret,
 I could not come! I do not care to claim
 My royal bride, or even touch her hand,
 While yet this damning doubt assails my soul,
 Whether this revel be an ambushade,
 Or mean a lasting peace—if she be true
 To me, her husband—or her fair face smile
 To lure me to my fall—

Enter RIOUX, hatless, and with a drawn sword, his hand pressed on his arm.

RIOUX

My lord, they murder us!

NAVARRE

Rioux—you have a wound?

RIOUX

Don't trouble about me—a tiny scratch,
 No more. The Admiral—

NAVARRE

Coligni—well ?

RIOUX

Was riding up the street of L'Auxerrois
Up to the Louvre, when from an open window
A shot came suddenly. Heavens ! am I come
Here to this town only to tell of murder ?

NAVARRE

A shot ? Coligni fell ?

RIOUX

Coligni lives,
The ball but grazed his arm. He's here, my lord.

*Enter COLIGNI, his arm bandaged. With him ANJOU and
GUISE ; and two young Huguenot chiefs, the young
PRINCE OF CONDÉ and COUNT TELIGNI.*

NAVARRE

[*Running to COLIGNI.*] My father, you still live ? Thank
Heaven for it !
Did not my message reach you ?

COLIGNI

Message—yours ?

NAVARRE

I warned you [*recollecting himself*]*—well, I warned you to
make haste,
Before the feast was over. Admiral,
A merry city—Paris !*

COLIGNI

What is this ?

A wreath upon your head ? Is this Arcadia ?

Act II

NAVARRE

A bridal guerdon, suitable for—peace!

[*Tears off the wreath.*]

My lord of Anjou, such a shot as this

[*Pointing to COLIGNI's arm.*]

Does little honour to your soldiers' skill.

Will you not hang the rascal, when you find him?

ANJOU

We have done all we can to find the knave.

Lord Admiral, this is a sorry welcome.

We tender you apology.

GUISE

We hope

You will not think us the less glad to see you.

COLIGNI

No more, no more, I beg you, noble Princes.

ANJOU

You're very welcome in our capital!

[*ANJOU and GUISE exeunt.*]

NAVARRE

[*Aside.*] So says the hunter, when the prey is snared!

COLIGNI

[*Turning to NAVARRE.*] Sire, will you tell me——

NAVARRE

Rioux, cousins mine,

Teligni, Condé, may I have a word

Here with the Admiral? I pray you go

And, if no other sport attracts your minds,

Sharpen your swords—look to your armour well—

And wait the royal mother's trumpet-call!

[*Exeunt TELIGNI, CONDÉ, and RIOUX, looking at each other with some bewilderment.*]

COLIGNI

My Prince !

NAVARRE

[*Throwing himself into a garden chair.*] It's horrible,
too horrible !

COLIGNI

Why, what is this ?

NAVARRE

Oh, why are you here,
My father ? And my messenger miscarried !
Is Heaven void of angels—none to warn ?
Why have you come ?

COLIGNI

The order of my King ?

NAVARRE

Ah, you must keep your word, e'en though it kill you !
And all the Huguenot chiefs—chiefs of the faith
For which we shed our blood—imprisoned here ;
Locked in this bloody den of murderers,
Through me—through me—and this unholy marriage !

COLIGNI

What do you fear ? They've given us their word.

NAVARRE

And they will break it, whenso'er they list.
No faith is kept with heretics !

COLIGNI

Who taught you that ?
My Prince,

Act II

NAVARRE

He of the Lateran !
 Ask history for proof ! A million oaths
 Proud Rome has broken ; and a million wrongs
 Made consecrate for service in God's name !
 What shall I say ? You ask me what I fear—
 I know not, for my thoughts in widest range
 Can scarcely compass all that may betide,
 And yet I fear—I fear. My bride I see not,—
 I dare not see her. And I play my game
 And wear the mask of folly ; watch unseen
 That wily snake of Florence, the Queen-Mother
 Catherine. I cannot say—the danger's *here*—
 I only know 'tis somewhere, everywhere !
 I call you "father." May not aching thoughts
 Turn to my mother too ? My broken heart
 Has shed a rain of bloody tears to-day,
 While foolish jests were crowding to my lips.
 You know it, Admiral ? She's dead !

COLIGNI

God's will !

NAVARRE

No, 'tis the hired assassin's, 'tis her will,
 That cunning connoisseur in deadly poisons,
 Last viper of the Medicæan brood !

COLIGNI

Nay, that's some lying story of the gossips !

NAVARRE

Then lies the wound upon your arm, Coligni,
 Which for the first time proved your murderess
 A bungler in the business of blood !
 And all the horror weighs upon my conscience !
 All that has come, or will come circling round
 My single self ! And death, which left us free

On many fields of battle, finds his prey
Trapped at the last, like vermin in a snare !

COLIGNI

These are but charges—none of them made good.
Your mother, maybe, was not really poisoned.
The shot which struck me was an accident.

NAVARRE

Well, have it as you will. But I shall watch.
Still, are our troops advanced, as I suggested,
South of the city ?

COLIGNI

They stand ready, Prince,
In case of peril. Do you come with me
To the King's presence ?

NAVARRE

No ; whatever threatens,
You must protect yourself. The task is easy,
For Charles's temper is not harsh and cruel,
His mother's hands have maimed him. Yet, my friend,
Diplomacy, I fear, is not your gift,
You are but honest warrior. You are——

COLIGNI

Fearless and true, the motto of my house !
But, Sire, I pray you pardon this white hair,
Pardon the heart that loves you—if I dare
To ask of you a promise and an oath.
If there are plots—I know not if there be—
Yet if the things you fear take bloody shape
And drive us to our swords, remember, Sire,
You are the King on whom rests all our hopes !
The Huguenot cause is yours, and, if you fall,
It, too, must perish. It is ours to die,
But you—the King—must live. I know you brave—

Act II A lion-hearted soldier. Yet you bear
 A greater burden than a soldier's sword—
 Your country's crown. I charge you, on your oath,
 E'en in the darkest hour of doubt and danger,
 Hold this the highest duty that you owe
 To those you love and to our common faith—
 Preserve our King alive !

NAVARRE

[*Solemnly kissing his sword.*] 'Fore God, I promise.
 [*Exeunt together.*]

SCENE 2.—CATHERINE'S room. *A long pier-glass at back, reaching to the floor. There is a gallery at one side. Enter CATHERINE and the CARDINAL, RUGGIERI the Magician, and a Chamberlain.*

CATHERINE

The fool, the idiot, Poltrot ! What, only graze
 Coligni's arm, and waste a shot ! [*To the Magician.*] Is
 yonder mirror ready, as I bade you ?

RUGGIERI

I have prepared it as you wish, my Queen.

CATHERINE

The cheat cannot be guessed ?

RUGGIERI

Impossible, my liege.

CATHERINE

Await my signal. [*RUGGIERI exit. To CARDINAL.*]
 Now, my Lord Cardinal, what news from Rome ?

CARDINAL

The Holy Father thinks that a judgment of heretics,
 sanctioned by the Church, will—primarily at all events—

bring profit and advantage almost solely to the crown of France. [CATHERINE looks at him uneasily.] Therefore it may be no more than reasonable that a kind of indemnification or recompense to Rome may be paid by the Louvre.

CATHERINE

Well, have you made out the reckoning? How much is the papal blessing to cost? Speak!

CARDINAL

If Henry of Navarre dies, together with the princes of his house, there will be no need—so the Holy Father thinks—to place the lands of Navarre and Bearn into the hands of any worldly regent—

CATHERINE

But?

CARDINAL

But they can be made into a province of the Church.

CATHERINE

[Gravely.] The sagacity of Rome is truly wonderful! It never fails—

CARDINAL

Never, my Queen.

CATHERINE

Unless it encounters a sagacity greater than its own.

CARDINAL

What means your Majesty?

CATHERINE

Why, this. Margaret loves Guise. How if I make this Guise the King of Navarre?

CARDINAL

Then, in that case—

Act II

CATHERINE

She will become Queen-regent of Navarre and the wife of the man she loves. You see, my plan is so compact of love that I can hardly grant this time the little request of Rome.

CARDINAL

And if at the last moment the Holy Father refuses his consent to the dealing with the heretics?

CATHERINE

Cardinal, how old is the Holy Father?

CARDINAL

Over sixty.

CATHERINE

Over sixty! An old man. Had you some thought of becoming a candidate—when his Holiness expires?

CARDINAL

[*Hesitating and disconcerted.*] My own influence—my princely birth—

CATHERINE

[*Smiles.*] Send your nephew, the Duke of Guise, to me.

CARDINAL

[*Makes the sign of the Cross.*] Benedicat tibi Dominus!
[*Exit.*]

Enter MARGARET.

MARGARET

You called me, mother?

CATHERINE

Yes, for a mother's heart
Is yearning for her child. I fain would have
Some little ray of sunshine. By the stars,
I love you, Margaret!

MARGARET

I know it, mother.

CATHERINE

You know it, yet you grieve, your cheek is pale ;
The mother, whom you love, has robbed her child
Of all her happiness.

MARGARET

Because of France !

CATHERINE

But now the end has come. Because of France,
I gave thee to him, and I take thee back.
Men tied the knot and men must let it loose,
Heaven did not will this marriage. Navarre's false !

MARGARET

[*Startled.*] Almighty God, and why ?

CATHERINE

He and his following die ! They stand accused
Of treachery to God and France. They die !

MARGARET

What—the Huguenots ?

CATHERINE

They only came to Paris
To form a plot against thy brother, Charles,
And the whole race of Valois.

Act II

MARGARET

Was this the man
 To whom I pledged my faith as loving wife ?
 It cost him little, doubtless ; it was I
 Who took the oaths and suffered—in my soul,
 He came not to my chamber—now I see
 The reason—nay, he could not, dared not come.
 [*To Mother.*] You must have proofs, my mother, ample
 proofs
 Of such a shameful treason !

CATHERINE

Proofs I have,
 Which, when your brother hears, will make him king
 Beyond his wont. Leave all the proofs to him.
 You could not save him, even if you loved
 The man whom now you hate. Give up the traitor,
 And let him die ! My daughter, you are free !

MARGARET

[*Half sobbing.*] Ah, mother mine,
 I would have suffered all, and borne my cross
 Could but my pain have watered with my tears
 The flowers of peace for France ! 'Tis over now !
 I tear the traitor's image from my heart ;
 Last relic of a loveless love—'tis gone !
 And I am free—am free !

CATHERINE

Beloved child ! [*Embraces her.*
 [*Smiling.*] And shall we find in European courts
 A second husband ?

MARGARET

Never !

CATHERINE

Shall I ask

The Holy Sisters of the Heart of God—
 Dear love, how pale you grow ! And do you dare
 Another wedlock with another Henry—

GUISE *enters at back.*

MARGARET

What mean you, mother ?

CATHERINE

Of the house of Guise ?

MARGARET

I am but young,
 Yet far behind me lies a childhood's dream,
 When I could think of one who loved me well,
 And whom I loved as no one else beside.
 He seemed the princeliest knight within our Courts,
 The truest, tenderest warrior. In his eyes
 I saw the faith of one who could not swerve
 A hair's-breadth from his duty or his love.
 Not like this Huguenot rebel ! this false King
 Of heretic traitors ! [*She sees* GUISE.
 Ah ! The Prince of Guise !

GUISE

[*Comes forward and falls on one knee before her.*] Margot !
 dear Margot ! let me claim thy hand !
 And let my knee fulfil its wonted task
 Of joyful service at thy feet !

MARGARET

My mother,
 You sent for him ? That, surely, was not well !

Act II

CATHERINE

[To GUISE.] You've spoken with my lord the Cardinal?

GUISE

[*Rising and kissing the QUEEN's hand.*] I heard my fate as
in a waking dream.

As for the Huguenots, I knew your mind
Was set against them——

CATHERINE

[*Hastily interrupting him.*] They are traitors all!
This hateful plot against our royal house—
You understand me, Prince?—is in my hands.
No more of them. I have a sweeter task.
To-morrow Margaret is free, released
From all the vows she gave the Bourbon King.
The rest, perchance, you would prefer to hear
From younger lips. Heaven's blessing on you both!
[*Exit CATHERINE.*]

GUISE

[*Aside.*] The plot? What plot? I know not what she
means!

But what care I? [*Aloud.*] To-morrow, Margaret?

MARGARET

[*Excitedly.*] Go, Henry, go!

GUISE

Why do you tremble, dear?

MARGARET

To-morrow I am free; to-morrow, Henry!
I think you love me—leave me for to-day!

GUISE

Between to-morrow and to-day there lies
Only a moment—yet eternity
To all my wishes! [*Coming nearer and trying to clasp her.*]

MARGARET

I pray you, Henry !
 Leave me for to-day,
[*Is going.*]

GUISE

Whither are you going ?

MARGARET

To save me from myself ! Farewell, farewell !

GUISE

You love me, then ?

MARGARET

To-morrow you shall know ! [*Runs out.*]

GUISE

She loves me ! Call my blood but stagnant water,
 Or I will wring an answer from her lips
 This very hour ! [*Follows her.*]

Enter CHARLES followed by COLIGNI, who stands waiting.
 CHARLES is engrossed in a paper.

CHARLES

[*Reading.*] "Oh, kingly crown,
 When cares o'erweight our hearts, from youth to age,
 Will thy dread burden be our only wage ?"
 Good. Who is here ? How like you these few lines ?

COLIGNI

Sire, 'tis a sonnet.

CHARLES

Ay, I have some skill
 In turning out a verse. Why, are you not
 Admiral Coligni ? Wherefore are you come ?

Act II

COLIGNI

I came because you sent for me, my liege.

CHARLES

Your arm—you're wounded?

COLIGNI

'Twas an accident!

CHARLES

Stay, I remember now. My head is racked
With many thoughts. I have so much to think of!
You cannot say *I* bade the villain fire?
It was not I!

COLIGNI

No more, I pray you, Sire!

CHARLES

Nay, do not think it. They plan many things
Without my cognizance, and at the last
They ask me for my sanction and my seal.
I'm not so stupid as they think. I can
Make ritornels as well as other men.
Only in speech at times the right word fails me.
I bade you come, 'tis true, Lord Admiral,
But now it grieves me. You are much too loyal,
And loyalty is folly—as you know.

COLIGNI

Nay, Sire, 'tis surely better to be loyal
Whate'er the cost. Your gracious message bade me
Come to your presence—not to be a guest,
But for some warlike service?

CHARLES

Yes, be seated.
Come nearer. I can look you in the face,

I like to watch your eyes—'tis passing strange—
 For most men's eyes I shun. Dost know, my friend,
 You are to march to Flanders ?

COLIGNI

[*Uneasily.*] Flanders, Sire ?
 What is my business there ?

CHARLES

Oh, pray you, ask
 My mother, who is acting with the Spaniard,
 Duke Alva, Philip's captain. At Bayonne
 They lately shuffled cards—you know the man.
 What is your business ? Why, hang heretics,
 Flay, burn, behead the rebels, make a wager
 Which of you two's the better murderer !

COLIGNI

[*Drawing back.*] You will not so dishonour my gray
 hairs !
 What, old Coligni, hand in hand in blood
 With the Dutch hangman—in the pay of Spain !
 Oh, pardon me, my liege—I speak too bold.
 I know the perils gathering for France
 Beyond the mountains, in Don Philip's Court !
 Where lie the troops which I must lead to Flanders ?

CHARLES

Rochelle, or Chatillon—I know not.

COLIGNI

What !
 My Huguenots—my brothers in the faith !
 And I to lead them to a massacre
 Of fellow-Christians in the Netherlands—
 For Philip's greater glory ? Gracious Heaven,
 This is no plan of yours, my honoured liege,
 This devil's work is hatched by other brains !

Act II

CHARLES

Hush—do not speak so loud—do not revile them.
 They've told me, till I think it must be true,
 I owe to Heaven for my many sins
 Atonement and some signal recompense.
 They bid me do some act of penitence,
 Some royal act ! To win eternal grace
 There is but one way—so they ever tell me—
 I needs must clear the land of heresy,
 And wipe out Huguenots from sea to sea
 To the last man.

COLIGNI

Good God ! They poison bodies,
 And now assail men's souls !

CHARLES

What, Admiral !
 You dare to thwart my wishes—my commands ?
 I've had men killed for less. Have you no fear ?

COLIGNI

Due reverence, my liege—I know not fear.

CHARLES

Praise Heaven, then, I've found a miracle,
 A man who knows no fear ! Speak on, speak on ;
 I give you leave to speak.

COLIGNI

I thank your Majesty
 For this your gracious word. Ah, do not think
 Coligni stands before you, but a man
 Of flesh and blood like you, who loves his foe,
 And knows the touch of human tenderness,
 And human sorrow. Put aside your crown—
 This gilded trouble which you sing in verse—
 And be a man like me. Burst all the chains

Of royal habit—all this courtly pomp ;
 Let your heart speak, as though I were your father
 And you my son. Naught severs us, believe me.
 Except a book——

CHARLES

A book ?

COLIGNI

The Holy Bible

Which by the mouth of all the holy prophets
 God hath revealed.

CHARLES

Yes, father, yes—speak on.

COLIGNI

They tell you that the blood of heretics
 Is a sweet savour to eternal Heaven ;
 God's writing in that Bible runs not so.
 'Tis "Judge not and ye shall not be judged" ; or this,
 "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you"—
 Of such commands love is the true fulfilment.

[CATHERINE and the CARDINAL appear in the
gallery behind.

CHARLES

Is that so ?

'Tis not what they have taught me.

COLIGNI

No—the priests

Explain the book according to their needs.

CHARLES

You have white hair—I do not think you lie.
 "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you."
 A wondrous text—I never heard the like !

Act II Oh, "judge not that ye be not judged of God"—
That is a fearful fate! But tell me more.
What else is in the book?

COLIGNI

"The time shall come
When many shall draw near to me and say,
'Lord, in thy name full many a work is ours,
Lord, in thy name we've spilled much human blood,
And in thy name have doomed to endless death.'

[*A pause.*]

Then will the Lord reply to them in thunder,
'I made you ministers of endless Love,
And all ye know is Enmity and Hate.
Away, away—ye workers of all evil!'"

CHARLES

[*Covers his face with his hands, and falls on his knees.*] Have
mercy, Lord, have mercy on thy servant!

[*CATHERINE and CARDINAL steal out of gallery.*]

COLIGNI

[*Lifts him up.*] Yet whosoever cometh to His throne,
Lisping the childish syllables of prayer,
Shall find forgiveness, for He willeth not
A sinner's death.

CHARLES

I pray you, give me truth.
Truth—what is truth?

COLIGNI

Truth only dwells with God.
We can but love.

CHARLES

Then give this love to me,
God knows I need it, father. Mother's love
I never had, I never shall have more.

I fain would pray. And therefore leave me, father. Act II
 You shall not go to Flanders. Let me pray.

[COLIGNI *exit*.

CHARLES

[*Sinks on his knees.*] Beloved Saviour—dear Bartholomew,
 Whose feast we keep to-morrow—at the stake
 I promise thee a dozen heretics,—
 All that I ask of thee's to save my soul,
 Forgive—forget—
 Be gracious, Lord, forgive—I cannot pray,
 No prayer succeeds.

Enter CATHERINE and the CARDINAL.

CATHERINE

Stand up, I'll teach you prayer !

CHARLES

[*Shuddering.*] You—mother—here ?

CATHERINE

To open your blind eyes
 Before the flames of Paris.—

CHARLES

Paris ?

CATHERINE

Yes,
 Before your city falls. You are the traitor !
 You have betrayed the Lord, betrayed the Church,—

CARDINAL

And doomed your soul to everlasting hell !

CHARLES

Ah, save me from this anguish ! Give me truth,
 The truth. Who has the truth, my mother ?

Act II

CATHERINE

[*Pointing to the* CARDINAL.]

Rome !

CARDINAL

This is the truth, King Charles, as it is written,
 "He that is not with me is against me."

CATHERINE

Prepare thyself by penitence, my son,
 To be forgiven. You think your mother cruel ;
 You call her hard, and why ? Because I know
 My duty as the widow of a king ;
 My royal duty to the house of Valois,
 And to the throne of France.

CHARLES

And house and throne,
 Are they in danger ? What is this you dream ?

CATHERINE

If it be dream, I would some kindly sleep
 Might win my eyelids to forgetfulness !
 I cannot count the days, the sleepless nights,
 The slow-drawn hours, wherein I think and scheme
 Both for the Valois, and the royal crown.

CARDINAL

And all seems vain ! For look you, how the world
 Is changing from the fashion of its prime,
 The old world dying tardily, the new
 Rising in might from out the womb of Time.
 Our ancient service was of Reverence,
 Of Faith, the humble worship of the Unseen ;
 Of Trust, the simple credence in a God.
 Now all is chaos and catastrophe !
 That cursed art of Mayence has laid bare
 To vulgar eyes a prostituted truth.
 The tree of knowledge is plucked bare of leaves ;

Men eat forbidden fruit, and, eating, die !
 Till at the last, the monk of Wittenberg,
 Spawn of the Devil, blasts the world with lies,
 And Hell itself, bursting its barriers,
 Roars at the portals of the Lateran !
 Monarchs and crowns go downwards in the crash
 Of falling empires ; every slave's a king,
 And kings are slaves. Wilt thou await thy doom,
 Thou latest lily of the line of Valois,
 Till the storm take thee, and thy battered leaves
 Fall into nothingness ?

CHARLES

What must I do ?

CARDINAL

It is commanded to maintain thy rights :
 And make all earthly means secure this end.
 Such is the ancient doctrine of thy house.
 Look everywhere around thee—war and hate,
 Carnage and ruin, pestilence and death,
 O'erspread the land and prove the wrath of Heaven.
 Thou art begirt with peril, learn thy task ;
 Crush or be crushed ; destroy or be destroyed !
[Exit CARDINAL.]

CHARLES

[Turning to CATHERINE.] What would you have me
 do ? I will not lie
 To those who are my friends, nor prove a traitor
 To men who trust me ; everything but that !

CATHERINE

When you invited heretics to Paris
 To see your sister wedded, and they came
 Armed with a plan to overthrow your house,
 I call that treachery and nothing else !

CHARLES

[Startled.] What proof have you of that ?

Act II

CATHERINE

[*Strikes a bell.*]

Marshal Tavannes!

[*He enters.*]

His Majesty the King desires to know
What news you have of districts south of Paris?

TAVANNES

My messengers report that troops in arms,
From Troyes to Chartres, are forming crescent-wise,
And threatening your city.

CHARLES

Troops? What troops?

TAVANNES

The Huguenots, my liege.

CATHERINE

[*Makes a sign to TAVANNES.*] You may retire.

[*To CHARLES.*] And have you put Coligni to the
proof? [TAVANNES *exit.*]

Goes he to Flanders?

CHARLES

[*Startled.*] No, he would not lead
His forces 'gainst his brethren in the faith
To the Low Countries.

CATHERINE

I was sure of it!

Will you peruse this paper? [Gives him a letter.]

CHARLES

[*Reads.*] "Queen Elizabeth of England is ready with
ships and money in case Admiral Coligni will support
the rising in Flanders, secretly."
How came this letter, mother, in your hands?

CATHERINE

'Twas captured in Boulogne.

CHARLES

Ah, and these troops ?

CATHERINE

Of two things one. Either they go to Flanders,
Or else they storm this drowsy capital
While we are feasting.

CHARLES

Oh, then, mother, help ;
Defend the crown of France, and save me.

CATHERINE

[*Spreading a paper before him at the table.*] Sign.

CHARLES

[*Bending over it.*] "The Huguenots in Paris,"—"in
one night,"—
"To the last man." Why, fifteen thousand souls
Are here in Paris !

CATHERINE

There is more than that.

Read further.

CHARLES

"And in all the provinces
From sea to sea." Great Heaven ! Words like these
Reek with the scent of blood. They drive me mad !
This plan is hatched of devils ; hell itself
Rewards its execution !

CATHERINE

[*Showing another document, to which hangs a seal.*]

Will you hear

A message from his Holiness the Pope ?

Act II

CHARLES

[*Reads.*] "A hundred thousand slaughtered Huguenots,—
I grant him absolution." [*Laughs insanely.*]

Only that!

A paltry offering! And I must sign,
Or else be damned! Nay, mother, leave me one,
Leave me my Henry, for he drives the ghosts
Out of my head by all his merry jests.
And he's not dangerous! Leave me my fool!

CATHERINE

Better to leave the hundred thousand lives
Than just this Henry! Spare his life and then,
Here in thy stead, this so-called harmless fool,
This Henry of Navarre is—King of France!

CHARLES

Navarre—the King? What Henry, King of France?
Nay, but my will—

CATHERINE

Fate laughs at all thy wills!

Crush or be crushed—destroy or be destroyed!

[*She begins to make incantations.*]

By pains and tortures in the gulfs of hell
Which ye shall suffer if ye mock my will—
Ay, for a thousand years—appear, appear,
Ye spirits of the nether world, appear,
Obedient to my summons! Spirits come!

[*A flash of lightning and thunder. A gale of
wind blows through the room. Some of the
candles are blown out. In others, the flames
visibly bend before the draught.*]

In yonder mirror show to us the face
Of him who, after Charles, shall wear the crown!
Out of the clouds it comes! Behold, behold!

[*Clouds of smoke rise, and then the picture of a
king with sceptre and crown is seen for the
moment on the surface of the mirror, after-
wards disappearing in smoke.*]

CHARLES

[*Who approaches the mirror and then draws back.*] Ha!

A king's face! 'Tis Henry of Navarre!

Look, how it bends its scornful eyes on mine,
And waves its stolen sceptre! Thunder and devils!
Thou—if thou art a king—stand to my sword!

[*He advances towards the mirror with drawn sword, then steps back.*

Why, look you—it is gone! Stand, coward, stand!

CATHERINE

[*Touches his arm and points to the table.*] Impalpable is
Fate! Kill flesh and blood!

CHARLES

[*Sobbing.*] In flesh and blood I kill thee, cursed shape!
Defend thyself! Canst thou return and break
The marble ribs of thine imperial tomb?
Then be my heir! For with a pen-stroke—thus—

[*Signs the paper.*

I stab thee to thy death! [*Falls fainting to the floor.*

[*CATHERINE takes up the paper and holds it before her triumphantly.*

CATHERINE

Crush or be crushed—destroy or be destroyed!

ACT III

Act III SCENE.—*State-room in the Louvre. At one side there is an oratory. In the centre back there is a curtain, behind which some steps between pillars lead up to a balcony. Late afternoon. In the background CATHERINE is with the CARDINAL in prayer. In the foreground are the DUKES OF ANJOU and GUISE, the MARSHALS TAVANNES and GONDI-RETZ. POLTROT at back.*

CATHERINE

[*Getting up from her knees and coming forward.*]
Are we ready, gentlemen? My Lord Cardinal—you represent the cause of Holy Church in France—will you ask these Princes whether any one of them desires to recall the solemn oath he pledged to you?

CARDINAL

I ask, as the Queen desires.

GUISE

Command my sword.

ANJOU

And why ask me? My work is war.

CATHERINE

Marshal Tavannes, our troops will take up their position before the Louvre. When eleven strikes all the streets opening into the Square of the Louvre are to be barricaded with chains. The houses of the Catholics must have lights in them. Whoever appears in the

thoroughfares without a white cross on his shoulder, dies. A shot from the tower of St. Germain will give the signal for the festival to begin. In one night France will win peace, or never again! Henry of Guise, of all the thousand victims, I desire but one at thy hands!

GUISE

Navarre?

CATHERINE

Navarre for myself! For you—Coligni.

GUISE

By my father's blood, which cries to me from the ground against this murderer—Coligni dies!

ANJOU

Death to the traitors!—Traitors to Heaven and France!
[*Exeunt* PRINCES.]

CATHERINE

Your Eminence, I still require some ghostly help from you.

CARDINAL

Can the Church help you? We, who swing the censer and bear the Cross—what can we do?

CATHERINE

You can do much. Throw open all the monasteries of Paris—let them vomit forth their inmates into the streets! Let those who cannot wield the sword and dagger, wave the crucifix!

CARDINAL

Enough, my Queen. 'Tis an idea of which Torquemada might be proud!
[*Exit* CARDINAL.]

Act III

CATHERINE

Poltro!t !

POLTRO!T *advances.*

POLTRO!T

Your Majesty requires me ?

CATHERINE

Arrest the King of Navarre to-night.

POLTRO!T

Where shall I find him ?

CATHERINE

In the turret-chamber.

POLTRO!T

And if—if the King defends himself ?

CATHERINE

I hope he may !

POLTRO!T

What—that I may be forced to—you mean ?

CATHERINE

Away, knave ! What you mean, I mean !

[Goes to door, which POLTRO!T opens.]

POLTRO!T

[Bowiug low.] As you will, your Majesty. *[Exeunt.]**Enter CHARLES and MARGARET. It is growing dusk.*

CHARLES

Now you know all. The wicked thought was hers ;
—'Tis always she who fills my reeling brain

With such rank poison—and I signed my name.
 I signed my name—in sooth, it drives me mad.
 And therefore have I sought thee, sister mine,
 To see thy face and hear thy voice ! Great Heaven,
 I needs must give my pent-up soul relief,
 I needs must talk with some one. And you love,
 You—you alone—in all this stupid world,
 Your hapless brother. Margot is still here,
 Margot will comfort me, as she was wont,
 When in the bygone days, as boy and girl,
 We played at Cluny.

MARGARET

Brother—brother mine——

CHARLES

Can you remember how in Cluny woods
 We played together ? And I see you still
 Shoot like a lizard through the golden green
 Amid the sunshine, and your merry laugh
 Trilled like the happy chatter of the birds !
 And the old gardener—is he living yet ?
 I would I knew. [*With a sudden change of manner.*

Why should not Harry hold
 The sceptre when I'm dead ? It matters not.
 Naught matters now. I once was proud to think
 The Valois line might long endure—but now—
 I do not love my brothers, and the Queen,
 Queen-Mother, Catherine, with her magic arts
 I hate ! 'Twas jugglery which bent my will
 And made me sign that paper—she it was
 Who fooled my senses with the cursed tricks
 Of black-souled Ruggieri and his crew.
 And is there no revenge ? Why, Henry King,—
 That cannot break my sleep ! With Henry King,
 You would be Queen of France and wear my crown.
 I should be happy then—and I would have
 A little garden near the Cluny woods
 Where I could train carnations——

Act III

MARGARET

[Smiling.]

When you were dead ?

What, my brother,

CHARLES

[Still absently.]

But Harry is a fool.

'Tis pity, Margot, and he loves you not. [A pause.]

They say that Cousin Guise came somewhat late
From out your chamber.

MARGARET

[Rising.]

Sire, you forget yourself.

CHARLES

[Pettishly.] "Sire," "Sire," 'tis always "Sire" and
"Majesty" !I hate these royal titles ! Oh, for love,
One little grain of love to ease my heart
And fill my eyes with tears. Come, sister mine,
I would not have you angry—let me throw,
Just for to-night, my royalty aside,
And be a brother merely. See, 'tis dark
Already over Paris—go and pray.
Pray for yourself and me—but leave her out,
Leave mother out, that God may hear your prayers !

[Exit.]

MARGARET

[Musingly.] The world was happy once and seemed to
smile :Now all seems different. I drain the cup
Which all our fathers drained—the primal curse
Of sin and suffering—which from sire to son
Comes on our race like a descending flood.
I know not where I stand, between the love
Which once was mine—to take or throw away—
And all the horror of these new espousals.

[Covers her face with her hands.]

Enter NAVARRE through a secret door.

NAVARRE

Margaret ?

MARGARET

Who's there ?

NAVARRE

'Tis I,—Navarre !

Margaret of Valois, I would speak with you.

MARGARET

Sire, if men's lives are fastened, each to each,
By threads of destiny, we twain must be
Together to the fated end. Speak on.

NAVARRE

I thank thee, Princess, hear me to the end.
I'll bare to thee my soul. When first I knew
That thou and I were plighted, and a peace
Assured 'twixt both our camps, I asked myself,
Are they in earnest, and does Paris want
A true alliance ? Then no price were high,
No sacrifice too great, e'en though the bride
Were something other than—fair Margaret !
Our country's claim is clearly paramount,
No matter though the bridegroom be a man
Light-minded, foolish, fickle, as you know.

MARGARET

[*Astonished.*] Not so, I find you changed. You are not he
Whom once I knew.

NAVARRE

We came to Paris, all
The Huguenot chiefs, with friendship in our hearts

Act III And swords in sheath—to find your Catholics
 Armed to the teeth. I hastened to the Louvre
 Before my men, to keep a watchful eye
 On all that might befall. And had I come,
 As gallant as your virgin fancy dreamed,
 And had you learned to love me—did the Queen
 In truth desire your happiness *alone* ?
 Was this her *only* object ?

MARGARET

Nay—I know not.

NAVARRE

Nor I, fair Princess—yet I needs must know.
 Because of France I wore a mask of folly,
 And made a mock of all my bridal rights—
 The while I watched the Queen, to learn my fate,
 Your fate and mine—the destiny of France !

MARGARET

No more, no more ! My sorrow is past cure !
 I dreamed you only worthy of contempt,
 I dared despise you, at my mother's bidding !
 It was my mother's act—it is her curse ;
 She dooms to ruin everything she rules !

NAVARRE

Blame not thyself, nor her ; I too have dreamed,
 And found fulfilment bitter. When I lay
 Upon my bed in utter wretchedness
 Here in this Louvre, and the slow daylight crept
 Across the growing whiteness of the sky,
 I had a vision of what might have been.
 I saw thy face grown kindly with a love
 Of perfect faith in me : I saw myself
 Upon a throne—the throne of France.

MARGARET

[*Startled, and to herself.*] 'Tis thus
You are accused—but no, it cannot be!

NAVARRE

Around us twain a race of happy brothers
Whom peace had cradled in forgetfulness
Of all the bloody past. From sea to sea
No hand was raised for strife, no swords were drawn,
No trumpet blown for warfare. With one voice
They hymned the God of righteousness and love—
One God for peaceful France!

MARGARET

O husband, husband!
O cruel mother!

NAVARRE

[*Kneels.*] Nay, my Margot, thou
Wert centre of my dream, thy face enshrined
Queen of my vision, Queen of happy France,
Queen of my heart!

MARGARET

[*Draws back and speaks in a whisper.*] Nay, Henry or
Navarre!
Too late!

NAVARRE

Too late?

MARGARET

[*With a revulsion of feeling.*] Yes. If of you and me
One is the baser, the less worthy, I—
'Tis I, and I alone. It were not just,
If on this day which severs us for ever—
Which tears apart the husband and the wife,
And leaves each solitary, friendless, lone—

Act III

NAVARRE

[*Starting.*] Good God ! What mean you ?

MARGARET

[*Smiling half sadly.*] Ah, I know it now,
 I knew not love before. In innocence
 Of virgin fancy, when my heart was young
 I pledged my maiden vows and thought I loved.
 'Twas long ago, before I saw your face.
 We dream some early dream of wedded troth,
 We see some face, some form of gallant mould,
 And straightway think 'tis he ! Love comes not thus.
 'Tis born of travail and of loneliness,
 Not in the dawn, but in the midday heat,
 Born of the spirit's anguish, in the fire
 Of noontide passion, in its fiercest glow—
 Too late ! too late ! too late !

NAVARRE

Nay, Margaret,
 I know not what you mean. 'Tis not too late,
 I cannot leave you now, for if we love,
 What need we else ?

MARGARET

'Twas a good angel, love,
 Which brought thee to my side, which led us both
 To make confessions. Yet, but tell me this ;
 It is not true you plotted against Charles
 To win his royal throne ? That dream of yours
 Was only dream ?

NAVARRE

By yonder cross, Princess,
 I am no traitor ; and my dream concerned
 The welfare of the people, not myself !

MARGARET

[*With sudden energy.*] For God's sake save yourself!

NAVARRE

In Heaven's name,
Tell me your meaning? For your words convey
Some hint of awful danger! Let me face it,
It only scares, unseen.

MARGARET

Look out and see.

NAVARRE

[*Looking behind the curtain.*] I see a city slumbering in
peace.

Nay, what is this? Bodies of armed men
Are gathering around the Louvre; each soldier wears
A white cross on his shoulder. [*Stepping back.*] Has the
scene
Of brooding horror, shrouded by the night—
Has it a name, a meaning?

MARGARET

It is death.

NAVARRE

Death? And to whom? The princes of my house—
Coligni? Condé? Henry of Navarre?

MARGARET

To-night ten thousand Huguenots are slain!
To-night, this very hour. Ah, save yourself!

NAVARRE

In Heaven's name, 'tis false!

MARGARET

Yes, it *is* false;
'Tis not ten thousand; forty thousand, rather,

Act III Fall throughout France this hour—my mother's work ;
 She slips the leash, and the wild dogs of war
 Are ravening in the streets. You see the peace
 To which you were invited by the Queen !

NAVARRE

Now I see light ! The mystery is cleared,
 The dragon takes its stand before our eyes,
 Visible and palpable ; but what your part ?
 And what is mine ? what is the doom I win
 Here, in this charnel-house ? I go to meet
 My foe !

[*Is going.*]

MARGARET

Stay, Henry ! All the gates are barred,
 You cannot leave the Louvre !

NAVARRE

Within it, then !
 'Tis better so. I'll hasten to my room,
 And make each single drop of blood atone
 A Huguenot's death !

MARGARET

Too late. A murderer stands
 In every corridor. You cannot pass.

NAVARRE

Well—Rioux, then ?

MARGARET

Where is the knight ?

NAVARRE

Within my tower chamber. He shall ride
 Fast to the south for succour.

° He lies

MARGARET

He must die.

You cannot save him. Save yourself. 'Tis all
That human skill may do.

NAVARRE

I, too, will die.

MARGARET

What of your dream, then? Was it sent from Heaven?
If you are wiser than great God Himself,
Here is the door, Navarre, step forth and die!

NAVARRE

[*To himself.*] Ah, God—my promise to Coligni! This,
Ay, this, is what his prescient mind foresaw!
My blood cries out to die beside my friends,
But I have sworn, and I must keep my oath,
And bear the heavier burdens of a King.

[*To MARGARET.*] Yet, if I stay, is there a corner safe
In the whole palace?

MARGARET

Yes, one corner—there!

[*Opening to the door of her bedroom.*]

NAVARRE

Your bedroom, Princess! 'Tis a bitter jest!

MARGARET

Nay, Henry, 'tis no jest!

NAVARRE

To-morrow, then,
Who finds me not to-night, will find me there
To-morrow! [*Drawing his sword.*] Better die than
live a coward!
When does this carnival of blood begin?

Act III

MARGARET

They wait a signal from St. Germain's tower.

[*A cannon-shot is heard.*]

NAVARRE

Are we so far already? Let me go!

[*Tries to push by her.*]

MARGARET

Not till you hear me speak. 'Tis my last word!
 Take but one step from out this room—but one—
 To certain death—and I will plunge the steel

[*Drawing a dagger.*]

Here in my heart. Your death shall be my own!
 Now—leave me, if you will! I am no coward,
 I am a Queen—a daughter of the Valois!
 And if your doom must come—and come through me,
 Then Henry's wife shall die beside her lord!

[*Steps are heard.*]

NAVARRE

[*Dropping his sword-point and drawing her to him.*] I
 would my Huguenots could see you now!
 Brave wife and true!

[*Is going.*]

MARGARET

[*As the steps come nearer throwing herself before him.*] Ah,
 they are coming! Hark!
 Quick, Henry, quick! Nay, but I pray you, love,
 You are the King France looks for—and my King,
 My heart, my all! For my sake, for our love's sake,
 quick.

[*She hurriedly ties a white ribbon on his arm and
 pushes him into her room as a page enters
 with the words "The Queen."* MARGARET
 sinks down.

The bells begin to ring, the firing has commenced, but it is still some way off in the distance, so that the dialogue is not interrupted. Enter CATHERINE with the CARDINAL, ALENÇON, ANJOU, Court Ladies, and Gentlemen of the Chamber. All the Catholics wear a white cross on their shoulders from this to the end of the Act.

CATHERINE

[MARGARET rises.] We fain would have you merry,
Margaret!
We miss your presence in this festival
With all good Catholics to-night.

MARGARET

To-night!

And this a festival? These clanging bells,
This roaring musketry——

CATHERINE

A firework, child!

Some entertainment and festivity
We owe our honoured guests. [Turning round.] Come
here, to me!

MARGARET

Who is the murderer my mother calls?
Will no one answer? Must a bride's lips tell
The horrid truth? 'Tis murder! In this hour
Ten thousand Huguenots die!

CATHERINE

You know it, then?

So much the better!

MARGARET

[To ALENÇON.] And Alençon—you—
What are you doing here? Go forth and draw
Your sword for God's own glory!

Act III

ALENÇON

[*Sullenly.*] By the Cross,
The night is dark. I am a son of France.

MARGARET

[*Turning to the* CARDINAL.] You, Cardinal, to your
office! There are saints
To earn your blessing! Every one who kills
A heretic is on his certain way
To Heaven to-night!

CATHERINE

I fear my daughter's soul
Hath caught the taint of heresy.

MARGARET

Speak on!
I'm ready for the cloister. Have your will!
I leave these human shambles to your hands!
I was the snare—you cannot tell me more
Than what I know—the innocent decoy
To draw the Huguenots within the nets,
The long-spun nets of Death! Do as you will,
And win eternal infamy to-night!

CATHERINE

[*With a sneer.*] Methinks we're not so merry as we
like!
Cardinal, a game of chess. My ladies, go—
Make love, and play, and dance! [*A Chamberlain places
a chess-board. The Ladies and Gentlemen of the
Court exeunt into the adjoining room, whence is heard
the music of a gavotte or a minuet.*] Alençon—
you——

ALENÇON

I go, dear mother, to the monastery,
To shoot in concert with Dominicans.

[ALENÇON *exit.*]

CATHERINE

Open the curtains—let the cool night air
Blow in our faces. We would hear and see
Our faithful people's midnight revelry!

*[The curtains are drawn back, and the windows
thrown open. Beyond the balcony the sky is
seen to be blood-red.]*

Where is my son, the King?

POLTROT enters and goes up to CATHERINE.

POLTROT

Your Majesty!

CATHERINE

[Looking up.] Navarre is dead?

POLTROT

He died, as you commanded!

CATHERINE

Was he within his room?

POLTROT

Ay.

CATHERINE

Bolted in?

POLTROT

The door was open. I could see within
A figure on a cushion—fast asleep—
By the faint starlight I crept up to him,
And stabbed him as he lay. He only groaned.
The word "Navarre" came rattling from his throat.

CATHERINE

Who now is Lord of France—ye spirits, say,
Liars and traitors—when King Charles is dead?

Act III *Enter GUISE, and behind him a Page, carrying something covered with a cloth on a silver tray.*

MARGARET

[*To GUISE.*] Guise — cousin — take me hence—for Heaven's sake!

CATHERINE

[*To GUISE.*] Coligni, Prince?

GUISE

My father is avenged!
[*Beckons the Page, who comes forward and kneels.*]

CATHERINE

Ay, and the Catholics! [*She goes over to the Page and lifts the cloth a little away from the audience.*] Farewell, Coligni! [*Starts.*]

Look, Cardinal, he smiles. His features wear
The perfect peace of grace! He died in peace!
And this a heretic? Can the devil's lies
Extend beyond the grave?

CARDINAL

Sit anathema!

'Tis hell's eternal triumph to deceive! [*Exit Page.*]

CATHERINE

My Lord of Guise, I owe you recompense.
I give it here. [*Pointing to MARGARET.*] Receive it from her lips!

GUISE

Nay, Queen, there's other work. Where is Navarre?

CATHERINE

Navarre is dead.

GUISE

Already? Why, I hoped
To lay his head before my Margaret's feet.

MARGARET

Out of my sight, assassin !

GUISE

[*Astonished.*] Margaret !
 You had another message for my ears
 But yesterday. [*Turning to QUEEN.*] And is he dead, in
 truth ?

CATHERINE

The answer lies within the turret-room.

GUISE

I'll find it there ! [*Exit.*]

MARGARET

[*Sobbing.*] Oh, for a single word
 To reach my mother's heart ! Oh, for the tongue
 Of some inspired angel to awake
 The tenderer thoughts of conscience, and give pause
 To all this senseless butchery ! [*Falls at her feet.*]
 Mother, spare,
 Spare further slaughter ! Put an end to blood !

CATHERINE

[*Quietly to CARDINAL, resuming her chess.*] Your castle
 is in danger, Cardinal !

Enter CHARLES, wildly excited.

CHARLES

Begone, pale shadows ! Take that form away—
 That form, gray-headed, with its kindly smile.
 I cannot bear to look upon his face.
 Why do ye dog me thus ?

CARDINAL

Is the King ill ?

Act III

CHARLES

Bloodhounds ! ye rouse a tiger in my veins
 Which scents the smell of blood—it will not sleep—
 It will have blood—oh, for the love of God,
 Will no one tell me if Coligni lives ?
 I saw him but just now !

CATHERINE

Where, idiot, where ?

CHARLES

I saw him in the corridor. He stood
 As pale as death, with blood upon his face.
 With hollow voice, as though from out his grave,
 He stood and cried “ Be King, at length a King ! ”

CATHERINE

A fancy—nothing more !

CHARLES

A game of chess ? [*Sits down.*
 I'll play. Move, mother. How much is the stake ?

CATHERINE

Your crown, my son !

CHARLES

Good, if I win I'm King !
 [*He makes a move.*

CARDINAL

Check to the Queen !

CHARLES

[*Jumping up.*]
 Spirits and devils ! who—
 Who made that move !

CARDINAL

The move is good, my liege.

CHARLES

You saw it not? Why there it stood, and moved
My hand upon the board!

CARDINAL

Who, Sire?

CHARLES

Coligni!

I am not guilty of his blood, and yet
His spirit tortures me! [*With a change of manner.*
Nay, if I must
Condemn a thousand innocents to murder
I will have one at least to be my prey!
I want a Huguenot corpse! A musket—quick!
[*Seizes the gun of one of the Guards, and springs
up into the balcony.*

CATHERINE

Deafen this chattering madman! Music! there.
[*Dance music begins again in the ante-room.*
*Outside in the streets there rolls up to the
windows the chant of marching Huguenots:
"Eine feste Burg" ("God is our strong
rock"). Then it is eventually drowned in a
discharge of musketry.*

CATHERINE

[*Looking up from her game.*] What is that noise?

ANJOU

[*Entering.*] The war-cry of the foe;
The Huguenot chant of battle!

MARGARET

Hark, they sing.
"God is our rock." How many Gods, ye priests,
Can reign in Heaven, if their faith be vain?

Act III

CHARLES

[*Shoots.*] Aha ! he's hit ! He wallows in the street !
His blood is maddening wine ! Give me some more !
Another musket !

[*The chant is over, but a few voices remain singing.*

“*Thou takest from us earthly life,
Possessions, houses, children, wife.*”

CATHERINE

Peace ! let this screaming cease !

CHARLES

[*Wildly.*] I will have blood ! A shot ! Another shot !
[*A single voice is heard, “The kingdom must be
ours,” interrupted by a death-shriek as CHARLES
shoots him.*

I have him ! See, he falls ! Aha ! he's dead !

[*As he turns round he sees—unseen by others—
COLIGNI'S ghost, standing on the steps leading
up to the balcony.*

There ! there he stands ! I see him, standing there !

He offers me a golden sceptre. See !

He tells me to be King ! I will, pale ghost,

I will indeed be King ! Ah, he is gone.

[*Totters down from the balcony.*

You saw him, Margaret ?

MARGARET

My poor, poor Charles !

CHARLES

Wait—give me air ! I dare not look again.

Is't there ?

MARGARET

Be King, and it will come no more !

Undo your work, let the mad revel cease,

Withdraw your troops—I pray you end this murder,

Let live whoever lives. Be King, be King !

CATHERINE

What insolence is this? This puppet King
Must off to bed! This night is wholly mine!

MARGARET

Mother, once more I ask you, stay your hand;
Recall your orders; if you have a heart
Stop this wild massacre, or else I swear,
Here at your feet, all duty I renounce,
You are no mother—I no more your child!
[To CHARLES.] List to me, Charles. So help you Heaven
above,
My brother, be the King and give us peace!
'Tis your good angel's voice!

Enter GUISE.

GUISE

You are betrayed, my Queen!
In yonder turret-room there lies Rioux,
A halberd in his heart. 'Tis not Navarre!

CATHERINE

[*Standing up.*] What, not Navarre! Nay, everything
was dark,
You could not see him.

GUISE

I was not alone,
A servant with me bore a torch.

CATHERINE

Great Heaven!
I am the more deceived. Where is Poltrot?
[POLTROT *throws himself at her feet.*
Away with him! Away! Navarre still lives!
[POLTROT *is led off by the Guards.*

Act III

CHARLES

Navarre still lives? What? He for whose one life
 Paris is soaked in blood? Ten thousand fall
 And yet he lives! St. Denis! Here's a sign
 For Charles to understand, a sign from Heaven
 Which e'en the blind might see, the deaf might hear
 Shoot out your lightnings, mother, I care not.
 I will be King indeed. You shall obey.
 What, in one night ten thousand of my people
 Butchered in Paris, and in France still more?
 And I their King.—Nay, mother, I forgive,
 Freely forgive you all the rest. He lives!
 Navarre still lives! Nay, but this plot of thine
 Is comedy indeed, my mother!

MARGARET

[Who has followed him breathlessly, and falls on her knees.]

Heaven be praised!

Charles takes his sceptre, Charles will yet be King.
 Navarre is saved, is saved!

CATHERINE

[Going up to her.]

You know his hiding-place?

Where is he, where?

MARGARET

I know——

CATHERINE

[Threatening her with a dagger.]

Tell me, or else I'll kill you! In the Louvre?

Where, then?

MARGARET

Your hands may find him. I will not betray!

Enter NAVARRE from the side door.

NAVARRE

Navarre is here. He will protect his wife.
Release her, Queen, and turn thy steel on me !

CATHERINE

What, in my daughter's bedroom ? Treason ! Treason !
[*To the Guards.*]
Arrest them both !

CHARLES

Stay ! Hither, officer !
[*To CATHERINE.*] Your time is over. [*To OFFICER.*]
Hasten to the troops,
Show them my seal ! I bid the slaughter cease !

CATHERINE

Who dares repeal my order ?

CHARLES

[*With dignity.*] I, the King !

ACT IV

Act IV SCENE I.—*In the QUEEN'S room. CATHERINE, CHARLES IX., ANJOU, ALENÇON, seated round a table.*

CATHERINE

And why compel a Valois by force to occupy a throne which he despises ?

CHARLES

Well, I might answer, because I shall thus uphold the honour of my race in securing the Polish realm. I might say *Ventre St. Gris* !—like our good Harry, the Bourbon King—and tell you that such is my will.

ANJOU

Poles, too ! Is a Valois, a knight of France, to be sent among wolves, to learn how to breed horses in the marshes ? God's blood !

CHARLES

Take your courtly state with you from Paris. You know you love the camp. In this country, brother Anjou, there is nothing left to fight ; our heretics, thanks to our mother, have been murdered long ago ; but there you will find on your borders crowds, doubtless, of heathen folk. Try your skill on them.

ALENÇON

If he won't, I will. Give me a crown. So long as it is made of gold, what care I what my subjects are called ? I will play cards and pocket my taxes——

CHARLES

Silence, Alençon. This is a conference of men, not blockheads. You are not permitted to have a voice.

ALENÇON

As usual!

CHARLES

[*Pushes his chair back.*] I close the conference. You have tried the patience of a brother long enough; I warn you not to tempt the anger of a king! [*Exit.*]

CATHERINE

Go and play cards, Alençon.

ALENÇON

Yes, mother.

[*Exit.*]

ANJOU

I will *not* go to Poland!

CATHERINE

You *will* go to Poland, if your mother bids you.

ANJOU

You? Have you any wish to accompany me?

CATHERINE

I have a wish to see you on Charles's throne within the year.

ANJOU

I wish that myself.

CATHERINE

Listen to me, Henry. The King, so far as I can see, will not live till the year's end—he is weak and diseased alike in body and in soul. The rest is in my hands. Now go.

Act IV

ANJOU

A year? It may be so. Then shall I sleep all the softer in the Louvre. To get at the kernel one must needs bite through the shell. [Exit.]

CATHERINE

[Alone.] Not yet, not yet—my power has not yet ceased. Not yet, King Charles!

Rings a bell. A Chamberlain enters.

The Princess Margaret. [Exit Chamberlain.]
I needs must know how they get on together,
The husband and the wife. Can they be friends?
Will *she* be in her husband's room to-night?

Enter MARGARET, dressed in black.

CATHERINE

Are we in mourning in the Court, Princess?

MARGARET

Yes, we, the country, the wide world and God.
My presence was required, your Majesty?

CATHERINE

"Required"? "Your Majesty"? I asked to see
My daughter, merely.

MARGARET

Not to seek her good,
As formerly, I hope? Oh! never, never more!
[Comes nearer.]
There is no blessing on your sleep. You wake
To curse the new-born day. Confess it all!

You hide it from the world, but Heaven's eye
Can find it out. The sword of Heaven's vengeance
Hangs o'er your head ; you see it—and you tremble !

CATHERINE

I stand condemned—I cannot tell you why—
Ask me no questions, for my mouth is sealed.
I wait my sentence from the only lips
Which dare to tell the truth. Give me no love,
For love is agony. Come, daughter, come,
Call your whole heart of loathing to your lips,
And let me taste the rapture of your hate
In ample measure—let me be condemned.
Lies to the priest, but only truth to you ;
I will confess it all, and on my knees
Ask for your absolution. [*Falls on her knees.*

MARGARET

What is this ?

Is everlasting Nature in revolt ?
My mother on her knees ! Oh, if my words
Can free you from the chain of reckless sin,
Repent—repent——

CATHERINE

[*Recovering herself.*] Nay, daughter——

MARGARET

Feel remorse—

Oh, tell me that you feel at least remorse !
'Twas for our sins Christ came into the world,
And every man, and not the priest alone,
May grant his brother absolution.

CATHERINE

Stay,

I was but faint—a momentary spasm,
Mere woman's weakness.

Act IV

MARGARET

Nothing more than that ?

CATHERINE

Come, child, no more ! We'll talk of other matters.

MARGARET

No more than that ?

CATHERINE

I seek your happiness !

MARGARET

My happiness, you say ? Deck me with gold,
Place on my head a dozen queenly crowns,
You can no more—and it is all too little.
There is but one soil whence the flower can grow
Of perfect happiness—a heart at peace
With its own self and God.

CATHERINE

If we can loose
What God hath never joined, a loveless marriage,
Can that be mortal error ?

MARGARET

Ah, the old creed,
The fatal creed of Rome ! I pray thee, speak.
Is it arranged that for the good of France
My fortunes from Navarre are severed ? Speak !

CATHERINE

Not from the land of Bèarn and Navarre,
But from a heretic's side. The Pope of Rome
Gives his consent.

MARGARET

'Twere better he had willed
That such an union should have ne'er been made.
Yet—'twas God's will.

CATHERINE

And Guise hath asked thy hand!

MARGARET

Guise? No, I hate him!

CATHERINE

Hate him? What, so soon?

And yet I heard the whisper of a story—

MARGARET

I pray thee, mother, cease; mayhap the cause
Of all my hatred is this selfsame story;
Who knows a woman's heart? No more of Guise!

CATHERINE

So then you love Navarre?

MARGARET

My lot is plain—

In all that he commands, through joy and pain,
Through sickness and through health, I cleave to Henry!

CATHERINE

Turning away.] She gets beyond me, like her wilful
brother. [*Watching her narrowly.*

Your husband waits to-night—the guards so tell me—
A lady in his rooms—

MARGARET

Angrily breaking out.] What's that to me?
And so, good night!

CATHERINE

The guards well know the lady!

MARGARET

And if they do, my mother knows the reason.
I pray you let me go, before you stain
Your lips by mentioning her name—good night!

Act IV

CATHERINE

[*Quickly, forgetting herself.*] Then 'tis not you? 'Tis true you never visit Your husband's chamber?

MARGARET

[*Suddenly attentive.*] If you needs must know it, I will admit I've never done so yet!

CATHERINE

Sweet child—I'm glad of it. It is not you! That peace and friendship is restored with Henry Is truly welcome news. To-day I go With all my Court to pay my solemn vows Before the altar of the Innocents. You will come with me? No? Well, as you will. [Exit.]

MARGARET

[*After a restless pause.*] What does she mean by this? I would I knew! Was there no note of triumph when she heard I go not to his rooms? Is there a plot New-hatched against my husband's peace—and mine? For Catherine's hatred, when it's once aflame, Knows neither pause nor end! What shall I do? I'll warn my husband of the coming danger. Alive or dead, my place is by his side! [Exit.]

SCENE 2.—*Ante-chamber to QUEEN'S Room.*

Enter FONTANGES.

FONTANGES

An urgent message from Her Majesty? The Queen expects me here? What is her need of me? She is not wont to be so kind.

Enter CATHERINE.

CATHERINE

Marquise, do me a kindness as you happen to be here ? Write me three lines, Marquise. Sit down and write : "Sire, grant me the favour to receive in your rooms to-night a lady, who, needing protection, would fain speak with you, not as a king, but as a man of honour."

FONTANGES

[*Aside.*] My God ! What can this mean ? Her eyes are glittering like a tiger's on the spring !

CATHERINE

Address the letter : "His Majesty the King of Navarre."
[*Aside.*] A feeling of gallantry—the love of adventure—that's the best bait !

FONTANGES

[*Aside.*] Some danger threatens him. How can I warn him ?

CATHERINE

Fontanges, I am obliged to you. Return to your room, and—let us have roses on your cheeks to-morrow !
[FONTANGES *exit* R. CATHERINE *goes* L., *and calls.*]
Officer of the guard !

An Officer enters, L.

The Marquise of Fontanges is put under strict arrest until further orders. [*Exit Officer. Pushing open a side door L. U. E.*] Ruggieri !

Enter RUGGIERI.

CATHERINE

The tapers ?

Act IV

RUGGIERI

Madam, they are ready.

CATHERINE

You have tested them ?

RUGGIERI

Madam, I have.

CATHERINE

You have the keys of all the turret-rooms in the Louvre. Navarre is gone falconing to St. Denis, we hear. Go and put the tapers in the brackets in his room, and then come back.

[Exit RUGGIERI.]

[Alone.] Not yet—not yet—my power has not yet ceased.

Not yet, King Charles ! For thirty years I fought
 And conquered. Shall I, fighting with a boy,
 Yield up forthwith the victory in a day ?
 Fate in the stars may threaten me with ruin,
 I care not—I will tear her from her throne,
 And she shall be my slave. I fought the fight
 With thirty thousand Huguenots to the death,
 And shall I fail in conflict with their King ?
 I will not fail again. The hunter's craft
 Is best and surest when he snares the game
 In its own lair.

[Exit.]

SCENE 3.—In NAVARRE'S turret bed-chamber. The lights are burning in the candelabra with peculiar brightness.

NAVARRE

[Reading a letter.] A woman's hand ! the note perfumed
 with roses !

'Tis either the first blush of innocence,
 Or some old maid in trouble. Which is it ?
 Let's listen to the lady. What, to-night ?
 In my own room ? Oh, it must be the old one !

Lambkins have not the courage ! more's the pity !
 What does she say ? She "needs protection," eh ?
 Old maids are safe enough from man's pursuit ;
 It cannot be the old one ! Beautiful, of course,
 For ugliness, we know, protects itself !
 What shall I do ? I needs must see the lady ;—
 So speaks the young, rash devil of my folly.
 But there's another voice which whispers me,
 Shut fast thy door, let no one enter here !
 Ah, that's the whisper of my better self,
 The voice of secret love, the voice of her
 Whose name eclipses every other name,
 Whose light outshines all other lesser stars,
 Sun of my life, lord of my firmament,
 The sweetest name to swear by—Margaret !
 And shall I blush for shame, because my wife—
 My wife—no other—satisfies my soul ?
 I love her, as a guardian angel loves
 His sinful child, I love her with my tears,
 My faith, my reverence, my sincerest self ;
 Before her image I can kneel and pray
 In dumb, forgetful silence.—Hush ! who comes ?

Enter CHARLES, in night attire.

King Charles, so late ?

CHARLES

Late—is it very late ?

Are you alone ?

NAVARRE

Well, for the moment, Sire,
 I am alone. What drives you from your couch ?

CHARLES

Nettles and briars, Henry, nettles and briars !
 They sting, they burn, they blister. Oh, for sleep !

Act IV If I could only sleep ! There in my room,
 Pale ghosts are always flitting. On the walls
 They move in slow procession to and fro,
 Pale, bloodless, ghastly phantoms ; as they pass
 Each turns its eyeless socket on my face—
 Huguenots, and Huguenots, and Huguenots—
 Ten thousand ghosts, and ever more and more !

NAVARRE

Poor, troubled King !

CHARLES

We will change rooms, my Harry,
 Or I will sleep near you. No ghosts come here.
 If I could only banish that one face
 So mild and gentle, with the snow-white hair,
 Martyred Coligni, who will stand and smile—
 If only he would frown !—and strive to speak,
 Save that some awful fetters chain his tongue—
 Oh, it is frightful !

NAVARRE

'Tis thy mother, Sire,
 To whom Heaven looks for vengeance, not thyself.
 Nay, but take courage, steel thy fainting nerves,
 Look Nature in the face ! They'll come no more,
 These foolish ghosts ! See, we will range the woods
 After the deer to-morrow ; or, if you will,
 Dressed like the Caliph in the tale, we'll visit
 Each street and alley, enter the rooms
 And climb the balconies—as chance may lead.
 Come—let us bury all this royal state
 In sport, or feast, or idle merriment !

CHARLES

By Denis, so we will ! Methinks we'll have
 Some famous days together. You're the man
 To doctor my weak soul. But listen, Harry.
 Henceforth, we'll sleep together. In this room

I feel so strangely sleepy, for the air
Is free from angry ghosts. Yes, I will sleep !

NAVARRE

So be it ! While you sleep here in my room,
I will pursue your ghosts in yours, and see
What stuff they're made of. Never fear for me.
'Tis in your brain they gibber—not in mine !
What papers have you, brother ?

CHARLES

My last will !

NAVARRE

What last, already—ere the first be signed !

CHARLES

[*Gloomily.*] The first may be the last. 'Twill make
them stare !

NAVARRE

Stare ? Who ?

CHARLES

My brothers ! Catherine ! The world !
My cousin, answer me,
What would you do if you were King of France ?

NAVARRE

I'd put a fowl each Sunday, *Ventre St. Gris* !
Into the dish of each good citizen.

CHARLES

What, heretics too ?

NAVARRE

What is a heretic, Sire ?

CHARLES

Why, you, yourself, God help you ! Better change
Your faith, good Harry, or you will be damned.

Act IV

NAVARRE

That's like enough, for sundry lies I told,
Whereby I made a maiden's heart beat faster—
But not because I will not go to Mass !
No more of that, I pray you. Now, good night ;
The air, methinks, is somewhat sultry here.
Ah, by the way, should any ghost appear——

CHARLES

What's that you say ?

NAVARRE

Nay, do not be alarmed.
The kind I mean have human flesh and blood.
And if she comes, I pray you, press her hand ;
I warrant she'll be frightened more than you !

CHARLES

[*Looking up with a sad smile.*] What, Margaret, is it ?
Make her happy, Harry.
Be happy both ; had I the power to bless,
Be sure I'd wish you happiness for ever ;

NAVARRE

[*Who has turned away.*] My God, if it were she ! but that's
absurd.
I will not so beguile my heart. Good night.
You'll tell me who it is to-morrow, Charles ;
To-night, I'm not at home. Her letter bore
No signature. Sleep peacefully, my King.
I go to fill my lungs with the night air
Upon the tower. May all good angels watch
Thy peaceful sleep !

CHARLES

Sleep—sleep !

NAVARRE

Once more, good night !

CHARLES

Good night ! [NAVARRE *exit*.
 It is a comedy ! For years they've whispered,
 Made all their plots, and spilt some human blood.
 Now, with a pen stroke, he whom ne'er they've asked
 Opinion from, or thought about at all,
 Brings—with a pen stroke—the whole house of cards
 In headlong ruin. 'Tis true comedy ! [Wildly.
 If I have nothing else to will away,
 I have the crown.

Enter MARGARET, in night attire.

MARGARET

My brother ?

CHARLES

Margaret ?

MARGARET

And Henry—where—

Where is my husband ?

CHARLES

And are *you* the one—

The lady seeking him ?

MARGARET

I seek him for——

CHARLES

Dost love him, Margaret ? Is it love at last ?

MARGARET

Why ask me ?

CHARLES

Why—because it gives me joy
 To see two happy and united hearts.
 Mayhap I ne'er shall see the like again !

Act IV You ask for Henry—well, he went away,
 Because the loving missive lacked a name.
 Had it borne yours, I think he would have stayed.
 Why, Margot—how you blush and droop your eyes
 Shame-facéd to the ground as though you were
 A callow girl enamoured of a boy !
 You are in love !

MARGARET

Nay, jest not, brother mine,
 This is no time for jests—'tis deadly earnest !
 I came to warn my husband.

CHARLES

Danger is't ?
 What danger ? Whence ? Where stands the peril ?

MARGARET

Only this I know,
 My husband's life is threatened in this room.
 I came to share what peril may befall
 Close by his side.

CHARLES

True wife, true yoke-fellow !
 Still I am here, and here I shall remain,
 I am the King—what if we waited here ?
 Ay, that were wise—I think we will remain.
 What was I saying ? Why, the air is dense,
 As Harry said, it makes the brain spin round—
 We two will wait and see this lady come,
 This pretty dame who claims to visit Harry,
 And catch her in the act with all the proofs
 Of villainy upon her. By the Cross,
 I'll send her to some far-off lonely tower
 Hard by the ocean's marge, where she shall hear
 Naught but the billows' melancholy plaint
 Beating their life out on a desolate shore.

MARGARET

I, too, will stay with thee and see what comes.

CHARLES

Right, sister mine—we twain will sit and watch.
 Come, nestle here, and fold my mantle close
 Around you, as I twine you with my arms.
 I am the mother-bird who calls her chicks
 Under her wings as soon as night-time comes—
 Night with its unknown perils and alarms.
 And I will shield you from the birds of prey
 Who spy upon your loneliness and vex
 Within your heart the heaven of your love.
 What was that mournful song we used to sing
 Of kingly lives, so anguish-fraught and drear,
 So sweetly sad, so rich in piteous tears ?

[Chants in low voice to soft orchestral music.]

As children in the vale where Cluny lies
 We laughed for nothing : now in royal state,
 Here in this Louvre, with sorrow-laden eyes,
 We weep at every turn and trick of fate !

MARGARET

We played with pebbles once and sang for joy,
 But now our jewels are all wet with tears !
 Gold was our sunshine—gold without alloy :
 How black our night is, girt with royal fears !

CHARLES

At eve we sighed, because the light was done,—
 The happy light which gave us time to play ;
 But now we dread the rising of the sun,
 The dawning of some new and tragic day !

MARGARET

No royal pomp, no guarded palace lends
 The painless peace we fain would make
 our own.

Act IV

CHARLES

A hungry beggar may have troops of friends.

MARGARET

But we are kings, and therefore all alone !

CHARLES

How shall we end our chant of kings
forlorn ?

MARGARET

I end it thus : " Would God, we'd ne'er
been born ! "

CHARLES

[*Repeats.*] " Would God we'd ne'er been born ! "

[*After a short pause.*] Is music sounding here ? No, all
is peace.

And yet what roar of cataracts is this
Which break in thunder from the mountain sides ?
Oh, for some Arctic sea, some polar stream
To cool this burning brow ! I melt in fire !
How goes it with you, sister ?

MARGARET

Well, indeed.

I sit alone within a deep green wood,
And wait and wait until my consort comes,
The noble quarry whom my soul desires.
Then will I spring upon his neck and hold
Him close, a willing prisoner in these arms.
I knew a song of royal children once—
Ah ! if my head would cease its throbbing pain !

[*Pause.*][*Pause.*]

CHARLES

[*Springing up with clenched hands.*] Blood, blood, my
sweat is blood—the Huguenots' blood !
See the great drops which trickle from my hands,
How ruby red they shine ! Is there no room
Untenanted by ghosts where I can stay ?

Ghosts? No—a sick man's fancy! 'Tis the air,
 The poisoned air that kills. Rise, sister, rise,
 The danger that we waited for has come—
 We are betrayed. Where stands the enemy?

[He reaches out wildly with a sword which he has seized.]

Not palpable to touch, unheard, unfelt—
 Nay, this is devil's work. *[Throws it away and gasps down to the front of the stage.]* I cannot breathe.

The air, the air is poisoned. Sister, rise,
 Fly if you can. The mother's festering breath
 Is wafted through the room. I pray you rise!

[He has with difficulty dragged himself to her, and props up her drooping head, bending over her.]

Foam on her lips! A cold sweat on her brow!
 Pray Heaven, 'tis not too late! Oh, for one gleam—
 One little gleam of thought to help me now,
 Just the bare remnant of my consciousness.

[His eyes are fixed on the candelabra.]

Where have I seen such tapers? Eddying rings
 Of vapour rise and curl— *[Steps nearer and looks at the ground.]* The ground is strewn

With glittering points of poison-laden dust.
 Help! Murder! Help! The very air is death;
 I drink in death in gasps of labouring breath.

This then was Henry's doom! *[Seizes the bell and rings continuously.]* Oh! that this bell

Might call all Paris to this treachery!

[Pages and Gentlemen and Ladies of the Chamber hurry in with lights.]

Quick! doors and windows open, take these lights away;
 Let the sweet air of night into the room.

[The Pages change the candles and go out with the old ones.]

MARGARET

[Groaning to herself.]

The bells ring out the marriage peal,
 Why doth the bridegroom tarry?

Act IV

CHARLES

Where are the women ?

Quick, give the Princess air !

MARGARET

[Singing.]

Where is the bride her vows to seal ?

Where is the priest to marry ?

Ah !—my mother did it all. God rest her soul !

[Is led to the window. The Women attend to her.]

CHARLES

Come to me.

[Two Gentlemen that remain behind support him.]

Now, God of justice, now I pray thee, strengthen

This nerveless hand of mine to give the stroke,

The final stroke which seals this testament.

In Heaven's stead I stand to show the world

Eternal justice lives. Doom to the Valois :

That is the sacred ordinance of Heaven.

Open this will. The name alone remains

Unsigned. [Writes.] 'Tis done. Go forth and summon
here,

Tear him from bed if need be, our State Councillor.

Bid him come quick to execute this deed.

[Exit a Chamberlain.]

So—all the rest is hardly worth a smile.

Now comes the end.

[Sinks on a chair.]

Enter CATHERINE with Pages, and from the other side GUISE,
Guards, etc.

CATHERINE

What is all this ? What noise disturbs our sleep ?

You in this room, and where is—— Is not this

The turret-room of Henry of Navarre ?

CHARLES

Ah! Thou unholy agent of revenge,
 If one were blind and deaf, one then might think
 'Twas all mischance; but God—believe me, mother—
 Does not permit such trafficking with Heaven.

GUISE

What is the matter, Charles?

CHARLES

Nay, ask of her [*pointing to CATHERINE*],
 If she will speak. Call Henry of Navarre.

CATHERINE

Nay, call a priest.

CHARLES

Call Henry of Navarre.

GUISE

See, here he comes.

Enter NAVARRE. He clasps MARGARET in his arms.

NAVARRE

Margot—my own—I find you then at last,
 My love, my bride! Nay, you are ill and pale,
 You draw your breath in slow and painful gasps,
 What strange event is here?

CHARLES

Ah, there is much to say.
 See, mother, how your cursed plan has failed!
 Her love hath kept her safe! They are together—
 They're one, at last! So falls the house of Valois,
 And Bearn wins!

CATHERINE

Can this be Heaven's vengeance?

H

Act IV

CHARLES

[To NAVARRE.] Nay, leave her, brother mine, and bend
thine ear

Close to my mouth. I fain would speak a word,
A final word, ere death arrest my tongue.

I pray you, Henry, make the Church at peace.

Let each man, as he lives beneath thy rule,
Find his own path to Heaven.

Enter CHANCELLOR, Heralds, and Pages.

Nay, Queen Catherine,
Your day is past for ever. Chancellor, now.

CHANCELLOR

[*Reads.*] "In the name of God and by order of the
King! Herewith, with a sound mind, so may God help
us to everlasting peace, we appoint to the inheritance and
rule of our Kingdom Henry, the King of Navarre and
Bëarn——"

[CATHERINE *stands transfixed.*

CHARLES

[*Raises himself with a final effort.*] Greet the new King!
Greet Henry of Navarre!

[*Dies.* *The Herald breaks a staff with the words*
"Le Roi est mort, vive le Roi!" *The*
Guards salute.

Curtain.

KIT MARLOWE'S DEATH

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE, poet and dramatist.
SIR THOMAS WALSINGHAM, Marlowe's friend and patron.
THOMAS NASH, dramatist }
THOMAS LODGE, poet } friends of Marlowe.
EDWARD ALLEYN, actor }
HENRY CHETTLE, a literary man.
FRANCIS ARCHER, landlord of "Red Lion" Inn at Deptford.
NAN, Archer's housekeeper.

SCENE.—"Red Lion" Inn at Deptford.

* * The acting rights of this play are in the hands of Mr. George Alexander.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

KIT MARLOWE'S DEATH

SCENE.—“*Red Lion*” Inn at Deptford. Parlour with sanded floor. NAN discovered laying table and making preparations for a meal as the curtain rises. “Come live with me and be my love” is sung as a quartette behind stage. NAN laying table and bustling about while music is going on. She sighs from time to time, and goes finally to window and draws back curtain, looking out on a moonlit scene.

TIME.—Evening of June 1, 1593.

Enter FRANCIS ARCHER (*the landlord of the Inn*).

ARCHER

Why, how now, Nan, is everything ready for our guests? A noisy crew they will be, I warrant—ay, and a quarrelsome one before the night is out!

NAN

[*Sighing.*] Ay, Master Archer. [*She still looks out of window, and does not turn round.*]

ARCHER

Master Archer! Master Archer! How many times am I to tell thee, girl, that to thee I am not Master Archer, but plain Francis—Francis, an it please you, that loveth thee with as true and honest a love as ever man gave to a maid. Is it moonlight to-night, Nan?

NAN

Yes, Master Archer.

ARCHER

Master Archer again ! Why, sweet Nan, bonny Nan, know you not that moonlight is made for lovers ? [*coming close to her.*] And that thou and I are very like to be betrothed to-night ? [*She turns away and goes back to table ; he follows.*] Didst thou not promise, girl, that it should be even so ? Didst thou not swear to me that to-night, after the clock had struck midnight, thou wouldst give me a fair and straightforward answer, ay or nay ? Knowest thou not that since my late wife died (God rest her soul !) I have favoured no other maid, but only thee ? I grant you that my late venture was no profitable one. But thou, Nan, will make more than amends for all I have suffered ; and thy bright eye will clear my bosom of all the perilous stuff of anger and petulance which have harboured there these many years past. Shall it not be so, Nan ? Didst thou not make the promise I have said ?

NAN

Yes, Master Archer, I have promised ; but [*as he comes still nearer, and tries to take her hand*] after midnight, and not before.

ARCHER

Nay, Nan, I understand thee well enow. But thy coldness disconcerts me. Art thou coy, lass, with me, that hath loved thee these many months ; Art thou afraid of me, that would take thee to his breast, like a frightened and timorous bird ? Dost thou not know me, child ? [*He at last gets possession of her hand, but she still keeps her eyes turned away from him.*] Is it something else, Nan, that keeps thee from me ? [*fiercely.*] What is it ? Who is it ? Thou shalt tell me, Nan ; ay, even if I tear thy secret from out thy lips !

NAN

Nay, Master Archer ; I have naught to tell. Let me go. [*Bursts into tears.*]

ARCHER

Now, by all the saints in Heaven, I *will* know ! Who is it ? I ask thee again. It cannot be that one of the gentry hath spoken soft things in thine ear ? Thou wouldst never dare lift thine eyes so high. Who is it, girl ? [*roughly.*] Some simple swain, to whom thou hast plighted thy troth long ago, before thou becamest housekeeper in my service, and to whom thou yet feelest thyself bound ? God's blood, but I am worth more than so clumsy a hind ! No ? Who then ? Not one of these mad players and playwrights, who go over the whole face of the earth in paint and powder, cozening the face which Heaven hath given them into the likeness of knave or hero, God or devil ? Ah ! have I touched thee there ? Then was I a thousand times right in asking their worshipful vagrancies here, and watching their wild antics with thee. Which is it, Nan ? for God is my witness, know I will, and that soon. Is it that wild tragedy villain, Alleyn, who hath debased himself into all the sins of Tamburlaine—so they tell me—ay, and even hath given himself a false nose and red hair, and masqueraded as Barabas, a Jew of Malta ? or is it that whimpering Chettle ? or the cold, sneering Nash ? or—may God confound him—is it that handsome, careless, devil-may-care Kit Marlowe, with his saucy manners and his sparkling eyes, who hath taken the whole town by storm ? Nan, is it Kit ? God in Heaven, not Marlowe ! Speak, girl, speak !

NAN

[*With face averted, and frightened.*] Let me alone, Master Archer ; nay, but I will not be thus harried by thee ! Let me alone, I say ! Have I not promised thee that I will give thee my answer to-night ? Will not that content thee ?

ARCHER

Content me, no—nor any other man, who feeleth the devil's own jealousy within him, as I do. Tell me fairly and openly, Nan, is it Marlowe? [*with a change of manner.*] Thou wilt not be hard-hearted, Nan; thou wilt not be so unkind to one who hath loved thee, and would fain cherish thee all the years of thy life? Say, Nan, thou wilt tell me, wilt thou not?

NAN

[*Crying.*] Nay, nay, nay, I cannot; leave me go, leave me go, Master Archer. See, how thy rude hand hath hurt my wrist! Unmannerly!

ARCHER

Unmannerly, sayest thou? And what of thee, who hast led me on from week to week and from month to month with the ever-deferred promise that thou wilt be mine? Is that unmannerly? What of thyself, who hast played with so wanton a lightness on my heart's strings until, as thou knowest full well, I have no thought but of thee; and then, when the happiness of thy possession seemed to be at last within my reach, thou fliest off after some new fancy—some fresh young light-o'-love, no sooner seen than desired! Is that unmannerly? Heaven's truth! Speak not to me of unmannerliness, when thou canst thus throw off an old friend!

NAN

Indeed, indeed, Master Archer, thou knowest that I have always respected and—and—liked thee well enow.

ARCHER

[*Bitterly.*] Liked! Respected! And when some beggarly young scapegrace of an actor and playwright, some son of a cobbler, who hath already lamed himself in his wild riots on the stage, and earned a fame at "the Curtain" which should be the shame of honest men;

who hath disgraced the mother that bare him and the learned colleges which have brought him up; who is notorious for his quarrels and his cups, ay, and his mistresses; who——

NAN

[*Breaking in.*] Thou shalt not thus wrong Master Marlowe. I will not listen to thee. He hath ever been kind of heart and open of hand to all who have been in sorrow or in need. Why, only yester-even——

ARCHER

Ah! it is Marlowe, then! [*fiercely.*] 'Fore God, Nan, thou and he shall live to repent this! What, it is he then that hath caught this silly, fluttering bird—who hath taken all the gloss off thy butterfly wings! And I—well, I may go hang where and when it listeth me! But it shall not be so, Nan! I swear it on my oath! He shall never hold thee in his arms as I am holding thee now. [*Clasps her.*] This very night——

Enter LODGE, NASH, ALLEYN, CHETTLE, SIR THOMAS WALSINGHAM. NASH *holding a paper, over which they are all laughing immoderately, with the exception of* CHETTLE. ARCHER *leaves* NAN, *who escapes out of the room, and turning with a low bow——*

[*Exit* NAN.]

Your servant, gentlemen all!

LODGE

Good even, Master Francis. Servant, be it; and look you, we be thirsty souls; therefore serve us with some wine, and be quick about it; and we be hungry souls, look you, therefore serve us with that same supper which thou wottest of; and hurry thy legs about that too!

ARCHER

[*Obsequious.*] Certes, gentlemen. Your appetites and

your thirst shall not exceed my nimbleness. Ye shall be served with a supper which hath been these ten minutes awaiting you.

SIR THOMAS WALSINGHAM

Who was that comely wench, who so incontinently fled our coming? Methinks, if we are to be served by her hands, we shall not do amiss, please God.

ARCHER

It's my housekeeper, my lord.

SIR THOMAS

Housekeeper, villain! She is young enough to be thy daughter.

LODGE

[*Laughing.*] "Young enough and fair enough and free enough to—cheat thee!" Aha, Sir Thomas, thine eye is ever for the wenches! At thine age, too!

SIR THOMAS

Well, well, the supper—and thy housekeeper, Archer—especially the housekeeper! [*Exit* ARCHER.]

ALLEYN

And now for the dying will and testament, friend Nash. Out with it; let us all hear thee, and let those who have galled withers wince! I care not, I. But who would have thought our old friend Robin Greene would have made such an ending?

CHETTLE

[*Rubbing his hands.*] Ay, ay, he was a kindly man was Robin Greene. A kindly man and a thoughtful—a rare writer of plays and a rare critic of his friends!

LODGE

Peace, thou sallow-faced weasel, and let thy betters speak.

NASH

[*Reading from Greene's "Groatsworth of Wit Bought by a Million of Repentance."*] "To those gentlemen his quondam acquaintance that spend their wits in making playes, R. G. wisheth a better exercise, and wisdom to prevent his extremities."

LODGE

Poor friend Robin ! He died hard, so it is reported.

CHETTLE

Nay, gentlemen, peace. Let us hear him.

NASH

[*Reading.*] "If woeful experience may move you, gentlemen, to beware, or unheard-of wretchedness intreat you to take heed, I doubt not but you will look back with sorrow on your time past, and endeavour with repentance to spend that which is to come."

ALLEYN

Is not this brave ? A rare preacher ! say I.

NASH

[*Reading.*] "Wonder not (for with thee will I first begin), thou famous gracer of tragedians——"

ALLEYN

Kit Marlowe ! Kit Marlowe !

SIR THOMAS

'Twere best he speak no ill of Marlowe in my presence. What does the graceless villain say of Marlowe ?

CHETTLE

Peace, peace, gentlemen. I pray you listen.

NASH

[*Reading.*] "Why should thy excellent wit be so blinded that thou shouldst give no glory to the Giver? Is it pestilent Machiavellian policy that thou hast studied? O, peevish folly!" Nay, friends, is not this infamous? I will not sully my tongue with such dying venom. Hardly a year in his grave, and to leave such a legacy! I would that Kit were here to hear himself bespattered!

CHETTLE

Nay, but proceed, Master Nash. There is much sound wit and judgment in what is to come.

NASH

Proceed? Not I. Is it thou, thou white-faced loon, that hast given this pestilent rubbish to the world?

ALLEYN

Ay, Chettle, art thou the editor?

CHETTLE

Gentlemen, gentlemen, I pray you be just to me. I have all the time of my knowledge of books hindered, so far as it hath lain with me, the bitter inveighing against scholars, and how in that I have dealt I can sufficiently prove. As for this Marlowe, I am not acquainted with him, and I care not if I never be.

SIR THOMAS

Well, then, if thou carest to have a whole skin, the sooner thou departest the better for thee. Do I hear Kit's voice? [MARLOWE'S voice heard without, singing.

NASH

Ay, begone with thee, Chettle! If thou givest such rubbish as this to honest men, beware their resentment!

ALLEYN

Out with thee, thou knavish purveyor of malice !

[*As they threaten,* CHETTLE *slinks out* L.
From door R. NAN *comes in with tankards
and wine.* From door C. *enter* MARLOWE,
flushed, and as he comes in he sings :—

And saw you not my Nan to-day ?

My winsome maid have you not seen ?

My pretty Nan is gone away

To seek her love upon the green.

As he comes down he sees NAN, *and puts his
arm round her waist and draws her to him.*

ARCHER, *who has followed* NAN *with dishes,
sees the act.*

MARLOWE

[*Seating himself at table.*] Well, comrades, how goeth it
with you ? Be ye merry, and I will give you a stave.
But an ye be mournful, I am not of your company
[*looking after* NAN, *who has gone out, and sings*]—

My pretty Nan is gone away

To seek her love upon the green.

SIR THOMAS

Thou art come in time, friend Kit, for this varlet
Archer hath been like to upset the pasty on my lap, so
overjoyed is he at thy coming. [*To* ARCHER] Sirrah,
wilt thou put the dish down and be gone ? Come, thou
tragic histrio, Alleyn, repeat to him some of thy deep-
mouthed verses to frighten him !

ALLEYN

[*With tragedy air.*] “Holla, ye pampered jades of
Asia !” [*They all laugh.*]

MARLOWE

Nay, nay, Tom Nash loveth not “the drumming
decasyllabon,” eh, Tom ? “The swelling bombast of a

bragging blank verse," eh, Tom? But, my worthy sirs, though I see many cups, yet there is to my mind a miserable paucity of contents. Friend Archer, wilt thou not remove that sullen face of thine, and let thy Nan come in to replenish our emptiness?

[ARCHER goes out sullenly.]

SIR THOMAS

Who is this Nan, Kit?

MARLOWE

[Carelessly.] Nan? She is what Archer calls his house-keeper, is she not?

SIR THOMAS

Ay, ay, we know that well enough. But canst thou tell us no more of her than what we know already? Did not my ears catch some ribald lines which thou wert repeating in her honour, and did not my eyes see thy tender salutation?

MARLOWE

[Laughing.] Each one to his own! say I. Nay, in all seriousness, gentlemen, she is a small chit that hath much helped to relieve my dulness in this village while the plague is raging in the town. I did her, or her mother, some small kindness: I forget which it was, or what it was; and she hath in return done me the great kindness of living in Deptford, whereby I have something whereon to feast my weary eyes. [NAN comes in with more wine.] Hast thou not, Nan?

NAN

[Shyly.] I know not, Mr. Marlowe, what thou sayest.

MARLOWE

[As she fills his cup.] Well, Nan, thou shalt give my cup the benison of thy lips. Drink to me, lass. Nay, I insist. [She touches the cup with her lips; MARLOWE

drains it down.] 'Fore Heaven, 'tis nectar now. "A lass and a glass," saith the wise man. And now, Nan, go thy ways, my bonny girl; for we hard drinkers are not meet company for thee. Go thy ways, lass; go!
[*She goes out.*]

NASH

Confound thee, Kit; thou always hast the devil's own luck.

MARLOWE

Which is more than I can say for thee, Tom, when thou writest in the company of Robin Greene and decriest thy learned friends as "idiot art-masters"! [*The others laugh at NASH's expense.*] But what was the business over which ye all looked so grave as I entered? It was a thirsty business, I'll be bound, or all the cups would not have been so empty!

NASH

We were reading Greene's testament, wherein, to his shame, he hath said so many hard words of thee.

MARLOWE

So hast thou, Tom, in thy time, so hast thou! Nay, deny it not, man, nor think that it angereth me a jot. Dame Nature hath given me a tough hide.

SIR THOMAS

And a tender heart.

MARLOWE

That shall be as it may be. But read on, Nash, read on. I would fain have some savoury morsel wherewith to flavour my cup.

NASH

[*Reading.*] "Defer not till the last point of extremity"—he is speaking of thee, Kit—"for little knowest thou how in the end thou shalt be visited."

MARLOWE

Like enough! like enough! Unvisited, unwept for,
and alone! [*This in a half-aside, with almost a serious
air.*]

NASH

[*Continuing.*] “With thee I join young Juvenal, that
biting satirist. Sweet boy, might I advise thee, be
advised, and get not many enemies by bitter words.” He
must mean thee, Tom Lodge.

LODGE

No. Am I not a gentleman of Lincoln’s Inn, and a
Master of Arts?

MARLOWE

Ay, a better Master of Arts than thou art a Doctor of
Divinity! But he means not Tom Lodge, but Tom
Nash. Have we not all suffered from his biting
satires?

NASH

I care not, whether it be I or he. But here is a
worthier passage. Listen, sirs, and tell me whether even
poor crazy Robin Greene speaketh not sometimes to the
point [*reads*]: “There is an upstart crow, beautified with
our feathers, that supposes he is as well able to bombast
out a blank verse as the best of you, and being an abso-
lute Johannes-factotum, is in his own conceit the only
Shakescene in a country.” Aha, methinks he hath taken
off our young deer-stealer to a nicety!

SIR THOMAS

Ay, that is the proper sauce wherewith to serve so
eminent a gosling!

LODGE

Bravo, Robin! Thou canst be young Juvenal too,
when it liketh thee!

MARLOWE

[*Starting up.*] Now, 'fore Heaven, I think ye be too uncharitable! I care not what he saith of me or any of you, but no man shall speak thus in my presence of young Will Shakespeare.

SIR THOMAS

Why, Kit, they say he is like to be thy rival!

MARLOWE

Rival, sayest thou? Nay, mistake me not. He is not my rival, nor any man's. I tell ye all that when we are lying in our graves, there will be one man who will be living in men's mouths—Will Shakespeare! When men have forgotten the very names we bore, when all that we have written becomes like letters on the sand or the water—there is one name they will never forget—Will Shakespeare! Ye talk of me and of my mighty line; what is all that I have penned, weighed in the balances against Will Shakespeare? Why, gentlemen, he is but in the first blush of his spring, and mayhap none of us shall see his summer, but I tell ye that there are thoughts of his and words which he hath written which ring in my ears like the divinest music, which cross the dull and muddy air we breathe like lightning flashes of Heaven's own blinding radiance! I say nothing of the man himself, how gentle he is and how modest, compared to our noisy crew, and with how simple a life he is for ever rebuking our mad escapades; but if this speech be my last, I will bear testimony to the finest mind and purest genius that ever blest our English tongue with inimitable pearls and diamonds—ay, the one man who, if fate so will that our dear England be conquered by some foreign foe and sink into obscurity and nothingness, will for ever redeem our race and the common name we bear—because Will Shakespeare was an Englishman! [MARLOWE *sinks down on his seat.*]

[*A pause.*]

SIR THOMAS

Why, how now, Kit, this is tragedy indeed !

MARLOWE

[*Wearily.*] Ay, ay, mayhap I am something overwrought to-night. Give me more to drink. Is it true that men have sometimes a strange feeling that their end is nigh, and that all their work is over ? Pshaw, this is woman's weakness !

NASH

Come, come, Kit. Tell us of thyself. Hast thou been doing aught that is noteworthy ?

MARLOWE

[*Brightening.*] Something here and there, by fits and starts, as is my wont. Rememberest thou the tragedy of Dido and those young school-boy essays of mistranslating Virgil ? Well, Tom, there is work in that for thee. The work tires me somewhat. Wilt thou take it in hand ?

NASH

Ay, that I will, and welcome. Right proud am I to be thy helper.

ALLEYN

But hast thou nothing for me ? I would fain have something to study that is thine—some character to take the town, when this cursed plague is over. Hast thou no new Barabas ?

Thus like the sad-presaging raven that tolls
The sick man's passport in her hollow beak,
And in the shadow of the silent night
Doth shake contagion from her sable wings—

Hast thou nothing like that, now ?

MARLOWE

[*Smiling.*] Maybe I have, and thou, my Alleyn, shalt be my interpreter.

LODGE

What is it? May we know?

MARLOWE

What say ye, gentlemen, to a new character? A man who hath something in him of Tamburlaine, and here and there a likeness to thy friend [to ALLEYN] Barabas?

NASH

Perchance, too, there is a touch of Faustus?

MARLOWE

Nay, nay, there is only one Faustus!

ALLEYN

And his name, Kit, his name?

MARLOWE

Hebrew, sirs, Hebrew. The Hebrews have all the vices and the intelligence of our time. Nay, now I be- think me, I have made him a Moor.

ALLEYN

But his name, Kit, his name!

MARLOWE

Art thou not forward in thy haste? His name is Aaron. Wouldst thou hear somewhat of his speech? Well, give me a brimming cup to baptize my latest offspring. [*They pour out wine in his cup, which he swallows.*] Again, lads, again. Aaron is a name somewhat dry in the mouth, methinks. [MARLOWE pulls a MS. out of his pocket and reads from the play of "Titus Andronicus."]

[NAN steals in and listens by the door.]

As when the golden sun salutes the morn,
And having gilt the ocean with his beams,
Gallops the zodiac in his glistering coach
And overlooks the highest-peering hills——

—nay, it is sorry stuff.

NASH

Marlowe's line, nathless.

ALLEYN

More, more, I pray thee.

MARLOWE

[*Turns over a few pages, and reads*]—

Madam, though Venus govern your desires,
 Saturn is dominator over mine ;
 What signifies my deadly-standing eye,
 My silence and my cloudy melancholy ?
 My fleece of woolly hair that now uncurls
 Even as an adder, when she doth unroll
 To do some fatal execution ?
 Vengeance is in my heart, death in my hand,
 Blood and revenge are hammering in my head.

LODGE

“Deadly-standing eye” is good.

MARLOWE

Good, quotha ? Nay, I am sick of it. Oh, that I had the grace of Will Shakespeare to fashion my hard verses to smoothest melody ! I care not if I never finish it. [*Seeing NAN, who has been listening with rapt attention.*] Ah, Nan, art thou there ? Leave me, gentlemen, I pray you. I fear I am not so lightsome in my heart as you would desire. Leave me.

NASH

Leave you ? Not I.

ALLEYN

Nor I.

MARLOWE

I pray you, do.

SIR THOMAS

What ! shall we humour him ? Then give us thy new play to amuse ourselves withal. [*MARLOWE gives his MS.*]

But we will return anon, Kit. Thou graceless villain, are we to leave thee all the sweets? Well, gentlemen, come.

[*Exeunt* SIR THOMAS, NASH, LODGE, and ALLEYN. MARLOWE is left with NAN.]

MARLOWE

Come hither, sweet. Hast thou been here all the time, and I saw thee not?

NAN

Nay, I only came when I heard the sound of thy voice. Thou knowest that it rings like music in my ears.

MARLOWE

A harsh note, Nan, believe me. There is no music in my composition. Some force, maybe, and fervour, some gift of high-sounding words which these lads, that are my friends, do not attain unto. But no music, Nan—I would there were!—no unearthly melody like that which haunts the least words of Will Shakespeare. But why talk I thus to thee? Come nearer and comfort me, lass, for I feel strangely sick at heart.

NAN

Art thou ill, dear master?

MARLOWE

Ill? No, only moody and dispirited. No matter, let us drink.

NAN

No, no [*putting away his glass*]. I do not like thee in thy company vein. I like thee by thyself, as when we sometimes walk through the great solemn woods, and see the shadows of the tall trees on the grass, and hear the birds sing in the meadows. Ah, thou hast been a kind friend to me!

MARLOWE

No, lass, no. 'Tis thou rather that has been kind to

me. See here, sweet, I am but young in years. What is my age? 'Tis barely thirty, but methinks I have lived too long. I have seen too much, or else I have lived through my allotted space too fast. Whatever it be, I am all awearied of the world, and thy Kit Marlowe is an old man before his time. My life hath withered up my heart.

NAN

Nay, now, I know that thou speakest falsely. Hast thou no heart, thinkest thou, when thou canst turn out of thy way to be kind to a poor country lass like me? When thou savedst my mother's life with thy timely gifts and still more kindly words, dost think thou hadst no heart? Ah, Master Marlowe, I know thee better.

MARLOWE

No more of that, I pray you. Come, let us be merry, and talk of love, and laugh at death and old age. Thou art a bonny child, Nan, and 'fore Heaven I love thee well! [*Draws her to him and kisses her.*] Drink, lass, drink! Life is all glorious when we drink!

NAN

When dost thou go away?

MARLOWE

What talk is this of going away? Why, Nan, have I infected thee with my dull spirits? Maybe, I shall never go away.

NAN

What do you mean?

MARLOWE

God's truth, I know not. What a strange life is this of ours, when ever and anon there come visitings from another world—when in the heyday of life there is the sudden shadow cast across our path— Why do I talk thus to thee? Drink, girl, drink!

NAN

Art thou ill ?

MARLOWE

[*Musing.*] Is there another world ? And is all that we see and feel and touch the mere semblance of a dream which shall roll away, and leave us bare and naked before some dread Reality ?—I had a strange vision last night.

NAN

Tell me, kind master. I would fain know all thy thoughts.

MARLOWE

I believe thou wouldst, for I have ever found in thee, although that thou art but a village child, some touch of poesy. Ay, let me tell thee. But let me feel thy warm touch about my face ; let me link thy arms about me. [*He puts her arms round his neck, she only half resisting.*] Listen, child. Methought I was in some large plain, and before me there was a mountain which bounded the horizon, and it seemed that I must needs climb the ascent. And though the way was steep, and I could see others fainting by my side, to me it was an easy and delightful task to climb the lower bases of the mountain. And then, as I rose, I found that the mountain divided itself into twin peaks—one of them all rocky and precipitous, and the other slowly rising from the day into some wondrous region of cloud and mist. And a voice said, "Choose which thou wilt climb." And I said to myself, "Let me choose the steep and arduous peak ; the other only requireth patience, and surely all men can attain to it." [*Putting her from him and rising.*] So I climbed up the precipices, and my foot was light and my hands were strong : nor could aught prevent my eager haste, till I placed myself at last on the cold, stony top of the hill I had chosen. And when I laid myself down to rest, of a sudden there was thunder, and I heard a pealing cry, "Live thou on thy peak alone." And the

clouds that rested on the other summit were swept aside for a moment, and I saw that it was immeasurably higher than mine. And again the awful voice, "Thou hast chosen ill."—Nay, child, I have frightened thee with my fancies.

NAN

[*Slowly*]. When dost thou go away ?

MARLOWE

Again that question ? Why, Nan, how unkind thou art to me in thus harping upon my going. When do I go away ? Mayhap in a month, or a day, or never. Dost thou love me, lass ?

NAN

Oh, do not ask !

MARLOWE

But thou must say, lass—thou must say. Dost thou love me ?

NAN

[*Shyly*]. Thou knowest that I do. Hast thou not been all kindness and tenderness to me ?

MARLOWE

I know not. Maybe I have been unkind, for in certain ways, methinks, I have deceived thee. I would not have thee mistake me, Nan. Think not that love—the mere love of man for maid—can ever sway my heart. It is not so ; I have a love within me—a passionate love, which naught can assuage ; but it is not an earthly love. They call me 'atheist,' do they not ?

NAN

Ay, sir ; I have heard so.

MARLOWE

Atheist ; ay, so says Richard Bame. But it is not true—at least, not true save in their narrow sense. I have an

unearthly love about me for something to which I can give no name. It is a haunting passion, an aspiration for that which hath never been, nor ever yet will be : a mad feverish thirst for the grand, the divine, the impossible. There is for ever hovering in my restless head—

One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least
Which into words no virtue can digest.

Why—[*laughing*—]—what a sorry knave am I, that must needs quote my own words, like some poor prating parrot !
Dost love me, Nan ?

NAN

I love thee.

MARLOWE

Love me not, love me not ! I only love my art.

NAN

Ah—but—nay, why shouldst thou care what my lot may be ?

MARLOWE

What is thy lot, Nan ?

NAN

I have promised Francis Archer that I will marry him.

MARLOWE

Marry Francis Archer ? What, hast thou promised ? No, 'fore God, thou shalt not marry him ; thou shalt marry me. S'blood, I am sick of the town life. I will stay here with thee. Wilt thou marry me, Nan ?

NAN

Ah—mock me not !

MARLOWE

Mock thee ? not I ! Marry Francis Archer ? Never ! Never ! Come, marry thee I will, willy nilly. When shall it be ? To-morrow ? To-night ? [*getting excited.*]

In sober truth, I will leave the world and live with thee.
I will marry thee now. Where is the priest?

NAN

Nay, thou knowest that there is no priest here.

MARLOWE

No priest? Nay, the ceremony shall be now. [*Going to the door, wildly.*] Here, Nash, Lodge, Alleyn, come in, all of you. [*They enter.*] Come in, come in and be my witnesses in a solemn act of betrothal!

NASH

What mad prank is this?

MARLOWE

Nay, I am in sober earnest, or I shall be with one more cup of wine. Come and be my witnesses.

LODGE

"Is this the face that launched a thousand ships"? [*pointing to NAN.*]

MARLOWE

Ay, and a pretty one, too! Come, thou tragedy-monger, Ned Alleyn, and be my priest.

ALLEYN

Thy priest, Kit?

MARLOWE

Ay, art thou not an actor?—which in good high-sounding Greek means a hypocrite. Priest, actor, hypocrite, 'tis all one! Come, marry us. [*He seizes NAN and forces her down on her knees with himself in front of ALLEYN, the others laughing.*]

Enter ARCHER. He stops appalled, then rushes forward.

ARCHER

Sirs, sirs, what mean ye by this foolery? Let the girl go!

NASH

Why, how now, thou moody knave! Nay, we must have no brawlers in church. [*Seizes him, and attempts to push him to the door. They struggle.*]

MARLOWE

Thou insolent varlet! What, thou art going to marry Nan, art thou? Nay, let me get at him [*to LODGE and ALLEYN, who stop and attempt to keep him back*]. Nay, I will turn him out of doors. 'Fore Heaven, I will murder him! Let me get at him, the drunken fool!

[*MARLOWE, struggling with LODGE and ALLEYN, gets at last to NASH, who is struggling with ARCHER. As they struggle the table is overturned, and ARCHER seizes a knife on the floor, which has been upset from the table. As MARLOWE at last reaches him, throwing off his friends, ARCHER stabs MARLOWE to the heart.*]

ARCHER

Take that, thou vile seducer!

[*MARLOWE secures the knife after a struggle, and holds it over ARCHER, then sinks back, and the knife falls on the floor. The others rush up to him, and ARCHER escapes from the room.*]

ALLEYN

Kit, Kit, look up, lad. Thou art not hurt?

MARLOWE

Hurt? Ay, past surgery. Nan, art thou there?

[*She comes forward, trembling, and lifts his head on her knee.*]
Lend me thy kerchief, lass, to stanch this bleeding. It is draining my life. Look cheerily, lass, 'tis all one; and if it is not to-day, then it will be to-morrow. Nay, nay, weep not, child. Thou knowest I would have married thee?

NAN

Ay, my dear lord [*weeping*].

MARLOWE

Well, then, I am thy husband. Fare thee well! Come, come, gentlemen, eye me not so sadly. Ye will grieve, it may be, for a time, and anon ye will be merry again. 'Tis all one.

LODGE

Let some one go and arrest the murderer.

MARLOWE

Nay, let him go. He thought I had wronged him.

ALLEYN

Oh, Kit, Kit! Thou wilt not die and leave us?

MARLOWE

Needs must, sirs, when fate calls. Poor Kit Marlowe! 'Tis a sorry ending to a sorry life! Well, it would have come hereafter. "O water, gentle friends, to cool my thirst!" [*His head sinks down.*]

NASH

Is he gone? [*They press some water to his lips.*]

MARLOWE

Nay, there is yet a flicker ere the light goes out. But ah, my plays, my plays! When comes another Tamburlaine? Will men write another "Faustus"? And my "Hero and Leander"! I pray ye ask George Chap-

man to end it for me; but when? when? And men will judge me only by what I have written. Poor, poor Kit Marlowe! [*His head sinks again.*]

ALLEYN

Nay, Kit, thy memory shall be dear to us.

MARLOWE

[*Starting up.*] Is it e'en so? "Nay, nay, come not, Lucifer! See where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!" Ah, ah! [*shrieks*]. [*Recovering.*] Nay, friends, look not so terrified. It is but Faustus that speaks. Will they remember me, think you, in the after days? Will they speak kindly of poor, wild Kit Marlowe? "Weep not for Mortimer, that scorns the world, and as a traveller goes to discover countries yet unknown." Oh, God! God! will death never come? I am but what I am—a poor froward boy, who hath shipwrecked his life on the sharp rocks of circumstances and fate. The fool hath said in his heart—— [*Dies.*]

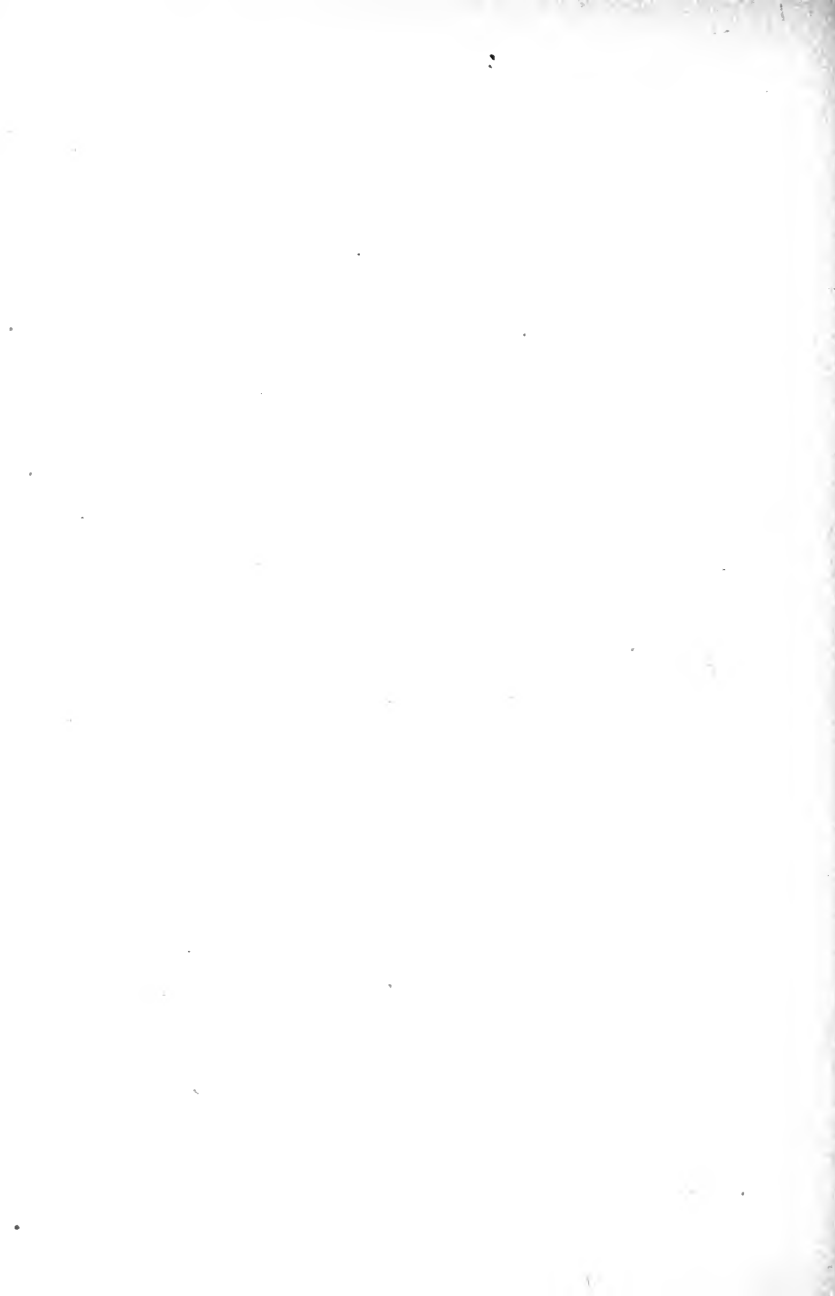
ALLEYN

[*Solemnly*]—

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
And burnéd is Apollo's laurel bough.

[*"Come, live with me," sung or played softly, as the curtain descends.*]

Slow Curtain.



GASTON BONNIER

OR

TIME'S REVENGES

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

GASTON BONNIER, a well-to-do French farmer.

PIERRE BONNIER, his son.

LE PETIT GASTON, his grandson.

MARCEL, a soldier.

HORTENSE, secretly married to Pierre.

MARTHE, housekeeper to Gaston Bonnier.

ACT I

INTERIOR OF GASTON BONNIER'S PARLOUR, 1854.

ACT II

INTERIOR OF GASTON BONNIER'S PARLOUR (after sixteen years),
1870.

* * * Written for and performed by Professor Hubert von Herkomer,
R.A., at his theatre at Bushey.

GASTON BONNIER

OR

TIME'S REVENGES

ACT I

SCENE.—*Parlour of a farmer's house in France, early morning.* Act I

[*As curtain ascends, chorus of harvest-song is sung. The song continues in a subdued key through all the opening sentences of the dialogue.*]

Enter MARTHE.

MARTHE

[*Who draws aside the curtains and opens the windows.*]
Sunshine and music. A lovely morning! There could not be a finer day for the harvest festival, and no one will be better pleased than M. Gaston, who loves to see all the young folks around him enjoying themselves. Ah! He is a man with a heart of gold—I wish there were more like him! All round the country side there is no truer friend to the labourers than M. Gaston.

Enter HORTENSE.

HORTENSE

[*Puts her head in at the door, and then advances into the room on tiptoe, behind MARTHE's back; she puts her hands*

Act I *round MARTHE's eyes and simulates a gruff voice.*] Is this the house of M. Gaston Bonnier? [*Then laughs merrily.*]

MARTHE

No, it's no good, my young lady, your trying to deceive me, I could tell your footsteps among a thousand. But you are early, Mademoiselle!

HORTENSE

No, it's you who are late. What, on a festival day like this, and on such a lovely morning, to be only just down. Lazy old Marthe! [*Turns her face round and kisses her.*]

MARTHE

Bless you, Mlle. Hortense, we cannot all be such early birds as you. But come and sit down and tell me what you want.

HORTENSE

No, no, Marthe. I am in a hurry. Has M. Pierre come down yet?

MARTHE

M. Pierre, M. Pierre—what do I know about M. Pierre?

HORTENSE

Oh, don't tease me, you wicked old thing. You know quite well I don't want to talk to you, and so you pretend you cannot understand—just on purpose to annoy me.

MARTHE

Come, come, ladybird—don't fly out at me like that. I know you, you young ladies, you are always in a hurry, and if one does not answer you directly, you begin to pout and call people all manner of unkind names. No—I don't know anything about M. Pierre.

HORTENSE

Dear old Marthe—you must not begin the day so badly with so naughty a falsehood. Come, tell me, there's a darling. [*Kisses her.*]

MARTHE

Oh yes, you expect to get over me with those soft ways! No, no!

HORTENSE

Get over you, of course I do. Why you dear, silly old Marthe, don't you know how I love you?

MARTHE

Not so much as you do a certain gentleman who shall be nameless! Oh, you don't deceive me.

HORTENSE

But, Marthe dear, has M. Pierre come down yet?

MARTHE

There we go! I've told you I didn't know anything about M. Pierre, and you go on, just as if you didn't believe me.

HORTENSE

But I don't believe you, I don't believe a word you say.

MARTHE

Did any one ever hear the like of that? Ah, you saucy child, there's no resisting you. Well, well, I will tell you all I know about M. Pierre.

HORTENSE

[*Eagerly.*] Yes, yes.

MARTHE

Because I know nothing.

HORTENSE

Oh, you dreadful old story-teller! Didn't I tell you you weren't to be believed?

MARTHE

Well then, what's the good of my speaking? M. Pierre is not down yet—will that content you?

Act I

HORTENSE

I can see that with my own eyes.

MARTHE

That was what you asked me, wasn't it? And I shouldn't think he would be down for some time yet. He was very late last night.

HORTENSE

[*Anxiously.*] Very late?

MARTHE

Yes, he was sitting in his room very late—writing and writing and writing—I think he was writing to his father.

HORTENSE

[*Turning pale.*] To his father? To M. Gaston Bonnier?

MARTHE

Yes, why should he not? Though, to be sure, he has got him in the house and he might as well say all he wants to, by word of mouth. But some people prefer writing, when they are not quite sure of what they ought to say.

HORTENSE

Oh, M. Gaston frightens me.

MARTHE

No, no, dearie, no. He is a man to love, not to fear. He is a good, honest man, very just, and very clear-sighted, and I don't think he would willingly wrong any man.

HORTENSE

But he has got such hard eyes.

MARTHE

Well, he has suffered, you know, and that makes a man hard sometimes. Poor M. Gaston, I don't think he deserved to be treated as he was.

HORTENSE

Why, how has he suffered ?

MARTHE

Didn't you know ? Poor child, how should you ? Well, you will know some day, and I may as well tell you now. His wife ran away from him.

HORTENSE

His wife ran away from him ?

MARTHE

Yes, she was a girl belonging to this part of the country—just like yourself. She ran away with a soldier. And for this reason M. Gaston is sometimes hard on country girls and doesn't like soldiers. He makes an exception in favour of M. Marcel, though he is a soldier, but I don't think he would like to see too much of him.

HORTENSE

And he does not make an exception in favour of me, I am afraid.

[*A voice is heard without, "Is that you, Marthe?"*]

MARTHE

[*Looks out of window.*] Ah, there is M. Marcel. Run away, dear, I want to talk to him.

HORTENSE

Well—mind you tell M. Pierre that I am waiting for him outside—he promised to dance with me.

MARTHE

Yes, yes, Mlle. Hortense. [*HORTENSE goes out.*] Poor little bird, she is too fond of M. Pierre, I am afraid. And M. Gaston has such good cause to be angry at the match ! What will come of it all ?

Act I

Enter MARCEL.

MARCEL

Aha, Marthe, good morning, good morning!

MARTHE

Marthe indeed! Madame Marthe, if you please, M. Marcel. It's not too early to be polite!

MARCEL

Well, Mlle. Marthe, then!

MARTHE

I said Madame!

MARCEL

And I said Mademoiselle! Why, don't you know, you are coming to the festival with me and going to dance with me? [*He attempts to seize her round the waist, but she laughingly retreats.*]

MARTHE

No, no, M. Marcel. I am sure I am old enough to be called Madame. But, be serious, if you can. I want to talk to you.

MARCEL

Oh, bother seriousness! No one can be serious on a day like this.

MARTHE

But you must be. I want to talk to you about M. Pierre and Mlle. Hortense.

MARCEL

Why, what about them? They are lovers, aren't they? Just as much lovers as—as—you and I. [*Laughs.*]

MARTHE

[*Shaking her head.*] If they were only lovers! You know how angry M. Gaston is, if any one couples their two names together. Well, they are more than lovers, I am afraid?

MARCEL

More than lovers? There is nothing greater than love in this world, is there?

MARTHE

I think they are already married. Hush! Here comes M. Pierre, not a word!

Enter PIERRE BONNIER.

PIERRE

Good morning, Marthe! Marcel too! Preparing for to-day's holiday, eh? I don't think there's a finer looking woman in the village than Marthe—eh, Marcel? No, nor a better dancer, if she likes—eh, Marcel? Upon my word, if I hadn't other fish to fry, I should like to cut you out, you rogue!

MARTHE

Mlle. Hortense has been here, M. Pierre, asking how much longer you would be before you were ready.

PIERRE

Mlle. Hortense! Oh, I will go out to her at once.
[*Prepares to go out.*]

MARTHE

But, M. Pierre, what shall I say to your father when he asks for you?

PIERRE

Oh, say anything—say that Marcel here brought me a message—that I was wanted at once! Say anything you like!
[*Exit hurriedly.*]

Act I

MARTHE

[*Looking after him.*] Ah, M. Pierre, if only you weren't so careless. You will have to suffer for all this some day, I am afraid!

MARCEL

[*At window.*] Look, there he goes, and there's Mlle. Hortense too!

MARTHE

[*At window.*] A pretty pair; as handsome a pair as you would wish to see. [*Music outside.*] Look at them, they are beginning to dance, ah, it makes one young again!

MARCEL

Well, come and join them, come along! [*Puts his arm round her waist, again she repels him.*]

MARTHE

No, no, I have got my work to do, if you have none, M. Marcel.

MARCEL

But I have. I have got to speak to M. Gaston, only you make me forget everything! What is it you said about their being married?

MARTHE

Oh, it is only my suspicion. Perhaps I am wrong. Don't think any more about it.

MARCEL

But why shouldn't they be married, if they want to be?

MARTHE

Ah, you don't know, you can't imagine how angry M. Gaston will be.

MARCEL

Oh, he will get over that, when he finds there's nothing to be done.

MARTHE

Marcel, have you ever thought who Hortense is—I mean who were her father and her mother, and where she came from ?

MARCEL

[*Carelessly.*] No, who is she ?

MARTHE

I swore I would never tell a soul.

MARCEL

Well then, tell me—I am not a soul, no soldier is, so far as I know !

MARTHE

Ah, don't laugh ! Well, I will tell you, because I think you are a man to be trusted, and you have been a good friend to us all. You remember that sad sorrow of M. Gaston when his wife ran away with Captain Rivardier ? Well, he took away M. Gaston's wife, but he left behind his own child ! He wrote a brief note to M. Gaston saying that to comfort his solitude he bequeathed him the care of his daughter. Exchange—ah, I remember his brutal words—exchange, he said, was no robbery !

MARCEL

And Mlle. Hortense is——

MARTHE

Captain Rivardier's daughter !

MARCEL

Phew—the devil !

Act I

MARTHE

Yes! Poor little child! She was brought up in the village here, under the care of old Madame Plozet, to whom I entrusted her. As for M. Gaston, he cannot bear the sight of her. Poor man, she is always reminding him of his loss!

MARCEL

[*Meditatively.*] H'm! Does Hortense know all this?

MARTHE

No, no, not a word. But you now understand why I hope they are not married. I will tell M. Gaston you are here. Poor, poor M. Pierre. [*Exit.*]

MARCEL

H'm, I wonder if it's true they are married! But how? Pierre could never get his father's written consent. Forgery? It's not unlikely. M. Pierre is so head-strong and he was bound to get into mischief before long. Poor M. Pierre indeed! Poor M. Gaston, I think! He won't be very pleased when he hears of it, especially as I have got some news for him which will rather upset him this morning. I almost wish I hadn't come to disturb this holiday, but I hadn't another day to spare before I go Eastwards. Heaven be praised that I have no wife and no son! All this marrying and giving in marriage brings grey hairs on the head, and adds wrinkles to the cheek—which would never do for a soldier. Ah, here comes M. Gaston.

Enter M. GASTON BONNIER.

Good morning, Monsieur Gaston, I hope I see you well!

BONNIER

Well and hearty, thank you Marcel, well and hearty! But what brings you here so early?

MARCEL

[*Aloud.*] Oh, I'm off to-morrow to the Russian war, and I thought I should like to see you all before I go. To-morrow I join my regiment and then, hey for the Crimea! [*Aside.*] I cannot tell him yet.

BONNIER

Ah, rolling stones all you soldiers! Here to-day, gone to-morrow, with never a house to call your own, or any spot in the wide world to be your home! Upon my word, Marcel, if you were not a good fellow, and one who has been a kind friend to me in the past, I would not let you come here to disturb us with your restless soldier-ways, and your wild campaigning talk!

MARCEL

[*Laughs.*] I am not going to trouble you for long, anyhow; only just a good-bye, and I am off. [*Reflectively.*] I don't much care for the idea of fighting side by side with those English, it is true; but, still, fighting is fighting, whoever may be your friends or enemies. [*Aside.*] How can I tell him?

BONNIER

[*Sitting down.*] Well, I am very glad to see you, although you are a soldier. You have been good to me, Marcel, indeed I don't know what I should have done without you. Any news from—from Paris?

MARCEL

It is just about that that I want to talk to you.

BONNIER

Yes, yes; now that you are going out of France, who is going to see that her money is paid to her, and that she has all she wants? Have you seen her lately?

MARCEL

[*Reluctantly.*] I don't think you need trouble much about that.

Act I

BONNIER

Not trouble about that? Ah, Marcel, that is the first unkind word you have said to me! Not trouble about her? Poor Clementine! She is dead to me, ever since she left me so cruelly, so cruelly, but she shall never want her daily bread while I am alive.

MARCEL

[*Slowly.*] She will not want her daily bread any more.

BONNIER

What? She hasn't made it up with that soldier fellow who betrayed her? Not that, not that, Marcel.

MARCEL

[*Shakes his head.*] No, no.

BONNIER

Something worse! Fallen into some one else's hands? Ah, how you torture me! Tell me at once!

MARCEL

She is dead, Monsieur Gaston!

BONNIER

[*Pause.*] Dead! My Clementine dead! Poor, poor Clementine! You broke my heart when you ran away from me, and now, now that Heaven in its mercy has taken you to itself, you almost break my heart a second time! Poor, poor Clementine!

MARCEL

Ah, do not make me wish I had never told you.

BONNIER

No, no, of course you had to tell me. I can bear it, Marcel. Twenty years ago, when the wound was yet fresh, I should almost have welcomed her death as the best way out of the trouble. But now, time has, if not healed

the wound, at least robbed it of its sharpest pangs, and Clementine has become a memory, a dream, an imagination, which, when it is gone, leaves me all the poorer for its loss. Well, she is gone, with all the sorrow she brought upon herself, and upon me! Heaven be merciful to us all!

MARCEL

She died peacefully, and her last words were of you.

BONNIER

God be thanked for that! But my boy must know of it. Where is Pierre? Oh, at the festival, of course. How strangely comes the news of her death on this day of all days of the year! But I must not spoil his happiness to-day; no, we older ones are made to bear these rude shocks of fate, from which we must try to screen the younger ones.

MARCEL

That's right, Bonnier! Let him have his merriment while he can.

BONNIER

Of course, of course. And after merriment, business and sorrow. You know, Marcel, what I mean him to do?

MARCEL

Let him be a soldier, sir! There is no other profession.

BONNIER

A soldier! I would rather see him in his grave. He drew a lucky number in the conscription, thank Heaven! I hate all soldiers, ever since—well you know what I have suffered at a soldier's hands. No, I mean him to study the law and go to Paris and pass all his examinations, and be an honour to himself and his father! To-day I intend to talk to him seriously about all this. No, whatever rude blows fortune has given me, I have still a son, to be proud

Act I of and to love. Come, Marcel, let us go and see how our people are enjoying themselves.

[*The music begins without as BONNIER exits.*]

MARCEL

In a moment, M. Bonnier, I will join you in a moment. Where is Marthe? I must know why she suspects—hullo, here's the truant!

Enter PIERRE.

PIERRE

Truant? Why truant? What have I run away from, or who has been asking for me?

MARCEL

Well Pierre, your father has been asking for you! What are you going to do, lad, when I am gone? Don't you wish you were coming with me to the Crimea?

PIERRE

In some ways, yes. But I don't think my father would ever allow it.

MARCEL

There are other things your father wouldn't allow, Pierre, besides soldiering.

PIERRE

What do you mean? [MARCEL *points significantly outside where the music and dance are proceeding.*] Oh, yes, of course.

MARCEL

You are to go off to Paris, young man, and become a lawyer, that's what you are fated for! So the sooner you forget all this [*pointing outside*], the better for you.

PIERRE

[*Moodily.*] Yes, I know. [*Suddenly.*] Look here, Marcel, I am in a devil of a mess, and I'm hanged if I know what to do!

MARCEL

Out with it then, young man, there is no father confessor like a soldier. If he does not forget to-day what you have told him he is generally twenty leagues away to-morrow, and so it makes little odds whether he remembers or forgets!

PIERRE

Yes, I had better tell you. Well then, Marcel—Hush! Here she is.

[*There is a burst of singing. HORTENSE, with three or four Girls in holiday clothes, singing the concluding notes of the song, bound into the room, flushed with the dance. The other Girls, when the song is over, bow to HORTENSE and PIERRE, and exeunt.*]

HORTENSE

Where have you hidden yourself, you traitor! [*Stops.*] Oh, I see you are not alone, I beg your pardon.

PIERRE

No, no, this is my oldest friend, M. Marcel. Marcel, I don't think you have ever met Mlle. Hortense?

MARCEL

Mademoiselle, I have the honour. [*Bows low, and HORTENSE curtsies.*]

PIERRE

M. Marcel is trying to tempt me to go with him to the Crimea, Hortense, and he had almost persuaded me when you came in.

Act I

HORTENSE

Then I am glad I have come in time—if M. Marcel will pardon me.

MARCEL

M. Pierre is only joking, Mademoiselle ; I think he is only too happy where he is for me to try and take him away. Well, I must rejoin M. Gaston. [*To PIERRE.*] You will find me outside when you want me.

[*Bows to HORTENSE and exit.*]

[*The music is very soft throughout the following scene.*]

HORTENSE

You were only joking Pierre, were you not? You weren't really serious?

PIERRE

Serious, about what?

HORTENSE

About the Crimea.

PIERRE

Silly child! Why, I must live.

HORTENSE

Yes, but if you went to the Crimea, that would be the way to die! And what would become of me? Ah, Pierre dear, you don't know, you can't know.

PIERRE

Can't know what, little one?

HORTENSE

[*Shyly.*] Oh, it so hard to put into words—[*after a pause*—how I love you.

PIERRE

Yes, I do, darling. And don't you know how I love you? [*They kiss ; the music gets louder, HORTENSE starts *ap.**]

HORTENSE

Come on, Pierre, let us dance again? But listen, sir, I won't have you dancing with other girls! How I hated you when you were dancing with Amande? Why, you had actually got your arm round her waist [*indignantly*].

PIERRE

Well, I couldn't dance with her if I had not got my arm round her waist, could I?

HORTENSE

Well then, you shouldn't dance with her at all! I am the only person you are to dance with, do you hear, and——

PIERRE

And this is the only waist I am to put my arm round, eh? [*Draws her to himself, putting his arm round her.*]

HORTENSE

Dear Pierre! Oh, it does seem so strange.

PIERRE

What?

HORTENSE

Why, that we are—put your ear close to my mouth [*whispers*]*—*married! Ever since yesterday! What a long way off yesterday seems to be. [*Sighs.*]

PIERRE

Yes, that is why we have got to be serious, and think about the future.

HORTENSE

Oh, not to-day, not to-day!

PIERRE

Yes, dear, to-day! I must tell my father sooner or later, and it had better be got over at once. Heaven knows what he will say!

Act I

HORTENSE

To-day? Oh, Pierre, I am so afraid of M. Gaston!

PIERRE

Nonsense, little one, what is done cannot be undone, and whatever he may say or do, you and I are still man and wife.

HORTENSE

[*Hiding her face on his shoulder.*] Not to-day, not to-day! Let us have one more day to enjoy ourselves without thought for—for the future. See, you have quite frightened me!

PIERRE

Come, Hortense, hold your head up and be brave. He wants me to go to Paris and study for the law.

HORTENSE

And leave me?

PIERRE

No, no, dear, he cannot separate us, you forget that.

HORTENSE

But you won't go to Paris? What should I do in a big city, without fields and flowers, where there is only the hard pavement under one's feet and the pitiless sky above one's head? It would kill me, Paris——

PIERRE

[*Moodily.*] Well, it must be either that or the Crimea. I don't see any other choice.

HORTENSE

Oh, how hard life is! Cannot we stay here always? No, no, of course, for you must work and I must work, and we must earn a living, now [*with a sad smile*]—now that we are married! And I suppose M. Gaston must know; but oh, the dream, the romance, what will become of that?

PIERRE

Why, it will remain where it is, little one, so long as you and I love one another.

HORTENSE

Dear, dear Pierre.

[While they kiss, M. GASTON BONNIER comes into the room. He looks from one to the other in astonished displeasure.]

BONNIER

Pierre, what does all this mean? Mlle. Hortense, may I ask why you are here? I wish to talk to my son on an affair of business, and I wish to talk to him alone.

PIERRE

Whatever you have to say, there is no reason why Hortense should not hear it!

BONNIER

Indeed! And what do you say to that, Mademoiselle? Are you to be made privy to all our secrets? Are you to affect an interest in whatever a father and son may have in common?

HORTENSE

Oh, M. Bonnier, indeed I don't want to offend you.

BONNIER

Then may I ask you kindly to leave my son here with me?

HORTENSE

Yes, I will wait for him outside. *[Going.]*

PIERRE

[Firmly.] No, Hortense, there is nothing, I feel sure,

Act I in what my father is going to say to me which you may not hear. Besides, you have a right to listen—as much right as I have.

BONNIER

[*Getting angry.*] A right? I don't quite see how that can be. Why, Pierre, I know you are young and Mlle. Hortense is a pretty girl and you both see a good deal of each other and are very good companions, and I dare say you fancy you are in love with each other. That is all very well for a day of festival like this, when there is music and dancing. But, unfortunately, I have to talk to Pierre on a matter of business—a serious matter of business. It is quite time that he should leave this idle life of flirting and gossiping and begin to think about his career. Come, Mademoiselle, I don't wish to say anything to hurt you, but——

PIERRE

Father, stop! I beseech you.

BONNIER

No, Pierre, I must say what is in my mind. I have been foolish not to have said it before, but at all events I will delay no longer. Mlle. Hortense, it is my wish that Pierre should break this—what shall I call it?—this idle intercourse with you. You are neither of you children. You must remain in the village with your—your other friends, and Pierre must go to Paris.

HORTENSE

Oh, M. Bonnier, do not be so hard and cruel!

PIERRE

[*Firmly.*] Father, what you say is impossible.

BONNIER

Impossible! Nonsense! I say it shall be. My mind is made up; that is enough.

PIERRE

I repeat : it is impossible.

BONNIER

What ! will you drive me to still harsher measures ? Well, then, I command. Mlle. Hortense, you see that my house is no place for you at the present moment.

HORTENSE

[*Looks tearfully from one to the other.*] What am I to do, Pierre ?

BONNIER

What are you to do ? Great Heaven !—and you ask Pierre what you are to do ? Why, what is Pierre to you, or what are you to Pierre, that you should interfere with my wishes, my commands ? I have been a fool, I see, not to have spoken before. Well, Mademoiselle, if you *will* hear the truth, I will speak it. I would sooner see Pierre in his grave than that he should marry—you.

PIERRE

Father, father, stop !

BONNIER

No, I will not stop. She shall hear everything, since she so chooses. Listen, Mademoiselle, I had a wife once, a wife taken from this village, a pretty girl, just as you are. She left me after five years of marriage. Left me for a soldier, whose fine coat and dashing manners attracted her more than my humble ways and work-a-day clothes ! Left me and her little boy alone, to get on as best we might : I without a wife, and he without a mother ! And I swore a great oath then that I would sooner see Pierre in his grave than that he should wear a soldier's coat or marry a girl like you ! I swore it then, and I am not going to break my oath now !

Act I

HORTENSE

[*Covering her face with her hands.*] Don't say that!
Ah, don't say that!

BONNIER

Come, Pierre, you understand me better now.

PIERRE

Too late, too late.

BONNIER

Too late! What does the boy mean?

PIERRE

I should have told you sooner.

BONNIER

Good God! what do you mean?

PIERRE

Father, it is too late. We are already married!

BONNIER

Married! You and Hortense married? No, no, it's impossible! I say it is impossible, and it shall never be! Married! Don't look at me like that, but speak, speak, I cannot understand what you mean.

PIERRE

Hortense and I were married yesterday.

BONNIER

And my consent? [*PIERRE does not answer.*] My consent, I say? How did you get my written consent?

PIERRE

[*With a struggle.*] Father, I had to get it somehow; I—I—wrote it myself!

BONNIER

Forged it? [*PIERRE does not answer.*] Is that what you mean? Fool, fool, fool! Ah, so it's you, is it,

Mademoiselle, who have tempted my boy to his ruin? Act I
My only boy! May Heaven reward you for what you
have done to a desolate father and his only son.

PIERRE

Hush! father, she is my wife.

BONNIER

Your wife! We will see about that! I refuse my
consent! Pierre, you shall leave for Paris to-morrow—no,
to-day, this very hour! You shall be separated from her
for ever! Do you hear? For ever! Go out of the
room and pack up at once, or I shall curse you both!

PIERRE

I cannot go without my wife.

BONNIER

Ah, Pierre, you were always a good son to me. Don't
break my heart. Don't break your father's heart! You
know you have always been my darling, my love, my all!
What is there that I would not have done for your sake!

PIERRE

You make it very hard for me, father, but I cannot do
what you ask.

BONNIER

You will not go to Paris?

PIERRE

I will not leave my wife.

BONNIER

Once more, and only once. Will you leave Hortense
and do what I tell you?

PIERRE

No, father, I cannot leave my wife.

BONNIER

Then, God knows I am driven to tell you, what I
thought should be for ever locked up in my heart. Look

Act I at that girl, Pierre ! look at Hortense, as she calls herself ! Do you know who she is ? I will tell you. She is the daughter of your mother's seducer.

PIERRE

Oh, father, father !

BONNIER

Yes, Rivardier's daughter ! He left his child, when he took away my wife. Take her with you now if you like, but I will never give my consent, never ! And without it yours is no marriage, and your children will be illegitimate.

PIERRE

For God's sake, do not speak so wildly. There is nothing wrong in our union. She is no blood-relation of mine, and it is not her fault if her father was a villain.

BONNIER

Will you leave Hortense ? [PIERRE takes HORTENSE in his arms.] Then—Heaven be my witness, I wash my hands of you both ! You have chosen your own path, and you shall follow it to the end. From this time henceforth you are no son of mine. I cast you off, I renounce you, I expel you from my doors ! Go where you like, but never come into this house again ! I am no longer your father, and you are no longer my son ! Go !

PIERRE

Enough, father, enough ! I will not stay any longer. As you say, Heaven shall judge between you and me. I shall go with Marcel to the war. [*Goes out with HORTENSE in his arms.*]

BONNIER

[*Alone.*] To the war ! Clementine dead ! My Pierre a soldier ! And married to Hortense ! My God, is this my doom ?

ACT II

(1870)

SCENE.—*Parlour as before. Sixteen years afterwards.*

Act II

TIME.—*Late afternoon, growing dusk. The stage is empty as the curtain rises.*

Drums—as of a regiment marching—are played just before and as the curtain ascends, and continue, going away into the distance, during the opening of the Scene.

When curtain has gone up on an empty stage, there is a soft knock heard on the outside door of the parlour, which after a time is repeated.

Enter MARTHE with greyish hair.

MARTHE

[Hurriedly and noiselessly.] Who is there? *[Going to the door.]* Can they have come? Marcel told me that they would be here soon. *[Listens at door.]*

PIERRE

[Outside.] Is that you, Marthe? May we come in?

MARTHE

[Opening door.] Yes—hush, do not make any noise.

[Enter PIERRE and HORTENSE.]

M. Gaston may come in at any moment.

Act II

PIERRE

Marcel told you we were coming, did he not ?

MARTHE

Yes, yes—ah, dear M. Pierre, how you are changed ! And you too, Madame. But where is he, where is the little boy ?

HORTENSE

He is not very little, dear old Marthe, remember he is now fifteen years old. Ah, how pleasant it is to see your dear honest old face. [*Kisses her.*]

MARTHE

[*Crying.*] But the boy, the boy, where have you left him ?

PIERRE

He is with Marcel. We thought it better to leave him while we came to see how the land lay. And now, Marthe, tell me, how is my poor old father ?

MARTHE

[*To HORTENSE.*] Sit you down, dearie. Hush ! [*Goes to inner door.*] Let me see if everything is quiet first. [*Opens door and looks within, while the others sit down.*] Nothing's stirring in the house. He must have fallen asleep. [*Comes back to PIERRE and HORTENSE.*]

HORTENSE

[*Taking both MARTHE's hands and looking in her face.*] You are changed too, Marthe. Have you been ill ?

MARTHE

No, no, only sad, and sorrow makes one old. But you should see M. Gaston ! Such white hair, and such a worn, troubled face—ever since, ever since you both went away.

PIERRE

But he is well, Marthe, he is not suffering now ?

MARTHE

Suffering ? He has never ceased to suffer since that fatal day. Always muttering to himself, and moaning that he has killed you. He thinks you were killed at the Crimea—we all thought that—till Marcel told you had got home, safe to Madame at Marseilles. But M. Gaston still thinks you dead, and I have never been able to assure him of your safety. Why did you never come before ?

PIERRE

My poor father ! But it was no good coming, Marthe, till many years had passed away and perhaps softened his memory of the past. Besides, you know, I was badly wounded, and was ill for a long time. Do you think he has forgiven me, Marthe ? [*eagerly.*]

HORTENSE

And me ? Has he forgiven me ?

MARTHE

[*Crying.*] Oh, I don't know, I don't know. He is so old, and feeble, and querulous. Hush, I thought I heard him. [*Goes to door again, listens for a moment, and returns.*] Quick, quick, tell me what you intend to do ?

HORTENSE

We came to ask you, Marthe.

PIERRE

I thought we had better come boldly and see him.

MARTHE

No, no, it would kill him, I think. [*After a moment's pause, while she listens.*] No, the only way is for Marcel to bring the little boy.

Act II

HORTENSE

But he will not be angry with little Gaston ?

MARTHE

I think not—I think he may be overjoyed to see him, and there is no peace-maker like a child. Let him plead your cause, and let us pray Heaven that all may be well.

PIERRE

Well, you know best, Marthe, I think. But still——

MARTHE

Not another word, I hear his footsteps. Send Marcel with the child—that's the only way. And now go, go I beseech you. [*Hurrying them to door.*]

HORTENSE

God bless you, Marthe, you will take care of little Gaston, if he comes ?

MARTHE

Yes, yes !

PIERRE

[*At door ; HORTENSE has gone out.*] Remember, if anything happens to the child, it will break his mother's heart. Good-bye, Marthe.

[*Goes out, MARTHE hurriedly shuts and locks the door. Enter BONNIER with candle. He is old and feeble.*]

BONNIER

So dark ! So dark ! Marthe, Marthe ! Where is she ? They are always leaving me alone.

MARTHE

Yes, Monsieur, did you call me ?

BONNIER

No—yes—I have forgotten what I wanted. What time is it ?

MARTHE

Seven o'clock, Monsieur, I think.

BONNIER

Have I been asleep, then? Did I dream that I heard some drums beating and soldiers marching?

MARTHE

No, Monsieur, it was no dream. Some troops have just passed through the village, a fine body of men, with their colours flying and their band playing. I suppose they are going to the war.

BONNIER

War, war, it is always war! No other word seems to ring like that in my brain! It is always echoing there from morning till evening. I hear it when first I open my eyes, and it is the last sound which I remember when I get to sleep. Always war, war, war!

MARTHE

Dear M. Bonnier, never mind the war, I was wrong to mention it. The Prussian war will not affect us much, at any rate.

BONNIER

Not affect us much? Ah, no, nothing matters much now. But you are wrong if you think I feel no interest in the war. Can I ever forget the war? Why, war and soldiers have been my ruin all through my life. They robbed me of my wife, and then they robbed me of my son. Curse the war! No, no, I will never curse anything again, never again! Curses come home to roost! [*Gets to chair in chimney-corner and sits down.*]

MARTHE

Try to sleep again, Monsieur; the soldiers have gone now.

Act II

BONNIER

No, I am wide awake, I don't want to sleep. What time was it when I left this room ?

MARTHE

Three o'clock, I think.

BONNIER

Three till five. I have been sleeping two hours. Ah, I remember now, I had a dream. I thought I saw nothing but plains, covered with snow everywhere, blotting out every road and tree and hedge in the landscape, a dead white grave-cloth of snow over the face of nature. And I seemed to be looking for something, searching and peering about amongst the snow-heaps with my eyes almost blinded with that eternal whiteness—digging with bleeding fingers, and, though faint and weary, never desisting from my patient, untiring search. I found it at last, the little black wooden cross with the two letters scratched roughly upon it, P.B.—Pierre Bonnier—marking a soldier's grave. And then I was seized with a longing to see him once again—my poor, poor boy, whom I sent out to his death in the Russian war. I was all alone, and no one would see me take the mould off his body, and I would kiss him and hold him to my breast, and, if God so willed, I would lie down by his side and share with him a common grave. But when I had scratched away the earth, it was not Pierre's body that I saw, but a child, who looked up at me brightly, and called me by my name. Then there was a sound of drums, and I awoke. It was a strange dream, Marthe, wasn't it ?

MARTHE

[*Halfcrying.*] Ah, Monsieur Bonnier, try and sleep again.

BONNIER

Do you think, Marthe, if I slept again I could go on with that dream ? Maybe I should, and then perhaps I

could understand it better. Yes, I will try to sleep again. Leave me, Marthe, I shall be all right by myself. [MARTHE goes out with candle, crying. The room is only lighted by fire-light.] Pierre! Did you forgive me, I wonder, and all my hard words, before you died? Did you remember all I had suffered in my past life, and how the remembrance of my wife made me mad against Hortense? Ah, but you could not know that I had heard that very morning that Clementine was dead; no, you were not aware how my nerves were all unstrung by what Marcel had told me! And then came that sudden revelation about your marriage, and I went mad. Oh, my boy, if all the sorrow and despair which I have felt—all the solitary anguish that has been my lot since you left me—be any atonement for my crime, you have no cause to hate me now! And I sent you to your grave, out there amongst the Crimean snows, with a father's curse ringing in your ears. And Hortense? It was she who tempted you; hers was the fault, not yours, not yours. It was she whom I ought to have cursed; I cannot forgive her for all she has done! No, God help me, I cannot forgive her! [Pause.] Pierre, did you call me? I thought I heard your voice. I am coming to you, I am coming, my son. Is it cold out there under the snow? No, I will take you in my arms and warm you, Pierre, and we will be happy again and forget all that is past. [Gradually going to sleep.] You are mine again, Pierre—forgive, forget—mine once more. [Sleeps.]

[There is a pause, then MARTHE steals into the room on tiptoe with the candle, and looks at him. MARTHE goes to the window and looks out, and beckons to some one outside; then goes to door, which she opens, noiselessly, and MARCEL enters, looking worn and grizzled.]

MARTHE

Hush! be very quiet; he's asleep—speak low.

Act II

MARCEL

How he is changed ! Poor Monsieur Gaston.

MARTHE

[*Speaking low and quickly.*] Is he outside ?

MARCEL

Yes, shall I bring him in ?

MARTHE

Don't you think that will be the best way ?

MARCEL

Yes, if you are sure that the joy will not kill him ?

MARTHE

We must run the risk of that. Let the boy come in, and we must leave them alone together.

MARCEL

Hadn't we better be in the room too ?

MARTHE

No, I think not. Better leave them alone. Oh, how my heart beats ! Bring him in.

[MARCEL goes and re-enters with little GASTON, both walking softly and on tiptoe. The boy looks scared ; MARTHE folds the boy in her arms.

PETIT GASTON

[*In a whisper.*] Is that grandpapa ?

MARTHE

Yes, darling, yes ; we will leave you together, and when he wakes you must tell him who you are. Come, Marcel.

MARCEL

Remember, Gaston, he loves your father and your father loves him!

[Exeunt MARCEL and MARTHE with the light. The boy is left alone with old GASTON, who is sleeping in the easy chair. He stands watching him for some time in a quiet awed silence. Then he goes closer to him and timidly lays one hand on his arm.]

GASTON

M. Bonnier, grandpapa. *[Again a silence, and the words are repeated.]*

BONNIER

[In his dream.] Yes, Pierre, yes; I hear you call. I can't get through this snow. I am coming to you, dear, but I am old—so old and weak!

GASTON

Not Pierre, Monsieur; it is I, Gaston.

BONNIER

[Opens his eyes.] Not Pierre? Ah, who is it?

GASTON

It is I, Gaston.

BONNIER

My dream, my dream! You are the child I found in his grave. Who are you?

GASTON

Gaston, le petit Gaston.

BONNIER

Gaston! That is my name. Who gave you that name?

Act II

GASTON

My father, Monsieur, my father !

BONNIER

And your father's name was—— ?

GASTON

Pierre.

BONNIER

No, no—not that name. [*Wailingly.*] Pierre is dead ; he died long ago in the Crimea.

GASTON

He gave me the name of Gaston after his own father.

BONNIER

His own father ? Come here closer—let me have a look at you closer. In Heaven's name do not deceive me, child. I am an old man—a poor, weak, foolish old man.

GASTON

It is true, grandpapa !

BONNIER

[*Eagerly.*] Yes, yes, I hope it is true ; or is it all part of my dream ? Tell me over again.

GASTON

I am your grandson, Monsieur. My father called me Gaston because his own father bore that name ; and my father was called Pierre, and you are my grandfather.

BONNIER

Hush, hush—do not say it so loud. You will wake me, and then the dream will pass away. Come, dear [*takes him in his arms*], you shall whisper it in my ears. Say it all over softly to me. This is too sweet a dream to break.

GASTON

It is no dream, M. Bonnier.

BONNIER

Not that name—the other name you used just now. Call me by that other name.

GASTON

Grandpapa !

BONNIER

My little grandson, my little Gaston ; oh, if this be a dream let me never wake again, now that I have found my Pierre again in you. [*Holds him fondly in his arms, there is a pause, then MARTHE and MARCEL enter softly.*]

[*Excitedly.*] Marthe, Marthe ! Look at him, tell me who it is ; is it—can it be——

MARTHE

[*Who is half crying.*] Yes, Monsieur Bonnier, it is your grandson. Marcel brought him, ask Marcel here.

BONNIER

Marcel, you ? Do dead men come out of their graves ? I thought you were dead in the Crimea with—with——

MARCEL

Me dead ! No, no, Bonnier, I am too tough to be killed very easily. I am alive, thank God ! and I am glad of it, since I have been able to bring you your grandson.

BONNIER

Yes, yes, my grandson, tell me about him. How did you find him ? Where did you find him ?

MARCEL

Well, I think it was he who found me, wasn't it, little one ?

Act II

GASTON

Yes, Monsieur Marcel, my father wrote and told me whenever I was in trouble to ask for Marcel. Those were his words. Mother showed them to me in a letter. So I looked for you and found you.

MARCEL

Quite right, my boy ; Marcel will stick to you always, for your own and your father's sake. Why, he told me often in the Crimea to look after his child at Marseilles.

BONNIER

You found him at Marseilles ?

MARCEL

Not much trouble about that ! I have seen a good bit of them—Hortense and the little Gaston : have I not, Marthe ?

MARTHE

It is true, Monsieur.

MARCEL

Yes, I have tried to do what I could for them, not that that is much, for, as you told me many years ago, Bonnier, we soldiers are rolling stones, and it is not often that this particular stone has rolled to Marseilles. But it is from Marseilles that I have brought him here.

BONNIER

But you said the boy found you ?

GASTON

So I did, I went down to the quay and found him.

MARCEL

Quite true, little lad, quite true. You knew that Marcel would come to you, whenever you wanted him.

MARTHE

[*Breaks in hurriedly.*] Come, Monsieur Bonnier, it is not the time to tell over our tales—now that the little one has come home. Let me bring in the wine.

BONNIER

[*With growing excitement.*] Yes, yes, Marthe, bring in the wine. Here is Marcel—old dog! I never knew him refuse a glass of wine! And I shall drink too, and my little boy here shall drink and we will begin a new life. Wine, Marthe, wine! [MARTHE goes out.] [To MARCEL.] Old friend, I think I should hardly have known you. But I suppose we are both changed, both grown old and grey!

MARCEL

Yes, Bonnier, time plays sad tricks with us old ones, though it does not change our hearts. But you will get young again now that little Gaston has come.

BONNIER

We will all get young again; Gaston shall teach us the way. Aha, here comes Marthe! [*Enter MARTHE with wine, etc., and sets the things on the table, which she draws close to BONNIER.*] Come, we will forget the past and live in the present. There—now you, Marcel, shall sit there, and my little grandson must sit here—by my side. Pour out the wine, Marthe, pour out the wine! We are going to be merry and never be sorry any more! We are not too old to be merry, are we, Marcel? [*They sit at table and MARTHE helps them.*]

MARCEL

Not I, at all events. Well, here's to you, Bonnier. [*Drinks.*] With all my heart.

BONNIER

That's not the proper toast! No, no, we will first drink to this young man! Here, Gaston, here's to your health, my boy.

Act II

MARCEL

Hear, hear ! Gaston, your good health.

GASTON

[*Drinks to both.*] I hope you will both have a long life and much happiness.

BONNIER

If I have, it will all be owing to you, Gaston. Marthe must drink too ! [*They all drink.*]

MARCEL

[*After a deep draught.*] Come, that's better ! Now I don't care what happens in this war. If I live, so much the better ; and if I die, it will be for France. Vive la France ! [*Drinks again.*]

GASTON

Vive la France, et à bas les Prussiens !

MARCEL

[*Laughing.*] Hear him, hear the young patriot ! That's right, my boy, stick to the text and you won't go far wrong.

BONNIER

War again, it is always war !

MARCEL

Well, if there wasn't war, what would an old soldier like me do ? You don't suppose I could ever rest quietly in a cottage and smoke my pipe in a chimney corner ? No, vive la guerre ! say I.

GASTON

Vive la guerre !

MARTHE

Hush, Monsieur, hush ! [*Pushes the table back away from BONNIER.*]

GASTON

Why? I like hearing about war. My father is a soldier! Tell me about the war, Marcel!

MARCEL

[*Rising.*] No time now, little one. I must be off. We have had our marching orders, and I am not the one to delay. One more glass, Bonnier, and then—à Berlin. [*Laughs as he drinks; drums begin outside.*]

BONNIER

War, always war! Don't go yet, Marcel!

MARCEL

But I must, old friend! France calls me, you don't suppose that when the drums are beating and the flags flying, Marcel is going to be a laggard? Good-bye, old friend, I have done the best service I could for you and Pierre, and now I am off! Vive la guerre! Vive la France! À Berlin!

GASTON

[*Has been watching him with eager, wide-open eyes.*] Adieu, adieu, Marcel! Mind you beat them—those Prussians!

MARCEL

All right, youngster! Come, Marthe, you shall see me to the door. Adieu!

[*MARCEL and MARTHE go out. There is a brief pause while PETIT GASTON goes to the window to see the last of MARCEL. Opens window.*]

GASTON

There he goes, there he goes! Oh, is he not fine and strong, Marcel!

[*Drums, gradually dying away.*]

Act II

BONNIER

[*Feebly and a little irritably.*] Yes, yes, come back and shut the window, Gaston! Come and sit by me! Don't let us talk about the war! [Drums cease.]

GASTON

[*Comes back.*] But don't you like Marcel, then?

BONNIER

Marcel is a fine fellow—for a soldier. But you and I have got something else to think about than war and soldiers. Tell me about yourself.

GASTON

What shall I tell you? About our life at Marseilles? Oh, may I tell you about my dear mother?

BONNIER

No, no, about your father.

GASTON

Didn't you like mother?

BONNIER

I—I—hardly knew your mother.

GASTON

Oh, then, I will tell you all about her. I used to call her "Angel."

BONNIER

[*Aside.*] The boy will kill me. [*Aloud.*] Your father first, Gaston.

GASTON

Father was a soldier, and he was always ready to die for his country, and I am going to be a soldier too, and if France calls me, I will die for her.

BONNIER

Gaston, I don't want you to be a soldier.

GASTON

Not a soldier? What else is a man fit for? Why, father was a soldier; didn't you want him to be a soldier?

BONNIER

No. [*Sighs.*]

GASTON

And yet he was one, why was that?

BONNIER

He would be, Gaston, whether I liked it or no.

GASTON

And were you angry with him?

BONNIER

[*Aside.*] What am I to say? How cruel a child can be!

GASTON

[*Looks at him with wondering eyes.*] My father was a soldier, and you didn't want him to be. I want to be a soldier, and you say no. Will you be angry with me too?

BONNIER

No, no, Gaston, if you will stay at home with me and forget all about wars.

GASTON

But that cannot be always. I want to be a soldier, and fight the Prussians. I promised mother that I would, and that is a promise I cannot break.

BONNIER

[*Irritably.*] Your mother, your mother! I tell you I want you, Gaston, to be with *me*.

GASTON

I am sure you didn't like mother. [*Suddenly.*] Why did you never have mother here? [BONNIER *does not answer.*] Was it because you were angry with father?

Act II

BONNIER

Oh, Gaston, do not ask such questions. It's all long ago now, and I don't want to remember the past. Be kind to your old grandfather.

GASTON

[*Slowly.*] Yes, I will if I can. But I am not quite a child, Monsieur. You cannot wish me to break a promise to my mother, or forget my father's life.

BONNIER

I never forget Pierre, Gaston.

GASTON

And yet you were angry with him ?

BONNIER

I was wrong, Gaston, I was wrong, and I have repented it bitterly since ! I know it was my fault that he left this house and became a soldier, but indeed, indeed, I have suffered, ever since, ever since, God knows !

GASTON

He left you because you were angry ? Oh, Monsieur, tell me the truth ! It is right that I should know. I am no longer a child.

BONNIER

Yes, Gaston, yes. I was angry and said wicked words, and he went away. [*Aside.*] My God, do not punish me by means of this child.

GASTON

And my mother—were you angry with her too ?

BONNIER

Yes, because she took him away from me.

GASTON

Did you forgive them ?

BONNIER

I forgave your father.

GASTON

But you never forgave my mother—is that true? [BONNIER *is silent and hides his face in his hands with a groan.*] Monsieur! [*Slowly.*] I think I must go with Marcel to the war.

BONNIER

No, no, anything but that, anything but that! Oh, my boy, my boy, you are all that I have now, all that I have to remind me of Pierre. Do not leave me, I have found you after many years, do not leave me. See how old and worn I am, I cannot hope to live long. Stay with me while I live, I beseech you, Gaston! If I could I would ask you on my knees. Yes, I, your grandfather, would beg you on my knees not to leave me, old and desolate and comfortless.

GASTON

[*Slowly.*] And would you forgive them now?

BONNIER

Ah, it is all long ago! Yes, I have forgiven them. [*With a long sigh.*]

GASTON

Ah, grandfather. [*Coming close to him and looking at him earnestly.*] Will you forgive them *now*?

BONNIER

[*Feebly.*] Hush! we must not talk about the dead.

GASTON

But they are not dead—they are alive.

BONNIER

[*Half rises with a cry.*] *Not dead!* What do you mean?

Act II

GASTON

They are alive, they are alive ! They are here in the village ; they are just outside. [BONNIER rises with a choking cry and then falls back. Attempts to speak, but no articulate words will come.] Grandpapa, grandpapa, don't look like that. [After a pause, in which BONNIER tries to speak but cannot.] Speak to me, speak to me, say something. Can you forgive them ? [As BONNIER remains silent, the boy looks at him for a moment in a scared way, then runs to door.] Marthe, Marthe ! Come—quick !

Enter MARTHE, hurriedly followed by PIERRE and HORTENSE.

MARTHE

Ah, Heavens ! poor Monsieur Bonnier. [Runs over to him, supports his head.] Quick, some wine, wine ! [PIERRE fills a glass from the table, and MARTHE on one side of him, PIERRE the other side, hold him up and hold wine to his lips. The boy remains kneeling in front of him ; HORTENSE, shyly, at a little distance.]

PIERRE

Oh, father, father, have I come too late ?

GASTON

[Wailingly.] Forgive them, forgive them ! Oh, what have I done !

BONNIER

[With an effort.] Pierre, Pierre, come to me. [PIERRE comes round and kneels in front. The boy drags HORTENSE over, and brings her before BONNIER, where she too kneels.]

MARTHE

[*Behind BONNIER.*] Monsieur Gaston, say one word, forgive them.

[*BONNIER feebly lays one hand upon PIERRE's head. Then he lifts it to place it on HORTENSE's head. As it gets nearly to her, the hand falls nervelessly on his lap, and with a groan BONNIER's head falls forward, and he dies. In the far distance are heard the drums as the curtain slowly descends.*]

Slow Curtain.



UNDINE
A DREAM PLAY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

UNDINE.
COUNT HULDBRAND OF RINGSTETTEN.
BERTALDA.
FATHER HEILMANN.
FISHERMAN.
FISHERMAN'S WIFE.
BERTALDA'S FOSTER-PARENTS.
SHEPHERD.
THREE BEGGARS.
A BLIND MAN.

Courtiers, Attendants, Crowd, etc.

ACT I

INTERIOR OF FISHERMAN'S COTTAGE.

ACT II

HALL OF CASTLE OF RINGSTETTEN.

ACT III

A MOUNTAIN GORGE NEAR RINGSTETTEN.

* * * The acting rights of this play are in the hands of Mrs. Patrick Campbell.

It has been translated into Spanish, and a performance given at Barcelona, under the care of E. Franquesa Bach.

UNDINE

ACT I

SCENE I.—*Interior of FISHERMAN'S cottage. It is evening. A staircase comes down from the upper part of the cottage at one corner: there is a fireplace in the centre with an inglenook, and a spinning-wheel stands at one side of it, where the FISHERMAN'S WIFE is spinning. The FISHERMAN enters by the door leading outside, and, as he enters, a gust of wind shows that outside a storm of rain and wind is raging, the windows are rattling with the tempest, and the sound of a lashing rainstorm is heard on the roof, while the wind howls round the eaves. While the FISHERMAN'S WIFE is seated very quietly and placidly, the FISHERMAN, after shutting the door, is restless and disturbed. He comes to the fireplace, warms himself for a moment, then goes to the window, and returns once more to the fireplace. He glances at his WIFE, as though irritated by her stillness.* Act I

FISHERMAN

It is many years since we had such a storm—not since Undine came to us. And the water is rising all round, and cutting us off from the mainland. It makes one uneasy and restless. Where is Undine? How can you sit there, wife, hour after hour, as though nothing was happening—as though nothing was going to happen?

WIFE

No one can alter fate. [*She goes on spinning.*]

Act I

FISHERMAN

Oh, I have not your patience. You sit there, just as you have sat for years—spinning, spinning, spinning. And the world is altering all the time. So many mornings and evenings come and pass away; and the sun rises and sets, and the stars come out: and each day something is happening which may change all our lives. I am very uneasy and restless to-night. I feel that some change is coming. I feel it in my bones.

WIFE

Well, husband, if it has to come, it will come. You can do nothing but wait and receive at Fate's hands whatever Fate has to give you.

UNDINE

[*Coming downstairs, gaily singing.*]

Where is the Sea-King's home?
 There where the great fish roam,
 In the heart of the deep sea's foam,
 There is the Sea-King's home. . . .

Arkël, Sibol, Harald, Kühleborn! I hear you! I hear you! [*Dances round FISHERMAN'S WIFE and kisses her.*] I am coming! I am coming! [*Goes to window.*]

FISHERMAN

Where are you going, Undine? It is not a night for you to leave the house.

UNDINE

[*Laughs*]. Why not? It is a night when all my kinsmen are abroad! Arkël, Sibol . . . [*She opens the window.*]

FISHERMAN

Hark, how the winds are howling and the rain . . . the rain!

UNDINE

Act I

Yes [*shutting window*], they are riding the wings of the rain! and I hear them calling for me . . . their voices are tossed along the paths of the storm! I am coming! I am coming! [*She goes to door.*]

FISHERMAN

[*Coming up to her.*] Undine, do not leave us!

UNDINE

[*Blowing a kiss to him.*] Only for a little while! I am the child of the storm! [*Sings a few notes and then goes out, laughing.*]

[*FISHERMAN goes to door—looks after her—then shuts the door with a sigh and comes to fireplace.*]

FISHERMAN

All the spirits of evil are in the air. I can hear them muttering their spells. They whisper and whisper, and then they do the mischief which God allows. Hark, what was that? [*He crosses himself devoutly.*] I thought I heard a cry. Undine!—[*there comes a splash of water against the window panes, followed by a wild laugh*]—Undine! Come back! Come home!

WIFE

She will not come. She loves the storm. She is the daughter of the winds and waves.

FISHERMAN

No, no, she is our daughter—yours and mine, wife. It is time she gave up her impish tricks. She is no longer so young as when we found her. She is no more a child. [*He goes to the door and calls.*] Undine! Come home!

VOICE IN DISTANCE

No—no—I am happy here! [*Laughter.*]

[*FISHERMAN shuts door.*]

Act I

WIFE

She will never be our daughter, husband. She is not of our kith and kin. Is it red blood that flows in her veins? I do not know, nor do you. What is it that is wanting in her face? Something which others have, men and women like ourselves, but she has it not. She has strange, uncanny ways. Can she be warm and loving and kind? Can she love? I do not know, nor do you.

FISHERMAN

She will be our daughter, I tell you, if you only give her time. She will forget all her wild kindred and no longer be the sister of winds and waves. And when she loves a man, as woman loves, then the something you speak of will come into her face, and we shall be proud of her, and have our little grandchildren at our knees . . .

WIFE

I think not, I think not. She does not come to you when you call. Call her, she will not obey!

FISHERMAN

Hark, what was that? I thought I heard a cry. It is the second time I have heard a cry. [*He goes to the window: there is a knock at the door.*]

THE VOICE OUTSIDE

Let me in, let me in, for the love of God!

FISHERMAN

Shall I open, shall I open the door, good wife?

WIFE

Better not. It is Kühleborn, it may be, Kühleborn, spirit of evil, disguised in some mad shape, come to mock at us.

FISHERMAN

Act I

But it may be some Christian soul. Yet who can be abroad on so wild a night ?

[The knocking is repeated, and the same voice.]

WIFE

It may be Fate, good husband, knocking at our doors. One must open the door when Fate knocks.

FISHERMAN

[Going to door.] Come in, come in. I pray God all may be well.

Enter COUNT HULDBRAND, *wet from the storm.*

HULDBRAND

I thank you, good friends. Peace be with you. I am worn and wasted with travel, and I would fain rest awhile, if I may. Good Lord, how the wind blows to-night ! *[He shivers.]*

WIFE

Come to the fire, and welcome, sir. It is ill to be abroad in storms like these.

[HULDBRAND throws off cloak, and comes towards fire.]

FISHERMAN

We ask no questions, sir. We give all we can, warmth and shelter.

WIFE

Nay, but we can give some poor morsel to eat, if the knight be hungry.

HULDBRAND

I am hungry, good mother—and cold and wet. *[Sits down.]*

Act I

The FISHERMAN bestirs himself to put bread and cheese and beer from a cupboard on the table, the KNIGHT watching him awhile, and then gazing into the fire abstractedly.

HULDBRAND

[*After a moment's pause.*] You have not asked my name, good friends, but I owe it to you and to your hospitality to tell you. I am Count Huldbrand of Ringstetten—perchance you know the castle?

FISHERMAN

Ay, ay. I have heard of it.

HULDBRAND

But what a forest! What a forest! [*Looks into the fire gloomily.*]

FISHERMAN

You lost your way in our forest, sir?

HULDBRAND

Yes . . . All the devils of the air are abroad to-night!

WIFE

Ay, ay. They ride the horses of the wind, and the spirits of the forest come to meet them. Trouble and woe, trouble and woe for those who have to pass them, when they are at play!

HULDBRAND

[*Shudders.*] And the voices, and the whisperings, and the thunder of their laughter! I was mad to try the journey.

FISHERMAN

You were put to some proof, sir?

HULDBRAND

No—well, in one fashion, yes. I was bidden by the

lady Bertalda, the queen of the tourney, to pass through the forest. I could not be her liege-knight if I did not accept her challenge. But it was a fool's errand I was sent upon. I lost my horse, for he was frightened and threw me, and galloped into the night. And I was forced to make my way as best I could on foot. It was a fool's errand—just to win a lady's smile. May I eat, good mother?

FISHERMAN

Ay, sir, eat and drink. It is humble fare, but you are welcome.

[The KNIGHT eats silently and there is silence. Suddenly there is a splash of water on the window panes and a peal of laughter. The KNIGHT starts.]

HULDBRAND

What was that?

FISHERMAN

Nay, sir, do not start, it is only my wild madcap of a daughter, playing us one of her tricks.

HULDBRAND

Your daughter? And abroad such a night as this?

FISHERMAN

Yes, our daughter, Undine. She has ever been fond of some roguery. But I would that she would come back home.

WIFE

She is not of our kith and kin, Sir Knight. We lost our own bairn, and heavy was our sorrow. Then was this child, Undine, found asleep on the edge of the lake. And we took her, and have brought her up as our own. But in nature she belongs not to us, but to the waters whence she came. Undine, the child of the wave.

Act I

FISHERMAN

Come, come, good wife. She will grow to be our very own in time. She is but seventeen as yet. And dearer to us every year that passes. [*Goes to the window, opens it and listens.*] But I would fain see her face and know that she is safe. Undine! Undine!

HULDBRAND

It cannot be well that she should be out and abroad to-night.

FISHERMAN

I am going out to find her, good wife. I cannot sleep in peace, if she be not returned.

HULDBRAND

And I will go with you and help you.

FISHERMAN

Nay, sir, I would not trouble you. You have had walking enough to-night.

HULDBRAND

I am stronger now. Come, Fisherman, we will find her. [*Puts on cloak and hat and they go out together.*]

WIFE

[*Left alone, puts away the eatables in the cupboard and then goes on spinning.*] We do not know when Fate comes to our doors, for she comes in many guises. But she must always come in . . . there are no bolts and bars that will keep her out. As I sit here and spin I think of many things, and sometimes I know when Fate's moment has arrived. Dark and strange is the forest, and dark and strange the figure which moves through it . . . moving, moving to our doors. What will the morrow bring? That which is born of to-day. It is fated, it cannot be altered.

[*A chorus outside sings softly.*]

CHORUS OF FATE

Act I

High in the spaces of sky
Reigns inaccessible Fate :
Yields she to prayer or to cry ?
Answers she early or late ?

Change and re-birth and decay,
Dawning and darkness and light—
Creatures they are of a day,
Lost in a pitiless night.

Men are like children who play
Unknown by an unknown sea :
Centuries vanish away—
She waits—the eternal She.

Nay, but the Gods are afraid
Of the hoary Mother's nod ;
They are of things that are made,
She the original God.

They have seen dynasties fall
In ruin of what has been :
Her no upheavals appal—
Silent, unmoved, and serene.

Silent, unmoved, and serene,
Reigns in a world uncreate,
Eldest of Gods and their Queen,
Featureless, passionless Fate.

[*The FISHERMAN'S WIFE puts away
spinning-wheel and exit to her room.*

Act I

SCENE 2.

Enter COUNT HULDBRAND *with* UNDINE. *Both are wet with the rain, and UNDINE's hair is blown about her face. UNDINE is very quiet, with large wistful eyes.*

HULDBRAND

I have found you, Undine. . . . I have found you at last.

UNDINE

Yes, you have found me. You were always sure to find me, for I have known you a long time past!

HULDBRAND

But how can that be, Undine? I knew your name, for your foster-father has told me, and your strange, wild history. But how do you know me? I have never seen you before, nor have you seen me.

UNDINE

I do not know your name—but that does not matter. What is your name?

HULDBRAND

Huldbbrand—the Count Huldbbrand, who lives in the castle of Ringstetten.

UNDINE

Huldbbrand, Huldbbrand. I will try to remember your name. But your name does not matter. I have known you a long time.

HULDBRAND

No, no, Undine . . . that is impossible.

UNDINE

Does it seem to you so strange? But I have dreamt of you, and dreams tell the truth.

HULDBRAND

Act I

When have you dreamt of me, Undine ?

UNDINE

Oh, deep down in the blue waters, where all my childhood was spent. There were miles and miles of blue sea above me, and all my fathers and brothers and kinsmen were about me, and Kühleborn used to watch me with his big eyes.

HULDBRAND

Who is Kühleborn ?

UNDINE

Hush ! . . . you must not speak his name. He is my uncle, and he never liked me to dream, because he knew that in dreams I ceased to belong to the sea. Dreams always take one into another world, and then one gets restless. All love of change is born of dreams. And if one desires change, then the old world slips away and the new thing happens to one—the strange new thing which is to give one a soul. . . .

HULDBRAND

What do you mean, Undine ?

UNDINE

They told me I had no soul, it was Kühleborn who told me. “You have no soul, Undine,” he said, “what is the good of dreaming ?” And I said, “But it is a soul I want ; why should I not dream ?” And he used to shake his head and turn away. But for me the passion grew stronger and stronger, the passion for the new thing, the passion for a soul. And it was you whom I saw, you who were to give me a soul. That is why I have come up out of the deep waters to find you. . . . Long time have I known you, Huldbrand——

HULDBRAND

You are very beautiful, Undine.

Act I

UNDINE

Can one be beautiful if one has no soul? I do not think so. The soul must look out of the eyes. In the deep world below the waters there are many shapes and bodies and limbs which are beautiful, but no beautiful faces, no beautiful eyes . . . they are all soulless . . .

HULDBRAND

You are more beautiful than the women of my world, Undine.

UNDINE

The women of your world, Huldbrand? Are they beautiful? Tell me of them . . . I have only seen my foster-mother. [*Laughs.*] Have you seen many fair women, Huldbrand?

HULDBRAND

Yes, Undine.

UNDINE

Fairer than I am?

HULDBRAND

Yes. . . . I do not know . . .

UNDINE

Beautiful women? Have you seen one most beautiful woman? For to all of us there must be one most beautiful thing—that for which the body is athirst and the heart craves. I saw that in my dream—a face and a shape like yours, Huldbrand. And that is why I knew you when you came. But you—have you seen the one most beautiful woman?

HULDBRAND

I do not know, Undine—perhaps—I thought so—once.

UNDINE

You thought so once? When did you think so? Tell me about her. What was her name?

HULDBRAND

Act I

Never mind about her? Let us speak about you.

UNDINE

No, no, I want to know her name. Should I like her?

HULDBRAND

Her name was Bertalda.

UNDINE

Bertalda—it is a beautiful name. But I do not like her. Why do I not like her? Was she good to you? Do you love her?

HULDBRAND

I do not know—perhaps.

UNDINE

Whose are those colours you are wearing? Are they Bertalda's?

HULDBRAND

[Smiling.] Yes. . . . But . . .

UNDINE

[Takes his hand and puts her teeth to it.] I hate her . . . I hate Bertalda! [Her manner gets wilder.]

HULDBRAND

Oh, little cat! Why did you bite me?

UNDINE

[Gets up and goes away from him.] What did Bertalda make you do? For all women make men do something.

HULDBRAND

You hurt me, Undine. Why did you bite me?

UNDINE

Because I hate Bertalda. What did she make you do?

Act I

HULDBRAND

She made me come through the forest. She was the queen of the tourney, and I wore her colours and had to do what she ordained. And she challenged me to go alone through the enchanted forest. But the forest brought me to you, Undine.

UNDINE

Ah, yes, the forest! I knew what must have happened to you there. You had a strange time in the forest! [*Waltzing with slow steps.*] Many of my kinsmen were round you, Arkël and Sibol and Harald, and—Kühleborn! They were round you all the time, and they—teased you! [*Laughs.*]

HULDBRAND

Yes—yes . . . but it is over now.

UNDINE

[*Still moving in slow dancing steps.*] I heard them calling, calling all night. The spirit of the storm, and the spirit of the trees, and the spirit of the waters. I knew that they were holding high revels. And once the voices were so loud that I went out, but they would not listen to me. And again, a little later, I heard them crying—"He is coming! He is coming! But Undine must not know! Stop him! Stop him! Bind him with your chains! Let him never get out of the forest, lest Undine should see him and love him!" I heard them plainly enough. [*Stops dancing.*] But it was fated that you should come here, and that I should see you, and that I should love you. [*Sings.*]

There was a kingdom fair to see,
But pale, so pale, with never a rose :
The cold wind blows across the lea,
Westward the pale sun goes.

There was a maiden, soft and dear,
 But pale, so pale, with never a rose :
 Each quivering eyelid holds a tear,
 Sea-ward her sad heart goes . . .

[Ends with almost a sob.]

You will not go away again, Huldbrand? *[Sits down again.]*

HULDBRAND

No—I shall not go away again.

UNDINE

You will not leave me?

HULDBRAND

No—I shall not leave you.

UNDINE

Am I beautiful, am I beautiful, Huldbrand?

HULDBRAND

Yes, yes.

UNDINE

More beautiful than all? More beautiful than—
 Bertalda? *[Comes over to him and puts her hand on his
 shoulder.]*

HULDBRAND

Yes. Put your face near mine. Ah, you are beautiful,
 Undine! You are like the spring coming over the fields.
 You are the dawn coming over the waters. You are the
 first star that shines when the sun has gone down and
 the twilight creeps over the land. You are the flower of
 the earth, the fine-spun foam of the sea! You are
 beautiful—beautiful!

UNDINE

Do you love me—do you love me, Huldbrand?

HULDBRAND

Yes, I love you, Undine. Put your face close to me—

Act I close. Your mouth—give me your mouth. Your sweet, full lips. Ah! [*He kisses her.*] Why do you tremble, dear?

UNDINE

I love you, Huldbrand—I shall always love you. [*She kisses him.*]

SCENE 3.

Enter FISHERMAN with a priest, PRIEST HEILMANN, both very wet. UNDINE goes forward to greet the FISHERMAN.

FISHERMAN

Undine [*embraces her*], you have come back, thank the good Lord for His mercies. I knew you would come back. [*Turning to KNIGHT.*] You found her, Sir Knight? Nay, you might have let me know. I searched long and far, and all in vain!

HULDBRAND

And I only went down to the little river, and there on the opposite bank was Undine. I crossed the river—though she waded me back, for she knew the current to be strong—and the waves tore and tugged at me as I waded across. But I would not have Undine touch the water again.

FISHERMAN

You carried her over the water? [*The KNIGHT assents.*] And you, Undine . . . are you glad to be home? You have made me very anxious to-night.

UNDINE

Yes, I am glad to be home. [*She is very quiet throughout this scene. She sits in a corner of the room, watching every one with big thoughtful eyes.*]

HULDBRAND

But you, too, have found some one? [*indicating the PRIEST.*]

FISHERMAN

Act I

Yes. Come forward to the fire, Priest Heilmann. Your dress is dripping with to-night's storm.

PRIEST

It is a good deed you have done in that you saved me to-night. I thought to die in the forest. But God was good to me. Perchance He hath still some work for His servant to do. [*Looks at KNIGHT and UNDINE.*]

FISHERMAN

Come, let us draw close to the fire, all of us. My old wife, I take it, has gone to bed. But we can talk awhile. Take some food and drink. [*The PRIEST shakes his head.*] The storm is dying down, I think.

PRIEST

Nay, still the clouds press low upon the earth, and the wind is still moaning round the eaves of the cottage, and the waters are running in mad course—the waters which divide us from the mainland, and bring us nearer this strange lake. The lake, too, is full of voices. What do they say to you, Fisherman? What do they say to you, Sir Knight?

FISHERMAN

To me they say that Undine is returned.

HULDBRAND

And to me that Undine is won.

PRIEST

And to me that God hath still some work for His servant to do. Nay, what was that?

[*There is a burst of rain upon the window, which forces it open. All of them sit still and look fearfully out into the darkness. UNDINE slowly rises, and remains standing, spellbound. The voice of KÜHLEBORN is heard singing.*

Act I

[KÜHLEBORN *sings.*]

A night of storm
 And a night of woe !
 And the sailors bold
 And the ships of old
 Are hidden and buried for aye
 In the deep sea's mystery—
 Long, long ago !

The ships are torn
 And the men are dead :
 And their names are lost
 And their bones are tost
 Hither and thither, to and fro,
 Where no man may see and no man know—
 I' the deep sea's bed !

HULDBRAND

Whose voice was that ?

UNDINE

It was Kühleborn's. [*She goes over to the window, muttering some words, and moving her arms. The window closes again. The PRIEST holds up the cross hanging on his girdle.*]

PRIEST

There is witchery here. Devil or angel, man or fiend,
 I bid thee leave us. . . . I ban thee from our sight . . .

FISHERMAN

Nay, Father, we hear many such sounds, night and day. I pray you, be not concerned. For Undine knows how to govern these spirits. She talks to them in their own tongue, and they obey. Draw nearer the fire. The whole night has been alive with voices.

HULDBRAND

Ay, that is true. [*He shudders.*]

PRIEST

And for me it hath been a night of peril and of trial.
 The devil in many shapes hath been at my side : and

strange, muttering shapes of temptation and sin have plucked at my girdle. . . . Not only storm and wind and rain have buffeted me. These I could bear. But hell hath been let loose and all Satan's messengers have been abroad. Fiends have sate upon the back of winds, and the thunder hath echoed words of fearful blasphemy. . . . Is my penance complete, O God, is my penance complete? [UNDINE looks at him with wonder. Act I

UNDINE

What is your penance, good Father ?

HULDBRAND

Is there some sin for which you have had to atone ?
Tell us, if your lips be not sealed.

[UNDINE comes forward with her eyes fixed on the PRIEST, and sits by the side of the KNIGHT on the ground, with her head resting against his knee.

PRIEST

Ay, I will tell you. For it is ill to bear a burden alone. Seven days ago I set out from a convent, because for me there was no longer a life within its holy walls. Only by suffering could I redeem what I had done. I had failed to save a soul.

UNDINE

Failed to save a human soul? [She watches him intently.]

PRIEST

An old man was dying, and to me it had been ordered to take to him the holy elements ere he died. I was to be with him at eleven—no later, for he was sinking fast, and I had some journey to travel ere I could reach him. But at ten deep sleep overcame me, I know not from what cause. And when I awoke at last and hurried to his side, it was too late. He was dead. His soul had

Act I gone unshriven to the other world, and the fault was mine, the fault was mine! Eternally mine! [*He covers his face with his hands.*]

HULDBRAND

Nay, but we cannot help the tyranny of sleep.

PRIEST

Sir Knight, can a man win the whole world if the cost be the loss of a soul? The fault was mine, the sin was grievous. There could be no excuse or pardon for a sin like this. Many waters will not wash away the deep stain of wilful transgression.

HULDBRAND

And the penance, Father?

PRIEST

The abbot bade me wander forth on a hopeless quest. I was to seek through all the land, nor ever rest by day or night in the shelter of a home, until I had given a soul—given a soul in compensation for the soul I had lost. Is this not a hopeless task? For where and how can I give that with which all human beings are born—God's gracious gift of a soul, which lifts us from the brute? Nay, even now I am wrong to linger here. I may not take shelter in a home, till my task be done. And that, alas, it can never be! Woe is me, for I am undone, for ever and ever! God's penance is harder than I can bear!

[*He rises slowly from his seat with a deep sigh.*

UNDINE goes over to him and lays her hand on his arm.

UNDINE

Holy Father, what is a soul?

FISHERMAN

Hear the child! What is a soul? Why, we all know that! Nay, mind her not, Father,

HULDBRAND

Act I

But let the child speak, and let the Father answer.
What is a soul?

PRIEST

Ah, my child, I can only tell in part. It is that by which we live in this world and that by which we hope to live in the world to come. God gives it to us that we may be removed from the beasts that perish, and that we may know Him . . .

UNDINE

Does it hurt, the soul?

FISHERMAN

Why, what means this strange question? How can the soul hurt? Hush, hush, Undine . . .

HULDBRAND

I think I know what Undine means. . . . Is it true that things have more power to hurt us because we have a soul?

PRIEST

Ay, ay. Evil can hurt us, because we have a soul. Passion and sin can stain our lives, remorse can sting our conscience, because we have a soul. But . . .

UNDINE

Is it good to be hurt, to be stained, to be stung . . . ?

PRIEST

My child, it hath been so ordained, that by suffering men should become good.

UNDINE

Can one love without a soul? [*Looking away from* PRIEST *and nestling against* HULDBRAND.] You can tell me, Huldrand, for the Father knows little, maybe, about love.

Act I

HULDBRAND

Tell me yourself, Undine, for indeed I cannot say——

UNDINE

I think one may love without a soul . . . as the birds and the beasts love. But the love of human beings seems to be different from this. I cannot explain it altogether, but there seems to look from the eyes of men and women something which will make the man die for the woman, and the woman live for the man. Before we love, we think mostly for ourselves, but when we love we think always, always, always, for that which is more than ourselves . . . the thing to which the heart clings. [*The storm seems to rise again without.*] [*With a change of manner.*] Hark! I hear the wind sighing and the waters moaning! Kühleborn, Kühleborn. . . . No, no, I do not want a soul! I want to be free—free! Kühleborn! [*She goes to the window, throws it open and looks out. Then turning round.*] Shall I sing to you, good Father? Listen to the song of the winds and waters.

[*She chants the same song that KÜHLEBORN had sung, and as she sings, a soft chorus outside, repeating the same words, grows louder and louder.*

[*UNDINE sings.*]

A night of storm
 And a night of woe!
 And the sailors bold
 And the ships of old
 Are hidden and buried for aye
 In the deep sea's mystery—
 Long, long ago!

The ships are torn
 And the men are dead:
 And their names are lost
 And their bones are tost
 Hither and thither, to and fro,
 Where no man may see and no man know—
 I' the deep sea's bed!

PRIEST

[*Rises and goes over to her.*] Child, what are you? I conjure you to tell me. [*He raises the crucifix and* UNDINE *is cowed.*]

UNDINE

I am Undine, the child of the wave . . . I cannot harm you. But you can harm me. No—I do not want a soul. It frightens me, it frightens me!

PRIEST

[*To FISHERMAN.*] Whose child is this?

FISHERMAN

It is ours, holy Father, my wife's and mine. It has been ours for many, many years.

UNDINE

No—no. I am the child of the sea-depths, born of the foam and the surge. My father is the Lord of the Mediterranean, and Kühleborn is my uncle; and my cousins are Arkël, and Sibol, and Harald! I want no soul! I want no soul! Why should I suffer pain and sorrow and remorse?

PRIEST

Child, God hath sent me to you: He hath still some work for His servant to do. Is it not strange that I should come after seven days' wandering—I that had lost a human soul by my folly and neglect—to find that I may, if Heaven so will, give a soul? . . . I do not rightly understand who you are, nor what is the strange kinship with the winds and waves of which you boast. But this at least I dimly see . . . that you are soulless, and that God gives you the chance, the one chance, to become human and to know Him . . .

UNDINE

[*Petulantly.*] I am the spirit of the dancing waters. I will have nothing to do with your pain and sorrow and

Act I remorse. . . . Kühleborn, Kühleborn! [*She goes to the window and opens it.*]

PRIEST

Then my penance must remain unfulfilled; the hard yoke laid on me . . . I must go forth from your home, Fisherman . . . I must fare on my way alone . . .

FISHERMAN

[*Anxiously.*] Undine, have you no pity for the holy Father?

HULDBRAND

Undine, Undine! Do you renounce my love? You cannot love without a human soul. You said so yourself. [*UNDINE looks wistfully at HULDBRAND.*] And your dreams, Undine? Did you not dream that you would find me and put your hand in mine? Was not this the passion of your youth? Why, then, do you start back—now when the time comes to win a human soul? Have you forgotten, have you forgotten, Undine?

UNDINE

[*Slowly.*] No, I have not forgotten. [*She shuts the window, against which there comes a rattle of water and wind.*] Peace, peace, Kühleborn! It is fated that so it should be. No one can escape the thing that is doomed! And it is better that I should live the new life . . .

PRIEST

God be with thee, my daughter, for thou seest more than all of us. It may be that thou wilt suffer if thou becomest human; but thou shalt know joy and sorrow and love—the things which are of great price. And for awhile, maybe, thou shalt taste all the blessedness of human warmth and the kindness of human hearts . . .

UNDINE

[*Whose manner has become very quiet and who has come*

back to HULDBRAND.] Say it again, say it again, Huldbrand ! Act I

HULDBRAND

Say what again, Undine ?

UNDINE

That you love me.

HULDBRAND

I love you, Undine.

UNDINE

I love you, Huldbrand. I shall always love you. [*She kisses him.*]

[*Starting away.*] But will you always be kind to me ? Never say a harsh or bitter word ?

HULDBRAND

Never, never, Undine.

UNDINE

For, indeed, you must not be angry with me, if you would keep me by your side. Hark, how the spirits of the air are storming outside ! Hark, how Kühleborn raves ! For he knows that I am going away from him, from the old home . . . to the new home—where all will be strange. Never be angry with me, Huldbrand . . .

HULDBRAND

Never, Undine.

UNDINE

For if you speak bitter words to me, by the sea, or by the river, by running streams or dancing fountains, then will the spell be undone, and I shall go back to Kühleborn ! It is by love that I am winning a human soul, and if love fails then the human soul is lost. . . . Do you understand, Huldbrand ?

HULDBRAND

I understand. [*He gives her his hand.*]

Act I

UNDINE

Holy Father, give us your blessing. Make us man and wife.

PRIEST

[*Raises his hands over them as they kneel.*] If his love be thine and thine be his, then I pronounce you, Huldbrand and Undine, to be man and wife. God's blessing rest on you. [*They rise.*]

FISHERMAN

[*Embracing UNDINE.*] God be with you, my child. You are my child at last!

UNDINE

[*Going back to HULDBRAND.*] Say it again, say it again, Huldbrand!

HULDBRAND

I love you, I love you, Undine. [*They kiss.*]

ACT II

[*Some weeks elapse.*]

SCENE I.—*At Castle Ringstetten. It is midday. The scene is a large hall opening on a balustrade looking over the courtyard. There is a fountain with gushing water at the end of the hall. The hall is full of guests, as it is the day of welcome for COUNT HULDBRAND and his wife UNDINE. Among the guests are the FISHERMAN and his WIFE, whose appearance causes some surprise and derision; but they are evidently there for a purpose. Constant movement is seen in the crowd, and laughter. There are three Beggar Men and one Blind Man with dog on the steps.* Act II

FIRST BEGGAR

It is a good day for us when the Count comes home.

BLIND MAN

Is the day fair? Does the sun shine?

SECOND BEGGAR

The day is fair, but there is no sun; and there are dark clouds gathering in the west.

THIRD BEGGAR

And what may that mean? Can you tell us that?

BLIND MAN

Joy and sorrow combined: sorrow coming in the evening.

Act II

FIRST BEGGAR

But joy at midday. It is a good day for us when the Count comes home!

FISHERMAN

When does the Count come?

THIRD BEGGAR

We know not: he is waited for now.

WIFE

[*To blind man.*] Why sayest thou sorrow comes in the evening?

BLIND MAN

Nay, it is not given to me to say why. I see not with my eyes. I see only with the eyes of the soul.

WIFE

[*Shaking her head.*] Ay, ay, no one can tell how the day will end. What must be, will be.

FISHERMAN

And Undine comes too—Count Huldbrand's bride!

SECOND BEGGAR

[*Pointing.*] See how the water rises and falls in the fountain!

BLIND MAN

Is the water angry? Does it rise and fall as though in pain and fury?

WIFE

Why should the water be angry?

BLIND MAN

Nay, I know not. I only know that which I see with the eyes of my soul.

FIRST BEGGAR

It is a good day for us when the Count comes home!

Enter BERTALDA, with her foster-parents, who, being people of dignity, are shown up to the dais.

BERTALDA

[*To her parents.*] It is now some weeks since I saw Count Huldbrand, and I marvel at men's fickleness. For, indeed, when I saw him last he was the victor in the lists, and I the queen to whom, after his battles, he made obeisance. And he made me a certain promise and asked for my gloves. But I said that he should have my gloves only when he had been through the forest, wherein no man is safe, and come back to me again. And now he comes not to beg of me any guerdon for his loyalty and the performance of his word, but as a disloyal knight, who has fallen in love with some leman's eyes, and brings her home as his bride! Truly I marvel that a few weeks should make so great a change!

FISHERMAN

[*Coming up to her.*] I pray you, good lady, to pardon me, but how soon is the Lady Undine expected to arrive?

BERTALDA

[*Haughtily.*] You had better ask one of the attendants. I know no Lady Undine.

FISHERMAN

Not know the Lady Undine? Why, she is my daughter, and the wife of a worthy knight, Count Huldbrand of Ringstetten!

WIFE

Nay, she is no daughter of ours, I would have you know, fair lady, although my good man here is for ever thinking and saying so. She is our foster-daughter, given us by kind Heaven, when our own was lost. [*To herself.*] I know not how all this will betide!

Act II

THE PEOPLE

[*Watching eagerly and pointing to distance, suddenly raise a cheer.*] Long live Count Huldbrand! Long live Sir Huldbrand of Ringstetten!

BERTALDA

Worthy knight, indeed! And long live his wife, Undine, the fisherman's daughter!

FISHERMAN

[*Eagerly.*] Ay, ay. I say Amen to that! Long live Undine!

THE PEOPLE

[*Laughing at him.*] Thy daughter! A likely story! Tell us, old greybeard! [*They crowd round him.*]

FISHERMAN

Ay, sirs, she is my daughter. At least [*looking round anxiously for fear of his wife's correction*] she is our foster-daughter—a fair girl and a beautiful, and the very apple of my eye——

WIFE

Nay, good man, hold thy tongue. Dost see how all the folk are laughing at thee?

BERTALDA

There is good cause for laughter if this tale be true. I am glad I let the old man talk. [*Coming over to FISHERMAN.*] She is your daughter, old fisherman?

FISHERMAN

Ay, my lady, our foster-daughter.

BERTALDA

And her name is—what did you say?

FISHERMAN

Undine, my lady.

BERTALDA

And how came she to be Count Huldbrand's wife ?

FISHERMAN

The Count came to my cottage—my cottage by the lake—through the forest, the dreadful forest, wherein no man is safe ; and because rest is sweet after toil, and safety welcome after danger, he fared well and happily with me and my old wife.

BERTALDA

Yes—and Undine ?

FISHERMAN

She is a child of springs and seas and running water, and she found grace in the eyes of the Knight. So they were wed, and a Priest, who was with us, gave her his blessing and made them man and wife.

WIFE

I wonder at thee, that thou talkest so much. What matters all this to the good lady ?

BERTALDA

Nay, I thank you, good fisherman. [*Goes up.*]

THE PEOPLE

[*Shouting.*] They come, they come ! Here are the Count and his bride. Long live the Count Huldbrand ! Long live his bride !

[*There is a general commotion, while HULDBRAND and UNDINE, preceded by Heralds and Serving-men, appear at the balustrade, having come up from the courtyard, and then pass through hall to the dais. Loud acclamations are heard and then music and song of Choir. The Heralds blow a fanfare. UNDINE is looking here and there—with a pleased and happy smile—and as she sees FISHERMAN and WIFE she greets them heartily. Her eyes finally rest on the fountain and she grows pensive for a moment.*]

Act II

HULDBRAND

My friends! I thank you for your welcome home. I am glad of your presence here on a day which means so much for my happiness, and, I hope, yours also. And I present to you my bride—my bride, Undine, who is as joyful to be with you all as I am.

[*Cheers ; UNDINE bows and smiles.*

THE PEOPLE

Long live Count Huldbbrand's bride, Undine!

[BERTALDA and her foster-parents go up to HULDBRAND, who presents UNDINE to them. They remain talking while UNDINE slowly moves towards the fountain. She bends over it. The people are slowly filing out.

UNDINE

Kühleborn! Kühleborn! Will you not leave me this one day in peace? Nay, I know thy message, and I will deliver it faithfully. Peace, peace, Kühleborn!

BERTALDA

What says your wife, Sir Count? Did I not hear her speak?

HULDBRAND

No—I did not hear her say anything.

BERTALDA

I thought she said some words at the fountain. See, she is now wholly engrossed with the old fisherman and his wife. Perhaps she prefers their conversation to ours.

HULDBRAND

Why, yes, in some sort that may be true. They are her parents. Come hither, Undine.

[UNDINE comes back to dais.

BERTALDA

You know well the fisherman and his wife, it seems. Can it be true, as I have heard, that they are your parents?

UNDINE

[*With a slow, sweet smile.*] No—they were very good to me at the cottage by the lake. They are, in truth, my foster-parents. But I am not of their kin, I am the child of the waters.

HULDBRAND

Not now, Undine.

UNDINE

No—that is true. I was the child of the waters until I married you. Now I am Count Huldbrand's wife.

BERTALDA

[*Laughs*]. One cannot so easily change one's blood by marriage, Undine.

UNDINE

No, Bertalda, one cannot easily change one's blood. For you, too, hold to your own proper ancestry and carry about with you the blood of your father and mother.

BERTALDA

What do you mean? My parents came with me to this hall to wish you and the Count welcome.

UNDINE

Your foster-parents, Bertalda. But you do not belong to them, for you were given to them by the will of Heaven as a foundling. They have been very good to you, as my foster-parents have been to me; and you have lived with them now for many years, just as if you had been their very own. But I can give you your real father and mother. Your real father and mother are here! [*Pointing to FISHERMAN and WIFE.*]

BERTALDA

Mere fisherfolk!

HULDBRAND

What nonsense is this, Undine?

Act II

UNDINE

It is not nonsense, Huldbrand. I know what I am saying, for the secret has been told me—by those you wot of. These two, the fisherman and his wife, lost their child and then found me. Their lost child was taken to Ringstetten and she stands there! [*Pointing to BERTALDA.*] Are you not glad to find your kith and kin?

BERTALDA

Is your wife mad, Huldbrand?

HULDBRAND

Hush, hush, Undine, do not speak such wild words. All these things—secret messages, hidden mysteries, marvellous relationships—belong to your past. They have nothing to do with the present, remember.

UNDINE

But indeed, indeed, what I say is true. [*To BERTALDA.*] Are you not glad to find your father and mother? And you [*turning to FISHERMAN*], are you not glad to get back again your own child?

FISHERMAN

Nay, nay, you are my child, Undine; I want no other.

WIFE

And what have we to do with fine ladies! We live as we can, and we do that which Fate allows.

UNDINE

[*Half crying.*] Will no one believe me? Not you—or you—or you?

HULDBRAND

[*Sternly.*] Where did you learn these fancies, Undine? With whom have you been talking by the way? Are these two [*pointing to FISHERMAN and WIFE*] in this

plot? [*They shake their heads and move off.*] Or is this fine story only your invention? I had thought differently of you, Undine. Act II

BERTALDA

She wishes to get rid of me, Huldrand, that is what she desires.

UNDINE

There is no plot. There is no invention. It is true. He told me.

HULDRAND

He told you? Who? [*UNDINE is silent.*] Was it Heilmann, the priest? [*UNDINE is silent.*] Who was it? [*He comes over to her and seizes her by the hands.*] Tell me. You shall tell me.

UNDINE

[*Slowly.*] It was Kühleborn. Oh, let me go!

HULDRAND

[*Throwing her off.*] I thought all that was over. I hoped you were beginning a new life! But you have deceived me, it appears, Undine. You have made a mock at Bertalda. You have filled me with shame.

[*UNDINE, bursting into tears, goes sadly through the hall. The FISHERMAN and his WIFE hold out their hands to her, and she goes out with them. As she passes the steps the fountain bubbles furiously. FIRST BEGGAR MAN is on the steps.*]

FIRST BEGGAR MAN

It is a good day for us when the Count comes home!

SCENE 2.—BERTALDA and HULDRAND alone. *A silence.*

BERTALDA

I congratulate you on your wife, Huldrand.

Act II

HULDBRAND

Nay, she was overwrought—tired, maybe, with her journey.

BERTALDA

Is that so? To me she seemed not so much tired as——

HULDBRAND

As what, Bertalda?

BERTALDA

Well, if she was mad, there was some sense and method in her madness.

HULDBRAND

What do you mean?

BERTALDA

You must forgive me if I ask you a question, Huldrand. For, indeed, in some senses, I have a right to know. When you went through the forest and found Undine at the cottage by the lake, did you have some talk, you two, about each other and about the past? Did she tell you anything about herself, and did you tell her anything about yourself?

HULDBRAND

Yes, we talked—we talked of many things. But I do not, of course, remember all that we said.

BERTALDA

Oh, I know that Undine is more beautiful than I am, and beauty has its privileges. When a man talks to a beautiful woman he is not thinking of what she says, but of what she is. It is enough for him that something lovely and exquisite and gracious is before his eyes. So when you were talking to Undine, it was Undine's beauty you were thinking of, not of the precise words she was

uttering. But perhaps you may remember what you told her about yourself? Act II

HULDBRAND

Yes, Bertalda, I think I do.

BERTALDA

Did you tell her why you had passed through the forest, for example?

HULDBRAND

Yes, I said I was under some sort of challenge and promise, so that I must needs pass through—on the honour of my knighthood.

BERTALDA

And you mentioned my name?

HULDBRAND

Yes.

BERTALDA

Then I quite understand Undine's little plot, Huldbbrand!

HULDBRAND

Was it a plot, Bertalda?

BERTALDA

You gave it that name yourself! But if Undine knew that you loved me before you loved her—or, shall I say, that we had talked together before ever such a woman as Undine had been heard of—why it is just possible that she was—what shall I say?—jealous? You are silent, Huldbbrand—but is it not, at least, possible? And, after all, what do you know of Undine?

HULDBRAND

Bertalda, Bertalda, she is my wife.

Act II

BERTALDA

Yes, I know she is your wife, but what do you know of her, of her ancestry, of her character, her nature? Who is this Kühleborn of whom she speaks? And why does she mutter to herself when she thinks no one is noticing her? There is something strange and uncanny about her, and you know it.

HULDBRAND

Bertalda, she is my wife.

BERTALDA

Oh yes, she is your wife; but is she the wife for Count Huldrand of Ringstetten? How will Count Huldrand be able to live with all these Kühleborns and this love of fountains and this muttering of spells and incantations? What is Count Huldrand's place in a home shared with elves and sprites and hobgoblins? Have you thought of all this?

HULDBRAND

Oh, Bertalda, do not talk of these things; she is my wife.

BERTALDA

And I—have I no right to be heard? Is Bertalda so wholly forgotten? What were the words you said to me only a few weeks ago? For whose sake did you go through the forest? Who was the queen of the tourney when you fought so stoutly in the lists? Is it the same Huldrand who whispered soft words of love in my ear, and who asked of me, as the gage and testament of his plighted troth, my gloves? Will you ask of me my gloves now, Huldrand?

HULDBRAND

Bertalda, Bertalda . . .

BERTALDA

Ah, Huldbrand, Huldbrand, is man's memory so short? I have not forgotten, Huldbrand, for woman's love has deeper roots—it cannot be torn up and flung aside so easily. [*Coming close to him.*] Huldbrand, will you take my gloves now?

HULDBRAND

No, no—Bertalda . . .

BERTALDA

See, I offer them to you, Huldbrand. I will give you my gloves and you shall give me that little chain you wear. It shall be my necklace, and it shall never be taken from my neck. . . . Just for memory's sake, Huldbrand, will you grant me this little boon?

HULDBRAND

Yes, Bertalda [*slowly*], I will give you the chain and welcome. But your gloves I may not have . . . no—no . . . they cannot belong to me—now. [*Gives her the chain.*]

BERTALDA

Will you not put the chain round my neck, Huldbrand? For memory's sake? [*He is putting the chain round her neck. She holds up her face to him.*] For memory's sake, Huldbrand? [*He bends, as he kisses her.*]

[*The stage grows dark. The fountain plashes noisily. There is a flash, and KÜHLEBORN is heard singing. Terror of BERTALDA, who clings to HULDBRAND. In the midst of the turmoil, UNDINE comes in, and the stage grows light again. They start apart.*]

SCENE 3.

UNDINE

Kühleborn! Kühleborn! Will you never leave me

Act II free? Peace! Peace! [*She goes over to fountain, which becomes calmed.*]

HULDBRAND

I know not what sort of peace we are likely to have here, Undine. But is there never to be any breaking of the old ties which bind you to these spirits of yours? What kind of new life is this—such as you promised—nay, swore to me on your wedding-day? You are false to your oath, Undine.

UNDINE

Ah, Huldbrand, it is not I who am false to our oaths—the oaths we both made when we were wed. For, indeed, the spirit of the waters is not wroth without cause, nor is he wont to vex himself for naught. I know not what may have stirred his anger, but—

BERTALDA

Perhaps it is I, Undine.

UNDINE

Perhaps—I know not.

BERTALDA

[*To HULDBRAND.*] You hear how madly she is set on driving me forth? First, the false story about my parentage: and now the suspicion that I vex her attendant . . . devils!

HULDBRAND

For shame, for shame, Undine. What has Bertalda done that you thus pursue with spite and jealousy?

UNDINE

[*Sadly.*] I pursue her with spite and jealousy? Of what, then, should I be jealous? Nay, I know not whether it be she or you or I with whom the spirit of the waters is wroth. But, Huldbrand, I beseech you, look

not on me so coldly and strangely. Ask yourself what I have done. Have I failed in my wifely duty? Act II

HULDBRAND

These interruptions from the spirit world, this constant reminiscence that I won you in spite of winds and waves—they make me mad. I thought the old order had changed when Father Heilmann gave us his blessing.

BERTALDA

It is not likely to be a peaceful house, where spirits of evil are abroad.

UNDINE

[*With a sigh.*] We must have the fountain closed, Huldbrand.

HULDBRAND

The fountain? But it has been here in this hall for years. It belongs to my father and grandfather and the past generations of my house.

UNDINE

Nevertheless, I beg of you, have it closed. If there be a great stone placed on the top, so that no water can bubble through, then the spirits of the water cannot make their presence known, and I shall be at rest and you once more content with me.

BERTALDA

Close the fountain? What silly tale is this? For myself I like the fountain!

[*She goes over to it, playing with the necklace which HULDBRAND had given her.*]

UNDINE

Bertalda, Bertalda, do not go near the fountain!

BERTALDA

Why not? I am not afraid of it. I have known it

Act II for years. Dear fountain, we are old friends, are we not?

[*She bends over it. Suddenly a hand comes from the fountain and snatches the necklace away.*

BERTALDA gives a cry.

BERTALDA

Oh, my necklace, my necklace!

UNDINE

Bertalda, what is it? What have you lost?

BERTALDA

My necklace, my necklace! The necklace which Huldbrand gave me! Give it back to me! [*She holds out imploring hands to the fountain.*]

UNDINE

[*Slowly.*] The necklace Huldbrand gave you? When? Why? Oh, Huldbrand! [*She covers her face with her hands.*]

BERTALDA

My necklace! Can you not help me, Undine? You are in league with these spirits! Ask them to give it back!

UNDINE

Am I to help her, Huldbrand?

HULDBRAND

[*Turning away.*] Of course. If you can, Undine.

UNDINE

Very well, if you wish it.

[*UNDINE goes slowly over to the fountain, and, bending over it, sings a little crooning song.*

I weave the spell of the wayside streams

Where the wise old willows grow :

There is peace, there is peace, 'neath the tender beams

When the westering sun is low.

I weave the spell of the twilight hour
Which all mortal things obey ;
There is sleep, there is sleep, when the shadows lower
At the close of the long, long day.

[*Then she dips her hand into the water and brings out another necklace, made of coral, which she offers to BERTALDA.*

UNDINE

Here, Bertalda.

BERTALDA

But this coral gaud is not my necklace ! I want no present from your evil spirits, Undine. I want the necklace with great pearls which Huldbrand gave me. Huldbrand, speak to her ; speak to this sorceress of yours, who is not content with her lies and slander, but steals . . . what is yours and mine . . .

HULDBRAND

[*Striding over to fountain.*] Come, come, I have had enough of this. I do not choose to have my presents exchanged in this fashion ! [*He seizes the coral necklace from BERTALDA's hands and flings it away.*] There ! I wash my hands of all your devilries !

UNDINE

[*Covers her face and bursts out weeping.*] Oh, Huldbrand, Huldbrand !

HULDBRAND

Is it not time ? Have I not borne with all this foolery long enough ? When I married you, I did not marry all the wild heritage of the past. I married you for what you are—not for what you had been. The Undine whom I brought away from the cottage by the lake was quiet, tender, submissive . . . not a witch in league with spirits !

Act II

UNDINE

Oh, Huldbrand—and am I not even now quiet, tender, submissive? Can I help it that when you bring me near fountains and streams and running water the old links which bound me to the sea, with my father in the Mediterranean and with Kühleborn, revive and grow strong again? Did I not warn you of this? Did I not, only a moment ago, bid you close up this fountain for fear of what might happen? Did I not beg Bertalda not to go near?

HULDBRAND

I have nothing to do with all this. I only know that Undine my wife must have no relations with Undine the daughter of the floods! I thought that this was your promise when we plighted our troth in the cottage.

UNDINE

Oh, be patient, dear Huldbrand. For it only needs a little patience, a little love, a little sympathy, and all will be well. Gradually the whole past will wear itself away and be forgotten like a dream. But you must love me, you must love me, Huldbrand! Only love can work the miracle of change, or bring a soul to its full maturity.

BERTALDA

[*Laughs.*] The daughter of the fisherman is too modest! Listen to the small and insignificant boon she asks!

UNDINE

Nay, it is not much for love to ask or love to grant.

HULDBRAND

And *my* life meanwhile? Is it to be one constant storm, haunted by all these demons of evil who scruple not to rob by force the gifts I choose to make? Or is it only to you that I may be allowed to give gifts?

UNDINE

Oh, Huldbrand, why did you give your necklace to Bertalda ?

HULDBRAND

Ah, there, I suppose, is the root of the whole matter, Undine. But understand me, once for all, I shall give gifts when the fancy takes me, and I shall give them to whomsoever I choose.

[The fountain bubbles up once more.]

UNDINE

[Looking with alarm at the fountain.] Oh, Huldbrand, I beg of you not to speak so loudly !

BERTALDA

[Laughs once more.] Are you master in your own house, Huldbrand ?

HULDBRAND

I intend to be, and my wife must be something different from this . . . witch.

[Fountain bubbles up again.]

UNDINE

[Throwing herself on her knees before him.] Oh, Huldbrand, Huldbrand, do not say such terrible words ! See—I will do all you ask. I will try to be the wife you wish, there is no single thought or desire of yours that I will not seek to understand, and—if it be possible for me—carry out. I will work for you, tend you in health or sickness, surround you with my tenderest love, live for nothing else save you—you—you. Only do not look at me so angrily ; do not say such cruel words. Remember that I warned you, and you promised not to be angry with me. You promised, you promised, Huldbrand. Have you forgotten ?

HULDBRAND

Will you banish once for all these associates of yours,

Act II

who live in fountains and waters? Will you swear to me that there shall be no more interruptions from the spirit world? Will you break this power which Kühleborn exercises over you and over my house? Am I to have peace or war?

UNDINE

Be patient, be patient, Huldbrand.

HULDBRAND

No, I will not be patient. I mean to have peace. Will you swear to me that henceforth you . . .

[Fountain bubbles with greater violence.]

UNDINE

Oh, Huldbrand, you know I cannot yet . . . it is not possible yet . . .

HULDBRAND

[Furious.] Very well, then, my mind is made up. In the name of all the witches, go and live with them, and leave us mortals in peace! Sorceress as you are, there is no room for you in my house! Out of my sight . . . witch! *[There is a blinding flash of lightning, the stage grows dark. KÜHLEBORN comes forth from the fountain and clasps UNDINE in his arms. There is a long roll of thunder.]*

UNDINE

[As she fades away.] Huldbrand . . . Huldbrand . . .

[Terror of BERTALDA, who runs to HULDBRAND.]

He holds her close for a moment. He then sternly repels her, and she runs out. HULDBRAND, left alone, stands for a moment, gazing fixedly after UNDINE, takes a few steps after her, and returns. Then falls on his knees and holds out his hands.

HULDBRAND

Undine . . . Undine . . .

ACT III

[*A week elapses.*]

SCENE I—*A wild gorge of the mountains near Ringstetten Act III through which a stream runs. It is late afternoon, which, as the scene progresses, changes through sunset to twilight. There are large boulders and rocks. On the crest of one of the enviroing hills is a wayside crucifix. FATHER HEILMANN and a SHEPHERD meet in the gorge.*

HEILMANN

[*To SHEPHERD.*] You are searching for something ?

SHEPHERD

Ay. It is difficult to find them sometimes when they stray away.

HEILMANN

What is it you are looking for ?

SHEPHERD

A sheep.

HEILMANN

I will help you, for I too am looking for something.

SHEPHERD

What is it ?

HEILMANN

A human soul. It is difficult to find it sometimes when it strays away.

Act III

SHEPHERD

Ay, ay, maybe I shall find my sheep before you find your human soul.

HEILMANN

I don't know. It is possible. Shall we help each other?

SHEPHERD

I am willing enough. But I know a sheep when I see it, and . . .

HEILMANN

You do not know a human soul?

SHEPHERD

[With a laugh.] Well—no. It is your business, human souls: just as mine is sheep.

HEILMANN

Yes, we are both shepherds. You know the country well?

SHEPHERD

I ought to. I have been over it since I was a boy. But the sheep are foolish things, when you leave them by themselves, and sometimes they fall down the gorge and break their legs.

HEILMANN

Yes, yes. Human souls are foolish things, too, when left to themselves. They are very apt to fall, or else they are driven away by cruelty or stupidity or carelessness; and then it is a long search to recover them again.

SHEPHERD

[Who has climbed up, and stands by the crucifix.] You will see the country better, if you stand up here.

HEILMANN

Yes. The Cross will help both you and me.

[He climbs up. Meanwhile HULDBRAND comes down the gorge. There is a distant hullo.]

SHEPHERD

Ah, Father, there is my mate calling to me. Mayhap, he has found the sheep! Good luck be with you!

[*Exit.*]

HEILMANN

And God aid you!

[*They both disappear over the crest of the mountain.*][HULDBRAND *sits and sings.*]

Why do you turn away,
Face that was always kind?
If life hath gone astray,
Is nothing left behind?

You ask—must this be true,
We pass and we forget;
With love for what is new,
For old a bare regret?

Not so: in worlds grown gray,
New good we shall not find;
Why do you turn away,
Face that was always kind?

HEILMANN

[*Re-enters.*] Ah, here is one of my penitents! Has he found his sheep, I wonder? [*He climbs down.*]

HULDBRAND

Father Heilmann, you? Let me help you.

HEILMANN

Nay, let me help you, my son. I think you need it more than I. You have not found Undine?

HULDBRAND

No. I have not seen her since she disappeared from Ringstetten. I have looked everywhere, but Kühleborn keeps his secret well.

HEILMANN

Have you asked yourself why she had to leave you?

Act III

HULDBRAND

Oh, Father, I know full well. I was wroth with her, exceeding wroth : and that, too, when I had promised never to be angry with her. I have done wrong, Father, a great, irremediable wrong ! And now she has left me for ever !

HEILMANN

And Bertalda ?

HULDBRAND

Speak not of her. She was to blame as well as I. I drove her from the castle. I shall not see her again.

HEILMANN

My son, you have done grievous wrong. But we must both look for Undine, lest she perish for ever. The burden lies as heavy on me as on you.

HULDBRAND

Nay, Father, you have not driven her away.

HEILMANN

But it was I who helped to give her a human soul. Her love for you inspired her with longing : the clasp of your arms fulfilled her desire. But it was the Divine blessing that my lips were allowed to utter which set the seal on the bond. And as I found a human soul to lift off my own shoulders the penance that was set on me : so must I re-discover it again to save a human soul from perdition. Woe is me, if I find her not !

HULDBRAND

Must she perish, if we find her not ?

HEILMANN

Surely—for then she returns to the spirits and demons from whom we delivered her.

HULDBRAND

[*Sadly.*] Nay—may it not be better that she should return to her old home ? Was she not a stranger in

our midst, an exile amongst men of rough speech and wild ways, such as I? Act III

HEILMANN

And you, my son, what will you do without her?

HULDBRAND

Mea culpa! I have done wrong and I must suffer.
[Sits down wearily by a stone.]

HEILMANN

[Mounting the pass again.] Come up to the Cross, my son! The Cross may help you. [He goes over the crest of the hill and disappears.]

SCENE 2.—BERTALDA is seen coming down the gorge. The sun is setting.

HULDBRAND

[Rests his head upon his hand.] Nay, how shall Priest or Cross help me now? When that which we know to be the highest has come into our life, and we have driven it away, what help is it to make moan and say we have sinned? The Light has gone! The Light has gone!

BERTALDA

[Has come down during HULDBRAND's speech and creeps swiftly like a snake behind him.] Can I help you, Huldbbrand?

HULDBRAND

Bertalda! You here?

BERTALDA

Yes, Huldbbrand, I am here. Why did you drive me away?

HULDBRAND

[Sitting up and facing her with anger in his eyes.] Why did I drive you away? I will tell you. Because you crept

Act III like a snake between me and my happiness. Because you tempted me when I was weak, and played upon my folly till I grew mad. Because you made me think I was to be master in my own house, when I had wedded a Queen. Because it was you, you above all others, who have torn Undine from my arms . . .

BERTALDA

Enough, enough, Huldbrand. You drove me away because I told you the truth—that there could be no happiness in your marriage. Did not your marriage fail?

HULDBRAND

Yes, yes, a thousand times, yes! But it is not her fault. It is not Undine's fault. I know it now. No, it was not the fault of the Queen, nor of him who should have been her slave. The fault was yours . . . yours . . . yours!

BERTALDA

[*With a slight smile.*] And in no sense yours? [HULDBRAND *does not answer.*] Not yours? [HULDBRAND *sinks down and bows his head on his hands.*] Come, come, Huldbrand, you were not wont to be a fool. See now, I do not wish to pain you. I will say no word but what is wise. I will not even say that you were to blame. You are a man . . . that is all, and, like a man, you wanted certain things. Every man, all the world over, wants . . .

HULDBRAND

Why have you come here?

BERTALDA

Oh, I will not pain you. Every man, all the world over, wants certain things . . . warmth and happiness and human love. He wants round him the home of common joys and common hopes. He wants round him the arms of some one like himself, a woman who knows and understands. It is not much that he wants, after all . . . only peace and rest and a woman's face, after his everyday

struggle is over. He does not want coldness and aloofness, an icicle of purity . . . Act III

HULDBRAND

What are you saying, Bertalda ?

BERTALDA

Nay, ask yourself. Does a man always need a saint to worship ? Does he really love an image on a pedestal ? Is it a pleasure to him to be ever kneeling at a shrine ? Is it ? Ask yourself. Does a man like to humble himself in the dust before the woman he loves ? Oh, Huldbrand ! Is not that on which a man's eyes love to fasten just a woman's hair, a woman's flushing cheek, a woman's heaving breast ? Something he can touch and fondle and kiss ?

HULDBRAND

[*Hiding his face on his knees.*] Retro me, Sathana. . . .

BERTALDA

Where would the husband be whose wife was a saint ? I can tell you where he would not be . . . within the walls of his own home. For what part or lot would he have in that which was for ever above and beyond him, a thing that had no human heart, a beautiful, passionless . . . Undine ! . . .

HULDBRAND

[*Starts up.*] You shall not say her name. Her name is soiled by your lips. Bertalda—who may not say Bertalda ? But Undine ! but Undine ! . . .

BERTALDA

[*Laughs.*] And how are your lips better fitted to say Undine ? You said her name once, when you thought you loved her. Then you were angry with Undine, and Undine left you. Would you not often have been angry with Undine ? Undine . . . what is Undine ? Where is Undine ?

HULDBRAND

[*Almost lifting his hand to strike her.*] For Heaven's sake,

Act III do not tempt me too far. You do not understand . . . let me remember that ! You cannot understand. Leave me, for Heaven's sake, leave me !

BERTALDA

[*Very coolly.*] Leave you ? What, as you have left me ? Forgive me, Huldbrand, I was wrong to say one word against Undine. She was fair and beautiful. But she is gone. Where is she now ?

HULDBRAND

Ah, do not mock me . . . you know I am alone. . . . Yet, perchance, I may see her again. Leave me that one hope . . . that one star in blackest night !

BERTALDA

And what of me ? Have you ever considered what you have done to me ? There was a time when you loved me, Huldbrand—nay, do not start and shake your head—when you thought that you loved me. You asked of me a pledge. You wore my colours through the forest. You gave me your necklace. You kissed my lips.

HULDBRAND

Ah, my God !

BERTALDA

Is that all over, Huldbrand ? [*She comes nearer to him.*] Is it ? [*She puts her hand on his shoulder. He shakes it off.*] Oh, Huldbrand ! Huldbrand !

HULDBRAND

[*Rising angrily, then controlling himself.*] You do not understand . . . you do not understand !

BERTALDA

[*Bursting into tears.*] Forgive me, I am weak and a woman. We will not speak of that. The past is dead . . . dead. But what of the future ? What is to become of me . . . of me whom you have kissed ?

HULDBRAND

What do you mean ?

BERTALDA

Did you not kiss me, Huldrbrand? I thought it was you . . . when you gave me the necklace; do you remember?

HULDRBRAND

Hush, hush!

BERTALDA

And where am I to go . . . now? Bertalda, whom Huldrbrand kissed, to whose life he once laid claim, whose gloves he begged, and to whom he gave the necklace from his own neck. . . . Bertalda has no home.

HULDRBRAND

[*With some sternness.*] Go back to your parents, Bertalda. . . .

BERTALDA

To my parents? But they are not my parents. Undine was right. I know it all now, and they know it. They are my foster-parents, as Undine said. They do not belong to me, nor I to them. And my real parents are a fisherman and his wife, who will have none of me and who are gone . . . I know not where. [*Coming close to HULDRBRAND again.*] Huldrbrand, I am alone . . . alone!

HULDRBRAND

[*Rising, takes a pace or two backwards and forwards, while BERTALDA falls on her knees and holds out her hands to him in piteous appeal.*] Bertalda, listen to me. God knows that I am sorry for all that has been done . . . for you and for myself. I know that the fault is mine. It is not so much yours as mine. I have been to blame throughout. I was wrong when I asked to be your knight-errant through the forest. I was wrong, doubly wrong, when I gave you the necklace. I was wrong, doubly and trebly wrong, when I let you move me to anger against Undine . . . when you made me drive her back to her kindred. It seemed to me then that I wanted my wife to be as I am, as human as I. My punishment is greater therefore. But I do not want it now.

Act III

BERTALDA

[*Slowly.*] You do not want it now?

HULDBRAND

No, Bertalda, my wrong was great, but I will not make it greater. We do not make wrong right by adding thereto another wrong. It may be that you tempted me somewhat . . . but I will say nothing of that. I will say the fault was wholly mine. Only now, that my eyes are open and I see aright, I will not again choose blindness.

BERTALDA

[*With some wonder.*] Blindness? You call it blindness, Huldbrand?

HULDBRAND

Yes, blindness. If one moves in the dark, and some kindly hand sheds light through an open door, one does not care any longer for the dark. When the morning dawns, the windows are thrown wide open and the night is left behind. The brightness of the day leaves no longing for the sombre shadows of the dark . . .

BERTALDA

[*Gathering herself up slowly, scornfully, on her feet.*] Is this true, Huldbrand?

HULDBRAND

My morning has dawned . . . my day has come! I can never go back! She came, who has made all things different, my star of morning, my sunlight, my day! I can never go back!

BERTALDA

[*With concentrated anger.*] You can never go back! Coward! Liar! Traitor! [*She hisses the words to herself.*]

HULDBRAND

And if I never see her again it will always be the same! She will always be Undine, the child of the

morning waves, my bride, my love, always my Undine! Act III
 [FATHER HEILMANN *is seen on the mountain ridge.*]

BERTALDA

[*Through her teeth.*] You fool! She has left you!
 She is gone!

HULDBRAND

[*Sinking down ; FATHER HEILMANN seeing HULDBRAND and BERTALDA, is rapidly coming down the gorge.*]
 Gone! Is she gone? No, no, she is not gone. She is always with me—I feel her presence here. She has not wholly left me. Her breath is on my face. I see her hair, her lips, her mouth! Undine, come back! come back to me! [*He sinks forward, face in his hands. FATHER HEILMANN is close to them.*]

BERTALDA

[*Behind him, swiftly takes out a knife.*] Fool! . . .
 [*She raises her hand to plunge the knife into his neck, when her hand is seized by FATHER HEILMANN from behind. HULDBRAND starts up, and, after a brief struggle, BERTALDA is disarmed. She bursts into an agony of weeping.*]

HULDBRAND

Bertalda!

HEILMANN

My daughter, my daughter! I have come in time. Thank God, I have come in time! Nay, do not speak! There is no need for words! [BERTALDA *sobs.*] No need for words! No need for tears . . . save for those that will heal thee, if thou repentest. Come with me, daughter, come with me! Leave Huldbrand here—he hath his own repentance to make. But thou . . . pray Heaven that I may save thy soul! Come with me! God hath still some work for His servant to do!

[*He takes her away, she going with him, submissive, quiet, like a child. They pass upward towards the Cross, where the Priest stays for a moment with hands clasped,*

Act III

praying. Then they disappear. HULDBRAND throws himself once more on the ground. He begins in a low voice the song.

[HULDBRAND *sings.*]

Why do you turn away,
Face that was always kind ?
If life hath gone astray,
Is nothing left behind ?

SCENE 3.—*The sun has set and a glimmering moonlight begins. HULDBRAND is seated with head bent by the stone. As he repeats the verse with low voice, some soft music begins, at first very quietly, then louder. At last UNDINE comes out of the running stream and stands over HULDBRAND.*

[UNDINE *sings.*]

Death and sorrow and sleep—
Here where the slow waves creep
This is the chant I hear,
The chant of the measureless deep.

What was sorrow to me
Then when the young life free
Thirsted for joys of earth
Far from the desolate sea ?

What was sleep but a rest,
Giving to youth the best
Dreams from the ivory gate,
Visions of God manifest ?

What was death but a tale
Told to faces grown pale,
Worn and wasted with years—
A meaningless thing to the hale ?

Death and sorrow and sleep—
Now their sad message I keep,
Tossed on the wet wind's breath,
The chant of the measureless deep.

UNDINE

Huldbrand !

HULDBRAND

[Starting up.] Undine !

UNDINE

You must not touch me, Huldbrand. I am no longer yours. Only have I had leave to speak with you for a while. For I saw you sad and lonely, and then I knew that your love for Undine was not dead, and that you would be glad to see her once again.

HULDBRAND

Ah, Undine . . .

UNDINE

Are you not glad, Huldbrand ?

HULDBRAND

Yes, yes . . . but I know not what to say, Undine . . .

UNDINE

No, for all things are now changed. We can neither of us go back to the past, dear Huldbrand ; the will of those mightier than ourselves has so ordained. But I wished to see you once more, as, indeed, I think you wished to see me. You have sought me for long, have you not ?

HULDBRAND

I have sought you, Undine—as a hungry man seeks for bread, as a shipwrecked man strains his eyes to find the land, as a dying man prays for the Holy Elements to deliver his soul . . .

UNDINE

But I may not deliver you, or at least not wholly. We cannot alter the past, neither by tears nor by prayer ; and what has once been done remains done to the end of time. Perhaps I was foolish when I wished to become human and to win my humanity by marrying you. I do

Act III not know whether I was foolish or not, but the time is past for thinking of that. I have had my chance, and somehow—through my fault or another's—I have failed.

HULDBRAND

Undine, I cannot speak as you speak. Whether you were foolish or not in marrying me, Heaven knows; but I know that it was no madness in me to desire to marry you. For you were my Ideal, and you still are: only I have forfeited my Ideal, because I was too common and coarse and headstrong to live in the purer air.

UNDINE

Do not say that, Huldrbrand. The fault, I think, was not altogether yours. How could I, child of the sea-waves and the running water, hope to be veritably human—to live the warm, fitful, inconstant, lovable life of mortal men? Only a miracle could have made my blood one with yours or teach my pulses to keep tune with yours. How could I hope to become all you wanted in a wife?

HULDBRAND

Another man might have taught you, Undine, the fault was mine that I could not. The highest life is that which realizes the wonderful union of spirit and flesh in our everyday existence. The man who paints a picture does it; the man who writes or sings does it. Some men can marry the Ideal and bring her to their hearth-side.

UNDINE

But does she remain the Ideal? I know not, Huldrbrand. Perhaps I am not the Ideal. Or perhaps only in some other world can I keep true to my nature . . .

HULDBRAND

Ah, Undine! [*Pauses.*]

UNDINE

Huldrbrand?

HULDBRAND

Will you not come back to me—after all? May not the miracle be wrought, even now?

UNDINE

No—no, Huldbrand, I may not come—it is not permitted. I was only allowed to see you for a brief moment or two . . . lest you should break your heart with longing.

HULDBRAND

My heart is breaking now, Undine . . .

UNDINE

No, no, Huldbrand.

HULDBRAND

I cannot live without you, for you have taught me things which I cannot forget. You have altered my life, and I cannot take it up again, as though you had never been. . . . Will you not kiss me, at least, Undine?

UNDINE

No—no—I may not . . . unless . . .

HULDBRAND

Unless——

UNDINE

Unless you choose to come to me. If I kiss you it will kill you, Huldbrand. You will have to give up your human life and live my life, wherever I am . . .

HULDBRAND

Wherever you are, I choose to be with you. . . . Kiss me, Undine.

UNDINE

And live not your life, but mine?

HULDBRAND

And live your life—always. . . . Kiss me, Undine.

UNDINE

Think well, dear Huldbrand. Your mortal life is sweet.

Act III

HULDBRAND

But life with you is sweeter. . . . Kiss me, Undine.
[*He holds out his arms. She bends to him and kisses him.*]

HULDBRAND

I love you, Undine.

UNDINE

Say it again, Huldbrand, say it again.

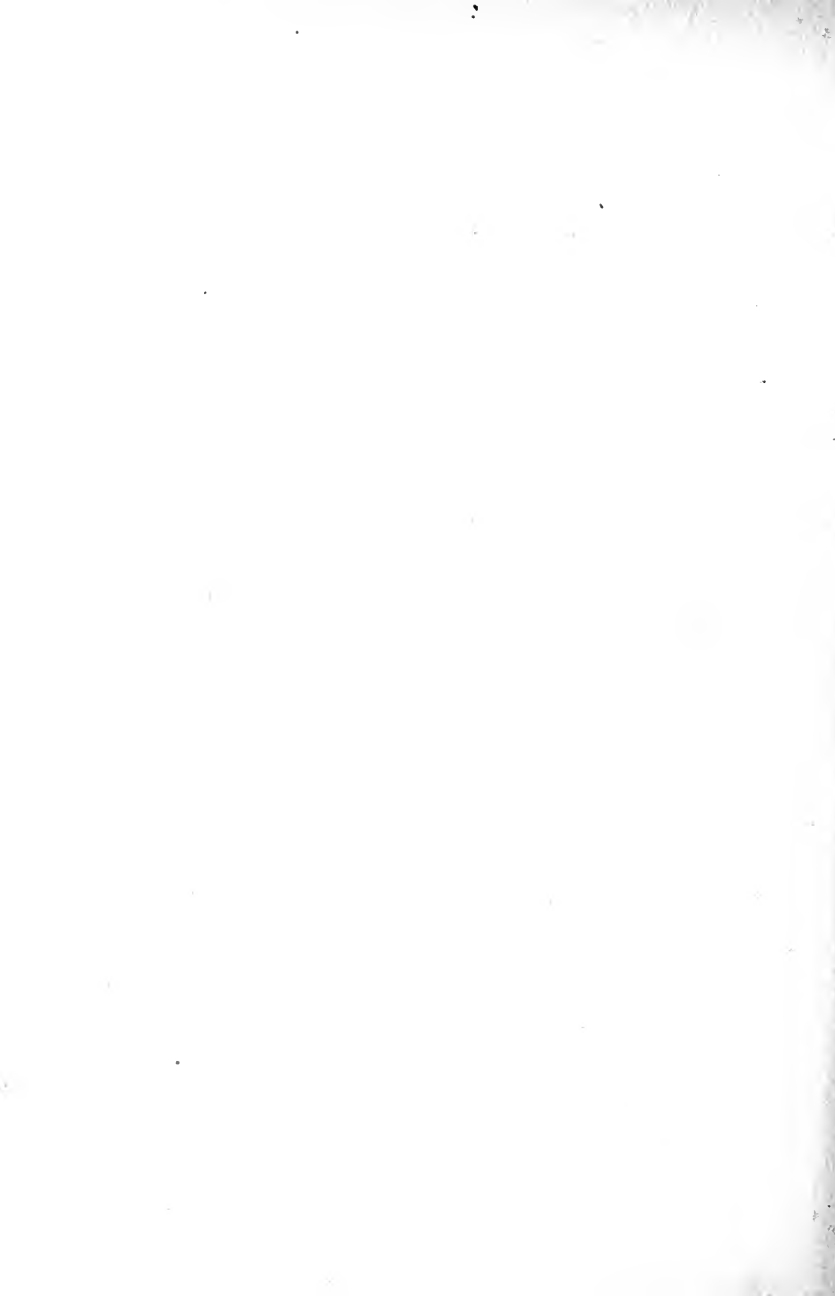
HULDBRAND

I love you, Undine, I shall always love you.

[*The scene gradually fades as HULDBRAND and
UNDINE are clasped in each other's arms.*]

FATHER TIME AND HIS
CHILDREN

A NEW YEAR'S CAROL FOR
BOYS AND GIRLS



FATHER TIME AND HIS CHILDREN

FATHER TIME

[Seated by himself in a chair in centre of stage.]

I love them all ! I love them all !
My merry months, from spring to fall ;
From summer's heat to winter's cold ;
They bring me happiness untold.
Unbid, they serve my least behest—
I know not which I love the best !

JANUARY

[Peeping in from side of stage.]

May I come in ?

TIME

Come in, you rogue !
What is the season's latest vogue ?

JANUARY

Oh, muffs and tippets, furry hats,
And all the gentlemen wear spats,
And all the ladies put on veils,
And ice is found in all the pails,
And little children hate their tubs,
And biting frost all noses rubs,
And old men wear a thicker vest—
Surely your Lordship likes me best ?

*[Dances round him, and takes up a position by
the side of his chair.]*

TIME

Wait till I see your sisters, dear.
Well, who is this? Appear, appear!

Enter FEBRUARY.

FEBRUARY

Your second-born, my worthy sire!
Who comes with all the troubles dire
Of rain and sleet and blinding snow,
Which fill all eyes, and trickling go
Adown the backs of shivering men—
They do not like me much; but then
I do not mind their hate confest:
You love me, Father, much the best!
[Dances with JANUARY *round his chair.*

TIME

You saucy child! Well, here's a kiss
To keep you quiet. Who is this?

Enter MARCH.

MARCH

I'm blustering March, a tyrant wild.
I am your Honour's noisiest child!
All down the streets I make a rout
And turn umbrellas inside out,
And blow down slates and chimneys tall,
And drive men's hats in eddying squall!
Each peck of dust I broadcast fling
Is worth the ransom of a king!
[The Three Months dance together.

TIME

Mad creatures, cease! Do what I bid ye!
Your antics make me downright giddy!

Enter APRIL.

APRIL

I am a shy and trembling thing,
A fairy harbinger of spring.
With softest rain and gentlest gale
I woo the hill, the plain, the vale.
There's health and beauty in my breeze,
And when I weep——

TIME

You make me sneeze !

[Sneezes loudly.]

Be quiet; do, and join your friends.

[The Four dance.]

Ah, who is this, who hither wends ?

Enter MAY.

MAY

All flowers and sunshine, soft I move
To teach poor mortals how to love !
Young men and maidens courting go,
Whisp'ring their secrets sweet and low
Adown the lanes, begirt with May,
While cuckoo sings the livelong day,
And tender grass with dew is wet—
I am my Father's chosen pet !

TIME

Don't be too sure, my winsome child—
I've known you anything but mild !

[Dance as before.]

But see !—who comes ?

Enter JUNE.

JUNE

The lovely June !
When birds sing out a merry tune,

And roses clamber round the porch,
 Unclouded suns can, sometimes, scorch :
 When men and boys at cricket play,
 And welcome smiles Midsummer Day.
 You like me best ?

TIME

I'm not quite clear ;
 Sometimes your welcome's rather dear.
 June Twenty-fourth's not always fine,
 And when it rains——

Enter JULY.

JULY

I come to shine !
 The grass is long and lush and sweet,
 And all the sunny hours can fleet
 With dancing steps across the lea
 To summer's merry minstrelsy !
 There is no month throughout the year
 Which wears a better, braver cheer !

TIME

H'm—what about St. Swithin, pet ?
 And forty days of constant wet ?
 Well, next man in ! Come, look alive !
 We draw the stumps at half-past five !

Enter AUGUST.

AUGUST

With oats and barley crowned am I—
 A month of jocund revelry !
 The harvest wagon's heaped with corn,
 The harvest moon shines on till morn ;
 The fields are stripped 'mid rustic play—
 St. Lubbock keeps Bank Holiday !

TIME

[*Doubtfully.*]

They say the British farmers swear
That you're not what you were, my dear !
Bread is too cheap, love, nowadays,
And agriculture seldom pays !
Well, better luck next year ! [*A gun goes off.*
Come in !
Good gracious ! What's that dreadful din ?

Enter SEPTEMBER.

SEPTEMBER

With banging guns amid the stubble
I give the partridge endless trouble !
Poor little bird, his fate is booked,
But he's so very nice when cooked !
At Michaelmas the goose is roasted,
And oysters——

TIME

Hush, enough you've boasted !
Dear me, I hardly could be thinner—
D'you think I don't enjoy a dinner ?
Peace, little glutton ! Silence, pray !

SEPTEMBER

[*Whispering to her Sisters.*]

Is Father rather cross to-day ?

Enter OCTOBER.

OCTOBER

October comes to give men cheer,
With purple grapes and mild-brewed beer !
The days grow short, the nights are cold,
The year's beginning to be old.

The streets are wet with constant mire,
And aren't we glad to get a fire ?

TIME

[*Shivering.*]

Don't make me shiver ere I need.
You are a forward child, indeed.
Two months to Christmas ! Deary me !
What is this wondrous form I see ?

Enter NOVEMBER.

NOVEMBER

Enwreathed in fog, all grim and gray,
I hide from human sight the day ;
The sun himself, a copper orb,
Can scarce the clinging mists absorb.
Poor London lives 'neath darkest sky,
And gas and water rates are high !

TIME

Ugh ! Come to me, child ; no more faces :
You're bright enough in country places,
Where cubs are hunted at the dawn
And pheasants shot from early morn.
Only in cities careless folk
Cannot as yet consume their smoke.
Aha ! At last my Benjamin,
My youngest child, comes tripping in !

Enter DECEMBER.

DECEMBER

Holly and ice and pantomimes,
And minor poets' hackneyed rhymes
Of Noel and of Wenceslas,
Of turkeys, mince-pies, and the glass

Which always cheers the festive guest—
Surely I bring of boons the best.
To all who love a merry meeting,
A good old-fashioned Christmas greeting!

TIME

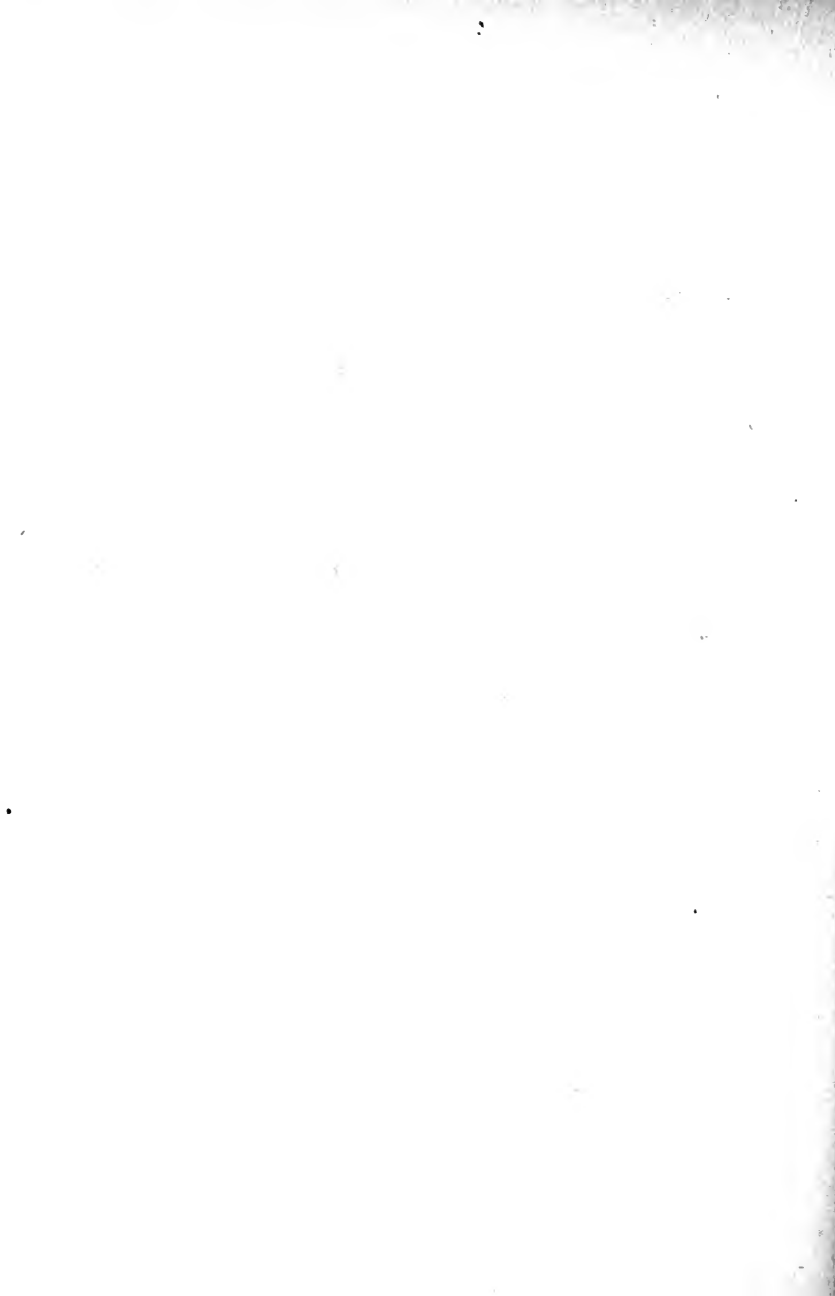
You do, you do! Come, take your places,
And range yourselves, with happy faces,
Before my chair. Come now, confess,
You want to hear a Father bless?
Which do I love the best, you ask?
H'm—let me see—a tedious task
To answer, that, and foolish, too!
'Tis you, and you, and you, and you!

[Pointing to them in turn.]

I love you all, I love you all,
My merry months, from spring to fall!
From summer's heat to winter's cold
You bring me happiness untold.
Unbid, you serve my least behest—
I know not which I love the best!

[Dance.]

Curtain.



PERICLES AND ASPASIA

A FARCE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PERICLES, Prime Minister of the Athenian Republic.

VOICE (of his wife).

ASPASIA, his Secretary and Typist.

ALCIBIADES, Pericles' cousin. A very forward young man.

SCENE : Pericles' Study in his house at Athens.

PERICLES AND ASPASIA

The Scene is laid in Pericles' study in his house at Athens. He is walking to and fro, composing his famous funeral oration. Every now and then he goes to his desk and jots down a few words. There is a typewriter at a separate table. Also on his desk is a telephone. Various reports, etc., are littered on his table.

The characters are supposed to be in Greek dress.

PERICLES

[*Repeating to himself.*] For we Athenians are lovers of the beautiful, yet simple in our tastes. We cultivate the mind without loss of manliness—without loss of manliness— An Athenian citizen does not neglect the state, because he takes care of his own household.

VOICE OF HIS WIFE FROM WITHIN

Pericles, Pericles !

PERICLES

Yes, my dear. [*Murmuring to himself.*] Because he takes care of his household—

VOICE

Pericles, are you busy ?

PERICLES

Well yes, a little. [*Murmuring to himself.*] An Athenian citizen does not neglect the state.

VOICE

Oh, I do not want to disturb you. I only wanted to know whether you send five or six chitons to the wash this week.

PERICLES

Six, my dear ; six, I think. [*Murmuring to himself.*]
We cultivate the mind without loss of manliness.

VOICE

You have signed a cheque for the laundress, haven't you ?

PERICLES

Yes—no—I will at once——

VOICE

Well, leave it on your desk, then I need not disturb you.

PERICLES

Yes—yes—of course. I'll do it in a few moments. [*Goes on murmuring.*] Because he takes care of his own household—um—um . . . Even those of us who are engaged in business have a very fair idea of politics.

VOICE

You remember the cheque is for two weeks, Pericles. You didn't pay last week's bill.

PERICLES

All right, my dear, all right—only tell me the amount.

VOICE

Very well, I'll add it up and let you know in a minute or two.

PERICLES

Let me see, where was I? Oh yes—Wealth, we employ not for talk or ostentation, but when there is a real use for it. To avow poverty with us is no disgrace.

VOICE

It comes to 40 drachmæ. You hear, don't you ?

PERICLES

Yes, yes, I hear ; 50 drachmæ.

VOICE

Not 50, dear—40. I am sure the woman charges

enough in all conscience. We needn't pay her more than she asks . . . [*Voice slowly dies away in the distance, talking.*]

PERICLES

Let me see—let me see. What did I say? Oh yes—To avow poverty with us is no disgrace. The true disgrace lies in our doing nothing to prevent it. We alone in Greece regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs not as a harmless but as a useless character: in other words, we cannot bear mugwumps. Above all, every one of us, high or low, rich or poor, young or old, is a lover of the beautiful. [*Repeats as he goes to desk.*] Yes, yes, lover of the beautiful.

Enter ASPASIA.

PERICLES

[*Looking up as she enters.*] A lover of the beautiful—

ASPASIA

Meaning me? Oh, what a nice compliment! Good morning.

PERICLES

My dear Aspasia, I am very glad to see you. But . . . aren't we just a little late this morning—just a *little* late, eh? There are a lot of things . . .

ASPASIA

Am I looking well to-day?

PERICLES

You always look well. I say, there are a lot of things . . .

ASPASIA

Yes, but am I looking *extra* well? Better than usual?

PERICLES

Of course, of course, but why? What is the reason?

ASPASIA

Oh, Alcibiades writes that he is coming round here.

this morning. [PERICLES *grunts.*] You don't like your young cousin Alcibiades?

PERICLES

He is a good-looking young man.

ASPASIA

Good-looking? I should think he was: but he is much more than good-looking. He is beautiful—he is an Adonis, a Narcissus, a young Apollo . . .

PERICLES

My dear Aspasia, why all this unnecessary enthusiasm? Alcibiades is, I say, a sufficiently good-looking young man. But as I have a good deal of work to do . . .

ASPASIA

[*Going to typewriter on table and taking off the cover.*] You clearly do *not* like your cousin. Why, I wonder . . .

PERICLES

I am not sure that I like young men. They are very vain—and—and—extremely difficult to talk to . . . I mean, extremely difficult for me to talk to . . . and they are rash and impetuous . . .

ASPASIA

[*Who has seated herself before the typewriter.*] In short, they are young: I suppose that is the truth of it . . . You have no sympathy with "Youth knocking at our doors," as Hesiod says . . . or was it Mimnermus?

PERICLES

I really do not remember. The phrase is after all a commonplace. Shall we begin?

ASPASIA

Anyway, Alcibiades is coming here this morning. You had better be out of the way. Shall I make the usual excuse—necessity for spending the week-end in the country? You know that Cimon says that for a good democrat you stay too much in the country houses of the wealthy.

PERICLES

Confound Cimon !

ASPASIA

By all means. But that is precisely what he tries to do to you when you speak at the Ecclesia . . . Well, what is the subject of your dictation ?

PERICLES

I am composing the funeral oration for those who have fallen in the war. Shall I begin ? um—um—um—I will speak first of our ancestors, for it is right and becoming that now, when we are lamenting the dead, a tribute should be paid to their memory . . . And if they are worthy of praise, still more are our fathers, who added to their inheritance, and after many a struggle transmitted to us—their sons—this great Empire . . . our great Empire.—Surely, Aspasia, your typewriter is more than usually noisy this morning ?

ASPASIA

I don't think so. Perhaps your nerves are a little out of order. You were supping with Socrates last night, I think. Socrates is very hard-headed, is he not ? I mean, nothing seems to make any impression upon him, does it ?

PERICLES

Would you mind taking what I say down in shorthand ? You can type it afterwards—when Alcibiades is here.

ASPASIA

[*Gaily.*] When youth knocks at our doors ? Oh, very well. [*She takes a notebook out of a drawer.*] Proceed . . .

PERICLES

[*Up and down the room, dictating.*] “Of the military exploits by which our various possessions were acquired, or of the energy with which we or our fathers drove back the tide of war, Hellenic or Barbarian . . .

ASPASIA

[*Looking up and beginning to sharpen her pencil.*] Pericles, do you think you are wise in magnifying war so much? You give so many opportunities to your enemies to criticize your militarism and your Imperialistic spirit. Why, only yesterday at our Beautiful Souls Club in the Lyceum, Cleon—you know Cleon, rather a vulgar person, but decidedly clever—spoke of the methods of barbarism with which you had conducted the first campaign against the Spartans. “Methods of Barbarism” is a phrase which Pindar uses in one of his Olympian odes, if I remember right.

PERICLES

Cleon be ——. Do you mean that low hound who intends to impeach me for embezzling public money contributed to the Parthenon?

ASPASIA

My dear Pericles, let me remind you that we live in a democratic age. As you once beautifully remarked, “We are all Socialists now.” Cleon represents “the belligerent forces of the hitherto submerged levels of our social state” . . . You recall your glowing words when he made his first speech?

PERICLES

He was a very short time ago the leader of the dock-strike in the Piræus.

ASPASIA

Yes, and he is now the leader of the Radical section of the Ecclesia. By the way, you still call yourself a Liberal, do you not?

PERICLES

H'm, yes—perhaps a Whig, an old Whig . . .

ASPASIA

Oh, I thought the old Whigs went out with Solon . . . Well . . . I'm waiting . . . [*Holds pencil poised.*]

PERICLES

What was I saying? H'm . . . Oh yes . . . I want to say something about our glorious constitution. "Our form of government does not enter into rivalry with the constitution of others. We do not copy our neighbours, but are an example to them. It is true that we are called a Democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few. But while the law secures equal justice to all, the claim of excellence is heartily recognized." That's all right, isn't it?

ASPASIA

Yes, I see—your apology for being "an uncrowned king." Didn't Thucydides call you an uncrowned king?

PERICLES

I believe he did so honour me. The phrase was originally mine, of course. Well, to continue. "When a citizen is in any way distinguished——"

VOICE OF WIFE OUTSIDE

Pericles, Pericles, so sorry . . .

PERICLES

Well?

VOICE

So awfully sorry to disturb you. But I have had to give the cook notice, and she has been so rude, and declares that she is going away this very minute.

PERICLES

Well, you must get another, then.

VOICE

Oh, it is very easy to say get another. But a cook does not grow on every gooseberry-bush, you know.

ASPASIA

How sweet to hear the words of divine Sappho! You recall that beautiful line of hers about the gooseberry-bush?

VOICE

Pericles, is Aspasia with you ?

PERICLES

Of course.

VOICE

I suppose Aspasia could not cook the dinner, could she ?
Because if she would come into the scullery——

ASPASIA

Really, your wife allows herself an unpardonable license
of speech !

PERICLES

No, no. Absurd. Go to the Registry Office, my love.
We are busy.

VOICE

[*Going away.*] Registry Office, indeed ! I don't know
what has become of all the good servants we used to be
able to get in Attica. Ever since the war began . . .

PERICLES

I really must pay my undivided attention to this speech.
Let me see, let me see . . . "There is no exclusiveness in
our public life, and in our private intercourse we are not
suspicious of one another, or angry with our neighbour if
he chooses to do what he likes. Our city is thrown open
to the world, and we never expel a foreigner . . ."

ASPASIA

No Alien Acts, eh ? Fortunately for me, born in
Miletus.

PERICLES

No, my dear. You are a most desirable alien. [*Bows
in courtly fashion and goes on.*] "Because of the greatness of
our city, the fruits of the whole earth flow in upon us, so
that we enjoy the goods of other countries as freely as
our own . . ."

ASPASIA

[*Thoughtfully.*] You are sure that there is nothing

to be said for a general tariff—for revenue purposes, of course . . .

PERICLES

My dear, Cimon is a Protectionist. I am——

ASPASIA

A Free-trader ?

PERICLES

Well, let me say a Retaliator. [*Continues.*] “And we have not forgotten to provide for our weary spirits many relaxations from toil ; we have regular games and dramatic entertainments throughout the year . . .” [*The telephone bell rings.*]

PERICLES

D——n ! I beg your pardon. Please answer the telephone.

ASPASIA

[*At telephone.*] Hullo, yes, I am 72 Ceramicus. What do you want ? Wrong number, I think. Please ring off. Oh, it is you, is it ? Yes, I am Aspasia. [*Listens.*] Of course . . . Oh, you mustn't say that . . . you naughty boy. Well . . .

PERICLES

Who is it ?

ASPASIA

Hush, it's Alcibiades . . . He says he is coming right along in ten minutes time . . . [*Puts up telephone.*] We had better get on. You were saying something about dramatic shows. By the bye, you are not an admirer of Euripides, are you ? “Our Euripides the new man,” as Alcibiades wittily says, parodying the line in Sophocles.

PERICLES

No, I side with Aristophanes. I infinitely prefer Æschylus.

ASPASIA

But you see the charm of Euripides for us women, surely. He is the only dramatist who knows a woman's nature, who can paint our strength and our weaknesses——

PERICLES

Especially your weaknesses. He does not paint a flattering portrait of women. He makes you all huntresses, animals of prey, hunting down your quarry—man !

ASPASIA

Oh, but think of the white-souled Candida, chaffing the priest and flirting with her mad young poet ! Isn't she true ? Isn't she real ? Isn't she vital ? Do you remember the sequel, how Electra lied to her husband, Pylades ?

PERICLES

What ? Oh yes, they are vital enough, those dreadful women—especially that Aphrodite lady who pursued her lover in a motor-car, wasn't it ? Shocking person. Why, until Euripides came, we never had these terrible exhibitions on our Attic stage of the effects of this ordinary—what shall I say ?—unredeemed and unashamed Eros !

ASPASIA

Yes. I believe that is exactly why Euripides conquered Athens. He responded to a "felt want," as Hesiod used to say in the advertisement columns of "Works and Days." "It subsequently transpired"—you remember that picturesque report of Euripides' triumph—"it subsequently transpired that the reason of Euripides' astonishing and phenomenal victory was that his drama corresponded to a felt want !"

PERICLES

Of course, Sappho—and in some ways I venture to think that you, Aspasia, are an intellectual descendant of the poetess—introduced a certain colour and—er—warmth into her odes—"All for love and the world well lost"—that was her celebrated line, I think. But who was the shameless young person who ran after her lover beyond the pillars of Heracles ?

ASPASIA

Do not mock her, please. She was a Cosmic Energy, a Vital Force. Hippolytus Tanner thought that he could

overcome her by much speaking. He was rash enough to defy her, and called her after the names of strange Egyptian beasts. But Aphrodite Ann had the best of it in the long run. Ha! ha! "Time and woman outlast all things," as the Gnostic poet—I forget his name—says.

PERICLES

Shall I resume my speech? If you don't mind, Aspasia, as I have a good deal to get through . . .

ASPASIA

Yes—in a minute. Of course Euripides' finest and most topical piece is "Hellas' Other Island," or half-island, in which the differences between Athenian and Spartan character are so cleverly portrayed. The dramatist absolutely proves that we can as little understand the Lacedæmonian as he can understand us—a beautiful moral, don't you think? The man you dislike is the man you don't know, or "to know all is to forgive all," as Stesichorus puts it in one of his least familiar songs. Which piece of Euripides do you admire the most?

PERICLES

Damn and Super-Damn!

ASPASIA

[*Sweetly.*] You haven't got the title quite accurately, but I know which you mean. However, don't let us waste any more time. I have to attend a meeting this afternoon for the higher education of the ordinary housewife. Rather necessary, I fancy.

PERICLES

[*With a glance at the door whence the voice of his wife had been heard.*] Certainly, certainly. [*Clears his voice.*] Now I want to arrange my peroration,—something big and fine about the mighty fallen. Let me see . . . let me see . . .

ASPASIA

You ought to say something about the women of Athens.

PERICLES

Ah, yes. "To a woman not to show more weakness than is natural to her sex is a great glory. Her chief honour is not to be talked about either for good or for evil amongst men."

ASPASIA

I don't think I should say that.

PERICLES

Why not?

ASPASIA

Well, my dear Pericles . . . it's rather a reflection on me, you know.

PERICLES

Nonsense—of course you are different—every one knows that.

ASPASIA

Different? How different? [PERICLES *is silent and scratches his head.*] Really, my dear Pericles, you are hardly complimentary . . . You had better go on with the mighty dead.

PERICLES

Um . . . um . . . "The whole earth is the sepulchre of famous men" . . . [There is a riotous knock at the door. ASPASIA *jumps up.*]

ASPASIA

Oh, that must be Alcibiades. You had better go now, Pericles. We can finish this speech later.

PERICLES

[*Irritably.*] But cannot Alcibiades wait?

ASPASIA

Oh no, youth never waits . . . When youth knocks at our doors—you remember?

PERICLES

[*Grumblingly picking up his papers, etc.*] Oh this youth, this youth! If youth had a little more knowledge, and old age a little more power—I think, Aspasia, that was one of the best epigrams I ever made in the Ecclesia . . . [*At the door.*]

ASPASIA

Yes, dear, yes. Good-bye. [*She pushes him out and shuts the door. Whistles a tune, arranges her hair at a glass. Then runs across room to opposite door and admits ALCIBIADES.*]

ALCIBIADES

[*Looks round room hurriedly.*] I say, Spasy, are you alone? That's rippin'. How jolly you look!

ASPASIA

My dear boy, how often am I to remind you that I am a "blue-stocking"? I believe that is what Aristophanes chooses to call educated women. His meaning is a little obscure, because they are not in the habit of wearing stockings, blue, or any colour, so far as I am aware. But you must not treat a "blue-stocking" with such airy frivolity.

ALCIBIADES

Oh, I say, that's all rot. . . .

ASPASIA

You ought to behave as respectfully to me as if I were—what shall I say?—a maiden aunt.

ALCIBIADES

Aunt be jiggered! Why, Spasy. . . .

ASPASIA

And you must not call me by so vulgar a name.

ALCIBIADES

What's the matter with Spasy? I cannot call you Aspy, you know. You are a sort of cousin, after all.

ASPASIA

Pericles is your cousin.

ALCIBIADES

Well, and aren't you and Pericles one? I mean, wouldn't he jolly well like it if you were one? By the way, where is the G. O. M.?

ASPASIA

The G. O. M.? What on earth do you mean?

ALCIBIADES

Oh, I don't know. Somebody—Cleon or Cimon or some such josser calls him that.

ASPASIA

But what does G. O. M. mean?

ALCIBIADES

Don't know, I am sure. Perhaps it means "God over Mortals" or "Good Old Muddler"—something sarcastical, you bet! But where is my revered cousin?

ASPASIA

He is somewhere about the house—alone with his great thoughts.

ALCIBIADES

Jolly solitary business, I should think, to be closeted with your ideas. Not for this child! And what are you doing?

ASPASIA

I am going to type out some of his great thoughts.

ALCIBIADES

Ugh! [*Shivers.*] Makes me cold all down my backbone, don't you know.

ASPASIA

Silly boy! Aren't you aware that when the Thunderer speaks all Hellas shivers?

ALCIBIADES

Thunderer! I thought that was the name of a newspaper.

ASPASIA

Nonsense. It is the name that Aristophanes gave him.

ALCIBIADES

I say, you seem jolly intimate with Aristophanes. That is the second time you have mentioned him in five minutes.

ASPASIA

Have I not told you that I am an educated woman? I know all the men of light and leading in Athens. "Light and leading"—what a pretty phrase of Cratinus!

[*The scene gets gradually darker.*]

ALCIBIADES

Yes, and Anaxagoras is another of your pals—a bit dangerous, that sort of pal, I imagine. Dreadful sceptic! Why, he says the moon is made of green cheese, doesn't he?

ASPASIA

He never said anything so stupid!

ALCIBIADES

Well, then, it must have been some other Johnny of the same name.

ASPASIA

After all, he is not more dangerous than your friend, Socrates.

ALCIBIADES

Oh, Soccy's a bit of all-right. He's a ripper, I can tell you. He has got the strongest head for liquor in Athens. And isn't he a quaint old bird! [*Whistles a tune.*] Bit ugly, though: that's a drawback for you ladies, I suppose. And such a nose! My Lord! just like a prize-fighter's.

ASPASIA

I wish you weren't so vulgar, Alcy—I mean Alcibiades.

ALCIBIADES

Oh, don't mind me, old girl. I prefer Alcy or Biddy, or anything you like. But, I say, Spasy . . .

ASPASIA

Don't call me Spasy. . . .

ALCIBIADES

Oh come, what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, as Orestes remarked to Ægisthus after he had killed Clytemnestra. But tell me, Spasy—I mean Aspasia—you don't really like history and philosophy, and all that high-falutin' business which Pericles talks about, do you? I mean, you don't think that life consists only in using long words, eh?

ASPASIA

I am very fond of philosophy—and of Pericles.

ALCIBIADES

Yes, yes, of course. But if I praise your frock and your looks, and call you a deuced pretty girl, you don't think me altogether an idiot, do you?

ASPASIA

I think you a very silly boy.

ALCIBIADES

Oh, rot! Every woman likes to be admired, and the more educated a woman is, the more she wishes to be admired for her face, and not for her mind. At all events, that's my experience of the sex.

ASPASIA

Oh, wise young philosopher! You have been talking to Socrates, haven't you?

ALCIBIADES

You're a jolly pretty philosopher, anyhow, and you know in your heart of hearts you would rather be called pretty than a philosopher. Come, isn't that so? [ASPASIA looks down and is silent.] Eh, Spa—Aspasia?

ASPASIA

Please do not talk such nonsense. Besides, I am busy. [She goes back to typewriter.] How dark it has grown!

Turn up the electric light, that's a good boy. [*He switches on the light.*] That's better. Now to work.

[*She bends over her work and begins to type.*

ALCIBIADES *comes close and bends over her.*

ALCIBIADES

I say, I am not in your way, am I?

ASPASIA

Naturally—you are very much in my way when you get between me and the light.

ALCIBIADES

[*Going to the other side of her.*] “Your father was not a glazier,” as Polyphemus said to Ulysses when his eye had been put out. No, but—bar chaff—are you frightfully busy?

ASPASIA

Frightfully. Don't you see I am? You had better run away and play.

ALCIBIADES

It's raining rather fast.

ASPASIA

Is it? Only a shower.

ALCIBIADES

By Zeus, Pericles does use some big words, doesn't he?

ASPASIA

That is because he has such big thoughts. I shall be spelling some of these long words wrong if you chatter so. . . . Do run away!

ALCIBIADES

All right, my honey, I won't utter a sound. [*Pause while the typewriter clicks, and ALCIBIADES whistles a tune.*] The rain is coming down with a vengeance! I say, may I smoke? [*ASPASIA nods her head without speaking. He produces a cigarette-case and offers it to her. She shakes her head.*] Come, come, all literary ladies smoke, I've seen them over and over again. They say it soothes their

nerves. Dreadfully nervous people, literary ladies! You won't take one? Oh, all right. [*He takes out a match-box, strikes a match against his sandals, and lights a cigarette, humming a tune as he does so. He strolls casually about the room, takes up a manuscript, throws it down, goes over to a bust of Homer.*] I say, that's by Pheidias, isn't it? [*She nods.*] Clever chap, Pheidias. Who is the old fogey? Homer? [*She nods again.*] Of course it's all rot about his writing the Iliad, you know. Hesiod wrote it under t'other chap's name. The cypher makes that plain enough. All the literary critics are agreed. You think Hesiod wrote Homer, don't you?

ASPASIA

[*Without looking up.*] My dear boy, do be quiet—only for a few minutes.

ALCIBIADES

Oh, all right. [*He whistles again, then comes back and looks over her shoulder.*] Hullo! There's a jolly howler!

ASPASIA

[*Stopping.*] Where?

ALCIBIADES

[*Pointing to page, hanging out of machine.*] Why there! You have spelt "fiscalitis" with two l's.

ASPASIA

Do you mean to tell me . . . [*She looks up at him indignantly, as he is bending over her. Their faces are quite close, and he kisses her. There is a low growl of thunder. Both start away, and there is a moment's pause.*]

ALCIBIADES

What the dickens is that?

ASPASIA

[*Who recovers first.*] One of his big thoughts! Thunderer, you know. [*She laughs and he joins her rather nervously.*]

ALCIBIADES

Well, I wish he would keep his big thoughts to himself.
It makes a chap nervous.

ASPASIA

Perhaps you smoke too many cigarettes, like the literary ladies. Besides, it serves you right for [*pause*] criticizing my spelling. Good-bye, I am going.

ALCIBIADES

I won't do it again, I promise.

ASPASIA

What do you mean by "it"?

ALCIBIADES

Why, the spelling, of course.

ASPASIA

Only the spelling?

ALCIBIADES

Well, the etcetera.

ASPASIA

You promise not to repeat the etcetera?

ALCIBIADES

I promise—on the sacred word of an Injun.

ASPASIA

A—what?

ALCIBIADES

An honest Injun. Don't you remember what Xerxes said to Themistocles?

ASPASIA

I cannot think where you pick up your notions of history. However, if you promise, I will stay—till the rain stops.

ALCIBIADES

I say, what are you doing to-night?

ASPASIA

Well, let me see. . . . I have to go to a meeting of the Beautiful Souls at the Lyceum.

ALCIBIADES

That's pretty steep, isn't it ?

ASPASIA

I don't suppose it would amuse you. I am going to read them a paper on the right of women to vote at elections, and Cleon will speak on Trade-Unions and the Law.

ALCIBIADES

Do you mean to tell me that it will amuse you ?

ASPASIA

Oh yes, I suppose so. I am a blue-stocking, please remember. What's your programme ?

ALCIBIADES

Oh, I'm thinking of going to a music-hall. I suppose . . . you wouldn't come to a music-hall ?

ASPASIA

Alcibiades !

ALCIBIADES

Oh, I suppose you only care for a theatre and the legitimate drama. Jolly slow, I think ! Why, if you want to have something really artistic you should go to the Hegemony and hear Aglae sing "Small Maria," or watch Circe dance the cake-dance !

[It grows gradually lighter.]

ASPASIA

The—what ?

ALCIBIADES

The cake-dance. Don't you remember your Iliad—how Circe treated the companions of Ulysses to afternoon tea and cakes ?

ASPASIA

Silly boy ! She turned them into pigs.

ALCIBIADES

[Indifferently.] Oh, I dare say. Anyhow, Aglae is rippin' fun, and Leucothea—well, she's a dream.

ASPASIA

Why don't you go to a theatre ?

ALCIBIADES

Can't stand the long speeches. Besides, you can't smoke in a theatre. Look here, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll compromise. I'll take you to one of Euripides' plays. Come now, isn't there a play of his something about Barbara ? That's pretty fair, isn't it ?

ASPASIA

I think it is a wonderful study of a woman. I should like to see it very much——

ALCIBIADES

Well, that's something, anyhow. I tell you what we will do. What's the time ? About five ? And the weather's cleared now. Well, we'll just run over to Salamis by trireme, dine at the Basileia Restaurant, and we can get back in lots of time for the show.

ASPASIA

I thought the triremes were not running now.

ALCIBIADES

Oh yes, they are. Your friends, the Archons, have spent any amount of the people's money over them, so they must keep them going. There'll be nobody on board—there never is—so we shall have the trireme to ourselves. Rippin' fun !

ASPASIA

I should like to go. [*Hesitating.*] But there's a lot of work to do, and Pericles has not finished his speech yet.

ALCIBIADES

More big thoughts ? Well, don't you think he ought to wrestle with them by himself ! I don't like thunder, do you ?

ASPASIA

Is it not rather selfish to go ?

ALCIBIADES

Well, you know that Protagoras says we ought to work for the benefit of the greatest number. Greatest number, number One. Eh, Spasy? Or shall we say Two—you and I?

ASPASIA

You won't call me Spasy, will you, if I come?

ALCIBIADES

Oh no, Aspasia, never again.

ASPASIA

Yes. [*Hesitating.*] But what excuse can we make—or rather how can I excuse myself to Pericles?

ALCIBIADES

I'll tell you what, Aspasia. [*He says the word slowly, resting on each syllable.*] If you will make my excuse I will make yours. We will write them out big—big as the great man's thoughts—on pieces of paper and leave them for the great man to see. Come along. [*He drags her to the table, she half laughing, half hesitating. He takes two pieces of paper and gives her one, keeping the other himself.*]

ASPASIA

I really don't know what to say.

ALCIBIADES

Oh, anything will do. Have you got your fountain pen? All right, fire away. When you've finished lend the pen to me. [*He strolls away, humming to himself. She pauses, writes . . . and turns the paper face downwards.*]

ASPASIA

Here is the pen. [*He comes back, writes, and turns his paper down.*]

ALCIBIADES

All right! Now let's see what we've written.

ASPASIA

[*Reads out.*] "Alcibiades has gone to talk philosophy with Socrates."

ALCIBIADES

[*Reads out.*] "Aspasia has gone to lecture on Women's Suffrage at the Lyceum." Hooray! That's capital. Come along! [*He seizes her hand and the two go laughing to the door like a couple of school-children. At the door ASPASIA pauses.*]

ASPASIA

I say, Alcy, you'll promise not to repeat the etcetera?

ALCIBIADES

Honour bright, Spasy!

[*They go out laughing, leaving the electric light burning. After a pause PERICLES comes slowly in. He looks round the room, and seems surprised at seeing no one there. Then he goes to the table and sees the two placards, reads them to himself, nodding his head.*]

PERICLES

Yes, they are good, studious children, and I am proud of them. [*Looks round.*] But they need not have left the electric light on. Dear, dear, how extravagant children are! Sad lack of the economical habit. . . . [*He carefully puts the light out, then with a sigh.*] Well, I suppose I must finish my speech myself. [*Sits down and begins to arrange his papers.*]

VOICE OF WIFE OUTSIDE

Pericles, are you there?

PERICLES

Yes, my love.

VOICE

Do you think you can dine at the club to-night? There will be no dinner at home, you know, because the cook has gone. I hope you won't mind. I am dining out myself. [*Voice slowly dies away in the distance.*]

PERICLES

Oh, Socrates, Socrates! Was your Xanthippe like this? [*Sighs deeply. Then turns over his papers, and begins.*] Let me see—let me see—“Every Athenian, while he engages in political life, loves to keep his house in order.” “His house in order”—that, I think, is an original phrase. I will suggest it to Sophocles for a new play. . . . um . . . um . . . I think I had finished that passage. [*Turns over papers.*]

[*Writes.*] “For the man who is master of himself is master of the world.” [*Repeats.*] Master of the world! [*With a whimsical sigh as he bends over his writing.*]

Curtain.

ON THE SIDE OF THE
ANGELS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MAJOR RALPH HAWSTORNE.

DR. TOM RALEIGH.

HON. GUY DANEBOROUGH.

HON. AND REV. CHARLES HARGREAVES.

LORD VIVIAN RODNEY.

MR. ROBERT TIDMAN.

MR. RAY LUNEVILLE.

TOMMY, crippled boy.

JARVIS.

HARVEY.

GRACE MAYHEW.

LADY (ENID) ROLLESTON, a widow, sister to Hon. Guy Daneborough.

MRS. MAYHEW, Grace's Mother.

LADY DANEBOROUGH, Guy's Mother.

MRS. HARGREAVES.

MISS ANGELA CROMPTON.

ACT I

IN MRS. MAYHEW'S COTTAGE. (Afternoon.)

ACT II

AT LADY ROLLESTON'S. (Late afternoon.)

ACT III

THE SAME. (Evening.)

ACT IV

IN MRS. MAYHEW'S COTTAGE. (Morning.)

* * This play was produced by "The Pioneers" at the Royalty Theatre, Dec. 16, 1906.

ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS

ACT I

SCENE.—*Room in Mrs. MAYHEW's cottage at Wootton-le-Hay, Wharfedale, Yorkshire. Broad window, leading out to rustic garden (c.), bright with flowers and sunshine. Door L.* Act I

MRS. MAYHEW

[*Old, pleasant-looking, çî-devant nurse, enters bringing in* LADY ROLLESTON.] Yes, Madam. [*Looking at card.*] My Lady, I should say. I will tell Major Hawstorne you are here. He is out in the garden, I think, or gone down to the village.

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Fashionably dressed lady of the world.*] Out of doors? Why, I thought he was very ill. He has been ill, has he not?

MRS. MAYHEW

[*Smiling.*] Not very ill. He has had the influenza—for the sixth time, I think it is. He was always a terrible boy for catching cold. [*LADY ROLLESTON looks surprised.*] I ought to know, for I nursed him when he was a baby. A terrible lad for catching cold. I used to say to his mother, a lad you will always have to preach flannel to—Jaegers, for choice. “Old Flannels,” he used to call me. But, lor’ bless him! he never would wear no flannel, when he com’d to be a man. He said that it was all very well for England, but it didn’t do for India. It was them

Act I linen shirts that have been the ruin of his health—canvas shirts and white ducks, and nothing warm next his heart!

LADY ROLLESTON

You seem to be very well acquainted with Major Hawstorne's physical health.

MRS. MAYHEW

Yes, Madam—my Lady, I should say—I have known him on and off for thirty-six years come next Michaelmas. I was in the service of his mother; a pretty, nice, delicate woman she was, always ailing a bit, never what I might call breezy and spry. Oh, I remember the time——

LADY ROLLESTON

Yes, yes. I made Major Hawstorne's acquaintance in India. He was never very strong. I only heard the other day that he was here. I live not far off, about twenty miles away, at Ottley-St.-Mary. How does he come to be here?

MRS. MAYHEW

Well, my Lady, it is like this. He was in London, and going the pace, from all I can hear—he was always light-hearted, Master Ralph—and then he gets the influenza. They are always having the influenza in London, they tell me. It comes regular, like the fogs and the showers of blacks and the Rates and Taxes and the road-repairs. "The streets are all up," writes Master Ralph to me, "and I've got the influenza again, so, as the doctors tell me to go down into the country, I am going to ask you to put me up. If any one can cure me, it's you, dear old Flannels."—That's what he calls me, and I hadn't seen him since he went out to India with his regiment, and I wrote to him to come here at once, and I'd cure him. He was a poor, battered-looking thing when he arrived. "Whatever have you been doing to yourself, Master Ralph?" says I. "Don't know," he says, "nothing more than usual. Suppose I want a change of air." "Change of air?" I tells him, "it's change of habits

and change of life you want." Was he often ill in India, my Lady?" Act I

LADY ROLLESTON

Oh, he had jungle fever and touches of ague pretty constantly, I fancy. He was not very careful of himself.

MRS. MAYHEW

Careful of himself? No, he has never been that. That's what his father has done for him, ay, and his grandfather before him.

LADY ROLLESTON

[*More interestea than she pretends to be.*] Does he come of a bad or a delicate stock?

MRS. MAYHEW

Well, I wouldn't say that exactly. The Hawstornes always held their heads high in Yorkshire. But the grandfather was very free with his money, they tell me, drank more than was good for him, spent all he got, wasted his own and his wife's income, and died young. The father—Ralph Hawstorne's father—was a cold, hard man, whom no one seemed to understand, least of all his wife. He made a good bit of money, and he certainly never spent more than he could help upon his family! But when he came to die they found that he had been keeping up more than one establishment, and that he had left the greater part of his money away to a foreign lady. My poor mistress, it fairly broke her heart, and she died not long after him. So you see, Master Ralph is not likely to be very careful about himself—what with the drinking habits of his grandfather, and the bad, licentious ways of his father. But he is the best of the three, I reckon—a free, generous nature, and a good lad, if only he would think a little about his health, and, as I say, wear flannel next his heart! I beg your pardon, my Lady, I talk too much.

Act I

LADY ROLLESTON

Oh no, you interest me greatly. I took a great fancy to Major Hawstorne in India. Has he gone down to the village, do you say?

MRS. MAYHEW

Yes, he went out with my daughter about half-an-hour ago.

LADY ROLLESTON

Your daughter? Is this your daughter? [*Taking up a photograph from the table.* MRS. MAYHEW assents.] Oh, I see. [*After a pause, smiles.*] My dear Mrs.—Mrs.——?

MRS. MAYHEW

Mayhew, my Lady.

LADY ROLLESTON

Mrs Mayhew, I think you are quite right to make him wear flannel next his heart—or perhaps I should say [*pointing to photo*] Mlle. Flannelette! Well, please give Major Hawstorne my card. I shall come back again presently, if you will allow me. Or perhaps I shall meet Major Hawstorne in the village. I am going in my motor to meet my brother. Will you give him my card? I think he may like to see me.

MRS. MAYHEW

[*Curtsyng.*] Yes, ma'am—yes, my Lady, certainly. This way, please. [*Shows her out by door L. After a pause enters by window at C.* GRACE MAYHEW, a simple, fresh-looking country girl, very sweet and pretty, with a lot of flowers in her hands.]

GRACE

Mother—mother—where is she? [*Re-enter MRS. MAYHEW at L.*] Oh, mother, who is the fine lady who has been here? I saw a motor at the gate.

MRS. MAYHEW

I don't know, and I don't much care. Oh, here is her

card—Lady Rolleston. Says she knew Master Ralph in India, and is much interested in him. But I must say I didn't take to her. She has an off-hand, stand-out-of-my-sunlight kind of way, which makes me cross. A beautifully dressed woman of the world, I suppose. I know the sort. No manners and no heart.

GRACE

India? Oh, I see. Perhaps she met him at Simla. Perhaps she is first cousin to Mrs. Hawksbee. Oh, I forgot, mother, you have not read "Plain Tales from the Hills." Nor had I, till Ralph—Major Hawstorne—gave me Rudyard Kipling's novels.

MRS. MAYHEW

I don't quite understand her either. She called you Mlle. Flannelette, by the bye. What did she mean by that?

GRACE

[*Laughing.*] Oh, if you are Madame Flannels, I suppose I am Mlle. Flannelette. Never mind her. She has gone.

MRS. MAYHEW

Yes, but she is coming back. She said she thought Master Ralph would like to see her.

GRACE

[*Disappointed.*] Oh!

MRS. MAYHEW

Where is Master Ralph?

GRACE

He is close behind me, I think. He stopped to give sweetmeats to the children in the village—and to help the little lame boy in some trouble or other. I think some bigger boys were bullying him. You know how fond he is of children.

Act I

MRS. MAYHEW

So he is, bless his heart! He ought to have some child of his own to love some day. [GRACE looks away.] But I hope he has not gone too far. He might easily get a touch of sun after being laid up indoors.

GRACE

[Looking off.] Oh, there he comes—followed by the children as usual.

Enter RALPH HAWSTORNE by the window. He has a small crippled boy in his arms, and turns round to children outside window.

HAWSTORNE

There—you've got my very last sweetmeat. Be off with you. Run away and play. [Turning round to MRS. MAYHEW.] Aha, dear old Mother Flannels, here's a little patient for you. Some horrid big boys were throwing stones in the road, and our poor little friend here got his leg in the way—what, wasn't it your leg? Well, your body, then, or your poor back, or something. Anyhow, it hurted very much, didn't it? And so I told him that I would just take him back to Mother Flannels, and she would put it all right for him. Poor little man! There—gently—better already, isn't it? Take him away, Flannels dear, and be a mother to him! [Gives the boy to MRS. MAYHEW.]

MRS. MAYHEW

Ah, Master Ralph, you've got a wonderful way with children—a real good heart, I'm thinking.

HAWSTORNE

Have I? A really good heart? Well—I wonder. Oh, by the bye, Mrs. Mayhew, you have not seen my ring anywhere, have you? I miss it from my finger. It's probably in my bedroom. Anyhow, have a look for it, there's a dear!

MRS. MAYHEW

What, that wonderful ring with the three stones you set such a store by? Dear, oh dear!

HAWSTORNE

Only two stones in it now, Mrs. Mayhew! You know I've managed to lose one. Anyhow, I don't want to lose the whole ring. I do value it very much indeed. You're sure to find it. Have a good look. Good-bye, little man. [*Cripple tries to speak.*] No, no, don't talk any more. Mother Flannels will soon put you all right.

[*MRS. MAYHEW and the little boy go out L.*]

HAWSTORNE

[*Coming down, musingly.*] A good heart. She says I have a good heart. Grace dear, have I a good heart? You ought to know.

GRACE

Oh, don't ask me, Ralph. You know what my answer will be.

HAWSTORNE

Yes, but I meant a good heart, not a loving heart. They are not the same thing, I fear.

GRACE

Are they not? They are the same thing to me. I cannot imagine love without goodness, or goodness without love.

HAWSTORNE

My poor little child, it is very clear that you don't know much about the world. Why, about one in every thousand of the people in this over-populated world is—perhaps—good; but the remaining nine hundred and ninety-nine can all love—after their fashion!

GRACE

Oh, love after their fashion! I didn't mean love; I meant LOVE!

Act I

HAWSTORNE

Love in capital letters, eh? Well, I'm very fond of you, little woman, and that's the end of it. And you're the sweetest little friend I've ever met—or likely to meet, more's the pity! Heigh-ho, I wish all our jolly time was coming over again, don't you?

GRACE

Why?

HAWSTORNE

Because the beginnings of things are so sweet.

GRACE

And don't they go on being sweet?

HAWSTORNE

H'm, I don't know. You see, all kinds of horrid irrelevant circumstances come in after a time and spoil the first fine careless rapture. There are one's friends and relations, for instance. I'd back friends and relations to spoil any dream, however sweet. And then there's the necessity for a change, the going back to one's normal existence, the taking-up of the burden of one's workaday life once more. You know the dew goes off the grass when the stupid, commonplace sun begins to get hot, and all the shadows grow hard and black, and there's no mist, no atmosphere, no mystery left!

GRACE

Ah, that's just where men differ from women. Women are always looking forward, and men are generally looking back. Women take their poetry with them into the midday heat, and men like to keep it solely for the early morning—before the work begins!

HAWSTORNE

You're a very wise little woman, Gracie, and I dare say you're right. Come here, dear, and sit down. We will keep the dew on the grass as long as we can, won't

we? I'm a little gloomy to-day. [*He takes out cigar-case and opens it abstractedly.*] Act I

GRACE

What an odd cigar-case! What do you keep in it? These are not cigarettes, are they? [*Takes out cocaine injections.*]

HAWSTORNE

No, no, but they do just as well as cigarettes. [*With an uneasy laugh.*] I have to use these things for my nerves. You know how influenza pulls one down.

GRACE

And ought you to take them? Does the doctor know?

HAWSTORNE

Yes, Raleigh knows all right. In fact, he—he—ordered them. [*Putting case down on table.*] I wish I did not feel so gloomy. If I was really superstitious—I should think that something was going to happen. I suppose it is the loss of that ring which has upset me.

GRACE

And you say you're not superstitious! Tell me, dear, why you value the ring so much—you promised to tell me some time.

HAWSTORNE

No, not to-day.

GRACE

Yes, to-day—now. If something is going to happen, if you—you—have to go away from me—and I cannot think what worse thing can happen—will you not please tell me—just for once? It's not much to ask, is it?

HAWSTORNE

Yes and no. If that stone had not tumbled out, it would be easier to tell you.

GRACE

Ah—please—please.

Act I

HAWSTORNE

Very well, only don't blame me afterwards. Promise you won't blame me.

GRACE

Of course I promise. Why should I blame you ?

HAWSTORNE

It was at Benares, when I was in India soldiering. I remember that I had been having rather a racketsy time for several months—what with pig-sticking and polo and card-playing and dances—and—and flirtations and all that sort of thing. You don't know the kind of life a soldier lives there. A good deal of it is beer and skittles, I can assure you. Don't look so serious, little girl, or I shall never get on with my story. Well, a mahunt, that is a kind of priest, not very high-class, but a good deal better than a fakir, took rather a fancy to me. Heaven knows why ! I suppose I had done him some act of kindness—nothing romantic. I believe I was kind to his adopted son, and I got him some medicines which enabled him to win a wholly fictitious reputation for wonderful cures. This mahunt asked me to come and see him, that I might choose whatever I liked out of his collection of sacred trifles—amulets and relics, and so on. He was a queer-looking devil, and his eyes didn't both look the same way ; one of them was green and the other had a yellowish tint, so far as I recollect. Not the most companionable fellow to have an intimacy with. What's the matter, Gracie ?

GRACE

Nothing, only [*nestling closer to him*] you rather frighten me sometimes.

HAWSTORNE

Well, this beggar rather frightened me, I think. He looked me through and through, and said in his own lingo that I was bound to come to a bad end—at least, that was what I made out of his grumblings and incanta-

tions. And when from his store of odds and ends I chose a ring, he shook his head in the most solemn fashion, and asked me to select anything else in his possession and leave that alone. You know what an obstinate chap I am, when I have once set my mind on a thing, don't you, Gracie? Well, the more he warned me off the ring, the more determined I was to have that and no other. Do you remember the ring? Act I

GRACE

Of course. Three queer-looking opals set in some beautifully worked old gold—filigree work, do you call it? Anyhow, there was an inscription inside—wasn't it Sanskrit, you told me?—and the opals looked positively alive! They were always changing their colour in different lights, and sometimes they looked quite angry! Oh, but there are only two now—one of the most beautiful of them, full of changing, iridescent hues, is gone!

HAWSTORNE

What a romantic little puss you are! Almost as mystical as my friend, the mahunt. When he saw that I had made up my mind to have the ring he told me a long rigmarole as to how a Brahmin had given it to him, and that originally the ring came from Tibet, or somewhere. Then he read the inscription. "What will be, must be. To desire, to possess, to know—this is the sum of human wisdom and human folly." That did not tell one much, did it? But you should have heard my friend preach on this theme! "My son," he said, "if this ring is yours, then know that it is the ring of your fate. It will grant you much that you wish, but each wish, when granted, will take something away from its value. It will become part of your life, it will live as you live, it will die as you die. It is the mirror of your soul, a conscience that rebukes, a god who condemns. Look at it, if you would know what you are and where you are. Its message is easy to learn, but what is lost of it can never be regained." And a lot more of the same kind of

Act I talk, very impressive and serious—and rather alarming, I remember, at the time that it was uttered. But you see why, although I am not really superstitious, I don't want it mislaid. I miss it so much. It is a kind of companion, or judge, or critic, perhaps, of my existence.

GRACE

[*Who has got up and looks really alarmed.*] Oh, Ralph!

HAWSTORNE

What is it, dear? Why have you gone so far from me?

GRACE

Oh, don't you see, don't you see? Oh, it's terrible!

HAWSTORNE

There now, I told you that I didn't want you to know the story. It's your fault; you made me tell you.

GRACE

But the stone that is lost, the stone that is lost!

HAWSTORNE

Well, what of it? It's gone, and it can't be helped.

GRACE

Yes, but do you remember when it was lost? Do you remember that it was missing after that night, when—when—— [*She breaks down, and begins to sob.*]

HAWSTORNE

That night when you—yes, by Jove, you're right!

GRACE

And don't you see what it means? It is a bit of your life gone. That is the punishment of us two, for what we have done! Oh, oh! [*She sobs.*]

HAWSTORNE

[*Musingly.*] To desire, to possess, to know—yes [*aside*], and now I no longer desire. It's deuced odd! [*Aloud.*] Well, what's done can't be mended. What will be, must be. Come, come, little woman, don't fret. It's all right. Come here and kiss me.

GRACE

Oh, but Ralph—— [*She comes over and sinks into his arms.*]

HAWSTORNE

Well, it's a bit of my life gone, as you say. But don't you think it is worth it, when you have given me yours? Eh, Gracie? You see, you make up for it. By Jove, I should think you did! [*He pets her, and her sobs gradually subside.*] Cheer up, childie. Remember, you promised not to blame me, didn't you?

GRACE

Oh, I don't blame you, dear, only somehow all the joy and the fresh young happiness seem to have gone out of our lives. Tell me that they have not gone, Ralph; I can't bear to think they have. They will come again, won't they? It is not only the beginnings of things that are sweet?

HAWSTORNE

The love remains, Gracie.

GRACE

Yes—yes. Talk to me about it. I want to feel that the love remains—that it is all round us and will not go away.

HAWSTORNE

[*Folding her in his arms.*] Of course love will remain, and even if I go away——

GRACE

Are you going away?

HAWSTORNE

I may have to. I have got my life to lead, remember. But I shall come back, little woman; I shall come back, to claim you as my very own.

GRACE

[*Dreamily.*] You will come back, and the dew will

Act I be on the grass—and we will find the ring again, and no more stones shall be lost out of it.

Enter MRS. MAYHEW. *They start apart.*

MRS. MAYHEW

Master Ralph—Major Hawstorne, I beg your pardon.

HAWSTORNE

Oh, bother Major Hawstorne! What is it, Flannels dear?

MRS. MAYHEW

It is a lady to see you—Lady Rolleston is her name.
[*Looking at card.*]

HAWSTORNE

Lady Rolleston? What in Heaven's name is she here for?

GRACE

Oh, I forgot to tell you. Mother says that a lady called while we—while you—were in the village, left her card, and said that she would call again.

HAWSTORNE

[*Pettishly.*] Why the devil couldn't you say that I had gone away, or was dead, or something?

MRS. MAYHEW

She is waiting outside, Master Ralph.

HAWSTORNE

Oh, I suppose I must see her. Show her in. Run away, Grace, and look for my ring.

MRS. MAYHEW

We will both look for your ring.

[*GRACE runs out by window c., MRS. MAYHEW goes to door l., and after a moment's pause ushers in LADY ROLLESTON.*]

MRS. MAYHEW

Act I

Lady Rolleston, please, sir. [*She goes out. There is a pause.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Advancing.*] Well, Ralph, aren't you glad to see me?

HAWSTORNE

My dear Lady Rolleston, every one is glad to see you, always. . . . You bring with you "the full effulgence of summer," as your friend, the Simla poet, used to say. By the way, how is that idiot—I beg pardon, that distinguished versifier—Ray Luneville? And how, by all that's wonderful, do I see you in Mrs. Mayhew's cottage in this out-of-the-way spot?

LADY ROLLESTON

You forget that I come from Yorkshire, and that my brother Guy happens to have his shooting-box only five miles from here. I hope to induce you to come and visit us for the 12th. Guy has some capital shooting on the moors.

HAWSTORNE

Oh, delighted, I'm sure—that is—well, I don't know if I can——

LADY ROLLESTON

Yes, you can if you try. I want to have a talk with you, Ralph. What is the matter? You never used to be so fidgety and *gauche*. You can't treat me altogether like a stranger, can you? Come, think, am I a stranger?

HAWSTORNE

No, Enid, Heaven knows you are no stranger to me, nor I to you. But time passes, as you are aware, and circumstances change——

LADY ROLLESTON

And men alter, of course. It used to be said that changeability was the characteristic of woman. How false that is! It is very difficult for a woman to change,

Act I while men—— Why, a man is a different being when he is in tweeds from what he is in a dress suit. He is practical in the morning, desperately athletic during the afternoon, and romantic after dinner. He makes love to you in a white tie, and he simply ignores your existence when he has got on his shooting-boots!

HAWSTORNE

[*Drily.*] Did you come here to tell me this?

LADY ROLLESTON

No, I want you to come and see me at Ottley-St.-Mary. You will, won't you? To tell you the truth, I am more than a little bored, and I want some distraction.

HAWSTORNE

And do you think that I can represent this amiable *rôle* of distractor? You pay me too great a compliment!

LADY ROLLESTON

Well—*soyons franches*. You remember how you found me at that hill station in India? I was wrongly placed, somehow. I don't think that it was altogether my fault, but I seemed to be *dépaysée*, to be out of touch with my surroundings—at war with my environment. I was listless, moody, unnerved. You came and made things better for me. Oh, I don't wish to flatter you! You had a sunnier temper than the others, and a wonderful gift of—what shall I call it?—delicate tact. You seemed to understand me and put me right. We had long talks together then, Ralph, and my life grew to be happier through your companionship. It was a pity, perhaps, that our friendship did not remain on the levels of the philosophical and the Platonic—*was* it a pity, Ralph?

HAWSTORNE

That is not for me to say. Plato's mood requires a genius to sustain, and I fear I am not a genius.

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Smiling.*] No—nor am I. What an extraordinarily comfortable doctrine the Platonic friendship is! How admirably it smooths the way for a real flirtation! I wonder if the old Greek gentleman was a cynic or a fool?

HAWSTORNE

Plato! How many errors have been committed in thy name! But perhaps he was neither *naïf* nor hypocritical. Perhaps Platonic love is a later doctrine, an eighteenth-century or a nineteenth-century gloss—foisted upon his real theory. I think I remember that some ingenuous student declared that he would rather be wrong with Plato than right with the rest of the world.

LADY ROLLESTON

Well, we were all right with Plato—or all wrong with him, whichever you like. But it was a splendid time—a time to look back upon and remember—a sort of golden summer full of sun and flowers!

HAWSTORNE

I think you must be quoting from your idiot Simla poet, aren't you?

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Laughing.*] Ah, Ralph, you were a little jealous of my poor Ray Luneville! Come, confess. Weren't you a little jealous?

HAWSTORNE

Had I any cause to be?

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Suddenly getting serious.*] No, Heaven knows you had not. I loved you, Ralph—oh, why should I not say it out? I loved you with all my heart. Some people will tell you it was the common talk at Simla that I had no heart. They were good enough to call me beautiful,

Act I but they added that I was dangerous—*gare a qui la touche!* Ralph, I don't think I knew that I had a heart till I saw you. Whatever it was that beat in my heart—old memories of an innocent youth, vague dreams of some possible happiness, or, it might be, a still unforgotten reverence for an ideal of goodness and confidence and truth—woke up and sprang into life at your touch. When you first put your arms about me, when you first kissed me, then I knew that I could love. What else is a heart but this?

HAWSTORNE

Well, physiologists say that a heart is a rather hard-worked pump, which sends blood down the arteries and receives it back again through the veins.

LADY ROLLESTON

Ah, don't chaff me, dear. I cannot bear it to-day. I have got back to the old mood, when everything and everybody used to bore me—before I saw you first. Oh, the flat, stale, unprofitable uses of life! How dreary is the dawning of each new day! But I want to get out of this desolate mood. I want the knight to crash his way through the wood and cut the clinging thorns, and wake the Sleeping Beauty. I want you, I want you badly. Won't you come to me? I loved you, Ralph; I love you still! [*She goes close to him and stretches out her hands.*]

Enter MRS. MAYHEW, *bringing in* GUY DANEBOROUGH.

MRS. MAYHEW

I beg pardon, sir, but Mr. Guy Daneborough would like to see you.

Enter GUY DANEBOROUGH.

GUY

[*Florid, stout, commonplace, with signs on his face of hard drinking and hard living.*] Ah, Hawstorne, glad to see you. Sissie said you were here. Sissie wants you to

come to us for the shootin'. Pretty good shootin' I've got. D——n it, it costs me enough, don't it, Sissie? [*She winces each time he alludes to her.*] Act I

HAWSTORNE

Lady Rolleston has been good enough to invite me, Daneborough. We were just discussing the matter when you came.

GUY

Discussin'? What's the good of discussin'? D——n it, man, come. We can put you up all right. Some capital chaps comin'—good table, good drinks, jolly company, and some clinkin' grouse drives. Eh, Sissie?

LADY ROLLESTON

I have been telling Major Hawstorne that we hope to make him comfortable, if only he will honour us.

GUY

Hullo, Sissie, on the high horse, eh? Don't he care for our society? You two used to be pretty chummy in the old days up on the hills. What's up now?

LADY ROLLESTON

Oh, Major Hawstorne has been rather ill, and he is not quite sure whether he is sufficiently recovered to pay visits.

GUY

[*Half to himself.*] D——d silly stilted talk, all this! [*Aloud.*] What's been the matter, Hawstorne? Off your feed? Liver wrong? See blacks before your eyes in the mornin'? Been going the pace, eh?

HAWSTORNE

I have been stupidly going through my sixth attack of influenza. That is why I am living in this cottage with my old nurse, Mrs. Mayhew.

GUY

Influenza? Silly rot! Come out on the moors, man,

Act I and take your place in a butt and watch for the grouse to come flyin' over you! That's the best remedy for all this tommy foolery of influenza! Sissie, talk to him. Give him beans if he gets restive! If any one can persuade him, you can. You used to turn him round your little finger!

LADY ROLLESTON

I am afraid my little finger has got out of work lately.

GUY

Oh, by the way, there's a chap outside waitin' to see you. Suppose he's the doctor chap. Said he had an appointment with you, but I told him I would not stay two minutes. Shall I call him in?

HAWSTORNE

If Lady Rolleston will permit me.

GUY

Of course Sissie will let you see your doctor. We'll hear what he says. If he has got any brains—and he'll be an exception in his trade if he has—he'll advise you to come to us. [*Going to window and calling.*] Hi, you out there! Doctor, aren't you? Well, come in and see your patient. We all want your advice.

[*By the window enters* DR. TOM RALEIGH, *a young man, clear-eyed, alert.*

HAWSTORNE

Raleigh, let me present you to Lady Rolleston and Mr. Guy Daneborough—Dr. Raleigh. [*LADY ROLLESTON bows.*]

GUY

Oh, we've met outside. Go ahead, my good man; look at his tongue, feel his pulse, and just give him a clean bill of health!

RALEIGH

[*Smiling.*] That's easier said than done, Mr. Daneborough.

GUY

Good Lord, man, it's easy enough. Look at me. I have a doctor in town and a doctor in the country. When I feel out of sorts in London I go to my man in Harley Street, and he says, "Go into the country, Mr. Guy. What you want is fresh air, early to bed, and lots of exercise." And when I am bored with the country I go to my country friend, and he says, "What you want, Mr. Guy, is a little excitement. You are rather dead-alive down here. Capital tonic is excitement! Run up to town and enjoy yourself for a few weeks. You'll be all the better for it." That's how they treat me; and as both get their guineas, and shove all responsibility off on each other's shoulders, why, they're both satisfied. And so am I, by Gad!

RALEIGH

Charming arrangement, certainly. But then you are probably an exceptionally healthy man.

GUY

Of course I am. I know how to treat myself. Take a blue pill sometimes. If one don't do, then take a second. Let 'em fight it out! That's my way! Well, just make Hawstorne trim and fit, and tell him to come shootin' with me. I'll take a turn round the garden, meanwhile. Comin', Sissie?

LADY ROLLESTON

I shall follow you in a moment or two.

[GUY goes out breezily.]

LADY ROLLESTON

May I stay, Dr. Raleigh? Or do you wish me to go? I am an old friend of Major Hawstorne. [*Looks appealingly to HAWSTORNE.*]

RALEIGH

Well, Lady Rolleston, I—[*looks also to HAWSTORNE*] I don't suppose that I shall have much to say to Major Hawstorne.

Act I

HAWSTORNE

Of course, Lady Rolleston, if it doesn't bore you—naturally, I am flattered. [*Looks half-annoyed, half-embarrassed.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

What is the matter with him ?

RALEIGH

Well, the pulse is better this morning. I think he is picking up. If, as I understand, you are an old—er—acquaintance of his, you are probably aware that Major Hawstorne is not constitutionally strong—a certain tendency to pulmonary affection, and these repeated attacks of influenza are weakening. We are always a little afraid about the lungs after influenza—especially in a case like this. But if only he will take a little care of himself, he will be all right.

HAWSTORNE

I'm afraid I never was one to take care of myself, doctor ! [*Laughs.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

What do you recommend ?

RALEIGH

Oh, I'm afraid I can only give the usual advice. He must avoid excitement and late hours, and lead a primitive, pastoral sort of life. His nerves are a little out of order. Therefore I recommend as little wine and spirits as possible, and lots of sunshine. I wouldn't drink spirits at all if I were you, Hawstorne.

HAWSTORNE

Well, Lady Rolleston, are you satisfied with the diagnosis of my uninteresting case ?

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Disregarding him, and turning to doctor.*] Don't you

think it would do him good to come and stay with us, at our shooting-lodge, for a week or so? Act I

RALEIGH

Oh—well—yes, certainly. If he does not stay up late smoking at night, and does not overdo the exercise. He must get to bed early. In many ways [*hesitating*] this vegetable kind of existence in Mrs. Mayhew's cottage is almost ideal for him.

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Eagerly.*] I would see that he went to bed early, and I would do my best to look after him. Wouldn't I, Ralph?

HAWSTORNE

You see, doctor, my fate is taken out of my hands!

RALEIGH

[*Smiles rather uneasily.*] In that case I have nothing to say. I will look in again to-morrow morning, or later this afternoon. Good morning, Lady Rolleston. Good morning, Major Hawstorne. By the way, you will be careful to take my advice on every point—on *every* point, won't you?

HAWSTORNE

Oh yes. By the way, doctor, just have a look at a boy who got hurt in a scrimmage in the village, will you? You will find him in the kitchen with Mrs. Mayhew.

[*Doctor smiles, bows, and goes out L.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Looks triumphantly at HAWSTORNE.*] Well, Ralph?

HAWSTORNE

[*Indifferently.*] Well, Enid?

LADY ROLLESTON

You see, I shall get my way!

Act I

HAWSTORNE

Of course. You usually do. It is your most charming and most dangerous prerogative.

LADY ROLLESTON

I assure you, I exercise it with all prudence and caution.

HAWSTORNE

Since when ?

LADY ROLLESTON

Oh, since this morning ! I am going to turn over a new leaf !

HAWSTORNE

Another ? You will be getting to the end of the book soon.

LADY ROLLESTON

Oh, don't spar with me. I'm too happy to argue. You are coming to me again, that's the great point. I shall see you again, and be with you and talk to you—just like the old time !

HAWSTORNE

Not like the old time in every particular, I trust.

LADY ROLLESTON

Don't be silly. Of course not [*coming close to him and taking his hand*]. Ralph, I want you to promise . . . What has become of that wonderful ring you used to wear ?

HAWSTORNE

Unfortunately, I have mislaid it—only temporarily, I hope. It is very annoying. I lost one stone out of it the other day, which seems to have gone beyond recall. And now the whole ring has disappeared.

LADY ROLLESTON

Are the people in the cottage honest ?

HAWSTORNE

As honest as the day. Why, they are probably searching everywhere for the ring at the present moment, Mrs. Mayhew and Grace——

LADY ROLLESTON

Grace ?

HAWSTORNE

Yes, Grace—that is Miss Mayhew.

LADY ROLLESTON

Oh, the beautiful rustic maiden. Mlle. Flannelette.

HAWSTORNE

Why do you call her by that name ? Oh, I see, Mrs. Mayhew is old Mother Flannels. I did not know that you had heard me call her so.

LADY ROLLESTON

Nor have I. But Mrs. Mayhew gave me at great length her prescription to you to wear flannel next your heart, and I thought that the daughter might possibly enter into the treatment as Mlle. Flannelette !

HAWSTORNE

Don't laugh at her, Enid. She is very good and sweet, and I am very fond of her.

LADY ROLLESTON

Really ? Am I to be jealous ?

HAWSTORNE

Certainly, if you like.

LADY ROLLESTON

Don't be so ridiculous, Ralph. Why, you are quite cross ! Mayn't I say a word against your rustic divinity—not even in fun ?

HAWSTORNE

Enid—no, I don't think you would understand.

Act I

LADY ROLLESTON

Well, try me. I am not supposed to be quite a fool.

HAWSTORNE

I wonder if I can explain. You know me pretty well, or at all events you did know a good deal about me in India. We have acted in private theatricals at Simla, and it was usually my stage duty to make love to you . . .

LADY ROLLESTON

You did it very well, Ralph, both on and off the stage.

HAWSTORNE

Yes, I suppose I did. And I lived the life out there to the full. But I wonder if you can realize that one sometimes gets dead sick and tired of that sort of existence—all spangles, rouge-pot, and limelight—even when so splendid and so materially real a woman as you is thrown in? And since I have been here I can confess to you that I have been a bit anxious about my health, and have tried hard to pull up in time . . . and . . . and see things differently. I am afraid I am very clumsy and stupid in explaining what I mean.

LADY ROLLESTON

On the contrary—you are very lucid, my dear. I quite grasp what is in your mind. But I wonder whether you understand yourself and your own nature.

HAWSTORNE

Why—don't I?

LADY ROLLESTON

Well, let me put it to you in this way. You are tired, we will say, of society, and a bit off colour, as my brother would phrase it in his singularly expressive speech; and you think that nothing is so good as simplicity, curds and whey, haymaking, blue eyes, virtue, innocence, and all the rest of it. Very well. The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be. But how long would it take you to

get tired of Arcadia? I rather think that curds and whey would rapidly be found a bilious form of refreshment—that haymaking entails the companionship of disagreeable things that bite and sting—and that an eternity even of blue eyes would pall on a fastidious taste. . . . The devil was well, the devil a monk was he ! Act I

HAWSTORNE

Yes, but how about purity, innocence, and the rest of it?

LADY ROLLESTON

Ah, my friend, how little you know yourself! Primitive virtues require primitive natures, not temperaments like yours and mine. Do you remember how the fine ladies at the French Court admired Watteau and tried to be shepherdesses? It was merely a pose, and they were just the same artificial, vain, extravagant, and most amorous ladies all the time.

HAWSTORNE

[*Moodily.*] And is my life here at this cottage a mere pose?

LADY ROLLESTON

No, it's a contrast, and all contrasts have their piquancy. We live in zig-zags, most of us—action, reaction; pressure, rest; excitement, calm. And you, poor boy, with your keenly nervous organization, more than most of us.

HAWSTORNE

You are very worldly wise, Enid.

LADY ROLLESTON

You are a big baby, Ralph. That is half your charm. No amount of experience will ever prevent you from making a fool of yourself. Please forgive my frankness. I have become a philosopher since we met.

HAWSTORNE

[*Hesitating.*] I dare say I've made a fool of myself down here.

Act I

LADY ROLLESTON

I have no doubt whatsoever that you have. But tell me quite honestly, Ralph, have you not already begun to be just a little sick of this cottage? Just a tiny, wee little bit, eh?

HAWSTORNE

Oh, I dare say—yes, I suppose I have. Oh, of course you're right, Enid; you always were a clever woman—a great deal cleverer than me.

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Softly.*] Not cleverer, Ralph, only more practical.

HAWSTORNE

I should not put the matter quite so delicately as you have, but I agree with you in the main. Once eat of the fruit of the tree, and you've got to take the consequences. As Hamlet or Solomon says—I never can distinguish between those two authorities—the dyer's hand is steeped in what he works in. The sow that was washed goes back to her wallowing in the mire! Yes, I suppose you're right. I haven't a dog's chance to reform!

LADY ROLLESTON

Come to me, and I will help you.

HAWSTORNE

[*With a bitter laugh.*] What, to reform?

LADY ROLLESTON

Ah, don't laugh, Ralph; it goes through me. Come to me, dear, and I will be good and nice to you. And we will be ever so wise and practical, and work at the philosophy of life together, won't we? [*She is very near him.*] You will come to Ottley-St.-Mary? Promise me, Ralph? [*She almost puts up her face to his.*]

HAWSTORNE

[*Looking down into her eyes.*] Yes, I will come.

Enter suddenly GRACE MAYHEW by door L. After her first sentence she stops, embarrassed and confused.

GRACE

I have found your ring! I am so glad I have found your ring—Oh, I beg pardon.

HAWSTORNE

This is Lady Rolleston—Miss Mayhew. Miss Grace Mayhew—Lady Rolleston.

LADY ROLLESTON

I am very glad to see you, Miss Mayhew. Major Hawstorne has been singing your praises to me. He says that you are a capital nurse.

GRACE

I am to be trained as a nurse, my Lady. That will be my profession. [*She goes up to HAWSTORNE.*] Here is the ring. I am so glad I found it.

HAWSTORNE

Where on earth had it got to?

GRACE

Oh, the oddest thing! That little crippled boy had it clasped tightly in his hand—the boy you brought in, you know. He would not give it up at first, till I promised to bring it straight to you.

HAWSTORNE

I suppose I must have given it to him to play with [*putting the ring on his finger*]. Many thanks. I am ever so much obliged.

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Who has been watching them.*] You are going to be released of your responsibilities for a time, Miss Mayhew. Major Hawstorne is going to pay us a visit at Ottley-St.-Mary. Good-bye. I shall send the motor

Act I for you to-morrow, midday. Will that suit you? [HAWSTORNE *nods.*] Well, good-bye. No, don't see me out. I shall go by the garden.

[*Exit* LADY ROLLESTON *by window c. There is a pause.*]

GRACE

Ralph, are you going?

HAWSTORNE

Yes, only for a few days. The doctor says it will do me good.

GRACE

And will you come back?

HAWSTORNE

Of course, Grace. I promised to come back, didn't I? Why, I must come back and look after you! Oh, don't cry, little woman. Can't you trust me?

GRACE

Yes, Ralph, yes; I will trust you. And you won't forget?

HAWSTORNE

No, no. Where is Mrs. Mayhew? I want to speak to her.

GRACE

In the kitchen. [*She watches* HAWSTORNE *go to door, l. He waves his hand to her, and is going out.*]

Oh, here's your cigar-case. You'll want that, won't you?

HAWSTORNE

[*Embarrassed.*] Thanks.

GRACE

[*Alone.*] He is going away. Oh, God! will he ever come back? [*She sinks down and covers her eyes with her hands.*]

Curtain.

ACT II

[*A month has elapsed.*]

SCENE.—*It is September. Hall sitting-room at Ottley-St.-Mary. It is late afternoon. Ladies are sitting in tea-gowns round the fire. It is a cold, chilly day in autumn, and the afternoon tea is still on the table.* Act II

RAY LUNEVILLE *is the only man. The ladies are* LADY ROLLESTON, MRS. HARGREAVES, MISS ANGELA CROMPTON, LADY DANEBOROUGH (*old lady*).

MISS CROMPTON

[*Slim, affected, literary.*] Oh, really, Mr. Luneville, you should not say such naughty things!

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Looking up from book.*] What desperately wicked things has Mr. Luneville perpetrated, Miss Crompton? I really ought to have warned you against him!

RAY LUNEVILLE

Dear Lady Rolleston, you have known of old my virgin and immaculate mind. I feel safe in your judgment of me.

MRS. HARGREAVES

[*Aside to old LADY DANEBOROUGH.*] Yes, I should think Mr. Luneville was quite harmless. He seems to be an old maid *manquée*.

LADY DANEBOROUGH

[*Rather deaf.*] Old maid? Who said she was an old maid? To my certain knowledge she has refused three offers of marriage.

Act II

MRS. HARGREAVES

Dear Lady Daneborough, I don't think we are talking of the same person.

LADY DANEBOROUGH

I thought you asked me if Miss Crompton was an old maid. Now I knew her mother very intimately, and though the girl is a little awkward, and dresses abominably—

MRS. HARGREAVES

No—no—no. I meant Mr. Luneville. [*Whispers.*]

LADY DANEBOROUGH

Eh? What? Mr. Luneville? Mr. Luneville an old maid? Ha, ha! very good. Mr. Luneville [*raising her voice*], why are you like an old maid?

RAY LUNEVILLE

I suppose, because I am devoted to cats.

LADY ROLLESTON

Dear me, now which of us is he devoted to? This is distinctly compromising! Miss Crompton, have a care! Mr. Luneville's compliments are double-edged!

MISS CROMPTON

Oh, we were talking of palmistry. Mr. Luneville says that my hand is of the variety called psychological, and that my headline is more strongly marked than my heart.

LADY ROLLESTON

No wise woman shows her hand, either in cards or in life.

RAY LUNEVILLE

Except sometimes to her partner, prospective or actual?

LADY ROLLESTON

Pray, Miss Crompton, is this a specimen of the naughty things he says?

RAY LUNEVILLE

Oh no. My great charm is my transparent goodness. I assure you, it is a positive foible with me to be frank. I am only wilful and obscure when I write.

MRS. HARGREAVES

What do you write, Mr. Luneville? Please forgive my ignorance.

RAY LUNEVILLE

Don't mention it! Nearly every one is ignorant of my works, I am glad to say. How dreadful it would be if my verses were quoted in the daily newspaper! Just think! *The Motorist* says that Mr. Luneville's verses are really capital! Oh!

MRS. HARGREAVES

Pecuniarily rather useful, wouldn't it be?

RAY LUNEVILLE

I don't think any one has ever seen my last book, *Suspiria Dolentis*, referred to in any current periodical? Life has few consolations, but one of the greatest is the knowledge that one stands alone and unknown, "Fallentis semita vitæ"—I beg your pardon!

MRS. HARGREAVES

Have you achieved your ideal?—to be unknown and obscure?

MISS CROMPTON

Oh, but I have read some of your pieces—"Soufflé and Sorrow," for instance, and "The Complaint of Pasiphae."

LADY ROLLESTON

Perhaps Mr. Luneville would not consider that your knowledge of him interfered with his ideal, Miss Crompton.

LADY DANEBOROUGH

You don't shoot, Mr. Luneville? [RAY shakes his

Act II *head.*] I thought not. Men who don't shoot usually take to palmistry or poetry.

RAY LUNEVILLE

It is their way of doing some damage, at all events. No, I am afraid I am not interested in grouse or partridges. They always seem to be suffering from disease. Did your grouse suffer from disease, Lady Rolleston?

LADY ROLLESTON

Well, I believe there has been some disease among the birds.

RAY LUNEVILLE

I thought so. And the early broods were washed away by the bad weather in the spring. And the second broods are too young to be shot before September, I feel sure. And your brother says that he never knew such a bad season before in his life. The records of sport are very monotonous, my dear hostess. May I have another cup of tea?

MISS CROMPTON

Is not life very monotonous, Mr. Luneville?

RAY LUNEVILLE

Oh, that depends on the digestion. If the digestion is good and the liver sound, as they generally are with sportsmen, then, I admit, life can be very monotonous. But there is always a charming variety of incidents if you are dyspeptic! Think how differently eating appeals to you if you are dyspeptic, or how brilliantly diverse appear to you the characters and dispositions of your friends!

MISS CROMPTON

Oh, Mr. Luneville; how can you utter such paradoxes? I thought you had a conscience.

RAY LUNEVILLE

My conscience is purely literary, I assure you, not

social. Besides, what is conscience? It is merely ethical dyspepsia! Act II

LADY DANEBOROUGH

I cannot make out what he is talking about. I know he insisted on having a large piece of cake after lunch.

RAY LUNEVILLE

Yes, that was the only way to give a taste to the sloe gin. And now I am going to have a large piece of bun to add piquancy to the Pekoe! I study the science of the appropriate adjunct. It's like finding the right adjective in literary criticism.

LADY DANEBOROUGH

[*Grumbling in a loud whisper to herself.*] I should think the man has been drinking.

RAY LUNEVILLE

No, my dear Lady Daneborough, the true pick-me-up is conversation with combative people.

MISS CROMPTON

Oh, I am afraid I am not a pick-me-up? I am not combative.

RAY LUNEVILLE

On the contrary, my dear young lady—you have all the charm of a dazzling exception. Did you not say that you had read my poems?

MRS. HARGREAVES

She did not say she understood them.

RAY LUNEVILLE

No, thank Heaven! To be understood is to be vulgar. Why, I don't understand myself!

LADY ROLLESTON

Well, we are all in the same position. We none of us understand you.

Act II

RAY LUNEVILLE

Then is the cup of my happiness full—unlike my tea-cup, by the way. May I have some more tea—with lots of milk?

LADY ROLLESTON

Ah, you are determined to keep on good relations with cats, I observe.

RAY LUNEVILLE

Indeed, yes. Cats are sublime. Do not all cats combine real ferocity of nature with exquisite manners?

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Looking across to* LADY DANEBOROUGH.] I think he is paying *you* a compliment, mother?

LADY DANEBOROUGH

Good gracious! What *bêtise* can I have committed!

RAY LUNEVILLE

Silence, Lady Daneborough. Silence is the only *bêtise*.

LADY ROLLESTON

You get tiresome, Ray. Run away and play—with Miss Crompton, for instance!

RAY LUNEVILLE

Oh, I am banished—the usual fate of the abnormal. Miss Crompton, will you take pity on me? Will you share with me an abnormal half-hour in the drawing-room?

MISS CROMPTON

With pleasure, Mr. Luneville—if you will do all the talking.

RAY LUNEVILLE

Ah, I am afraid that would be only too normal!

[RAY and MISS ANGELA go out.]

LADY DANEBOROUGH

Thank goodness he's gone. I never came across so strange a specimen! Is he a man gone wrong, or a woman who has missed her vocation?

MRS. HARGREAVES

I told you he was an old maid *manquée*!

LADY DANEBOROUGH

Well, anyhow, we shall have a little peace. I did not hear half he said. I never before was so thankful for my deafness. But if the other half has any resemblance to what I did hear, the man ought to be in the Zoological Gardens!

LADY ROLLESTON

I believe he studies the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

LADY DANEBOROUGH

I thought so. That proves my point. Where on earth did you pick him up?

LADY ROLLESTON

I did not pick him up on earth. I found him on the hills—at Simla.

LADY DANEBOROUGH

Ah, by the way, Simla—what's the matter with your friend Major Hawstorne?

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Coldly.*] Is anything the matter with him?

LADY DANEBOROUGH

You know there is. He is as moody as he can be, as nearly rude as his manners will permit him, and of a most indifferent temper. Is he in love, or has he taken to nipping?

LADY ROLLESTON

Well, I see him coming down the drive—you had better ask him yourself.

Act II

LADY DANEBOROUGH

That I certainly shall not. I will not run the risk of having my head snapped off. Come, Mrs. Hargreaves, let's leave him to his hostess—in the faint hope that she may do him some good. I take a long time dressing.

[MRS. HARGREAVES and LADY DANEBOROUGH
go off.]

Enter by hall door MAJOR HAWSTORNE. *He is much older-looking than in the first act, and much worn and haggard.*

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Gets up and goes to him.*] Well, Ralph, you're back early from shooting?

HAWSTORNE

Yes. [*Curtly.*] Couldn't hit a d——d bird—not even [*with a bitter laugh*] after lunch.

LADY ROLLESTON

What's the matter? It isn't like you to be so cross-grained. Do you feel ill?

HAWSTORNE

No, I think not, only a little out of sorts. Don't mind me.

LADY ROLLESTON

Will you have some tea? I will have some fresh made.

HAWSTORNE

No. I think I will have a brandy-and-soda. May I ring? [*He goes to the bell.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

Better have some tea.

HAWSTORNE

No, thank you. [*With sudden violence.*] D——n it all, Enid, I suppose I may have what I like—I beg your pardon, I don't know what has come over me. I don't

seem to have any self-control. [*The servant comes in.*] Act II
 A brandy-and-soda, please. [*Exit servant.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

Of course you can have what you like, Ralph. But you used to listen to my advice sometimes. You used to be guided by me. And now——

HAWSTORNE

Yes, I know I am a beast. But, believe me, I am as much surprised at myself as you can be. I don't recognize myself—that's a fact. And, oh! how I do hate my own personality! [*Servant comes in with brandy-and-soda.*] Thanks. Not much soda, please. That will do. [*He dashes it off feverishly.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

Ralph, I try to do what I can, but you have gone beyond me, somehow. I wish you would treat me as your friend, and tell me whatever it may be you have got on your mind.

HAWSTORNE

Well, it's a little difficult. [*With a short, hoarse laugh.*] For I have got nothing on my mind. That's the ugly part of it. I don't think of anything, and I brood, brood, brood—God knows what about! There is a sort of cloud over me—or else I seem to have dived down rather deep, and there are miles of green sea over me, and, try what I will, I cannot get to the surface. And then, good God! my temper!

LADY ROLLESTON

Can I do nothing?

HAWSTORNE

I am not sure that any one can. The sun seems never to shine in my sky; it's always clouds, clouds, clouds, and driving, pitiless rain. Can you guess what I did to-day? Oh, I may as well tell you. I was shooting as jealous as possible, being in a thoroughly nasty mood,

Act II and missing more birds than I have ever done in all my life! And I seemed to get conscious that other people were laughing at me—especially that swaggering young Member of Parliament—what is he called?—Vivian Rodney, who sits for one of the northern constituencies—in Cumberland, isn't it? As ill-luck would have it, he was next me, and whenever he fired I fired too, and claimed his bird. At last he expostulated, and then I called him a liar! Good Heavens, fancy telling a lie oneself and then, out of sheer cowardice, calling another chap a liar! And all about some silly partridges! But I hate that Vivian Rodney, and I'll see him damned before I apologise!

LADY ROLLESTON

My poor boy. [*She comes over to him. He shrinks from her touch.*] Go to bed. Don't come down to dinner. I will send you something—or I will bring it myself—up to your bedroom.

HAWSTORNE

What—just because I have had a bad day, and shot vilely? No, thank you! And let that silly young ass, Rodney, explain to the company how much in the wrong I was, and that my only way of decent apology was to go to bed? You must think meanly of me! Hang it all, I'm not a coward, and I can stand my own racket! May I have some more brandy? There's too much soda in this glass. [*Rings the bell.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

Ralph, you're a child. No, you shall not have any more brandy. You've had quite enough. Look at the time; it's half-past six, and we dine at eight. [*Servant comes in.*] Jarvis, has the evening post come in?

JARVIS

No, my Lady, I think not, but I'll inquire.

HAWSTORNE

Oh, and—Jarvis, bring me a liqueur of brandy. [*Servant*

goes out.] You may think me a child, Enid, but, con- found it all, I have got a will of my own. You insisted on asking me here, and now I've come I may at least be permitted to do as I like——

LADY ROLLESTON

Was it a mistake asking you here? Oh, don't say it was a mistake!

HAWSTORNE

I don't know. Of course I have drifted, and you have drifted. Probably you knew quite well we should drift. But oh, Heavens! that is nothing compared to the deadly depression which comes over me! This hideous, opaque cloud of gloom, which is always round me, and which I struggle against in vain! How can one fight with a cloud? But it is choking me, I tell you—it is choking me! I can't breathe! Oh, God! [*He lets his head fall between his hands. She tries to stroke his head. He fiercely resents.*] No, don't touch me, please. I can't bear it! By the way [*suddenly*], you are not wearing my ring to-day. Where is it?

LADY ROLLESTON

I cannot wear it. You know I cannot wear it—with my mother's eyes always on me, and Miss Crompton watching me. I have got it upstairs in my room.

HAWSTORNE

Fetch it, please; do you mind? I want to see it. Oh, here's the brandy.

Enter JARVIS, with the liqueur of brandy and some letters.

JARVIS

The letters, my Lady. Your liqueur, sir. [*Exit JARVIS.*

LADY ROLLESTON

One, two, three, four for me. And three for you, Ralph. Very well, I will go and fetch your ring while you read your letters. [*Exit LADY ROLLESTON.*

Act II

HAWSTORNE

[*By himself, opening letters. The first letter is from DR. TOM RALEIGH.*] What does Raleigh want? "My dear Major Hawstorne,"—hm—hm—hm—"I hope you are taking care of yourself and not getting wet or sitting up late." I sat up late last night and got wet this afternoon. Oh, bother, I can't read all this good advice. . . . What's this? "By the bye, forgive me if I once more warn you against cocaine. It's all very well when you were in actual pain, or your nerves were completely out of order. Then I allowed it—very much against my will—occasionally. But now that you ought to be in perfect health, with regular exercise, and out a good deal in the fresh air"—fancy my being in perfect health!—"you ought never to look at it. Remember that its action is in the highest degree deleterious. It is poison for you." [*He lets the letter fall on his lap, and looks serious.*] Well, I have only taken it once or twice. Besides, my nerves are wretchedly shattered, and I must do something to steady them. [*Takes up second letter.*] From Grace. "My dear Ralph, you haven't written to me for a long time, and I am afraid you have quite forgotten your poor little friend." Really, I can't be expected to write to her every day. What a nuisance she is! [*He is about to tear up the letter when he stops.*] No, she is not half such a nuisance as the other woman. What infernal bad luck that I should have come across her again! Grace is a nice child—much too nice for me, I am afraid. But still—if it comes to marriage—oh, that's absurd! "You know that you are never out of my thoughts, and that I have your photograph on the mantelpiece in my bedroom."—Poor little Gracie. [*He is still reading the letter when enter, boisterously, GUY DANEBOROUGH, LORD VIVIAN RODNEY, HON. AND REV. CHARLES HARGREAVES, ROBERT TIDMAN.*]

GUY

Hullo, Hawstorne, you gave us the slip! D——d poor

sport. You were quite right. But you might have told me you were going. You put poor Byles out terribly!

Act II

HAWSTORNE

[*Looking up from the letter he is reading.*] What Byles, your gamekeeper? I thought I told him I was going home.

HARGREAVES

Perhaps Major Hawstorne was feeling the weather. All this rain and damp are terribly trying. It makes me feel very rheumatic.

GUY

Oh, rot! Have a hot bath. You'll preach all the better next Sunday. Nothing like exercise and baths for pulpit oratory!

RODNEY

[*Supercilious, glass in his eye.*] I see that Major Hawstorne prefers another kind of protection against the weather. Eh, what? [*Pointing to liqueur glass of brandy, still untasted.*]

HAWSTORNE

[*Very shortly.*] Yes. Have some?

RODNEY

No, thank you. I never drink between meals.

TIDMAN

Really? Well, now, I wish I could say the same myself, my Lord! [*He is an officious, obsequious, deferential slave of the aristocracy.*] I often think a glass of sherry and bitters rather pleasant before dinner—or, say, a glass of brown sherry.

HAWSTORNE

[*Without looking up.*] You had much better copy the virtue of Lord Vivian, Tidman. You couldn't have a better example.

Act II

RODNEY

Oh, as for that, it isn't virtue; it is merely prudence, don't you know. I can't both shoot and drink—eh, what?

TIDMAN

[*Sniggering.*] Well, perhaps Major Hawstorne can! He is so strong.

RODNEY

[*With a meaning look at HAWSTORNE.*] Can he?

HAWSTORNE

[*Getting up and going to fireplace.*] Rodney, I've got a bad temper, and I'm sorry I behaved badly to you this afternoon. I was in the wrong, and I missed most of my birds. Well, I'm sorry—that's all.

RODNEY

Oh—that's all right! We none of us are particularly amiable when we shoot badly, don't you know—except Tidman. He's always amiable—eh, what?

TIDMAN

Oh, my Lord, you are too good!

GUY

[*Who has been talking to HARGREAVES.*] What are you people bickerin' about? When the day's shootin's over—well, it's over—that's what I say. Sorry you've all had such bad sport—better luck next time. Come, it's nearly time to dress for dinner. Perrier Jouet 89 to-night.

[*Exit HAWSTORNE.*]

RODNEY

Well, I'm off too. What is it you recommend, Mr. Hargreaves? Hot bath? Not a bad idea—eh, what?

HARGREAVES

Our host said that it is a good tonic for pulpit oratory, I believe.

RODNEY

Act II

What's good for pulpit is good for parliament—eh, don't you think so? [*He goes out, obsequiously followed by* TIDMAN.]

GUY

Wait one minute, Hargreaves. Noticed anythin' queer about Hawstorne?

HARGREAVES

He seems to be—not quite himself.

GUY

Not quite himself! I should think not. Why, he ain't the same man he used to be. D——d good chap—I beg your pardon; can't help swearin'. Wretched form to swear before a clergyman, I know. But it makes me swear.

HARGREAVES

What do you notice—exactly?

GUY

Well, it's like this. You know we used to see a good deal of one another in India, and he was the smartest officer in Simla. And then there's my sister Enid. She's very fond of him, as I dare say you have noticed. She's a bit rapid, of course, and all that, but she has a good heart. Never cared for her late husband, though. Let me see, where was I?

HARGREAVES

You were talking about Lady Rolleston and Hawstorne.

GUY

Of course. Well, I always thought that they were goin' to hit off a match. Shouldn't have let them be so much together otherwise. People talked a lot about them, too. But I naturally believed it would be all right. And now——

Act II

HARGREAVES

Yes. Has something interfered ?

GUY

No, not exactly, but I don't like the look of things. He left India without proposin', but I thought when they met again in England the event would come off.

HARGREAVES

They seem to be very fond of each other's society now—if I may be pardoned for saying so.

GUY

Yes, but d——n it all—I beg your pardon—he is so strange and moody, and all that. I'm not sure whether he is the right sort of husband for her. You see, I like old Enid. She don't make herself pleasant to everybody, I'm aware. But she's a good sort; and I like Hawstorne, too—at least, I used to. Can't make him out now—and that's a fact.

HARGREAVES

But what can I do ?

GUY

Well—I thought if you had a chance, you might talk to him a bit. You're a clergyman, you know, and all that, and there's no offence if a clergyman says a straight thing or two. Hawstorne may drink too much, for aught I know. Anyhow, I'm quite upset about him.

HARGREAVES

It's a little difficult, but if I get a favourable opportunity——

GUY

That's a good fellow. I knew you would. Talk to him after dinner. Perrier Jouet 89, you know. Any one can talk on that wine ! D——n it, what's the good of being a clergyman if you can't intrude—beg pardon, I don't mean that—interfere—no, that's not the word—well, you know what I mean !

HARGREAVES

[Smiling.] You mean, give counsel and advice——

GUY

Yes, it will be very good of you. Wonder if he will stand it, though?

HARGREAVES

I will see what can be done.

[Exit HARGREAVES. As GUY is going out by another door, LADY ROLLESTON comes in hurriedly. She is in a tea-gown.]

GUY

Hullo, Sissie! Not dressed yet? What's up?

LADY ROLLESTON

I want to see Major Hawstorne—at once! [Goes to bell and rings.]

GUY

Well, he's dressing, I expect. Can't you wait till dinner? [Exit.]

LADY ROLLESTON

No, I can't. [She walks up and down the room. Enter servant.] Ask Major Hawstorne to come here. Tell him it's important. [Exit servant. She walks up and down again. Suddenly she sees a letter lying on the floor, dropped by HAWSTORNE. She takes it up, hesitates a moment, then some words catch her eye, and she reads.] "Forgive me if I warn you once more against cocaine. Its action is in the highest degree deleterious. . . . It is poison to you." [She stops.] Good God! He is poisoning himself with cocaine! Poor boy, poor boy! [She sinks down in a chair, watching the door by which HAWSTORNE must enter.]

[HAWSTORNE enters, looking worried to the last degree. He has on a dressing-jacket, and is evidently half-dressed. She starts forward as he comes in, and stops appalled at the look in his face. He, too, stands at the doorway, staring at her. There is a moment's silence.]

Act II

LADY ROLLESTON

Ralph——

HAWSTORNE

[*Who looks dulled and only half-conscious.*] Enid—you sent for me——

LADY ROLLESTON

Come to me—come nearer—I cannot talk to you if you stand there.

HAWSTORNE

Yes—— [*He moves almost in a dream nearer her, and sinks into a chair.*] Well——

LADY ROLLESTON

I cannot tell you—I cannot tell you.

HAWSTORNE

Is there any need for telling?

LADY ROLLESTON

Why—do you know?

HAWSTORNE

No—but I don't seem to care. Does anything matter—after this?

LADY ROLLESTON

After what?

HAWSTORNE

This—— [*He holds out a letter to her, which she takes and is about to open.*] Stop—why did you send for me?

LADY ROLLESTON

Oh, Ralph, your ring!

HAWSTORNE

Have you got it? Yes? Why don't you give it to me?

LADY ROLLESTON

I dare not!

HAWSTORNE

Why, of course, I know. Has another stone gone?

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Holding it out to him.*] Yes.

HAWSTORNE

Of course, I might have known it.

LADY ROLLESTON

What do you mean?

HAWSTORNE

Read that letter [*pointing to letter in her hand*], and you will understand.

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Opens and reads.*] "I regret to have to inform you" . . . What is this? "Messrs. Allen, Judkins and Co." . . . "unable to meet the demands of their creditors"—suspended payment. Oh, Ralph! Had you much money with them?

HAWSTORNE

Practically all my money was with them.

LADY ROLLESTON

And now——

HAWSTORNE

Well, now I am a beggar, that's all. It's infernal luck, or, rather, it's my usual luck. Oh, God! Was there ever such a poor, miserable, helpless devil in this world as I?

LADY ROLLESTON

And the ring?

HAWSTORNE

D——n the ring! I have not had a moment's luck since it came into my possession. Of course, the second stone has gone. "To desire—to possess—to know." Desire has failed—and possession has gone. Great

Act II Heavens, how long will knowledge remain to me? [*He stands, looking moodily at the ring.* LADY ROLLESTON *silently looks up at him.* *In the silence comes from the drawing-room the tinkle of a piano and a woman's voice singing "Love laid his sleepless head."*] Who's that?

LADY ROLLESTON

Angela Crompton singing to Ray Luneville, I think. Shall I ask her to stop?

HAWSTORNE

No; I have no right to interfere with their amusement. It's pretty maddening, isn't it?

LADY ROLLESTON

The music?

HAWSTORNE

Yes, music, the world, life—everything! I suppose every man only gets what he deserves, but it is hard to bear—very hard to bear! "The fathers eat sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." Is it my fault that my grandfather was a drunkard and a spendthrift, and my father a spendthrift and a libertine? Nevertheless, I have to pay the debt to the full. I lose all that makes life worth having—health, spirits, hope, money! Everything I touch fails. Friends desert me. Love has long since left me. I am a wreck—bodily, mental, social, moral. . . . Well, why don't you say something?

LADY ROLLESTON

It is not the time to say much—one must do something.

HAWSTORNE

Do something? I am sick of doing something. What's the use?

LADY ROLLESTON

Well, I am going to do something, Ralph. This is not the only letter you had to-night. There was another.

HAWSTORNE

There were two others, I believe.

LADY ROLLESTON

You dropped one when you left the hall. It was from Dr. Raleigh. I have read it. Here it is. [*Holds out letter to him.*]

HAWSTORNE

Thanks. So you know about that too—cocaine? Well, I'm glad. Better know the worst. Well?

LADY ROLLESTON

I shall telegraph to Dr. Raleigh to come here—at once.

HAWSTORNE

What's the use!

LADY ROLLESTON

Every use. He must look after you—without delay.

HAWSTORNE

[*Indifferently.*] Just as you like. I don't suppose it will make much difference to me. He can't help me.

LADY ROLLESTON

We shall see. But that is not all. There is yourself to be considered—your future—and we must think what had best be done.

HAWSTORNE

You are very good to me, Enid. I always thought you had a kindly heart, though you never gave yourself a proper chance, if you will forgive me for saying so. You wasted yourself over the trifling and the insignificant. I ought to know, for I did the same thing, and it does not do in the long run. Only the big things count, after all.

LADY ROLLESTON

And what are the big things, Ralph?

HAWSTORNE

Oh, it isn't for me to preach—besides, preaching is not in my line. But when one has had a facer, as I

Act II have—when one has gone through a lot of experience—mostly tawdry and ignoble experience, as I have done—there comes a queer sort of insight, born of one's personal trouble, into the things that really matter in this life. I do not for a moment say that, if I was put all right at this moment I should ever be able to attain to them. A stronger will than I have is wanted. But it is something, I suppose, even to be able to see from a distance the difference between the great shining peaks of existence, and the drab-coloured, stupid commonplace plains.

LADY ROLLESTON

Tell me, Ralph. I haven't often heard you talk like this.

HAWSTORNE

No, I dare say not. I have generally managed to frivol away my time pretty successfully. But I imagine that there are certain really good and satisfactory things—honour and truth, straightforwardness and simplicity, kindness—oh yes, kindness above all, all the religion worth talking about is kindness—generosity—and—and . . . respect and reverence for virtue . . . and . . . chastity. . . .

LADY ROLLESTON

You are a good fellow, Ralph, much too good to have come down to—drink—and cocaine.

HAWSTORNE

No—that's just the worst of it. I am not good. I see the right and I don't do it. You see [*with a sad, wan smile*] I have still got knowledge left in my ring [*looking at it mournfully*]. But what use is it to know so clearly the right, and not have the will-power to do it? That is the sin against the Holy Ghost—sinning against light. . . . [*He shudders.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

Let me help you, Ralph.

HAWSTORNE

[*Listlessly.*] Can you ?

LADY ROLLESTON

Yes, I think so. Do you like me? You don't dislike me, at any rate? I used to be something in your life.

HAWSTORNE

Well, you are still, Enid, Heaven knows you are. I have not got so many friends that I can afford to lose one.

LADY ROLLESTON

Well, now, let us look at the state of the case, quite simply. You are down on your luck—very badly down on your luck. Your health is bad; you have been staying up too late; you have not been sleeping well; you have been drinking too much—and, because your nerves are bad, you have been poisoning yourself with cocaine. You see, I am not going to spare you.

HAWSTORNE

All right. Go on.

LADY ROLLESTON

Well, then, we will wipe you entirely out of the account—as a non-negotiable asset, because, to finish the whole story, you are, to all intents and purposes, a bankrupt. Is that so?

HAWSTORNE

Yes—practically that is so. I suppose I shall have about a couple of hundred pounds a year to live on.

LADY ROLLESTON

And debts?

HAWSTORNE

Yes—pretty bad debts.

LADY ROLLESTON

So you are no good at all, dear boy—simply zero, Z 99.

HAWSTORNE

That's about the state of the case. Oh, d——n that piano! [*From the next room comes the sound of a man's*

Act II *alto voice.* RAY LUNEVILLE *is singing*, "Why do they call me a Gibson Girl?"]

LADY ROLLESTON

Never mind the piano or Ray Luneville. If you count as nothing, he represents a hopelessly minus quantity, so we need not trouble about him. Ralph, I am going to ask you a question. Is there any just cause or impediment why you should not ask me to marry you? [RALPH *starts.*] Because if there is not I can put you financially straight, you see. I will not pay you the bad compliment of supposing that you would let me be your banker under any other conditions. That's so, isn't it?

HAWSTORNE

Good Heavens, Enid! What are you saying?

LADY ROLLESTON

Oh, something very simple. You may have forgotten it, Ralph; but long ago I told you I loved you. You are the one man who has ever made me forget my ordinary, worldly, social existence, and inspired me to dream of other things. When that happens to a woman—when she comes across a man who takes her out of her wonted plane and transports her to a new level—well, she never forgets the experience, or the man who has worked the miracle. And I shall never forget you, Ralph. I love you, and I ask you to marry me. . . . What is your answer?

HAWSTORNE

Enid. . . . [*He hesitates.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

Well, your answer?

HAWSTORNE

I had *three* letters by to-night's post, and they all meant something to me. One was from Tom Raleigh—that you read. Another was from Allen, Judkins and Co.—that you hold in your hand. The third [*fumbling in*

his pocket—the third [*he holds it out to her*]— No, I think I would rather you would not read that. Act II

LADY ROLLESTON

Tell me it yourself.

HAWSTORNE

It was from Grace Mayhew—the little girl at Wootton-le-Hay—the girl you laughed at.

LADY ROLLESTON

Your rustic divinity?

HAWSTORNE

Yes.

LADY ROLLESTON

Well? [*A pause.*] Do you mean that if you marry at all you ought to marry her? that you are morally bound to marry her?

HAWSTORNE

Yes.

[*There is silence, and from the next room comes the final verse, "Why do they call me a Gibson Girl?" RALPH gets up, puts his fingers in his ears, then walks to window, then comes back again and flings himself into a chair. The dressing-gong sounds, and Ralph winces.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Gets up.*] We must go and dress. [*She stops.*]
Ralph . . . have you nothing else to say to me?

HAWSTORNE

No, nothing. . . . Enid, you have been very good to me . . . much better than I deserve, and I am—well, I don't quite know what words would exactly describe me. But I thank you, Enid. I thank you—from the bottom of my heart. . . .

LADY ROLLESTON

My poor boy—forgive me; but I think you are a bit of a fool!

Act II

HAWSTORNE

I'm afraid that's not the only word ! [*Laughs bitterly.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

For once, let my worldly instinct help you. Do you think that you have any right to make an absolute shipwreck of your life ? You have come very near it, Ralph, but that's no reason why you should drive your ship straight on the rocks. Do you mean to tell me that you are the sort of man to marry the daughter of your old nurse ? Do you think you could make her happy ?

HAWSTORNE

I don't know, but I would try.

LADY ROLLESTON

You would try—for how long ? A year, six months, a single month ? Don't you know—in your heart of hearts—that both you and she would be perfectly miserable ? Look at your ring. You have still got the stone which means knowledge, and I presume that that includes a certain knowledge of the world. . . . Besides—I am almost ashamed to urge the point—but—don't you think that you owe me something ? However, I won't say anything further. Think it over. [*She is going to the door.*] I must finish my dressing. . . .

HAWSTORNE

Enid—stop ! Don't go yet. Give me one moment more.

LADY ROLLESTON

[*At the door.*] Is there anything still left to discuss ? You see, I am in rather a difficult position. I really ought to blush for what I have done already. Think for a moment. It is not usually considered quite *comme il faut* for a woman to propose marriage to a man. I have asked you to marry me. It is thought outrageous for a man to accept money from a woman ; I have asked you to accept money from me. Both of these

social enormities I have committed—why? Because we have been old friends and old lovers, and I thought I might dare to overstep those unwritten social laws which are so much more obligatory than the ordinary provisions of the Decalogue. Well, what is the position now? You refuse both my offers, and you tell me that you are bound to marry another woman—the daughter of your nurse. What is there left for me to do—but to retire with as much grace as is possible to a woman so scorned?

HAWSTORNE

Scorned? Oh, Enid, no! Admired, respected, worshipped with the gratitude of a full heart. . . .

LADY ROLLESTON

But not—loved?

HAWSTORNE

I know you are my best friend—my only friend—my only wise friend, kind, affectionate adviser and helper. I owe you everything—everything!

LADY ROLLESTON

But not—love?

HAWSTORNE

Yes, yes; love too! Come back to me. I am so hopeless, so solitary, so absolutely alone. Come back to me. I want you.

LADY ROLLESTON

You want me? And if I come back, in what relation do I come?

HAWSTORNE

Anything you wish—anything. Whatever I could do for you would be as nothing compared with what you have done for me. Come back to me! [*He goes half-way to the door where she is standing.*] Be my wife!

Act II

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Coming to him and holding out her hands.*] My darling !
 [*They kiss.*]

[*There is a pause. Then the door to the drawing-room slowly opens. LADY ROLLESTON swiftly leaves the hall. RALPH goes to the table. RAY LUNEVILLE comes in in evening dress, a "hope I don't intrude" sort of air.*

RAY LUNEVILLE

Hullo, Hawstorne, alone ? I thought I heard voices.

HAWSTORNE

As you see.

RAY LUNEVILLE

I say, aren't you dressed yet ? It's just dinner-time. I have been dressed the last half-hour, singing in the drawing-room. By the way, I hope I did not disturb you by my singing. I didn't know any one was in the hall.

HAWSTORNE

Were you singing ?

RAY LUNEVILLE

Warbling, my boy, warbling ! A little playful way I have ! They don't always appreciate me after dinner. The big bulls of Bashan roar after dinner, and the linnet has no chance.

HAWSTORNE

Well, hop away, linnet ! I want to write a post-card.

RAY LUNEVILLE

All right. See you at dinner. [*He goes to door, half goes out, then puts his head in.*] Perrier Jouet 89 to-night !
 [*Exit.*]

HAWSTORNE

[*Alone. Gets up, strolls to fireplace. Takes a cigarette, lights it, puffs a few times, then throws it away.*] It was

the only thing to do, the only thing to do! Between the devil and the deep sea! [*Goes to window, gazes gloomily out, with his hands in his pockets.*] But how in God's name am I to tell Gracie? Poor child, poor child! [*The dinner-gong sounds loudly. RALPH starts.*] Confound it! What a noise everything makes in this house! I suppose it's these cursed nerves of mine. [*He throws himself into a chair and stares in front of him.*] I don't see what else I could have done. [*Then his head sinks on the table.*] Oh, d——n! D——n everything! [*He rolls up his sleeve, takes a cigarette-case out of his pocket, and extracting a tube of cocaine and a syringe, proceeds to inject cocaine into his arm as the curtain falls.*]

ACT III

Act III *The Scene is the same. The door at L. leads from the dining-room, that at R. leads to drawing-room, and there is a door at C. which leads to the billiard-room and smoking-room proper. The ladies, who are discovered when the curtain ascends, have come in from dinner. There is LADY ROLLESTON, who is seated at escritoire, MISS ANGELA CROMPTON at piano, MRS. HARGREAVES talking to (or trying to talk to) LADY DANEBOROUGH.*

LADY ROLLESTON

[Goes over and rings bell, and then continues writing till the footman enters. Enter HARVEY.] Has Dr. Raleigh come yet?

HARVEY

No, my Lady.

LADY ROLLESTON

When was the telegram sent to him?

HARVEY

About eight o'clock, my Lady.

LADY ROLLESTON

Be sure you tell me the moment he arrives. Oh, and, Harvey, here's a letter for the post.

HARVEY

[Takes letter.] Yes, my Lady. *[Exit.]*

LADY ROLLESTON

[Turns round from escritoire.] Miss Crompton, do you mind not humming? I am very sorry to bother you, but "Love laid his sleepless head" gets on my nerves.

MISS CROMPTON

I'm sorry, dear Lady Rolleston. You see, Mr. Luneville is very fond of it.

LADY ROLLESTON

[Smiling.] Well, I don't wish to have a sleepless head, whatever Mr. Luneville's ambitions may be on the subject.

MISS CROMPTON

Oh, he assures me that he sleeps very little. The brain, he tells me, is rested in about an hour, whereas the body takes seven or eight hours to recover, and as he only exercises his brain, you see, he needn't sleep much.

LADY ROLLESTON

Dear me! I should have thought that, as he neither exercises his body nor his brain, he needn't sleep at all!

MISS CROMPTON

[Reproachfully.] You used to like Mr. Luneville——

LADY ROLLESTON

I like him very much now, my child, only sometimes he is too—what shall I say?—ethereal—like a dinner consisting solely of *hors d'œuvres* and *entrées*.

MISS CROMPTON

Ah! his talk is as light as thistledown.

LADY ROLLESTON

Naturally. I should think his food was thistles. . . . Forgive me, Miss Crompton. I am out of temper to-night. I have got a sad headache.

MRS. HARGREAVES

[Looking up.] I am so sorry, Lady Rolleston. I thought you looked far from well at dinner.

LADY DANEBOROUGH

Eh? What? I thought the dinner very good—particu-

Act III larly that dish with all the truffles and what-d'ye-call-'ems in it. What's its name? Nothing wrong with the dinner.

MRS. HARGREAVES

I didn't say anything was wrong with the dinner. I thought something was wrong with Lady Rolleston.

LADY DANEBOROUGH

Enid? I suppose she was bothering about Ralph Hawstorne. She has got him on the brain.

MRS. HARGREAVES

I thought he was particularly pleasant to-night.

MISS CROMPTON

Oh, he was positively brilliant! How clever he is!

LADY DANEBOROUGH

Yes, he was even pleasant to me—a luxury in which he has seldom indulged lately.

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Irritably.*] Oh, go to sleep, mother, until it's time for your Bridge.

LADY DANEBOROUGH

My dear, you need not fly down my throat because I pass a criticism on Major Hawstorne. I told you this afternoon that he was out of sorts. To-night he seems better. That's all. . . . I thought he drank too much, by the bye, and ate too little.

[LADY R. *turns away to the escritoire.* MRS. HARGREAVES *crosses over to her.*]

MRS. HARGREAVES

Dear Lady Rolleston, I know you are worried about Major Hawstorne. My husband told me, while we were dressing for dinner, that Mr. Daneborough had asked him to keep an eye on him, and help him if he could. I am sure he will do his best.

LADY ROLLESTON

Guy asked Mr. Hargreaves to—oh, good Heavens!

MRS. HARGREAVES

Yes. If he only has an opportunity, I feel certain that he will do him good.

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Pithily.*] I wish I could feel as certain. However, it doesn't matter. Miss Crompton, you sat next to Major Hawstorne.

MISS CROMPTON

Yes, and he said such clever things! Poor Mr. Luneville, on the other side of me, was quite outshone, and really looked quite sad. I remember that Major Hawstorne recommended him to have some more champagne. And he seemed so excited and his eyes sparkled so!

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Slowly.*] Yes, he seemed excited. [*Abruptly.*] Did he eat much?

MISS CROMPTON

No, very little indeed.

LADY ROLLESTON

Ah! Did his hand shake, do you remember? He broke a wine-glass, I think.

MISS CROMPTON

Yes. He said it was for luck. What a strange ring that is which he wears! There are two stones lost out of it, and he says that they cannot be replaced.

LADY ROLLESTON

Yes . . . yes . . . he values that ring—quite absurdly. Ah, here is Mr. Luneville, at all events, as a sort of advance guard. [*Enter RAY LUNEVILLE.*] Tired of men's society, Mr. Luneville?

Act III

RAY LUNEVILLE

Longing for ladies' society—that is how I should put it. What a barbarous custom it is to banish the ladies just when the dull business of eating is over and talk begins to run free.

LADY ROLLESTON

Perhaps it is the freedom of the talk which makes the ladies depart.

RAY LUNEVILLE

Ah, I observe you make the common confusion between freedom and license.

MISS CROMPTON

What is the precise distinction, Mr. Luneville?

RAY LUNEVILLE

Well, you see, if I say a *risqué* thing, that is only freedom, but if another man says a similar witticism, I call it license.

LADY ROLLESTON

Freedom, in fact, is what you claim for yourself; license is the quality you impute to other people—admirable! Well, that exactly explains why we ladies leave the table after dinner.

RAY LUNEVILLE

And also why I come here.

MISS CROMPTON

Oh, Mr. Luneville, do you want to see what license we ladies allow ourselves?

RAY LUNEVILLE

Heaven forbid! my dear young lady. I am afraid I could never understand the stories ladies tell each other after dinner. Their interest is too esoteric.

MISS CROMPTON

Esoteric—oh, what a lovely word! What does it mean?

MRS. HARGREAVES

The unmentionable ?

LADY ROLLESTON

The piquantly peculiar ?

MISS CROMPTON

The too awfully awful !

LADY DANEBOROUGH

The idiotic !

RAY LUNEVILLE

Something of all these—especially the last, Lady Daneborough [*with a bow to her*]. The esoteric is a fusion of subtlety and inwardness, the abstruse, for which we require some initiation——

LADY ROLLESTON

Like your jokes ?

RAY LUNEVILLE

Precisely—or like a lady's costume. Mystery, you see, is the salt of life. I put it into my talk. You put it into your dress. In either case, the result is fascinating.

MISS CROMPTON

How clever !

LADY DANEBOROUGH

[*Grumblingly.*] What rubbish !

LADY ROLLESTON

And did other people's license interfere with your freedom in the other room ?

RAY LUNEVILLE

Most grievously, I regret to say. There was no free exchange. The Cobdenite conversationalist had no chance. Talk was conducted on the principle of Protective tariffs—let me get the highest price for my commodity and put a tax on yours.

Act III

LADY ROLLESTON

So the conscientious free-trader was out of it? Who monopolized the conversation?

RAY LUNEVILLE

Well, do you know, Major Hawstorne, I think, was the chief offender. He was most selfish——

MRS. HARGREAVES

Don't you like Major Hawstorne?

RAY LUNEVILLE

Oh, charming! Sometimes a little obtrusive, perhaps. He talks of philosophy, which he does not understand, and of morality, which he does not practise, and of manners, to which he can lay no claim. Within these limits he is quite a good fellow.

MISS CROMPTON

What a curious testimonial! I am afraid you are jealous of Major Hawstorne!

RAY LUNEVILLE

[*To Miss CROMPTON.*] Jealousy suggests such an ugly shade of green. My favourite colour [*looking at Miss CROMPTON's dress*] is rose-pink.

LADY ROLLESTON

Well, here come the gentlemen, and here is Major Hawstorne to answer for himself.

[*Enter MAJOR HAWSTORNE, GUY DANEBOROUGH, LORD VIVIAN RODNEY, ROBERT TIDMAN, CHARLES HARGREAVES.* HAWSTORNE *has an excited manner, and is somewhat flushed.*]

HAWSTORNE

What have I got to answer for? Somebody been attacking me?

LADY ROLLESTON

Only Mr. Luneville has been suggesting some limitations to your acquaintance with philosophy and ethics.

HAWSTORNE

What, Luneville? Ha, ha! I know his favourite formula with his friends—"D——d scoundrel—great friend of mine—that's how he treats his nearest and dearest! Dangerous sort of chap, Luneville.

RAY LUNEVILLE

Dear me, what a compliment! To be dangerous is to be important.

HAWSTORNE

Yes—important to avoid. But cheer up, Luneville; your books are specified as harmless—didn't you tell me so, Mr. Hargreaves?

HARGREAVES

[*Looking shocked.*] I—oh, no! I—ah—I never read erotic poetry. I was, I believe, telling you how rarely I came across a modern novel which was harmless.

HAWSTORNE

Or a modern woman either, eh? [*Laughs rather noisily.*] Women are the devil—I beg pardon, present company, of course, excepted!

GUY

Come, Bridge, Bridge! What are you all wastin' time for? Here's my old mother dyin' for a game! Bridge! Bridge! [*He fusses about noisily.* LADY DANEBOROUGH has already taken her seat at one of the two tables.]

LADY ROLLESTON

Yes, it's quite time some of us settled down—quietly. [*Looking at HAWSTORNE.*]

RAY LUNEVILLE

The lilies and languors of cards are better than the roses and raptures of talk, aren't they?

Act III

HAWSTORNE

Especially to those who don't know how to talk. Cards are like a band at dinner. Intended to conceal the poverty of conversation !

LADY ROLLESTON

Come and sit here by me, Ralph. There are quite enough to play.

[*At one table are* LADY DANEBOROUGH, MR. CHARLES HARGREAVES, MISS CROMPTON, RAY LUNEVILLE. *At the second are* MRS. HARGREAVES, LORD VIVIAN RODNEY, MR. TIDMAN, and GUY DANEBOROUGH. HAWSTORNE and LADY ROLLESTON *come down* R.

RODNEY

Doesn't Major Hawstorne care to play—eh ?

MR. TIDMAN

He probably prefers to talk to our hostess.

RODNEY

Burnt his bridges, in fact—eh, what ?

TIDMAN

Oh, my Lord ! [*Laughs consumedly.*]

GUY

Can't think what people have to talk about all night. Talkin' bores me to death. [*They play.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

Ralph, you are better, are you not ?

HAWSTORNE

[*Who has alternations of excitement and sulkiness.*] Better ? Of course I'm better. Never felt so fit in my life.

LADY ROLLESTON

You frightened me rather at dinner—you seemed to be so excited !

HAWSTORNE

Was I ? Well, I'm flat enough now.

LADY ROLLESTON

But oh, Ralph—how am I to help you, when you—you take so much champagne?

HAWSTORNE

Oh, don't mind me. I know how to manage myself pretty well.

LADY ROLLESTON

Yes, but you talked so much and so loud. You were talking to the whole table, do you know?

HAWSTORNE

[Laughs.] I can't help it. If they are so silent, some one must do the talking unless we are all to be a set of mummies. Yes, I suppose I did talk—did you hear me sit on Vivian Rodney? I can't stand that chap—insufferable young prig!

LADY ROLLESTON

Was that when you broke a wine-glass?

HAWSTORNE

Did I break a wine-glass? I dare say. Somehow the whole dinner passed like a dream—or a nightmare. I pinched myself sometimes to see if I was awake.

LADY ROLLESTON

[Looking anxious.] You know I telegraphed to Dr. Raleigh? He ought to be here soon.

HAWSTORNE

What the devil did you do that for? I am all right.

LADY ROLLESTON

You remember, I told you I was going to—before dinner.

HAWSTORNE

I don't remember anything of the kind. Confound it, Enid, you might leave me alone. I can look after myself. I don't want to see Raleigh. And I think it's not fair on

Act III me to send for him behind my back. You've got no right to do anything of the kind.

LADY ROLLESTON

Oh, Ralph, no right? Not when you have asked me to be your wife?

HAWSTORNE

Oh yes; I had forgotten that! [*With a hollow laugh.*] By the bye, have you told any of these people—your brother and mother? I suppose they ought to be told.

LADY ROLLESTON

No, I haven't said anything yet.

HAWSTORNE

Well, it seems to me such glorious news ought to be spread as widely as possible. Look here, I'll tell them. [*He rises.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

No, no, Ralph—not now. Besides, they are deep in their game.

HAWSTORNE

Yes, now and here. Why not? Confound their Bridge. [*Getting excited suddenly.*] Of course, I knew there was something I had to tell them. I could not think what the grand secret was all through dinner-time. Of course, our engagement—I'll tell them at once.

LADY ROLLESTON

No, no. [*She stops him.*]

HAWSTORNE

Yes, yes, I tell you. Don't stop me. It is much too splendid a thing to be kept secret any longer. Ha, ha! [*The laugh is bitter and hollow.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

Oh, Ralph, don't be so wild, and don't laugh like that. [*She sinks in a corner helplessly.*]

HAWSTORNE

Why not? It is a real comedy. Some people might even call it a tragic farce! Ha, ha! Look here, my excellent and worthy friends. [*He goes up to one of the tables.*] I have got something much more interesting for you than your stupid Bridge. [*They look up surprised.*] Here, Tiddle-a-winks, my Lord Tom Noddy, or whatever you call yourself [*at the other table*], Miss Angela Crumpet, and my dear friend and adviser Graveyard—forgive my apparent excitement—but you will understand when you hear my news! Confound the cards! [*He seizes TIDMAN's hand of cards.*] You couldn't have won with that hand in a month of Sundays! Much better listen to me! [*He throws the cards down.*]

TIDMAN

Really, Major Hawstorne!
[*They laugh at first, then get serious.*]

HAWSTORNE

Yes, really, Tiddle-a-winks! Forgive me—I can't remember your admirable name, but I think it has something to do with sea-salt! Well—you would never have guessed it—I am going to be married! Why don't you congratulate me—all of you? Miss Crumpet, I really think you might pay me the conventional compliments.

GUY

Hawstorne, I must ask you— [*Getting up.*]

HAWSTORNE

Ask away, old chap. I'll tell you anything you want to know. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I see you looking rather surprised, and I hasten to relieve your embarrassment. I apologize for any chance inadvertence in my phrases, or any inconvenience I may have caused you by my abruptness. If I was a poet, like Loony Rayville there, I could put the thing much more prettily. But you know there are some situations in which a man is allowed

Act III a certain amount of rope—one is when he is going to be hanged, and another is when he is going to be married!

LADY DANEBOROUGH

Going to be mad! He's mad already!

HAWSTORNE

Married, dear lady, not mad. You mistake the effect for the cause. At present we're only in the initial stage. But when a man is to be hanged or married, he desires to make a sort of confession, or rhapsody, or swan-song—to improve the occasion, in short! Do not look alarmed, Mr. Hargreaves; I am not going to poach, more than I can help, on your preserves.

MRS. HARGREAVES

Dear me! Dear me! Can nothing be done to put a stop to this?

GUY

Hawstorne, once more, stop this foolin'. We've had enough.

HAWSTORNE

One moment, please. I ask for your patience. A charming lady has consented to be my wife—at my particular request. If marriages are made in Paradise, I suppose engagements are at least worthy of Purgatory. And observe the complete appropriateness of the affair. For, clearly, the mere bachelor, the obstinate, predestined bachelor, is admirably fitted for the Inferno—what do you think, old Tom Tiddler's ground? [*He slaps TIDMAN on the back, and laughs.*] The Adam in this restored Eden is your humble servant. The Eve—well, never mind the Eve for the present. Adam is a middle-aged bankrupt—but still she takes compassion on him. Adam is a man who has been known to drink too much—but still she takes compassion on him. Adam has wasted his youth and tarnished his manhood—but still she does not turn her face away. Adam is not likely, for causes already

mentioned, to have a long life—but still she accepts what is left of him. You will observe that Eve undertakes somewhat grave responsibilities. I can't think why she assumes such a burden, can you?

LADY DANEBOROUGH

I don't know why we should have to listen to the ravings of a lunatic! Guy, pray ring the bell for my maid.

[GUY goes to bell. HAWSTORNE anticipates him.]

HAWSTORNE

Allow me, my dear Lady. You are quite right to retire. Such discussions are not suited to your virgin ears. [Servant enters.] Lady Daneborough wants her maid and her perambulator, if you please. [Mrs. HARGREAVES goes up to LADY DANEBOROUGH, offers her an arm, and exeunt together.] That's all right. My discourse has the effect of dispersing the congregation almost faster than one of your sermons, honourable and reverend Mr. Harrowgrave! And now that all ladies and children have left the court at the command of the presiding judge, we will resume this distressing case. Let me see—where was I?

LADY ROLLESTON

Ralph—for Heaven's sake! . . . [She half rises.]

HAWSTORNE

Never mind, Eve dear; we will come to you presently. Marriage is a mystery, a holy covenant, a sacrament— isn't it? Don't shake your head, Loony rhyme-spinner! You can't find a good rhyme to "covenant," can you? or "sacrament" either? Never mind. You ask the parson if I am not right! Well, for what reasons do we enter the holy estate of matrimony? Social convenience? Expediency? A family arrangement? Statecraft? Maternal diplomacy? Passion? Money? Excellent reasons for tying the matrimonial noose, aren't they? particularly the last? My dear Miss Crumpet, don't

Act III blush! Ask your amorous poet there. He will give you admirable rhymes for love, but he will take devilish good care to find something more practical and substantial in his own interest! Ha, ha! But these are not the only causes for wedlock! I will give you another. Necessity! My dear friends—because you must! Because you can't help yourself! Adam has made an infernal fool of himself all his life, and then, when he has played his last stake, and sees ruin, moral, social, bodily, mental ruin staring him in the face, when he is good for nothing, and neither Heaven, nor Earth, nor Hell, offers him the ghost of a chance, or the glimmer of a fading hope—he marries! When in doubt, play trumps, you know! When you have spent your bottom dollar, and in the ranks of humanity have reached the class known as Z 99—you must either take orders—beg pardon, rector—or get married—either lump it or leave it, ha, ha! Matrimony is the solace of a broken heart—like religion; the last refuge for the ruined—like the bankruptcy court! Then come the statelier bridals, of which the poet dreams. Then comes the gracious Eve, who takes Adam for better or worse—the worse, for choice. Then dawns the light of a newer Eden—ha, ha, ha, ha! [*He sinks down suddenly, in a quick and strange reaction.*] Oh, God! how tired I am!

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Rising and going over to him.*] Guy, for Heaven's sake, take him away. Ring, and let's get him to bed. I have sent for his doctor.

GUY

Goodness knows what we're to do with him! Here, Luneville, take Miss Crompton away. She's frightened out of her wits!

MISS CROMPTON

Oh, Mr. Luneville, yes—let us go into the drawing-room. Anywhere—anywhere, out of this.

RAY LUNEVILLE

Act III

Dear Miss Angela—Angela—I will look after you. Come with me. [RAY LUNEVILLE and Miss ANGELA go out into drawing-room.]

GUY

Here, you fellows [to HARGREAVES, TIDMAN, and RODNEY], help me. We must get him away.

TIDMAN

[*Officiously.*] Shall I ring?

LADY ROLLESTON

No—no. I don't want the servants to see him like this.

HAWSTORNE

[*Rousing himself.*] Go to bed! Who said go to bed? Nonsense! I am not tired. Let's play a round game or something. Look here, Rodney, I will back myself against you in anything you like—cards, billiards, running, jumping, fighting. Five pounds each event. . . . Don't be a cur—come on!

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Whispering.*] Oh, do humour him. Take him to the billiard-room. I cannot bear any more. . . .

GUY

Come into the billiard-room, Hawstorne. It is cooler there.

HAWSTORNE

All right. I want a whisky-and-potash and a smoke.

[TIDMAN opens the door c. HAWSTORNE goes out, digging TIDMAN in the ribs as he passes. The others follow, and the door is closed. LADY ROLLESTON is left alone. She totters to the bell, and then sinks down on chair R., sobbing and almost fainting. JARVIS enters.]

Act III

JARVIS

If you please, my Lady, Dr. Raleigh has just driven up to the door.

LADY ROLLESTON

Thank God !

JARVIS

Shall I show him in ?

LADY ROLLESTON

Yes—no. Give me something to drink first . . . and, Jarvis, just arrange the room a little.

[The other servant, HARVEY, comes in. JARVIS goes out, while HARVEY arranges the room, picking up a chair that had fallen, and the cards, which are strewn on the floor. JARVIS re-enters with brandy-and-soda, which he gives to LADY ROLLESTON. After a pause.]

LADY ROLLESTON

Now, show Dr. Raleigh in, please. *[JARVIS exit with HARVEY. LADY ROLLESTON goes to looking-glass, then sits at escritoire, pretending to write.]*

Enter JARVIS, ushering in DR. RALEIGH.

JARVIS

Dr. Raleigh, my Lady.

RALEIGH

I am sorry to be so late, Lady Rolleston, but I was out when your telegram came. I gather that there is something urgent—

LADY ROLLESTON

Oh, thank Heaven you have come, Dr. Raleigh ! Yes, indeed ; I wanted you very badly, or I should not have given you all this trouble.

RALEIGH

What is it ? In the first place I think I ought to attend to you. You look very far from well.

LADY ROLLESTON

Never mind about me. Of course, I sent for you about Major Hawstorne.

RALEIGH

Ah, so I feared. What has happened ?

LADY ROLLESTON

The most dreadful things. He seems to have utterly lost all control over himself, and just now we had a terrible outbreak.

RALEIGH

You see, he was not fit to pay you a visit at all. I was only too afraid of what might occur that afternoon when I saw you at Mrs. Mayhew's cottage ; but both you and he seemed so eager that the visit should take place that I allowed myself to be over-persuaded. I was wrong, evidently. You know what he is suffering from ?

LADY ROLLESTON

Yes, we are old friends, you know, since his time in India, and he showed me the letter you wrote to him. You alluded to cocaine——

RALEIGH

He has been poisoning himself for months with the wretched stuff. I kept him under strict control while he was at Wootton-le-Hay. But even then he sometimes broke my orders. It seems that he got into the habit in England, after some repetition of the ague-fits which he contracted in India. I suppose he was not very strong in India ?

LADY ROLLESTON

Yes and no. He had lots of spirit, and was ready for anything ; but he had fever very badly, and was much pulled down. Then he was invalided home.

Act III

RALEIGH

He told me that he was very liable to influenza attacks. At all events, some one told him that cocaine was good for the nerves—you know what great depression is caused by influenza—and he got into the habit of using it. Of course, the thing grew upon him; these habits invariably end by making the man or the woman who indulges in them an abject, miserable slave. I don't know whether you know the effects?

LADY ROLLESTON

I know something about morphia and the morphomaniacs.

RALEIGH

Well, it's much the same—in many respects actually worse. The victim, of course, requires more and more to produce the desired result. It is highly stimulating, and the reactions are dreadful. Sometimes the patient is in the wildest spirits, and afterwards he is in the lowest depths of despair. His temper is uncertain, his face changes in colour, he suffers from sleeplessness and loss of appetite, the hands tremble. But the moral effects are still more lamentable. All self-control is lost, and gradually every kind of distinction between right and wrong vanishes. Above all, the instinct for truthfulness disappears; falsehood and deception become natural; and in the last and worst stages the victim is a hopeless liar. [*Loud laughter from adjoining room.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

Don't—please, don't say any more! [*Shuddering.*]
It's too horrible!

RALEIGH

Of course, Major Hawstorne is not so bad as that—yet. But he has acquired, I am sorry to say, the irresistible craving for the temporary feeling of happiness and well-being **which** cocaine, like all similar drugs—hashish

and opium, for instance—produces. And at times he would almost sell his soul to get peace for his throbbing nerves. By the way, where is he ? Act III

LADY ROLLESTON

In the next room, the billiard-room.

RALEIGH

Ah, I thought I heard his laugh just now. It is not pleasant to hear—it's almost a maniac's laugh.

LADY ROLLESTON

Yes, yes. But what is to be done ?

RALEIGH

I must take him away, as soon as possible, and nurse him. Foreseeing what might happen, I have brought a nurse with me—a nurse whom he knows.

LADY ROLLESTON

Can I not nurse him here ?

RALEIGH

No, Lady Rolleston. There I am afraid I must be firm. I must take him away with me. Did you say he had had an outburst lately ?

LADY ROLLESTON

A dreadful outburst—this evening—just now. He has been in a queer state all the afternoon, and when he came back from shooting he complained that he was out of sorts, and could not hit anything.

RALEIGH

Has he had any mental shock—something, I mean to worry him ?

LADY ROLLESTON

Yes, he had a letter, I think, which upset him. It came with yours by the evening post.

Act III

RALEIGH

Ah—he probably took cocaine before dinner to steady his nerves. Feeling anxious and worried, he would be almost sure to fly to the cursed drug. How and when can I see him?

LADY ROLLESTON

Shall I go into the billiard-room and ask him to come here?

RALEIGH

No; he would probably refuse, and lose his temper. I must wait till he comes out of his own accord. He is sure to have the usual reaction, and then he will get moody and tired—at all events, he will be relatively quiet and reasonable. . . . I must see him alone.

LADY ROLLESTON

And you are sure that he cannot be nursed here? Surely it's better to get him to bed here? for to-night? I would do everything you told me to, and take every care of him.

RALEIGH

[*Firmly.*] No, Lady Rolleston. Forgive me; I must insist. I am afraid [*hesitating*] that you may be—pardon me once more—that you may be rather an exciting agency for him in his present condition.

LADY ROLLESTON

Oh, why? I am very fond of him.

RALEIGH

Pray do not say anything further on the point. If you are fond of him, if you care for him at all, you will do what you can to help him in this crisis. And by far the best thing for him is to let me take him away from this house, and—I regret to have to say it—from you.

LADY ROLLESTON

Of course, if you say it is necessary, I must give way. Oh, here is some one from the billiard-room.

Enter from billiard-room GUY DANEBOROUGH, almost purple in the face.

GUY

Look here, Sissie, I can't stand this any more——

LADY ROLLESTON

Guy, this is Dr. Raleigh. [DR. RALEIGH bows.

GUY

Raleigh, I'm devilish glad to see you. I'm a pretty patient man, very long-sufferin', and all that, but the way Hawstorne has been going on is more than I can stand. . . . Enid would have him here—I can't make out why—I'm sure I didn't want him, and now I'm d——d if I know what we are to do with him. Get him away, Raleigh, for Heaven's sake!

RALEIGH

I am here for that purpose.

LADY ROLLESTON

What has happened? I thought he was quieter.

GUY

He was fairly quiet at first, and played pyramids all right. Then he got excited again. He has cut my cloth, of course. I don't mind that so much, although the billiard-table is spoilt, and equally, of course, he has spilt his drink all over the place. But he is so infernally quarrelsome. He deliberately picked a quarrel with young Vivian Rodney—I suppose he doesn't like him. Anyhow, he wanted to fight a duel, -or somethin'! . . . Oh, I can't remember now what excited him. He had lost a cigarette-case, on which he set great store, and he made

Act III a devil of a row about it. . . . And then he jabbered a lot about that ring of his. I couldn't make head or tail of what he said—some rubbish about an Indian priest or somethin'. He is mad—that's what he is—rank, roarin' mad, and the sooner he is put into a lunatic asylum, the better for us all. [*Enter from billiard-room LORD VIVIAN RODNEY, TIDMAN, and HARGREAVES.*] Hullo, you chaps, where have you left the maniac?

RODNEY

He is quiet now. He has shaken hands with me, and told me he was sorry. He's a rum lot—eh, what?

TIDMAN

He was very insolent to you, my Lord.

RODNEY

So he was to you, Tidman.

TIDMAN

But it's different to me.

GUY

Is it? Well, I should have thought an insult was an insult all the world over? Do you say he's quiet now?

HARGREAVES

Yes—we left him at his own request. He said he wanted to be alone.

RODNEY

By the way, he wanted to enter into a theological discussion with Mr. Hargreaves. Odd fish, eh, what?

HARGREAVES

He is very anxious to find that cigarette-case he was talking about. I think, do you know, he half suspects us of robbing him of it. He told us we were persecuting him. That is probably why he wanted to be left alone—in order to look for the case himself.

GUY

This is the doctor—Dr. Raleigh. Thank Heaven, our responsibility is over!

RALEIGH

Gentlemen, I will ask you to be good enough to leave me to deal with him. Will you oblige me?

GUY

Oh, certainly, certainly. With the greatest pleasure. Come along.

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Anxiously.*] May I stay with you, doctor?

RALEIGH

No, Lady Rolleston, I think not.

GUY

Well, we are very much obliged to you, Raleigh—very grateful, in fact. Ring if you want anythin'. [*The gentlemen go out.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

Quite sure, doctor?

RALEIGH

Quite sure. [*LADY ROLLESTON goes out reluctantly.*
[*As soon as they have gone, DR. RALEIGH rings the bell. After a moment the servant comes.*]

RALEIGH

Kindly ask the nurse I brought with me to come here, to this room, as soon as possible. Bring her to the door. You need not come in yourself. You understand?

SERVANT

Yes, sir.

[*Exit.*

[*DR. RALEIGH proceeds to turn some of the lights out, and leaves one only glimmering. Then he throws open the windows, and lets in a*

Act III

flood of moonlight. Then he waits. Presently there is a knock at the door, and a voice without, "Shall I come in, doctor?" (in a whisper.)

RALEIGH

Yes, come in.

[The figure of a nurse—GRACE—comes across the moonlight.]

RALEIGH

Come here, in the shadow. We must wait.

GRACE

[Whispers.] Where is he?

RALEIGH

[Whispers.] In there. We must wait.

[There is a pause and a long silence. Then the door of the billiard-room opens and HAWSTORNE comes in. He looks frightfully haggard in the moonlight, and dishevelled, with large, staring eyes—as if he were walking in his sleep. The nurse and doctor keep in the shadow while he comes down.]

HAWSTORNE

I must find it, I must find it. Where the devil can I have dropped it? All dark here. Confound it, where are the matches? *[He goes to table and feels for match-box, and then in his own pockets.]* I must have that—that cigarette. I shall die if I can't have . . . *[He speaks dreamily. Then, after some search, he drops into a chair.]* I am so tired. I think I am dying. Death would be the best thing of all for me. Oh, I hope I am dying. What else remains? *[He puts his hands over his face, then drops his hands on his knees. His fingers are clearly seen in the moonlight. He looks down at his hands. Then suddenly his eye is caught by his ring on his finger, and he stares at it—incredulously at first, and then with growing alarm.]* Good

God! the ring! the ring! It has gone—the last stone has gone! To desire—to possess—to know—all have gone! Is this the end? [*He takes the ring off his finger, as though to fling it out of window. Then pauses.*] No, no; I cannot throw it away! It is all I have! Oh, help, help, help! [*He screams at last in sheer terror, then falls on the floor, fainting.* DR. RALEIGH turns up one light, and comes over to him.]

RALEIGH

He has fainted. [*To GRACE.*] Is there any water in the room?

GRACE

Here is a half-finished glass of something—brandy-and-soda, I think. [*She brings over the glass which LADY ROLLESTON had begun when DR. RALEIGH was announced.*]

RALEIGH

That will do. [*He holds the glass to HAWSTORNE's lips, while he and the NURSE support his head.*] That's better. He is coming to. [*HAWSTORNE slowly opens his eyes.*]

HAWSTORNE

[*Faintly.*] Where am I? Who are you? What do you want?

RALEIGH

We are your best friends, Hawstorne.

HAWSTORNE

[*Whose eyes are fixed on GRACE.*] Who are you? Let me see your face. Who is it!

GRACE

It is I—Grace!

HAWSTORNE

Grace—and you? [*Turning to RALEIGH.*] Raleigh?

Act III

RALEIGH

Yes.

HAWSTORNE

Grace, and Tom Raleigh! Oh, thank God, thank
God!

[He sinks back, happy, into their arms.]

Curtain.

ACT IV

Four weeks have elapsed. The Scene is the same as ACT I. Act IV

MRS. MAYHEW'S cottage at *Wootton-le-Hay, Wharvedale*. Bright October sunshine; open window c. MRS. MAYHEW and GRACE, dressed as a professional nurse, are dusting the room, putting things in order, etc. The little crippled boy of ACT I. is helping as best he can, hobbling about, and looking from time to time out of the window c.]

MRS. MAYHEW

[*Watching him.*] What is it, Tommy? You seem quite excited this morning.

TOMMY

[*Who speaks in odd, jerky monosyllables.*] Major—come—soon?

MRS. MAYHEW

Yes, Dr. Raleigh has allowed him to come down for the first time this morning.

TOMMY

Major—better?

MRS. MAYHEW

Yes, Tommy, much better, the doctor says.

TOMMY

Me—see—Major? [MRS. MAYHEW turns to GRACE.]

GRACE

Yes, if you are very good and quiet. Poor Major Hawstorne is not strong, you know. He is ever so pale and weak, and we must take lots of care of him.

Act IV

TOMMY

Me—take—care—him.

GRACE

You dear child! [*Kisses him.*] Yes, you shall help me to take care of him. Where are you going?

TOMMY

Tell—children—village. [*He limps out of open window.*]

MRS. MAYHEW

[*Looking after him with a smile.*] Oh, he has got some little scheme, I think, on his mind. He is going to tell some of the little children in the village about Master Ralph.

GRACE

He is a dear little boy, and nothing can exceed his gratitude and devotion to Major Hawstorne. You remember his first appearance here?

MRS. MAYHEW

Yes—Master Ralph brought him in his arms and gave him to me. He had been hurt.

GRACE

Tommy has never forgotten it. Nor yet the ring—do you recollect? He had it tightly clasped in his hand, and it was ever so difficult to persuade him to give it up. He often asks about the ring now, and wants to see it.

MRS. MAYHEW

What has become of the ring?

GRACE

Oh, it's still on Major Hawstorne's finger—that is to say, the frame of the ring. The stones are lost. . . .

MRS. MAYHEW

Ah, the stones are gone, and he set such store by them!

GRACE

[*Smiling.*] He thinks they are all lost. But I picked up one—when—when I went with Dr. Raleigh to—to fetch him home. He does not know yet. Don't tell him.

MRS. MAYHEW

Of course not.

GRACE

I want to keep it as a surprise for him to-day.

MRS. MAYHEW

Poor Master Ralph! He wants all the pleasure we can give him. Hush, what is that? Don't I hear his foot-steps outside?

GRACE

Yes—yes. [*She runs excitedly to the door L.*]

[*Enter HAWSTORNE supported by DR. RALEIGH. He is very much pulled down—very pale and bloodless, and apparently walks with difficulty. GRACE runs up and supports him on the one side. MRS. MAYHEW pulls forward a long easy chair by the window, and they put HAWSTORNE into it.*]

HAWSTORNE

[*In a weak voice and with a ghost of a smile.*] Aha, Mother Flannels, you see I am getting on famously—thanks to Grace and this dear doctor. I shall soon pull round.

MRS. MAYHEW

[*Crying.*] Oh, dear, Master Ralph, I wish we could do more for you. But it is a blessed sight to see you downstairs again. . . . Do you feel any draught from the window? Doctor, is it safe for him to sit by an open window?

RALEIGH

Quite safe, Mrs. Mayhew. The air is the best thing in the world for him.

Act IV

GRACE

It is almost as warm as July—a beautiful St. Luke's summer!

MRS. MAYHEW

Yes—yes—yes—but it's treacherous too. Has he got flannel—thick flannel—round him?

RALEIGH

He's all right, I can assure you.

HAWSTORNE

Dear old Mother Flannels! She thinks the whole world can be cured by Viyella or Jaegers.

RALEIGH

She is not far wrong, either. Well—now that you are comfortable I must go my rounds, and then I will call in again. Remember, Nurse, he is not to be here too long. Directly he feels tired he must go back to bed. Good-bye, Mrs. Mayhew. Au revoir, Hawstorne.

[As he is going out by the window, TOMMY, who is rushing in, runs full tilt against him.]

RALEIGH

Bless the boy! What's up now? Considering that you are a cripple, Tommy, you manage to get over the ground pretty fast. *[He pats TOMMY on the head and exit.]*

TOMMY

Major—down—hooray!

GRACE

Yes, Tommy, but you must not tire him. *[TOMMY draws GRACE aside and whispers in her ear.]* All right—yes, now, at once. I will tell Major Hawstorne.

TOMMY

No—no—mum's the word! *[He hobbles out quickly.]*

MRS. MAYHEW

Act IV

Bless us and save us! Wherever is the boy off to now? [*She goes out after him into the garden.*]

HAWSTORNE

Grace dear.

GRACE

Yes.

HAWSTORNE

Come near to me, and call me "Ralph."

GRACE

Yes. . . . Ralph. [*She goes over to him.*]

HAWSTORNE

Am I really better?

GRACE

Yes—the doctor gives a good account of you—and so do I.

HAWSTORNE

Am I going to live—after all?

GRACE

Of course you are. Only we must take great care of you.

HAWSTORNE

Ah, you are all so kind to me, so good and tender and affectionate. But is it worth while keeping a man like me alive? Is it worth while, I wonder? . . .

GRACE

Hush, hush! You must not talk like that!

HAWSTORNE

I feel so utterly worthless and weak, such a wreck—a mere rag of a man. Just look at these hands—they

Act IV almost frighten me ! I don't dare to look at my face in the glass. It must be horrible ! And sometimes an awful craving comes on me, a craving for *that*—you know what I mean. I think I would sell my soul to have that cigarette-case again. I wonder what became of it ? It is cruel to deny me, I only ask for such a little. Surely it cannot be right to break a habit in so abrupt a fashion. You ought to let a man down easily. Come, Grace, is it kind ?

GRACE

Ralph dear, you know what Dr. Raleigh's orders are. He believes in absolute cessation—stopping the thing once and for all—at whatever cost. If you had any more of that dreadful cocaine it would ruin you. You would go back to all the bad ways. . . .

HAWSTORNE

But surely some people are broken in gradually, by continually lessening doses. I remember a man in India who was treated that way, and he got all right. . . .

GRACE

It was morphia, probably—not cocaine. No. [*Firmly.*] We must do what the doctor tells us, and not complain.

HAWSTORNE

Well, it's jolly hard upon a fellow. [*Pettishly.*] Oh, it's all very well for you to preach at me, but you don't know what it feels like to have an aching, maddening craving like mine. A little would satisfy me, you know—only a very little.

GRACE

Dear, don't let us talk about it. Don't make it so hard for me to refuse. [*TOMMY runs in again.*]

TOMMY

Major—all right ?

GRACE

Act IV

Yes, Tommy. Ralph, Tommy has organized a children's chorus to greet your first appearance downstairs. You don't mind, do you? It won't bore you?

HAWSTORNE

[*Feebly.*] Oh, it is very good of Tommy. Let him do what he likes. Go ahead, Tommy.

[*TOMMY goes to window and makes signs. Outside a row of small boys and girls is drawn up. With a large paper-knife in his hand he imitates with perfect gravity the conductor of a band, beating time, and saying "One—two—three. Go!" The children begin wrong. TOMMY stops them by beating with his paper-knife on the window-ledge, waves his arms and tries to pull them together. Then they burst into a chorus, "See the conquering hero comes." HAWSTORNE's face gradually relaxes into a smile, as he sees TOMMY's excited gestures.*

GRACE

That will do, Tommy. We must not tire the Major.

HAWSTORNE

Come here, Tommy. I want you to thank the children for me, and give them these [*putting some coins into his hand*] for sweetmeats. Tell them that I am very grateful to them for their kindness, which I deeply appreciate, and say how glad I am to see them all again.

TOMMY

[*Strutting back to window. Tumbling his words over one another.*] Children—Major—very good—kindness to you—'preciate very much. Hooray! [*They cheer, TOMMY turns back again, bows, and puts himself at the head of the children, who march off. GRACE and HAWSTORNE laugh happily.*

Act IV

HAWSTORNE

Happy little kids ! I was once like that, Grace, though you may find it difficult to believe—just a chubby-cheeked, curly-headed boy. What colour is my hair now ?

GRACE

[*Bending over him tenderly.*] Rather gray, Ralph. There are a good many white hairs—more white than brown, I'm afraid.

HAWSTORNE

It was golden once. Fancy a broken-down, good-for-nothing failure like me having golden curly locks once ! I remember my mother cried when they were cut off, and kept them, done up in silver paper, in her jewel-case. She was proud of me—then.

GRACE

May I have one of the golden curls, Ralph ?

HAWSTORNE

Yes, dear, if they still survive. They will remind you that Ralph Hawstorne—wastrel, failure and ne'er-do-well—was once an innocent-hearted child ! [*He takes her hand.*] I am sorry I was pettish and stupid just now—forgive me. You know that though you have always been on the side of the angels, I am not quite fit for Paradise !

GRACE

Not yet, Ralph.

HAWSTORNE

Ah, but you think I shall be ? Well, there's many a bad man who has been dragged into Heaven by a good woman. It won't be your fault, anyway, if I cannot climb the steep path. But seriously, Grace, if I am to remain angelic for five minutes you must get me something to do.

GRACE

Shall I read to you ?

HAWSTORNE

No, that will be *your* doing something, not me. Do you think your gracious highness will permit me to smoke?

GRACE

I don't think one cigarette will hurt you.

HAWSTORNE

[*With a grim smile.*] One cigarette! Ye gods, have I come to this! Well, half a smoke is better than no tobacco! It's better than nothing. But where shall we get this precious cigarette? I have not got any, and I don't suppose Mother Flannels counts secret smoking among her vices, does she? Run down into the village and get me some cigarettes, that's a good girl. I think I could even tolerate a packet of Virginian from the post office!

GRACE

Oh, but I don't think I ought to leave you.

HAWSTORNE

Nonsense—it won't take you more than a quarter of an hour. And you know I have not got such superabundant activity that I am likely to get into mischief. I shall only sit here, like a log, and count the minutes.

GRACE

You will promise not to try to move?

HAWSTORNE

Honest Injun. Be off, Gracie, and come back soon.

GRACE

[*Reluctantly.*] Very well. Be a good boy while I am away.

HAWSTORNE

If goodness means sitting absolutely still, as we were taught in the nursery, I shall be a perfect model of rectitude. Run away. [GRACE goes off quickly L.]

Act IV

[HAWSTORNE, left alone, takes up a newspaper which is lying close to him, and tries to read. He soon puts it down, shakes his head despondently. Then he whistles softly and gradually, gets drowsy, almost falling to sleep. Enter by the window LADY ROLLESTON, who comes in very softly, tiptoes over to him and stands watching him for a moment or two.]

HAWSTORNE

[Without opening his eyes.] Grace—is that you ?

LADY ROLLESTON

No, it is not Grace.

HAWSTORNE

[Starting and looking up.] Enid ! Great Heaven—you !

LADY ROLLESTON

Yes, it is I, Enid. I think it is about time that I should see you. [*He slightly shivers.*] Four weeks ago you left my house. Oh, I have tried to see you several times before this, but have always been sternly repulsed. You have such dragons to watch you—Dr. Raleigh, perfectly courteous but obstinately firm, and your friend Grace, who looks at me with the wild eyes of an animal, as if I was going to take away something that belonged to her. Well, I suppose you do belong to her now, don't you ?

HAWSTORNE

[Rather faintly.] Yes. How did you get here ?

LADY ROLLESTON

Not very difficult, my dear Ralph. It is such a lovely October day that you naturally have your windows wide open. So I did not trouble to go round to the front door, but walked in through the garden. I don't quite know how I managed to escape your dragons, though.

HAWSTORNE

They are out. I sent Grace out myself on a small errand, but she will be back very soon.

LADY ROLLESTON

Meanwhile we have a wholly unexpected opportunity for a little talk. I, at all events, have been wanting such an opportunity for a long time. You, poor fellow, have probably been too ill to want anything but doctors' stuff and nursing [*with a tenderer manner*]. Are you better, Ralph? I have been rather miserable about you.

HAWSTORNE

[*Who speaks very shortly and for the most part keeps his face turned away.*] They tell me I am better, but I feel very weak and low-spirited.

LADY ROLLESTON

Poor old boy! I hope they are looking after you properly. I suppose Miss Grace can be trusted, although she can hardly be described as a trained nurse of much experience. Oh, don't look angry! [*With a hard laugh.*] I will not try to show any unseemly jealousy of Mlle. Flannelette. By the way, how delighted her mother must be to be able to preach to you again the sovereign virtues of flannel.

HAWSTORNE

[*With a nervous, irritable manner.*] Why have you come, Enid? I thought you had passed out of my life . . . after . . . after that . . . that breakdown.

LADY ROLLESTON

Why have I come? Really, Ralph, you are a little unreasonable. Have I not the ordinary right of a friend to pay you a visit of condolence and sympathy? And may I remind you—forgive me, if it is an unwelcome reminiscence—that we are still, as a matter of fact, engaged to be married? [*HAWSTORNE shudders.*] Oh, don't shudder. It's such a bad compliment to me, isn't it? Am I really so undesirable a person as all that? Believe me, I do not wish to lay any stress on the engagement. Circumstances alter cases—very effectually sometimes. . . . And when you were taken out of my house to be nursed

Act IV by people who, to say the least, had a certain dislike of me, and who would be sure to do their best to keep us apart—why, then I felt that the fate of our engagement had been practically decided. . . . Besides, it is better for you and better for me that the thing should be cancelled, finished, done with. . . .

HAWSTORNE

[*Repeats in a dreamy voice.*] Cancelled, finished, done with. . . .

LADY ROLLESTON

Yes, dear, let us part, *sans rancune*—as old friends ought to do. After all, Ralph, we have not been bad pals, you and I. I dare say we have not done each other much good, either at Simla or in Yorkshire. But that was not altogether our fault. Men and women are born with a particular nature, which is theirs by birthright. They did not create that nature: it was given to them by their fathers and grandfathers back to the fourth generation, who bequeathed not only their good, but, more particularly, their bad qualities. We did not start with very good chances, it seems to me. I was born worldly and a flirt. You were born a casual, careless, rackety sort of fellow, with a good heart, and a certain tendency to hysteria. Upon my word, I think that, considering our disadvantages, we did not do so very badly. We were fond of each other, and perhaps we behaved without much—what shall I say?—discretion. I don't think if we had married, we should either of us have been happy, and I am inclined to believe that in our secret hearts we were both aware of the fact. Meanwhile we were intimate friends, and you helped me a good deal. I don't know whether I helped you much, but, as Heaven is my witness, I sincerely wanted to help you. And I loved you, Ralph, don't forget that. . . .

HAWSTORNE

You were very good to me at Ottery-St.-Mary. I don't know how to thank you. . . .

LADY ROLLESTON

Don't try to thank me, Ralph. I can't bear it. Our mutual relations have gone beyond the region of mere thanks and ordinary gratitude. I know that we have to part. I am certain that it is the only wise course, the only possible course. But let us part friends. I want you to think kindly of me in your heart, as I most assuredly will always think kindly of you. When you hear of Enid Rolleston, let there be some tender memory which prevents you from passing judgment on her. And when I hear of Ralph Hawstorne, his name will always call up a host of affectionate thoughts . . . and some tears. Promise me that, Ralph, promise me that. . . .

HAWSTORNE

Don't talk to me, Enid. I can't bear it, I can't bear it!

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Recovering herself*]. All right, old boy. I do not want to pain you. I imagine that I always loved you a bit more than you loved me. It is woman's way. And, of course, my love was not your salvation, but your bane. I will try to remember that. Well—that is over. [*She sighs.*] Oh, by the way, I was almost forgetting one or the reasons of my visit. You lost your cigarette-case in my house. It was found after you left. I have brought it to you.

HAWSTORNE

My cigarette-case! [*For the first time he shows a glimmer of excitement.*] Give it to me! Give it to me!

LADY ROLLESTON

Here it is. Why, how eager you are! Have you missed it as badly as all that? Come, come, let me open it and see what is inside. [*She opens it and sees the cocaine tubes.*] Ah——!

HAWSTORNE

Give it to me! You don't know how I wanted it!

Act IV

LADY ROLLESTON

Wait, wait, wait—this is the cocaine, isn't it, that you have poisoned yourself with? You must not have that.

HAWSTORNE

Oh, it's all right. You see, one cannot break a habit off all at once. You must do it gradually, in lessening doses. . . .

LADY ROLLESTON

But what does Dr. Raleigh say? Does he allow it?

HAWSTORNE

Enid dear, you do not understand. . . . You see, if one has become a drunkard, or a morphinomaniac—or anything else that makes one a slave—the only way is to break down the tyranny gently, so as to avoid the terrible depression, the awful yearning of abstinence. It is all right, I assure you it is all right.

LADY ROLLESTON

No, dear, no. I cannot think that is right.

HAWSTORNE

Oh Enid, how can you be so cruel and unkind! You have been so nice to me, and talked so kindly and affectionately as though you really understood me, and now, when you can do me a great service, the greatest of all services, you refuse. [*He is half crying.*] How can a woman, who says that she loves, be so unfeeling, so hard-hearted! [*LADY R. shakes her head.*] Enid, darling Enid, you have always been good to me, and I have been a cur and a beast to you—but I will do anything—anything—

LADY ROLLESTON

[*With a sudden gleam in her eyes.*] You will do anything? [*Aside.*] Oh, God! what an awful temptation!

HAWSTORNE

Yes, yes, anything, anything. . . .

LADY ROLLESTON

You will do anything I ask?

HAWSTORNE

Act IV

Yes, what do you want me to do? Anything, anything—

LADY ROLLESTON

[*To herself.*] Oh, I can't resist—I can't resist! [*Aloud.*] Well, here is the tube. If I give it to you will you make me a promise. . . . Shall our engagement stand? Will you?

[*There is a pause.* LADY ROLLESTON stands with the tube half held out in her hand. HAWSTORNE is in an agony of doubt and hesitation. Suddenly the door at L. opens, and GRACE bursts into the room.

GRACE

Ralph! . . . Lady Rolleston! . . . What does this mean? What are you doing? What is that in your hand? [*She seizes LADY ROLLESTON's wrist.*] Give it to me—I will have it. Good God! It's a tube of cocaine! How dare you!

LADY ROLLESTON

[*Coolly.*] I was restoring to Major Hawstorne his property, Miss Mayhew. . . .

GRACE

[*Indignantly.*] And doing your best to kill him.

LADY ROLLESTON

Come, come, do not let us be melodramatic. Major Hawstorne lost a cigarette-case in my house. It was found by the servants, and I have brought it back to him—that is all.

GRACE

[*With her face aglow.*] Perhaps you do not understand. I will try to think that you do not understand. Cocaine is absolute poison to him in his present condition. Dr. Raleigh and I have for four weeks kept him away from all temptations. And he has cried for the drug, cried for it—over and over again. But we know that if he once

Act IV gave way all the good work of his reform would be useless. It has not been easy, Lady Rolleston, to refuse him—especially when one loves him, as I do. Why should I hesitate to tell you? I have loved him and refused him the drug, because I knew that one relapse meant death!

LADY ROLLESTON

I knew Major Hawstorne before you did, Miss Mayhew. And—as truth-speaking seems in the air—I loved him before you did. You have not got a monopoly of affection for him.

GRACE

[*Scornfully.*] Loved him—you! Yes, I know that kind of love! You loved him, and because you wanted him all to yourself, you do not care what ruin you cause so long as you have him in your hands. You loved him—and yet you do not consider what harm happens to him, what poison he imbibes, what dreadful form of death he has to face! You are the sort of woman who loves a man, not for his sake, but for her own; who will sacrifice his best interests to her own passionate folly; who prates about her love and is not aware that it is only selfishness. Love? What is your love? A stupid, sensual thing, a madness of your nerves, a hysterical delirium! Love? Why, it is only yourself that you are thinking of! You have not learned the first lesson of love. Love is not selfishness, it is the sacrifice of self on the altar of a higher faith! And you dare to talk of your love! [*She takes the cocaine tubes out of the cigarette-case and throws them into the fireplace.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

Dear me, Miss Mayhew, I thought you had been trained to be a nurse. I did not know you were qualifying yourself for the stage! However, so far as the cocaine goes, I dare say you are right. . . .

DR. RALEIGH

Act IV

[*Who has stepped in through the window, and now comes forward.*] She is undoubtedly right, Lady Rolleston.

LADY ROLLESTON

Miss Mayhew's knowledge of these matters is obviously greater than mine. Medicine is her sphere of education. Nursing is her profession. It is not mine.

RALEIGH

[*Stiffly.*] I give you the benefit of your ignorance, madam. I will admit that you did not understand what you were doing. By the way, we will get rid of these things—they are dangerous. [*Picks up cocaine and puts in pocket.*] And now may I be permitted to see you to your motor? Allow me. . . .

LADY ROLLESTON

Yes, I will go. Good-bye, Major Hawstorne. Good-bye, Miss Mayhew. . . . I think you will judge me more fairly hereafter, when you know all the circumstances. Perhaps even your love has some selfish elements in it. Think it over. Good-bye.

RALEIGH

Come—we will leave the nurse to attend to her patient. [*They go out.*]

LADY ROLLESTON

[*With a shrug.*] We will leave the man to the woman who loves him. [*They go out. GRACE and HAWSTORNE are left alone.*]

GRACE

[*Goes up to HAWSTORNE, who is sitting in the chair with his head bowed in his hands.*] My poor boy, my poor boy, I am so sorry you have had all this bother, on the very first day of your coming downstairs. You see, I ought not to have left you, ought I?

Act IV

HAWSTORNE

Grace, I don't know what to say. It is all too humiliating and dreadful. No, I suppose I ought not to be left alone for a single second. I cannot look after myself. [*With a wan smile.*] I am not to be trusted. I ought to be treated like a child. But oh! Will it be always like this?

GRACE

No, no, dear. You will get stronger, if we take proper care of you.

HAWSTORNE

Honestly, Grace, I cannot understand myself. One moment I seem to have some glimmering of reason, some atom of self-control and self-respect. And then the good moment goes. There comes upon me another and a blacker mood, in which I am not a man at all, but an animal, growling and snarling for some forbidden food—a wild beast raging—madly, passionately, horribly—for the raw meat it loves! It is not the same ego. It is two different personalities who war within my soul. I am Jekyll when you are here, and Hyde when you go away. And then after the mad struggle I feel the utter weariness, the prostration—I am conscious of the dank, dead, clinging mist of depression and despair. Oh, Grace, you don't know all my misery, and my utter loneliness! If only I could really understand myself, have some real, steady knowledge of what I am and what I ought to be!

GRACE

[*Taking his hand gently and stroking it, her eyes are caught by the framework of the ring.*] Poor old Ralph, I wish I could help you, dear. Oh, by the way, I have got one piece of good news for you. [*Fingering the ring.*] Let me see—"to desire—to possess—to know——"

HAWSTORNE

All gone—all gone!

GRACE

No, not all gone. Look here. [*She takes out a stone.*] I found this—on the floor—at Ottley-St.-Mary—that night when we—when I—came for you. So knowledge remains, knowledge remains, after all!

HAWSTORNE

[*Musing to himself, as he touches the stone.*] To know the truth . . . and the truth shall make you free. . . . Shall I win that freedom, Grace?

GRACE

Yes, dear—if you do your best to keep your body sound and your brain clear and unclouded. After all, the ring was only a symbol—to illustrate a living truth. Desire shall fail and possession shall cease, but knowledge is a lasting treasure. Sometimes, I think, you have been inclined to lay too much stress on this ring. You have regarded it as something deadly as well as precious, an agent of evil to you. And, after all, it has only been a poor sort of conscience, reminding you when you have gone wrong, but not helping you to go right. Do not let yourself be superstitious about it, as though it were a talisman.

HAWSTORNE

Have I been superstitious?

GRACE

A little, I think.

HAWSTORNE

Well—suppose we get rid of it altogether. What do you say?

GRACE

I shall not mind.

HAWSTORNE

Very well, then. [*He slips the ring off his finger.*] Give

Act IV me your hand, Grace. Now, one, two, three—and all together. Out it goes. [*The two hands throw the ring out of the window.*] There, you can bury it in the garden—do whatever you like with it; only never let any one get hold of it, and never let me see it again. Phew! I am so glad to be quit of the beastly thing.

GRACE

So am I.

HAWSTORNE

And now, what remains for us to do?

GRACE

[*Who has suddenly got shy.*] I don't know, Ralph.

HAWSTORNE

No more do I. [*With a smile.*] Shall we send for Tom Raleigh, and ask him? Or do you think that your mother, dear old Flannels, would give good advice?

GRACE

I think we had better decide for ourselves.

HAWSTORNE

And not ask for any advice?

GRACE

No—don't let us ask.

HAWSTORNE

Except our own hearts?

GRACE

Except our own hearts.

HAWSTORNE

If we happen to have hearts. I wonder if I have? Do you think I have got any heart left, Grace?

GRACE

I am sure you have—a very big, big heart—almost as big as mine.

HAWSTORNE

How big is yours? As big as this room?

GRACE

As big as the world—as your world and mine, Ralph; as big as our past and our present and our future. Do you remember when—long ago—you said that “only the beginnings of things were sweet”?

HAWSTORNE

Yes—and that the dew had a tendency to go off the grass.

GRACE

Well, we have got to begin all over again, you and I. I think we shall find the new beginning infinitely sweet. And if we are tender and loving and true, I don't think that the dew will ever go off the grass—or any cloud darken our sky. . . .

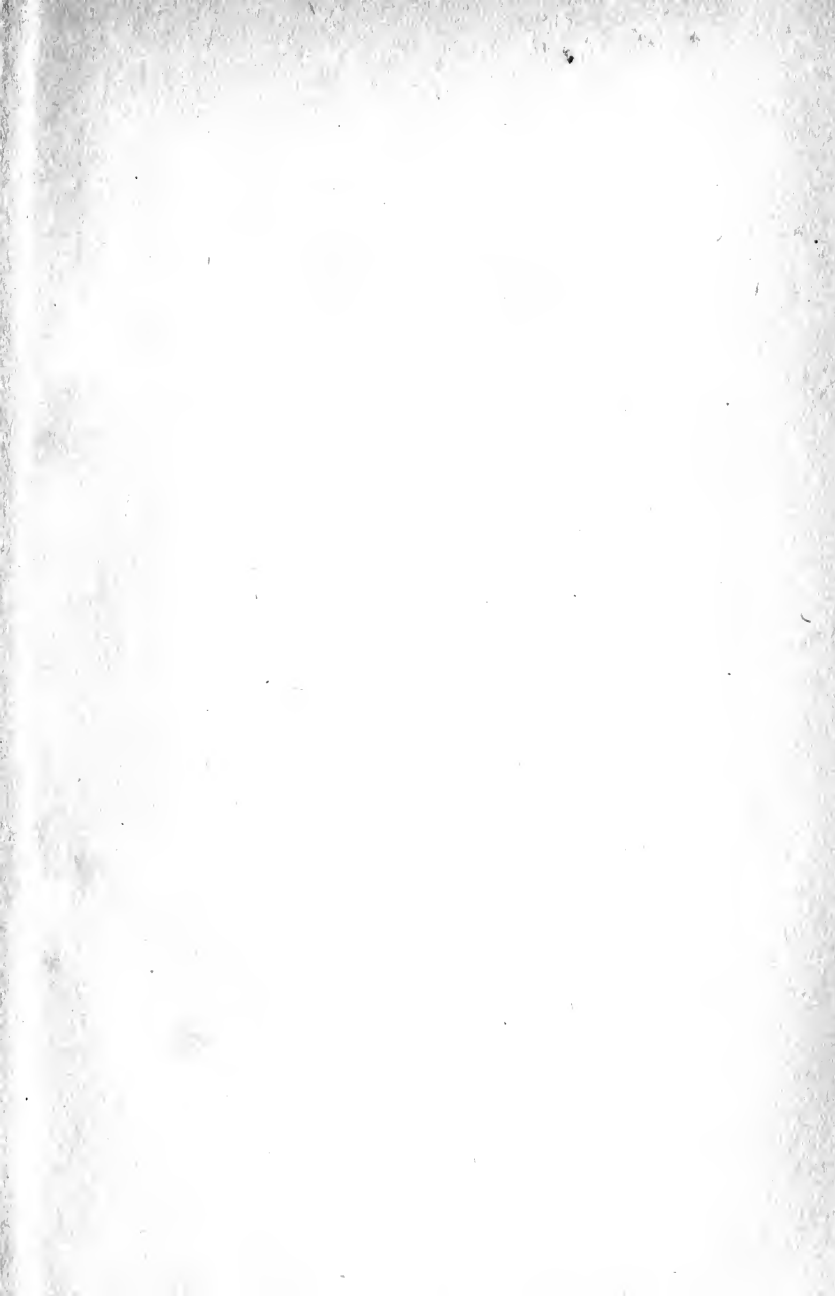
HAWSTORNE

Ah, Grace, you were always on the side of the angels! Kiss me, dear.

[*She bends over him as the curtain falls.*]

THE END

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