LOCKSLEY HALL

AND

THE PROMISE OF MAY

LOCKSLEY HALL

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

ETC.

BY

ALFRED
LORD TENNYSON
P.L. D.C.L.

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TO MY WIFE

I DEDICATE

THIS DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

AND

THE POEMS WHICH FOLLOW

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LOCKSLEY HALL

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

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SIXTY YEARS AFTER.

LATE, my grandson! half the morning have I
paced these sandy tracts,
Watch'd again the hollow ridges roaring into cataracts,

Wander'd back to living boyhood while I heard
the curlews call,
I myself so close on death, and death itself in
Locksley Hall.

So—your happy suit was blasted—she the faultless,
the divine;
And you liken—boyish babble—this boy-love of
yours with mine.

I myself have often babbled doubtless of a foolish
past;
Babble, babble; our old England may go down in
babble at last.

'Curse him!' curse your fellow-victim? call him
dotard in your rage?
Eyes that lured a doting boyhood well might fool
a dotard's age.

Jilted for a wealthier! wealthier? yet perhaps she
was not wise;
I remember how you kiss'd the miniature with
those sweet eyes.

In the hall there hangs a painting—Amy's arms
about my neck—
Happy children in a sunbeam sitting on the ribs of
wreck.

In my life there was a picture, she that clasp'd my
neck had flown;
I was left within the shadow sitting on the wreck
alone.

Yours has been a slighter ailment, will you sicken
for her sake?
You, not you! your modern amourist is of easier,
earthlier make.

Amy loved me, Amy fail'd me, Amy was a timid
child;
But your Judith—but your worldling—*she* had never
driven me wild.

She that holds the diamond necklace dearer than
the golden ring,
She that finds a winter sunset fairer than a morn
of Spring.

She that in her heart is brooding on his briefer
lease of life,
While she vows 'till death shall part us,' she the
would-be-widow wife.

She the worldling born of worldlings — father,
mother—be content,
Ev'n the homely farm can teach us there is some-
thing in descent.

Yonder in that chapel, slowly sinking now into the
ground,
Lies the warrior, my forefather, with his feet upon
the hound.

Cross'd! for once he sail'd the sea to crush the
Moslem in his pride;
Dead the warrior, dead his glory, dead the cause
in which he died.

Yet how often I and Amy in the mouldering aisle
have stood,
Gazing for one pensive moment on that founder of
our blood.

There again I stood to-day, and where of old we
knelt in prayer,
Close beneath the casement crimson with the shield
of Locksley—there,

All in white Italian marble, looking still as if she
smiled,
Lies my Amy dead in child-birth, dead the mother,
dead the child.

Dead—and sixty years ago, and dead her aged husband now,
I this old white-headed dreamer stoopt and kiss'd her marble brow.

Gone the fires of youth, the follies, furies, curses, passionate tears,
Gone like fires and floods and earthquakes of the planet's dawning years.

Fires that shook me once, but now to silent ashes fall'n away.
Cold upon the dead volcano sleeps the gleam of dying day.

Gone the tyrant of my youth, and mute below the chancel stones,
All his virtues—I forgive them—black in white above his bones.

Gone the comrades of my bivouac, some in fight
against the foe,
Some thro' age and slow diseases, gone as all on
earth will go.

Gone with whom for forty years my life in golden
sequence ran,
She with all the charm of woman, she with all the
breadth of man,

Strong in will and rich in wisdom, Edith, loyal,
lowly, sweet,
Feminine to her inmost heart, and feminine to her
tender feet,

Very woman of very woman, nurse of ailing body
and mind,
She that link'd again the broken chain that bound
me to my kind.

Here to-day was Amy with me, while I wander'd
down the coast,
Near us Edith's holy shadow, smiling at the slighter
ghost.

Gone our sailor son thy father, Leonard early lost
at sea;
Thou alone, my boy, of Amy's kin and mine art
left to me.

Gone thy tender-natured mother, wearying to be
left alone,
Pining for the stronger heart that once had beat
beside her own.

Truth, for Truth is Truth, he worshipt, being true
as he was brave;
Good, for Good is Good, he follow'd, yet he look'd
beyond the grave,

Wiser there than you, that crowning barren Death
as lord of all,
Deem this over-tragic drama's closing curtain is
the pall!

Beautiful was death in him who saw the death but
kept the deck,
Saving women and their babes, and sinking with
the sinking wreck,

Gone for ever! Ever? no—for since our dying
race began,
Ever, ever, and for ever was the leading light of
man.

Those that in barbarian burials kill'd the slave, and
slew the wife,
Felt within themselves the sacred passion of the
second life.

Indian warriors dream of ampler hunting grounds
beyond the night;
Ev'n the black Australian dying hopes he shall
return, a white.

Truth for truth, and good for good! The Good,
the True, the Pure, the Just;
Take the charm 'For ever' from them, and they
crumble into dust.

Gone the cry of 'Forward, Forward,' lost within a
growing gloom;
Lost, or only heard in silence from the silence
of a tomb.

Half the marvels of my morning, triumphs over
time and space,
Staled by frequence, shrunk by usage into com-
monest commonplace!

'Forward' rang the voices then, and of the many
mine was one.
Let us hush this cry of 'Forward' till ten thousand
years have gone.

Far among the vanish'd races, old Assyrian kings
would flay
Captives whom they caught in battle—iron-hearted
victors they.

Ages after, while in Asia, he that led the wild
Moguls,
Timur built his ghastly tower of eighty thousand
human skulls,

Then, and here in Edward's time, an age of noblest
English names,
Christian conquerors took and flung the conquer'd
Christian into flames.

Love your enemy, bless your haters, said the
Greatest of the great;
Christian love among the Churches look'd the twin
of heathen hate.

From the golden alms of Blessing man had coin'd
himself a curse:
Rome of Cæsar, Rome of Peter, which was crueller?
which was worse?

France had shown a light to all men, preach'd a
Gospel, all men's good;
Celtic Demos rose a Demon, shriek'd and slaked
the light with blood.

Hope was ever on her mountain, watching till the
day begun
Crown'd with sunlight—over darkness—from the
still unrisen sun.

Have we grown at last beyond the passions of the primal clan?
'Kill your enemy, for you hate him,' still, 'your enemy' was a man.

Have we sunk below them? peasants maim the helpless horse, and drive
Innocent cattle under thatch, and burn the kindlier brutes alive.

Brutes, the brutes are not your wrongers—burnt at midnight, found at morn,
Twisted hard in mortal agony with their offspring, born-unborn,

Clinging to the silent Mother! Are we devils? are we men?
Sweet St. Francis of Assisi, would that he were here again,

He that in his Catholic wholeness used to call the very flowers
Sisters, brothers—and the beasts—whose pains are hardly less than ours!

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! who can tell how all will end!
Read the wide world's annals, you, and take their wisdom for your friend.

Hope the best, but hold the Present fatal daughter of the Past,
Shape your heart to front the hour, but dream not that the hour will last.

Ay, if dynamite and revolver leave you courage to be wise:
When was age so cramm'd with menace? madness? written, spoken lies?

Envy wears the mask of Love, and, laughing sober
fact to scorn,
Cries to Weakest as to Strongest, 'Ye are equals,
equal-born.'

Equal-born? O yes, if yonder hill be level with
the flat.
Charm us, Orator, till the Lion look no larger than
the Cat.

Till the Cat thro' that mirage of overheated lan-
guage loom
Larger than the Lion,—Demos end in working its
own doom.

Russia bursts our Indian barrier, shall we fight
her? shall we yield?
Pause, before you sound the trumpet, hear the
voices from the field.

Those three hundred millions under one Imperial
sceptre now,
Shall we hold them? shall we loose them? take
the suffrage of the plow.

Nay, but these would feel and follow Truth if only
you and you,
Rivals of realm-ruining party, when you speak were
wholly true.

Plowmen, Shepherds, have I found, and more than
once, and still could find,
Sons of God, and kings of men in utter nobleness
of mind,

Truthful, trustful, looking upward to the practised
hustings-liar;
So the Higher wields the Lower, while the Lower
is the Higher.

Here and there a cotter's babe is royal-born by
right divine;
Here and there my lord is lower than his oxen or
his swine.

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! once again the
sickening game;
Freedom, free to slay herself, and dying while they
shout her name.

Step by step we gain'd a freedom known to Europe,
known to all;
Step by step we rose to greatness,—thro' the
tonguesters we may fall.

You that woo the Voices—tell them 'old experi-
ence is a fool,'
Teach your flatter'd kings that only those who
cannot read can rule.

Pluck the mighty from their seat, but set no meek ones in their place;
Pillory Wisdom in your markets, pelt your offal at her face.

Tumble Nature heel o'er head, and, yelling with the yelling street,
Set the feet above the brain and swear the brain is in the feet.

Bring the old dark ages back without the faith, without the hope,
Break the State, the Church, the Throne, and roll their ruins down the slope.

Authors—atheist, essayist, novelist, realist, rhymester, play your part,
Paint the mortal shame of nature with the living hues of Art.

Rip your brothers' vices open, strip your own foul
passions bare;
Down with Reticence, down with Reverence—for-
ward—naked—let them stare.

Feed the budding rose of boyhood with the drain-
age of your sewer;
Send the drain into the fountain, lest the stream
should issue pure.

Set the maiden fancies wallowing in the troughs of
Zolaism,—
Forward, forward, ay and backward, downward too
into the abysm.

Do your best to charm the worst, to lower the rising
race of men;
Have we risen from out the beast, then back into
the beast again?

Only 'dust to dust' for me that sicken at your lawless din,
Dust in wholesome old-world dust before the newer world begin.

Heated am I? you—you wonder—well, it scarce becomes mine age—
Patience! let the dying actor mouth his last upon the stage.

Cries of unprogressive dotage ere the dotard fall asleep?
Noises of a current narrowing, not the music of a deep?

Ay, for doubtless I am old, and think gray thoughts, for I am gray:
After all the stormy changes shall we find a changeless May?

After madness, after massacre, Jacobinism and Jacquerie,
Some diviner force to guide us thro' the days I shall not see?

When the schemes and all the systems, Kingdoms and Republics fall,
Something kindlier, higher, holier—all for each and each for all?

All the full-brain, half-brain races, led by Justice, Love, and Truth;
All the millions one at length, with all the visions of my youth?

All diseases quench'd by Science, no man halt, or deaf or blind;
Stronger ever born of weaker, lustier body, larger mind?

Earth at last a warless world, a single race, a single tongue,
I have seen her far away—for is not Earth as yet so young?—

Every tiger madness muzzled, every serpent passion kill'd,
Every grim ravine a garden, every blazing desert till'd,

Robed in universal harvest up to either pole she smiles,
Universal ocean softly washing all her warless Isles.

Warless? when her tens are thousands, and her thousands millions, then—
All her harvest all too narrow—who can fancy warless men?

Warless? war will die out late then. Will it ever? late or soon?
Can it, till this outworn earth be dead as yon dead world the moon?

Dead the new astronomy calls her. . . . On this day and at this hour,
In this gap between the sandhills, whence you see the Locksley tower,

Here we met, our latest meeting—Amy—sixty years ago—
She and I—the moon was falling greenish thro' a rosy glow,

Just above the gateway tower, and even where you see her now—
Here we stood and claspt each other, swore the seeming-deathless vow. . . .

Dead, but how her living glory lights the hall, the dune, the grass!
Yet the moonlight is the sunlight, and the sun himself will pass.

Venus near her! smiling downward at this earthlier earth of ours,
Closer on the Sun, perhaps a world of never fading flowers.

Hesper, whom the poet call'd the Bringer home of all good things.
All good things may move in Hesper, perfect peoples, perfect kings.

Hesper—Venus—were we native to that splendour or in Mars,
We should see the Globe we groan in, fairest of their evening stars.

Could we dream of wars and carnage, craft and
madness, lust and spite,
Roaring London, raving Paris, in that point of
peaceful light?

Might we not in glancing heavenward on a star so
silver-fair,
Yearn, and clasp the hands and murmur, 'Would
to God that we were there'?

Forward, backward, backward, forward, in the im-
measurable sea,
Sway'd by vaster ebbs and flows than can be known
to you or me.

All the suns—are these but symbols of innumerable
man,
Man or Mind that sees a shadow of the planner or
the plan?

Is there evil but on earth? or pain in every peopled
sphere?
Well be grateful for the sounding watchword,
'Evolution' here.

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the
mud.

What are men that He should heed us? cried the
king of sacred song;
Insects of an hour, that hourly work their brother
insect wrong,

While the silent Heavens roll, and Suns along
their fiery way,
All their planets whirling round them, flash a
million miles a day.

Many an Æon moulded earth before her highest,
man, was born,
Many an Æon too may pass when earth is manless
and forlorn,

Earth so huge, and yet so bounded—pools of salt,
and plots of land—
Shallow skin of green and azure—chains of moun-
tain, grains of sand!

Only That which made us, meant us to be mightier
by and by,
Set the sphere of all the boundless Heavens within
the human eye,

Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, thro'
the human soul;
Boundless inward, in the atom, boundless out-
ward, in the Whole.

* * * * *

Here is Locksley Hall, my grandson, here the lion-guarded gate.
Not to-night in Locksley Hall—to-morrow—you, you come so late.

Wreck'd—your train—or all but wreck'd? a shatter'd wheel? a vicious boy!
Good, this forward, you that preach it, is it well to wish you joy?

Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the Time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?

There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on palsied feet,
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the street.

There the Master scrimps his haggard sempstress
of her daily bread,
There a single sordid attic holds the living and the
dead.

There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across
the rotted floor,
And the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of
the poor.

Nay, your pardon, cry your 'forward,' yours are
hope and youth, but I—
Eighty winters leave the dog too lame to follow
with the cry,

Lame and old, and past his time, and passing now
into the night;
Yet I would the rising race were half as eager for
the light.

Light the fading gleam of Even? light the glimmer
of the dawn?
Aged eyes may take the growing glimmer for the
gleam withdrawn.

Far away beyond her myriad coming changes
earth will be
Something other than the wildest modern guess of
you and me.

Earth may reach her earthly-worst, or if she gain
her earthly-best,
Would she find her human offspring this ideal man
at rest?

Forward then, but still remember how the course
of Time will swerve,
Crook and turn upon itself in many a backward
streaming curve.

Not the Hall to-night, my grandson! Death and
Silence hold their own.
Leave the Master in the first dark hour of his last
sleep alone.

Worthier soul was he than I am, sound and honest,
rustic Squire,
Kindly landlord, boon companion — youthful
jealousy is a liar.

Cast the poison from your bosom, oust the mad-
ness from your brain.
Let the trampled serpent show you that you have
not lived in vain.

Youthful! youth and age are scholars yet but in
the lower school,
Nor is he the wisest man who never proved himself
a fool.

Yonder lies our young sea-village—Art and Grace
are less and less:
Science grows and Beauty dwindles—roofs of slated
hideousness!

There is one old Hostel left us where they swing
the Locksley shield,
Till the peasant cow shall butt the 'Lion passant'
from his field.

Poor old Heraldry, poor old History, poor old
Poetry, passing hence,
In the common deluge drowning old political
common-sense!

Poor old voice of eighty crying after voices that
have fled!
All I loved are vanish'd voices, all my steps are on
the dead.

All the world is ghost to me, and as the phantom
disappears,
Forward far and far from here is all the hope of
eighty years.

* * * * *

In this Hostel—I remember—I repent it o'er his
grave—
Like a clown—by chance he met me—I refused
the hand he gave.

From that casement where the trailer mantles all
the mouldering bricks—
I was then in early boyhood, Edith but a child of
six—

While I shelter'd in this archway from a day of
driving showers—
Peept the winsome face of Edith like a flower
among the flowers.

Here to-night! the Hall to-morrow, when they toll
the Chapel bell!
Shall I hear in one dark room a wailing, 'I have
loved thee well.'

Then a peal that shakes the portal—one has come
to claim his bride,
Her that shrank, and put me from her, shriek'd,
and started from my side—

Silent echoes! you, my Leonard, use and not
abuse your day,
Move among your people, know them, follow him
who led the way,

Strove for sixty widow'd years to help his homelier
brother men,
Served the poor, and built the cottage, raised the
school, and drain'd the fen.

Hears he now the Voice that wrong'd him? who
shall swear it cannot be?
Earth would never touch her worst, were one in
fifty such as he.

Ere she gain her Heavenly-best, a God must mingle
with the game:
Nay, there may be those about us whom we neither
see nor name,

Felt within us as ourselves, the Powers of Good,
the Powers of Ill,
Strowing balm, or shedding poison in the fountains
of the Will.

Follow you the Star that lights a desert pathway,
yours or mine.
Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature is
divine.

Follow Light, and do the Right—for man can half-control his doom—
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb.

Forward, let the stormy moment fly and mingle with the Past.
I that loathed, have come to love him. Love will conquer at the last.

Gone at eighty, mine own age, and I and you will bear the pall;
Then I leave thee Lord and Master, latest Lord of Locksley Hall.

THE FLEET.[1]

I.

You, you, *if* you shall fail to understand
What England is, and what her all-in-all,
On you will come the curse of all the land,
Should this old England fall
Which Nelson left so great.

[1] The speaker said that 'he should like to be assured that other outlying portions of the Empire, the Crown colonies, and important coaling stations were being as promptly and as thoroughly fortified as the various capitals of the self-governing colonies. He was credibly informed this was not so. It was impossible, also, not to feel some degree of anxiety about the efficacy of present provision to defend and protect, by means of swift, well-armed cruisers, the immense mercantile fleet of the Empire. A third source

II.

His isle, the mightiest Ocean-power on earth,
Our own fair isle, the lord of every sea—
Her fuller franchise—what would that be worth—
Her ancient fame of Free—
Were she . . . a fallen state?

of anxiety, so far as the colonies were concerned, was the apparently insufficient provision for the rapid manufacture of armaments and their prompt despatch when ordered to their colonial destination. Hence the necessity for manufacturing appliances equal to the requirements, not of Great Britain alone, but of the whole Empire. But the keystone of the whole was the necessity for an overwhelmingly powerful fleet and efficient defence for all necessary coaling stations. This was as essential for the colonies as for Great Britain. It was the one condition for the continuance of the Empire. All that Continental Powers did with respect to armies England should effect with her navy. It was essentially a defensive force, and could be moved rapidly from point to point, but it should be equal to all that was expected from it. It was to strengthen the fleet that colonists would first readily tax themselves, because they realised how essential a powerful fleet was to the safety, not only of that extensive commerce sailing in every sea, but ultimately to the security

III.

Her dauntless army scatter'd, and so small,
Her island-myriads fed from alien lands—
The fleet of England is her all-in-all;
Her fleet is in your hands,
And in her fleet her Fate.

IV.

You, you, that have the ordering of her fleet,
If you should only compass her disgrace,
When all men starve, the wild mob's million feet
Will kick you from your place,
But then too late, too late.

of the distant portions of the Empire. Who could estimate the loss involved in even a brief period of disaster to the Imperial Navy? Any amount of money timely expended in preparation would be quite insignificant when compared with the possible calamity he had referred to.'—*Extract from Sir Graham Berry's Speech at the Colonial Institute, 9th November* 1886.

OPENING OF THE INDIAN AND COLONIAL EXHIBITION BY THE QUEEN.

I.

Welcome, welcome with one voice!
In your welfare we rejoice,
Sons and brothers that have sent,
From isle and cape and continent,
Produce of your field and flood,
Mount and mine, and primal wood;
Works of subtle brain and hand,
And splendours of the morning land,
Gifts from every British zone;
Britons, hold your own!

II.

May we find, as ages run,
The mother featured in the son;
And may yours for ever be
That old strength and constancy
Which has made your fathers great
In our ancient island State,
And wherever her flag fly,
Glorying between sea and sky,
Makes the might of Britain known;
Britons, hold your own!

III.

Britain fought her sons of yore—
Britain failed; and never more,
Careless of our growing kin,
Shall we sin our fathers' sin,
Men that in a narrower day—

Unprophetic rulers they—
Drove from out the mother's nest
That young eagle of the West
To forage for herself alone;
Britons, hold your own!

IV.

Sharers of our glorious past,
Brothers, must we part at last?
Shall we not thro' good and ill
Cleave to one another still?
Britain's myriad voices call,
'Sons, be welded each and all,
Into one imperial whole,
One with Britain, heart and soul!
One life, one flag, one fleet, one Throne!'
Britons, hold your own!

THE PROMISE OF MAY

'A surface man of theories, true to none.'

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FARMER DOBSON.

Mr. PHILIP EDGAR (*afterwards* Mr. HAROLD).

FARMER STEER (DORA *and* EVA'S *Father*).

Mr. WILSON (*a Schoolmaster*).

HIGGINS
JAMES
DAN SMITH } *Farm Labourers.*
JACKSON
ALLEN

DORA STEER.

EVA STEER.

SALLY ALLEN } *Farm Servants.*
MILLY

Farm Servants, Labourers, etc.

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Before Farmhouse.*

Farming Men and Women. Farming Men carrying forms, &c., Women carrying baskets of knives and forks, &c.

1ST FARMING MAN.

Be thou a-gawin' to the long barn?

2ND FARMING MAN.

Ay, to be sewer! Be thou?

1ST FARMING MAN.

Why, o' coorse, fur it be the owd man's birth-

daäy. He be heighty this very daäy, and 'e telled all on us to be i' the long barn by one o'clock, fur he'll gie us a big dinner, and haäfe th' parish 'll be theer, an' Miss Dora, an' Miss Eva, an' all!

2ND FARMING MAN.

Miss Dora be coomed back, then?

1ST FARMING MAN.

Ay, haäfe an hour ago. She be in theer now. (*Pointing to house.*) Owd Steer wur afeärd she wouldn't be back i' time to keep his birthdaäy, and he wur in a tew about it all the murnin'; and he sent me wi' the gig to Littlechester to fetch 'er; and 'er an' the owd man they fell a kissin' o' one another like two sweet'arts i' the poorch as soon as he clapt eyes of 'er.

2ND FARMING MAN.

Foälks says he likes Miss Eva the best.

1ST FARMING MAN.

Naäy, I knaws nowt o' what foälks says, an' I caäres nowt neither. Foälks doesn't hallus knaw thessens; but sewer I be, they be two o' the purtiest gels ye can see of a summer murnin'.

2ND FARMING MAN.

Beänt Miss Eva gone off a bit of 'er good looks o' laäte?

1ST FARMING MAN.

Noä, not a bit.

2ND FARMING MAN.

Why coöm awaäy, then, to the long barn.

[*Exeunt.*

DORA *looks out of window. Enter* DOBSON.

DORA (*singing*).

The town lay still in the low sun-light,
The hen cluckt late by the white farm gate,
The maid to her dairy came in from the cow,
The stock-dove coo'd at the fall of night,
The blossom had open'd on every bough;
O joy for the promise of May, of May,
O joy for the promise of May.

(*Nodding at* DOBSON.) I'm coming down, Mr. Dobson. I haven't seen Eva yet. Is she anywhere in the garden?

DOBSON.

Noä, Miss. I ha'n't seed 'er neither.

DORA (*enters singing*).

But a red fire woke in the heart of the town,

And a fox from the glen ran away with the hen,
And a cat to the cream, and a rat to the cheese;
And the stock-dove coo'd, till a kite dropt down,
And a salt wind burnt the blossoming trees;
O grief for the promise of May, of May,
O grief for the promise of May.

I don't know why I sing that song; I don't love it.

DOBSON.

Blessings on your pretty voice, Miss Dora. Wheer did they larn ye that?

DORA.

In Cumberland, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

An' how did ye leäve the owd uncle i' Coomberland?

DORA.

Getting better, Mr. Dobson. But he'll never be the same man again.

DOBSON.

An' how d'ye find the owd man 'ere?

DORA.

As well as ever. I came back to keep his birthday.

DOBSON.

Well, I be coomed to keep his birthdaäy an' all. The owd man be heighty to-daäy, beänt he?

DORA.

Yes, Mr. Dobson. And the day's bright like a friend, but the wind east like an enemy. Help me to move this bench for him into the sun. (*They*

move bench.) No, not that way—here, under the apple tree. Thank you. Look how full of rosy blossom it is. [*Pointing to apple tree.*

DOBSON.

Theer be redder blossoms nor them, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Where do they blow, Mr. Dobson?

DOBSON.

Under your eyes, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Do they?

DOBSON.

And your eyes be as blue as——

DORA.

What, Mr. Dobson? A butcher's frock?

DOBSON.

Noä, Miss Dora; as blue as——

DORA.

Bluebell, harebell, speedwell, bluebottle, succory, forget-me-not?

DOBSON.

Noä, Miss Dora; as blue as——

DORA.

The sky? or the sea on a blue day?

DOBSON.

Naäy then. I meän'd they be as blue as violets.

DORA.

Are they?

DOBSON.

Theer ye goäs ageän, Miss, niver believing owt

I says to ye—hallus a-fobbing ma off, tho' ye knaws I love ye. I warrants ye'll think moor o' this young Squire Edgar as ha' coomed among us—the Lord knaws how—ye'll think more on 'is little finger than hall my hand at the haltar.

DORA.

Perhaps, Master Dobson. I can't tell, for I have never seen him. But my sister wrote that he was mighty pleasant, and had no pride in him.

DOBSON.

He'll be arter you now, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Will he? How can I tell?

DOBSON.

He's been arter Miss Eva, haän't he?

DORA.

Not that I know.

DOBSON.

Didn't I spy 'em a-sitting i' the woodbine harbour togither?

DORA.

What of that? Eva told me that he was taking her likeness. He's an artist.

DOBSON.

What's a hartist? I doänt believe he's iver a 'eart under his waistcoat. And I tells ye what, Miss Dora: he's no respect for the Queen, or the parson, or the justice o' peace, or owt. I ha' heärd 'im a-gawin' on 'ud make your 'air—God bless it!—stan' on end. And wuss nor that. When theer

wur a meeting o' farmers at Littlechester t'other daäy, and they was all a-crying out at the bad times, he cooms up, and he calls out among our oän men, 'The land belongs to the people!'

DORA.

And what did *you* say to that?

DOBSON.

Well, I says, s'pose my pig's the land, and you says it belongs to the parish, and theer be a thousand i' the parish, taäkin' in the women and childer; and s'pose I kills my pig, and gi'es it among 'em, why there wudn't be a dinner for nawbody, and I should ha' lost the pig.

DORA.

And what did he say to that?

DOBSON.

Nowt—what could he saäy? But I taäkes 'im fur a bad lot and a burn fool, and I haätes the very sight on him.

DORA.

(*Looking at* DOBSON.) Master Dobson, you are a comely man to look at.

DOBSON.

I thank you for that, Miss Dora, onyhow.

DORA.

Ay, but you turn right ugly when you're in an ill temper; and I promise you that if you forget yourself in your behaviour to this gentleman, my father's friend, I will never change word with you again.

Enter FARMING MAN *from barn.*

FARMING MAN.

Miss, the farming men 'ull hev their dinner i' the long barn, and the master 'ud be straänge an' pleased if you'd step in fust, and see that all be right and reg'lar fur 'em afoor he coöm.

[*Exit.*

DORA.

I go. Master Dobson, did you hear what I said?

DOBSON.

Yeas, yeas! I'll not meddle wi' 'im if he doänt meddle wi' meä. (*Exit* DORA.) Coomly, says she. I niver thowt o' mysen i' that waäy; but if she'd taäke to ma i' that waäy, or ony waäy, I'd slaäve out my life fur 'er. 'Coomly to look at,' says she —but she said it spiteful-like. To look at—yeas, 'coomly'; and she mayn't be so fur out theer.

But if that be nowt to she, then it be nowt to me. (*Looking off stage.*) Schoolmaster! Why if Steer han't haxed schoolmaster to dinner, thaw 'e knaws I was hallus ageän heving schoolmaster i' the parish! fur him as be handy wi' a book bean't but haäfe a hand at a pitchfork.

Enter WILSON.

Well, Wilson. I seed that one cow o' thine i' the pinfold ageän as I wur a-coomin' 'ere.

WILSON.

Very likely, Mr. Dobson. She *will* break fence. I can't keep her in order.

DOBSON.

An' if tha can't keep thy one cow i' horder, how can tha keep all thy scholards i' horder? But let that goä by. What dost a knaw o' this Mr.

Hedgar as be a-lodgin' wi' ye? I coom'd upon 'im t'other daäy lookin' at the coontry, then a-scrattin upon a bit o' paäper, then a-lookin' agean; and I taäked 'im fur soom sort of a land-surveyor —but a beänt.

WILSON.

He's a Somersetshire man, and a very civil-spoken gentleman.

DOBSON.

Gentleman! What be he a-doing here ten mile an' moor fro' a raäil? We laäys out o' the waäy fur gentlefoälk altogither—leästwaäys they niver cooms 'ere but fur the trout i' our beck, fur they be knaw'd as far as Littlechester. But 'e doänt fish neither.

WILSON.

Well, it's no sin in a gentleman not to fish.

DOBSON.

Noä, but I haätes 'im.

WILSON.

Better step out of his road, then, for he's walking to us, and with a book in his hand.

DOBSON.

An' I haätes booöks an' all, fur they puts foälk off the owd waäys.

Enter EDGAR, *reading—not seeing* DOBSON *and* WILSON.

EDGAR.

This author, with his charm of simple style
And close dialectic, all but proving man
An automatic series of sensations,
Has often numb'd me into apathy

Against the unpleasant jolts of this rough road
That breaks off short into the abysses—made me
A Quietist taking all things easily.

DOBSON.

(*Aside.*) There mun be summut wrong theer, Wilson, fur I doänt understan' it.

WILSON.

(*Aside.*) Nor I either, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

(*Scornfully.*) An' thou doänt understan' it neither—and thou schoolmaster an' all.

EDGAR.

What can a man, then, live for but sensations,
Pleasant ones? men of old would undergo
Unpleasant for the sake of pleasant ones

Hereafter, like the Moslem beauties waiting
To clasp their lovers by the golden gates.
For me, whose cheerless Houris after death
Are Night and Silence, pleasant ones—the while—
If possible, here! to crop the flower and pass.

DOBSON.

Well, I never 'eärd the likes o' that afoor.

WILSON.

(*Aside.*) But I have, Mr. Dobson. It's the old Scripture text, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' I'm sorry for it, for, tho' he never comes to church, I thought better of him.

EDGAR.

'What are we,' says the blind old man in Lear? 'As flies to the Gods; they kill us for their sport.'

DOBSON.

(*Aside.*) Then the owd man i' Lear should be shaämed of hissen, but noän o' the parishes goäs by that naäme 'ereabouts.

EDGAR.

The Gods! but they, the shadows of ourselves,
Have past for ever. It is Nature kills,
And not for *her* sport either. She knows nothing.
Man only knows, the worse for him! for why
Cannot *he* take his pastime like the flies?
And if my pleasure breed another's pain,
Well—is not that the course of Nature too,
From the dim dawn of Being—her main law
Whereby she grows in beauty—that her flies
Must massacre each other? this poor Nature!

DOBSON.

Natur! Natur! Well, it be i' *my* natur to knock 'im o' the 'eäd now; but I weänt.

EDGAR.

A Quietist taking all things easily—why—
Have I been dipping into this again
To steel myself against the leaving her?

(*Closes book, seeing* WILSON.)

Good day!

WILSON.

Good day, sir.

(DOBSON *looks hard at* EDGAR.)

EDGAR.

(*To* DOBSON.) Have I the pleasure, friend, of knowing you?

DOBSON.

Dobson.

EDGAR.

Good day, then, Dobson. [*Exit.*

DOBSON.

'Good daäy then, Dobson!' Civil-spoken i'deed! Why, Wilson, tha 'eärd 'im thysen—the feller couldn't find a Mister in his mouth fur me, as farms five hoonderd haäcre.

WILSON.

You never find one for me, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

Noä, fur thou be nobbut schoolmaster; but I taäkes 'im fur a Lunnun swindler, and a burn fool.

WILSON.

He can hardly be both, and he pays me regular every Saturday.

DOBSON.

Yeas; but I haätes 'im.

Enter STEER, FARM MEN *and* WOMEN.

STEER.

(*Goes and sits under apple tree.*) Hev' ony o' ye seen Eva?

DOBSON.

Noä, Mr. Steer.

STEER.

Well, I reckons they'll hev' a fine cider-crop to-year if the blossom 'owds. Good murnin', neighbours, and the saäme to you, my men. I taäkes it kindly of all o' you that you be coomed—

what's the newspaäper word, Wilson?—celebrate—to celebrate my birthdaäy i' this fashion. Niver man 'ed better friends, and I will saäy niver master 'ed better men: fur thaw I may ha' fallen out wi' ye sometimes, the fault, mebbe, wur as much mine as yours; and, thaw I says it mysen, niver men 'ed a better master—and I knaws what men be, and what masters be, fur I wur nobbut a laäbourer, and now I be a landlord—burn a plowman, and now, as far as money goäs, I be a gentleman, thaw I beänt naw scholard, fur I 'ednt naw time to maäke mysen a scholard while I wur maäkin' mysen a gentleman, but I ha taäen good care to turn out boäth my darters right down fine laädies.

DOBSON.

An' soä they be.

1ST FARMING MAN.

Soä they be! soä they be!

2ND FARMING MAN.

The Lord bless boath on 'em!

3RD FARMING MAN.

An' the saäme to you, Master.

4TH FARMING MAN.

And long life to boath on 'em. An' the saäme to you, Master Steer, likewise.

STEER.

Thank ye!

Enter EVA.

Wheer 'asta been?

EVA.

(*Timidly.*) Many happy returns of the day, father.

STEER.

They can't be many, my dear, but I 'oäpes they'll be 'appy.

DOBSON.

Why, tha looks haäle anew to last to a hoonderd.

STEER.

An' why shouldn't I last to a hoonderd? Haäle! why shouldn't I be haäle? fur thaw I be heighty this very daäy, I niver 'es sa much as one pin's prick of paäin; an' I can taäke my glass along wi' the youngest, fur I niver touched a drop of owt till my oän wedding-daäy, an' then I wur turned huppads o' sixty. Why shouldn't I be haäle? I ha' plowed the ten-aäcre—it be mine now—afoor ony o' ye wur burn—ye all knaws the ten-aäcre—I mun ha' plowed it moor nor a hoonderd times;

hallus hup at sunrise, and I'd drive the plow straäit as a line right i' the faäce o' the sun, then back ageän, a-follering my oän shadder—then hup ageän i' the faäce o' the sun. Eh! how the sun 'ud shine, and the larks 'ud sing i' them daäys, and the smell o' the mou'd an' all. Eh! if I could ha' gone on wi' the plowin' nobbut the smell o' the mou'd 'ud ha' maäde ma live as long as Jerusalem.

EVA.

Methusaleh, father.

STEER.

Ay, lass, but when thou be as owd as me thou'll put one word fur another as I does.

DOBSON.

But, Steer, thaw thou be haäle anew I seed tha a-limpin' up just now wi' the roomatics i' the knee.

STEER.

Roomatics! Noä; I laäme't my knee last night running arter a thief. Beänt there house-breäkers down i' Littlechester, Dobson—doänt ye hear of ony?

DOBSON.

Ay, that there be. Immanuel Goldsmiths was broke into o' Monday night, and ower a hoonderd pounds worth o' rings stolen.

STEER.

So I thowt, and I heärd the winder—that's the winder at the end o' the passage, that goäs by thy chaumber. (*Turning to* EVA.) Why, lass, what maäkes tha sa red? Did 'e git into thy chaumber?

EVA.

Father!

STEER.

Well, I runned arter thief i' the dark, and fell ageän coalscuttle and my kneeä gev waäy, or I'd ha' cotched 'im, but afoor I coomed up he got thruff the winder ageän.

EVA.

Got thro' the window again?

STEER.

Ay, but he left the mark of 'is foot i' the flower-bed; now theer be noän o' my men, thinks I to mysen, 'ud ha' done it 'cep' it were Dan Smith, fur I cotched 'im once a-steälin' coäls, an' I sent fur 'im, an' I measured his foot wi' the mark i' the bed, but it wouldn't fit—seeäms to me the mark wur maäde by a Lunnun boot. (*Looks at* EVA.) Why, now, what maäkes tha sa white?

EVA.

Fright, father!

STEER.

Maäke thysen eäsy. I'll hev the winder naäiled up, and put Towser under it.

EVA.

(*Clasping her hands.*) No, no, father! Towser'll tear him all to pieces.

STEER.

Let him keep awaäy, then; but coom, coom! let's be gawin. They ha' broached a barrel of aäle i' the long barn, and the fiddler be theer, and the lads and lasses 'ull hev a dance.

EVA.

(*Aside.*) Dance! small heart have I to dance. I should seem to be dancing upon a grave.

STEER.

Wheer be Mr. Edgar? about the premises?

DOBSON.

Hallus about the premises!

STEER.

So much the better, so much the better. I likes 'im, and Eva likes 'im. Eva can do owt wi' 'im; look for 'im, Eva, and bring 'im to the barn. He 'ant naw pride in 'im, and we'll git 'im to speechify for us arter dinner.

EVA.

Yes, father! [*Exit.*

STEER.

Coom along then, all the rest o' ye! Churchwarden be a coomin, thaw me and 'im we niver

'grees about the tithe; and Parson mebbe, thaw he niver mended that gap i' the glebe fence as I telled 'im; and Blacksmith, thaw he niver shoes a herse to my likings; and Baäker, thaw I sticks to hoäm-maäde—but all on 'em welcome, all on 'em welcome; and I've hed the long barn cleared out of all the machines, and the sacks, and the taäters, and the mangles, and theer 'll be room anew for all o' ye. Foller me.

ALL.

Yeas, yeas! Three cheers for Mr. Steer!

[*All exeunt except* DOBSON *into barn.*

Enter EDGAR.

DOBSON (*who is going, turns*).

Squire!—if so be you be a squire.

EDGAR.

Dobbins, I think.

DOBSON.

Dobbins, you thinks; and I thinks ye weärs a Lunnun boot.

EDGAR.

Well?

DOBSON.

And I thinks I'd like to taäke the measure o' your foot.

EDGAR.

Ay, if you'd like to measure your own length upon the grass.

DOBSON.

Coom, coom, that's a good un. Why, I could throw four o' ye; but I promised one of the Misses I wouldn't meddle wi' ye, and I weänt.

[*Exit into barn.*

EDGAR.

Jealous of me with Eva! Is it so?
Well, tho' I grudge the pretty jewel, that I
Have worn, to such a clod, yet that might be
The best way out of it, if the child could keep
Her counsel. I am sure I wish her happy.
But I must free myself from this entanglement.
I have all my life before me—so has she—
Give her a month or two, and her affections
Will flower toward the light in some new face.
Still I am half-afraid to meet her now.
She will urge marriage on me. I hate tears.
Marriage is but an old tradition. I hate
Traditions, ever since my narrow father,
After my frolic with his tenant's girl,
Made younger elder son, violated the whole
Tradition of our land, and left his heir,

Born, happily, with some sense of art, to live
By brush and pencil. By and by, when Thought
Comes down among the crowd, and man perceives
that
The lost gleam of an after-life but leaves him
A beast of prey in the dark, why then the crowd
May wreak my wrongs upon my wrongers. Mar-
riage!
That fine, fat, hook-nosed uncle of mine, old
Harold,
Who leaves me all his land at Littlechester,
He, too, would oust me from his will, if I
Made such a marriage. And marriage in itself—
The storm is hard at hand will sweep away
Thrones, churches, ranks, traditions, customs, mar-
riage
One of the feeblest! Then the man, the woman,

Following their best affinities, will each
Bid their old bond farewell with smiles, not tears;
Good wishes, not reproaches; with no fear
Of the world's gossiping clamour, and no need
Of veiling their desires.

Conventionalism,
Who shrieks by day at what she does by night,
Would call this vice; but one time's vice may be
The virtue of another; and Vice and Virtue
Are but two masks of self; and what hereafter
Shall mark out Vice from Virtue in the gulf
Of never-dawning darkness?

Enter EVA.

My sweet Eva,
Where have you lain in ambush all the morning?
They say your sister, Dora, has return'd,

And that should make you happy, if you love her!
But you look troubled.

EVA.

Oh, I love her so,
I was afraid of her, and I hid myself.
We never kept a secret from each other;
She would have seen at once into my trouble,
And ask'd me what I could not answer. Oh, Philip,
Father heard you last night. Our savage mastiff,
That all but kill'd the beggar, will be placed
Beneath the window, Philip.

EDGAR.

Savage, is he?
What matters? Come, give me your hand and kiss me
This beautiful May-morning.

EVA.

The most beautiful

May we have had for many years!

EDGAR.

And here

Is the most beautiful morning of this May.

Nay, you must smile upon me! There—you make

The May and morning still more beautiful,

You, the most beautiful blossom of the May.

EVA.

Dear Philip, all the world is beautiful

If we were happy, and could chime in with it.

EDGAR.

True; for the senses, love, are for the world;

That for the senses.

EVA.

Yes.

EDGAR.

And when the man,
The child of evolution, flings aside
His swaddling-bands, the morals of the tribe,
He, following his own instincts as his God,
Will enter on the larger golden age;
No pleasure then taboo'd: for when the tide
Of full democracy has overwhelm'd
This Old world, from that flood will rise the New,
Like the Love-goddess with no bridal veil,
Ring, trinket of the Church, but naked Nature
In all her loveliness.

EVA.

What are you saying?

EDGAR.

That, if we did not strain to make ourselves
Better and higher than Nature, we might be
As happy as the bees there at their honey
In these sweet blossoms.

EVA.

Yes; how sweet they smell!

EDGAR.

There! let me break some off for you.

[*Breaking branch off.*

EVA.

My thanks.
But, look, how wasteful of the blossom you are!
One, two, three, four, five, six—you have robb'd
poor father
Of ten good apples. Oh, I forgot to tell you

He wishes you to dine along with us,

And speak for him after—you that are so clever!

EDGAR.

I grieve I cannot; but, indeed——

EVA.

What is it?

EDGAR.

Well, business. I must leave you, love, to-day.

EVA.

Leave me, to-day! And when will you return?

EDGAR.

I cannot tell precisely; but——

EVA.

But what?

EDGAR.

I trust, my dear, we shall be always friends.

EVA.

After all that has gone between us—friends!
What, only friends? [*Drops branch.*

EDGAR.

All that has gone between us
Should surely make us friends.

EVA.

But keep us lovers.

EDGAR.

Child, do you love me now?

EVA.

Yes, now and ever.

EDGAR.

Then you should wish us both to love for ever.
But, if you *will* bind love to one for ever,
Altho' at first he take his bonds for flowers,
As years go on, he feels them press upon him,
Begins to flutter in them, and at last
Breaks thro' them, and so flies away for ever;
While, had you left him free use of his wings,
Who knows that he had ever dream'd of flying?

EVA.

But all that sounds so wicked and so strange;
'Till death us part'—those are the only words,
The true ones—nay, and those not true enough,
For they that love do not believe that death
Will part them. Why do you jest with me, and try

To fright me? Tho' you are a gentleman,
I but a farmer's daughter——

EDGAR.

Tut! you talk
Old feudalism. When the great Democracy
Makes a new world——

EVA.

And if you be not jesting,
Neither the old world, nor the new, nor father,
Sister, nor you, shall ever see me more.

EDGAR (*moved*).

Then—(*aside*) Shall I say it?—(*aloud*) fly with me
to-day.

EVA.

No! Philip, Philip, if you do not marry me,
I shall go mad for utter shame and die.

EDGAR.

Then, if we needs must be conventional,
When shall your parish-parson bawl our banns
Before your gaping clowns?

EVA.

Not in our church—
I think I scarce could hold my head up there.
Is there no other way?

EDGAR.

Yes, if you cared
To fee an over-opulent superstition,
Then they would grant you what they call a licence
To marry. Do you wish it?

EVA.

Do I wish it?

EDGAR.

In London.

EVA.

You will write to me?

EDGAR.

I will.

EVA.

And I will fly to you thro' the night, the storm—
Yes, tho' the fire should run along the ground,
As once it did in Egypt. Oh, you see,
I was just out of school, I had no mother—
My sister far away—and you, a gentleman,
Told me to trust you: yes, in everything—
That was the only *true* love; and I trusted—
Oh, yes, indeed, I would have died for you.
How could you—Oh, how could you?—nay, how
could I?

But now you will set all right again, and I
Shall not be made the laughter of the village,
And poor old father not die miserable.

DORA (*singing in the distance*).

'O joy for the promise of May, of May,
O joy for the promise of May.'

EDGAR.

Speak not so loudly; that must be your sister.
You never told her, then, of what has past
Between us.

EVA.

Never!

EDGAR.

Do not till I bid you.

EVA.

No, Philip, no. [*Turns away.*

EDGAR (*moved*).

How gracefully there she stands
Weeping—the little Niobe! What! we prize
The statue or the picture all the more
When we have made them ours! Is she less love-
able,
Less lovely, being wholly mine? To stay—
Follow my art among these quiet fields,
Live with these honest folk——
And play the fool!
No! she that gave herself to me so easily
Will yield herself as easily to another.

EVA.

Did you speak, Philip?

EDGAR.

Nothing more, farewell.

[*They embrace.*

DORA (*coming nearer*).

'O grief for the promise of May, of May,
O grief for the promise of May.'

EDGAR (*still embracing her*).

Keep up your heart until we meet again.

EVA.

If that should break before we meet again?

EDGAR.

Break! nay, but call for Philip when you will,
And he returns.

EVA.

Heaven hears you, Philip Edgar!

EDGAR (*moved*).

And *he* would hear you even from the grave.
Heaven curse him if he come not at your call!

[*Exit.*

Enter DORA.

DORA.

Well, Eva!

EVA.

Oh, Dora, Dora, how long you have been away from home! Oh, how often I have wished for you! It seemed to me that we were parted for ever.

DORA.

For ever, you foolish child! What's come over you? We parted like the brook yonder about the alder island, to come together again in a moment and to go on together again, till one of us be

married. But where is this Mr. Edgar whom you praised so in your first letters? You haven't even mentioned him in your last?

EVA.

He has gone to London.

DORA.

Ay, child; and you look thin and pale. Is it for his absence? Have you fancied yourself in love with him? That's all nonsense, you know, such a baby as you are. But you shall tell me all about it.

EVA.

Not now—presently. Yes, I have been in trouble, but I am happy—I think, quite happy now.

DORA (*taking* EVA's *hand*).

Come, then, and make them happy in the long

barn, for father is in his glory, and there is a piece of beef like a house-side, and a plum-pudding as big as the round haystack. But see they are coming out for the dance already. Well, my child, let us join them.

Enter all from barn laughing. EVA *sits reluctantly under apple tree.* STEER *enters smoking, sits by* EVA.

Dance.

ACT II.

Five years have elapsed between Acts I. and II.

SCENE.—*A meadow. On one side a pathway going over a rustic bridge. At back the farmhouse among trees. In the distance a church spire.*

DOBSON *and* DORA.

DOBSON.

So the owd uncle i' Coomberland be deäd, Miss Dora, beänt he?

DORA.

Yes, Mr. Dobson, I've been attending on his death-bed and his burial.

DOBSON.

It be five year sin' ye went afoor to him, and it seems to me nobbut t'other day. Hesn't he left ye nowt?

DORA.

No, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

But he were mighty fond o' ye, warn't he?

DORA.

Fonder of poor Eva—like everybody else.

DOBSON (*handing* DORA *basket of roses*).

Not like me, Miss Dora; and I ha' browt these roses to ye—I forgits what they calls 'em, but I hallus gi'ed soom on 'em to Miss Eva at this time o' year. Will ya taäke 'em? fur Miss Eva, she set the bush by my dairy winder afoor she went to school at Littlechester—so I allus browt soom on

'em to her; and now she be gone, will ye taäke 'em, Miss Dora?

DORA.

I thank you. They tell me that yesterday you mentioned her name too suddenly before my father. See that you do not do so again!

DOBSON.

Noä; I knaws a deäl better now. I seed how the owd man wur vext.

DORA.

I take them, then, for Eva's sake.

[*Takes basket, places some in her dress.*

DOBSON.

Eva's saäke. Yeas. Poor gel, poor gel! I can't abeär to think on 'er now, fur I'd ha' done owt fur 'er mysen; an' ony o' Steer's men, an' ony

o' my men 'ud ha' done owt fur 'er, an' all the parish 'ud ha' done owt fur 'er, fur we was all on us proud on 'er, an' them theer be soom of her oän roses, an' she wur as sweet as ony on 'em—the Lord bless 'er—'er oän sen; an' weänt ye taake 'em now, Miss Dora, fur 'er saäke an' fur my saäke an' all?

DORA.

Do you want them back again?

DOBSON.

Noä, noä! Keep 'em. But I hed a word to saäy to ye.

DORA.

Why, Farmer, you should be in the hayfield looking after your men; you couldn't have more splendid weather.

DOBSON.

I be a going theer; but I thowt I'd bring tha

them roses fust. The weather's well anew, but the glass be a bit shaäky. S'iver we've led moäst on it.

DORA.

Ay! but you must not be too sudden with it either, as you were last year, when you put it in green, and your stack caught fire.

DOBSON.

I were insured, Miss, an' I lost nowt by it. But I weänt be too sudden wi' it; and I feel sewer, Miss Dora, that I ha' been noän too sudden wi' you, fur I ha' sarved for ye well nigh as long as the man sarved for 'is sweet'art i' Scriptur'. Weänt ye gi'e me a kind answer at last?

DORA.

I have no thought of marriage, my friend. We have been in such grief these five years, not only

on my sister's account, but the ill success of the farm, and the debts, and my father's breaking down, and his blindness. How could I think of leaving him?

DOBSON.

Eh, but I be well to do; and if ye would nobbut hev me, I would taäke the owd blind man to my oän fireside. You should hev him allus wi' ye.

DORA.

You are generous, but it cannot be. I cannot love you; nay, I think I never can be brought to love any man. It seems to me that I hate men, ever since my sister left us. Oh, see here. (*Pulls out a letter.*) I wear it next my heart. Poor sister, I had it five years ago. 'Dearest Dora,—I have lost myself, and am lost for ever to you and my poor father. I thought Mr. Edgar the best of men,

and he has proved himself the worst. Seek not for me, or you may find me at the bottom of the river.—Eva.'

Dobson.

Be that my fault?

Dora.

No; but how should I, with this grief still at my heart, take to the milking of your cows, the fatting of your calves, the making of your butter, and the managing of your poultry?

Dobson.

Naäy, but I hev an owd woman as 'ud see to all that; and you should sit i' your oän parlour quite like a laädy, ye should!

Dora.

It cannot be.

DOBSON.

And plaäy the pianner, if ye liked, all daäy long, like a laädy, ye should an' all.

DORA.

It cannot be.

DOBSON.

And I would loove tha moor nor ony gentleman 'ud loove tha.

DORA.

No, no; it cannot be.

DOBSON.

And p'raps ye hears 'at I soomtimes taäkes a drop too much; but that be all along o' you, Miss, because ye weänt hev me; but, if ye would, I could put all that o' one side eäsy anew.

DORA.

Cannot you understand plain words, Mr. Dobson? I tell you, it cannot be.

DOBSON.

Eh, lass! Thy feyther eddicated his darters to marry gentlefoälk, and see what's coomed on it.

DORA.

That is enough, Farmer Dobson. You have shown me that, though fortune had born *you* into the estate of a gentleman, you would still have been Farmer Dobson. You had better attend to your hayfield. Good afternoon. [*Exit.*

DOBSON.

'Farmer Dobson'! Well, I be Farmer Dobson; but I thinks Farmer Dobson's dog 'ud ha' knaw'd

better nor to cast her sister's misfortin inter 'er teeth arter she'd been a-reädin' me the letter wi' 'er voice a-shaäkin', and the drop in 'er eye. Theer she goäs! Shall I foller 'er and ax 'er to maäke it up? Noä, not yet. Let 'er cool upon it; I likes 'er all the better fur taäkin' me down, like a laädy, as she be. Farmer Dobson! I be Farmer Dobson, sewer anew; but if iver I cooms upo' Gentleman Hedgar ageän, and doänt laäy my cartwhip athurt 'is shou'ders, why then I beänt Farmer Dobson, but summun else—blaäme't if I beänt!

Enter HAYMAKERS *with a load of hay.*

The last on it, eh?

1ST HAYMAKER.

Yeas.

DOBSON.

Hoäm wi' it, then. [*Exit surlily.*

1ST HAYMAKER.

Well, it be the last loäd hoäm.

2ND HAYMAKER.

Yeas, an' owd Dobson should be glad on it. What maäkes 'im allus sa glum?

SALLY ALLEN.

Glum! he be wus nor glum. He coom'd up to me yisterdaäy i' the haäyfield, when meä and my sweet'art was a workin' along o' one side wi' one another, and he sent 'im awaäy to t'other end o' the field; and when I axed 'im why, he telled me 'at sweet'arts niver worked well togither; and I telled *'im* 'at sweet'arts allus worked best togither; and then he called me a rude naäme, and I can't abide 'im.

JAMES.

Why, lass, doänt tha knaw he be sweet upo' Dora Steer, and she weänt sa much as look at 'im? And wheniver 'e sees two sweet'arts togither like thou and me, Sally, he be fit to bust hissen wi' spites and jalousies.

SALLY.

Let 'im bust hissen, then, for owt *I* cares.

1ST HAYMAKER.

Well but, as I said afoor, it be the last loäd hoäm; do thou and thy sweet'art sing us hoäm to supper—'The Last Loäd Hoäm.'

ALL.

Ay! 'The Last Loäd Hoäm.'

Song.

What did ye do, and what did ye saäy,
Wi' the wild white rose, and the woodbine sa gaäy,
An' the midders all mow'd, and the sky sa blue—
What did ye saäy, and what did ye do,
When ye thowt there were nawbody watchin' o' you,
And you and your Sally was forkin' the haäy,
At the end of the daäy,
For the last loäd hoäm?

What did we do, and what did we saäy,
Wi' the briar sa green, and the willer sa graäy,
An' the midders all mow'd, and the sky sa blue—
Do ye think I be gawin' to tell it to you,
What we mowt saäy, and what we mowt do,
When me and my Sally was forkin' the haäy,

At the end of the daäy,

For the last loäd hoäm?

But what did ye saäy, and what did ye do,
Wi' the butterflies out, and the swallers at plaäy,
An' the midders all mow'd, and the sky sa blue?
Why, coom then, owd feller, I'll tell it to you;
For me and my Sally we sweär'd to be true,
To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,

Till the end of the daäy

And the last loäd hoäm.

ALL.

Well sung!

JAMES.

Fanny be the naäme i' the song, but I swopt it fur *she.* [*Pointing to* SALLY.

SALLY.

Let ma aloän afoor foälk, wilt tha?

1ST HAYMAKER.

Ye shall sing that ageän to-night, fur owd Dobson 'll gi'e us a bit o' supper.

SALLY.

I weänt goä to owd Dobson; he wur rude to me i' tha haäyfield, and he'll be rude to me ageän to-night. Owd Steer's gotten all his grass down and wants a hand, and I'll goä to him.

1ST HAYMAKER.

Owd Steer gi'es nubbut cowd tea to *'is* men, and owd Dobson gi'es beer.

SALLY.

But I'd like owd Steer's cowd tea better nor Dobson's beer. Good-bye. [*Going.*

JAMES.

Gi'e us a buss fust, lass.

SALLY.

I tell'd tha to let ma aloän!

JAMES.

Why, wasn't thou and me a-bussin' o' one another t'other side o' the haäycock, when owd Dobson coom'd upo' us? I can't let thaa loän if I would, Sally. [*Offering to kiss her.*

SALLY.

Git along wi' ye, do! [*Exit.*

[*All laugh; exeunt singing.*

'To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
Till the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm.'

Enter HAROLD.

HAROLD.

Not Harold! 'Philip Edgar, Philip Edgar!'
Her phantom call'd me by the name she loved.
I told her I should hear her from the grave.
Ay! yonder is her casement. I remember
Her bright face beaming starlike down upon me
Thro' that rich cloud of blossom. Since I left her
Here weeping, I have ranged the world, and sat
Thro' every sensual course of that full feast
That leaves but emptiness.

Song.

'To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
To the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm.'

HAROLD.

Poor Eva! O my God, if man be only
A willy-nilly current of sensations—
Reaction needs must follow revel—yet—
Why feel remorse, he, knowing that he *must* have
Moved in the iron grooves of Destiny?
Remorse then is a part of Destiny,
Nature a liar, making us feel guilty
Of her own faults.
My grandfather—of him
They say, that women—
O this mortal house,

Which we are born into, is haunted by
The ghosts of the dead passions of dead men;
And these take flesh again with our own flesh,
And bring us to confusion.

He was only
A poor philosopher who call'd the mind
Of children a blank page, a *tabula rasa.*
There, there, is written in invisible inks
'Lust, Prodigality, Covetousness, Craft,
Cowardice, Murder'—and the heat and fire
Of life will bring them out, and black enough,
So the child grow to manhood: better death
With our first wail than life—

Song (*further off*).

'Till the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm,
Loäd hoäm.'

This bridge again! (*Steps on the bridge.*)
How often have I stood
With Eva here! The brook among its flowers!
Forget-me-not, meadowsweet, willow-herb.
I had some smattering of science then,
Taught her the learned names, anatomized
The flowers for her—and now I only wish
This pool were deep enough, that I might plunge
And lose myself for ever.

Enter DAN SMITH (*singing*).

Gee oop! whoä! Gee oop! whoä!
Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä
Thruf slush an' squad
When roäds was bad,
But hallus ud stop at the Vine-an'-the-Hop,
Fur boäth on 'em knaw'd as well as mysen

That beer be as good fur 'erses as men.

Gee oop! whoä! Gee oop! whoä!

Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä.

The beer's gotten oop into my 'eäd. S'iver I mun git along back to the farm, fur she tell'd ma to taäke the cart to Littlechester.

Enter DORA.

Half an hour late! why are you loitering here? Away with you at once. [*Exit* DAN SMITH.

(*Seeing* HAROLD *on bridge.*)

Some madman, is it,
Gesticulating there upon the bridge?
I am half afraid to pass.

HAROLD.

Sometimes I wonder,
When man has surely learnt at last that all

His old-world faith, the blossom of his youth,
Has faded, falling fruitless—whether then
All of us, all at once, may not be seized
With some fierce passion, not so much for Death
As against Life! all, all, into the dark—
No more!—and science now could drug and balm us
Back into nescience with as little pain
As it is to fall asleep.
This beggarly life,
This poor, flat, hedged-in field—no distance—this
Hollow Pandora-box,
With all the pleasures flown, not even Hope
Left at the bottom!
Superstitious fool,
What brought me here? To see her grave? her ghost?
Her ghost is everyway about me here.

DORA (*coming forward*).

Allow me, sir, to pass you.

HAROLD.

Eva!

DORA.

Eva!

HAROLD.

What are you? Where do you come from?

DORA.

From the farm

Here, close at hand.

HAROLD.

Are you—you are—that Dora,

The sister. I have heard of you. The likeness

Is very striking.

DORA.

You knew Eva, then?

HAROLD.

Yes—I was thinking of her when—O yes,
Many years back, and never since have met
Her equal for pure innocence of nature,
And loveliness of feature.

DORA.

No, nor I.

HAROLD.

Except, indeed, I have found it once again
In your own self.

DORA.

You flatter me. Dear Eva
Was always thought the prettier.

HAROLD.

And *her* charm
Of voice is also yours; and I was brooding
Upon a great unhappiness when you spoke.

DORA.

Indeed, you seem'd in trouble, sir.

HAROLD.

And you
Seem my good angel who may help me from it.

DORA (*aside*).

How worn he looks, poor man! who is it, I wonder.
How can I help him? (*Aloud.*) Might I ask your
name?

HAROLD.

Harold.

DORA.

I never heard her mention you.

HAROLD.

I met her first at a farm in Cumberland—
Her uncle's.

DORA.

She was there six years ago.

HAROLD.

And if she never mention'd me, perhaps
The painful circumstances which I heard—
I will not vex you by repeating them—
Only last week at Littlechester, drove me
From out her memory. She has disappear'd,
They told me, from the farm—and darker news.

DORA.

She has disappear'd, poor darling, from the world—
Left but one dreadful line to say, that we
Should find her in the river; and we dragg'd
The Littlechester river all in vain:
Have sorrow'd for her all these years in vain.
And my poor father, utterly broken down
By losing her—she was his favourite child—
Has let his farm, all his affairs, I fear,
But for the slender help that I can give,
Fall into ruin. Ah! that villain, Edgar,
If he should ever show his face among us,
Our men and boys would hoot him, stone him, hunt
him
With pitchforks off the farm, for all of them
Loved her, and she was worthy of all love.

HAROLD.

They say, we should forgive our enemies.

DORA.

Ay, if the wretch were dead I might forgive him;
We know not whether he be dead or living.

HAROLD.

What Edgar?

DORA.

Philip Edgar of Toft Hall
In Somerset. Perhaps you know him?

HAROLD.

Slightly.

(*Aside.*) Ay, for how slightly have I known myself.

DORA.

This Edgar, then, is living?

HAROLD.

Living? well—

One Philip Edgar of Toft Hall in Somerset

Is lately dead.

DORA.

Dead!—is there more than one?

HAROLD.

Nay—now—not one, (*aside*) for I am Philip Harold.

DORA.

That one, is he then—dead!

HAROLD.

(*Aside.*) My father's death,

Let her believe it mine; this, for the moment,

Will leave me a free field.

DORA.

Dead! and this world
Is brighter for his absence as that other
Is darker for his presence.

HAROLD.

Is not this
To speak too pitilessly of the dead?

DORA.

My five-years' anger cannot die at once,
Not all at once with death and him. I trust
I shall forgive him—by-and-by—not now.
O sir, you seem to have a heart; if you
Had seen us that wild morning when we found
Her bed unslept in, storm and shower lashing
Her casement, her poor spaniel wailing for her,

That desolate letter, blotted with her tears,
Which told us we should never see her more—
Our old nurse crying as if for her own child,
My father stricken with his first paralysis,
And then with blindness—had you been one of us
And seen all this, then you would know it is not
So easy to forgive—even the dead.

HAROLD.

But sure am I that of your gentleness
You will forgive him. She, you mourn for, seem'd
A miracle of gentleness—would not blur
A moth's wing by the touching; would not crush
The fly that drew her blood; and, were she living,
Would not—if penitent—have denied him *her*
Forgiveness. And perhaps the man himself,
When hearing of that piteous death, has suffer'd

More than we know. But wherefore waste your heart
In looking on a chill and changeless Past?
Iron will fuse, and marble melt; the Past
Remains the Past. But you are young, and—pardon me—
As lovely as your sister. Who can tell
What golden hours, with what full hands, may be
Waiting you in the distance? Might I call
Upon your father—I have seen the world—
And cheer his blindness with a traveller's tales?

DORA.

Call if you will, and when you will. I cannot
Well answer for my father; but if you
Can tell me anything of our sweet Eva
When in her brighter girlhood, I at least

Will bid you welcome, and will listen to you.
Now I must go.

HAROLD.

But give me first your hand:
I do not dare, like an old friend, to shake it.
I kiss it as a prelude to that privilege
When you shall know me better.

DORA.

(*Aside.*) How beautiful
His manners are, and how unlike the farmer's!
You are staying here?

HAROLD.

Yes, at the wayside inn
Close by that alder-island in your brook,
'The Angler's Home.'

DORA.

Are *you* one?

HAROLD.

No, but I

Take some delight in sketching, and the country

Has many charms, altho' the inhabitants

Seem semi-barbarous.

DORA.

I am glad it pleases you;

Yet I, born here, not only love the country,

But its inhabitants too; and you, I doubt not,

Would take to them as kindly, if you cared

To live some time among them.

HAROLD.

If I did,

Then one at least of its inhabitants

Might have more charm for me than all the country.

DORA.

That one, then, should be grateful for your preference.

HAROLD.

I cannot tell, tho' standing in her presence.

(*Aside.*) She colours!

DORA.

Sir!

HAROLD.

Be not afraid of me,

For these are no conventional flourishes.

I do most earnestly assure you that

Your likeness—— [*Shouts and cries without.*

DORA.

What was that? my poor blind father—

Enter FARMING MAN.

FARMING MAN.

Miss Dora, Dan Smith's cart hes runned ower a laädy i' the holler laäne, and they ha' ta'en the body up inter your chaumber, and they be all a-callin' for ye.

DORA.

The body !—Heavens ! I come !

HAROLD.

But you are trembling. Allow me to go with you to the farm. [*Exeunt.*

Enter DOBSON.

DOBSON.

What feller wur it as 'a' been a-talkin' fur haäfe an hour wi' my Dora? (*Looking after him.*)

Seeäms I ommost knaws the back on 'im—drest like a gentleman, too. Damn all gentlemen, says I! I should ha' thowt they'd hed anew of gentlefoälk, as I telled 'er to-daäy when she fell foul upo' me.

Minds ma o' summun. I could sweär to that; but that be all one, fur I haätes 'im afoor I knaws what 'e be. Theer! he turns round. Philip Hedgar o' Soomerset! Philip Hedgar o' Soomerset!—Noä—yeas—thaw the feller's gone and maäde such a litter of his faäce.

Eh lad, if it be thou, I'll Philip tha! a-plaäyin' the saäme gaäme wi' my Dora—I'll Soomerset tha.

I'd like to drag 'im thruff the herse-pond, and she to be a-lookin' at it. I'd like to leather 'im black and blue, and she to be a-laughin' at it. I'd like to fell 'im as deäd as a bullock! (*Clenching his fist.*)

But what 'ud she saäy to that? She telled me once not to meddle wi' 'im, and now she be fallen out wi' ma, and I can't coom at 'er.

It mun be *him*. Noä! Fur she'd niver 'a been talkin' haäfe an hour wi' the divil 'at killed her oän sister, or she beänt Dora Steer.

Yeas! Fur she niver knawed 'is faäce when 'e wur 'ere afoor; but I'll maäke 'er knaw! I'll maäke 'er knaw!

Enter HAROLD.

Naäy, but I mun git out on 'is waäy now, or I shall be the death on 'im. [*Exit.*

HAROLD.

How the clown glared at me! that Dobbins, is it,
With whom I used to jar? but can he trace me
Thro' five years' absence, and my change of name,

The tan of southern summers and the beard.

I may as well avoid him.

Ladylike!

Lilylike in her stateliness and sweetness!

How came she by it?—a daughter of the fields,

This Dora!

She gave her hand, unask'd, at the farm-gate;

I almost think she half-return'd the pressure

Of mine. What, I that held the orange blossom

Dark as the yew? but may not those, who march

Before their age, turn back at times, and make

Courtesy to custom? and now the stronger motive,

Misnamed free-will—the crowd would call it conscience—

Moves me—to what? I am dreaming; for the past

Look'd thro' the present, Eva's eyes thro' her's—

A spell upon me! Surely I loved Eva
More than I knew! or is it but the past
That brightens in retiring? Oh, last night,
Tired, pacing my new lands at Littlechester,
I dozed upon the bridge, and the black river
Flow'd thro' my dreams—if dreams they were.
She rose
From the foul flood and pointed toward the farm,
And her cry rang to me across the years,
'I call you, Philip Edgar, Philip Edgar!
Come, you will set all right again, and father
Will not die miserable.' I could make his age
A comfort to him—so be more at peace
With mine own self. Some of my former friends
Would find my logic faulty; let them. Colour
Flows thro' my life again, and I have lighted
On a new pleasure. Anyhow we must

Move in the line of least resistance when
The stronger motive rules.

But she hates Edgar.

May not this Dobbins, or some other, spy
Edgar in Harold? Well then, I must make her
Love Harold first, and then she will forgive
Edgar for Harold's sake. She said herself
She would forgive him, by-and-by, not now—
For her own sake *then*, if not for mine—not now—
But by-and-by.

Enter DOBSON *behind.*

DOBSON.

By-and-by—eh, lad, dosta knaw this paäper? Ye dropt it upo' the roäd. 'Philip Edgar, Esq.' Ay, you be a pretty squire. I ha' fun' ye out, I hev. Eh, lad, dosta knaw what tha meäns wi' by-

and-by? Fur if ye be goin' to sarve our Dora as ye sarved our Eva—then, by-and-by, if she weänt listen to me when I be a-tryin' to saäve 'er—if she weänt—look to thysen, for, by the Lord, I'd think na moor o' maäkin' an end o' tha nor a carrion craw—noä—thaw they hanged ma at 'Size fur it.

HAROLD.

Dobbins, I think!

DOBSON.

I beänt Dobbins.

HAROLD.

Nor am I Edgar, my good fellow.

DOBSON.

Tha lies! What hasta been saäyin' to *my* Dora?

HAROLD.

I have been telling her of the death of one Philip Edgar of Toft Hall, Somerset.

DOBSON.

Tha lies!

HAROLD (*pulling out a newspaper*).

Well, my man, it seems that you can read. Look there—under the deaths.

DOBSON.

'O' the 17th, Philip Edgar, o' Toft Hall, Soomerset.' How coom thou to be sa like 'im, then?

HAROLD.

Naturally enough; for I am closely related to the dead man's family.

DOBSON.

An 'ow coom thou by the letter to 'im?

HAROLD.

Naturally again; for as I used to transact all his business for him, I had to look over his letters. Now then, see these (*takes out letters*). Half a score of them, all directed to me—Harold.

DOBSON.

'Arold! 'Arold! 'Arold, so they be.

HAROLD.

My name is Harold! Good day, Dobbins!

[*Exit.*

DOBSON.

'Arold! The feller's cleän daäzed, an' maäzed, an' maäted, an' muddled ma. Deäd! It mun be

true, fur it wur i' print as black as owt. Naäy, but 'Good daäy, Dobbins.' Why, that wur the very twang on 'im. Eh, lad, but whether thou be Hedgar, or Hedgar's business man, thou hesn't naw business 'ere wi' *my* Dora, as I knaws on, an' whether thou calls thysen Hedgar or Harold, if thou stick to she I'll stick to thee—stick to tha like a weasel to a rabbit, I will. Ay! and I'd like to shoot tha like a rabbit an' all. 'Good daäy, Dobbins.' Dang tha!

ACT III.

SCENE.—*A room in* STEER'S *House. Door leading into bedroom at the back.*

DORA (*ringing a handbell*).

Milly!

Enter MILLY.

MILLY.

The little 'ymn? Yeäs, Miss; but I wur so ta'en up wi' leädin' the owd man about all the blessed murnin' 'at I ha' nobbut larned mysen haäfe on it.

'O man, forgive thy mortal foe,
Nor ever strike him blow for blow;

For all the souls on earth that live
To be forgiven must forgive.
Forgive him seventy times and seven:
For all the blessed souls in Heaven
Are both forgivers and forgiven.'

But I'll git the book ageän, and larn mysen the rest, and saäy it to ye afoor dark; ye ringed fur that, Miss, didn't ye?

DORA.

No, Milly; but if the farming-men be come for their wages, to send them up to me.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss. [*Exit.*

DORA (*sitting at desk counting money*).

Enough at any rate for the present. (*Enter* FARMING MEN.) Good afternoon, my friends. I

am sorry Mr. Steer still continues too unwell to attend to you, but the schoolmaster looked to the paying you your wages when I was away, didn't he?

MEN.

Yeäs; and thanks to ye.

DORA.

Some of our workmen have left us, but he sent me an alphabetical list of those that remain, so, Allen, I may as well begin with you.

ALLEN (*with his hand to his ear*).

Halfabitical! Taäke one o' the young ones fust, Miss, fur I be a bit deaf, and I wur hallus scaäred by a big word; leästwaäys, I should be wi' a lawyer.

DORA.

I spoke of your names, Allen, as they are ar-

ranged here (*shows book*)—according to their first letters.

ALLEN.

Letters! Yeas, I sees now. Them be what they larns the childer' at school, but I were burn afoor schoolin-time.

DORA.

But, Allen, tho' you can't read, you could white-wash that cottage of yours where your grandson had the fever.

ALLEN.

I'll hev it done o' Monday.

DORA.

Else if the fever spread, the parish will have to thank you for it.

ALLEN.

Meä? why, it be the Lord's doin', noän o' mine; d'ye think *I'd* gi'e 'em the fever? But I thanks ye all the sääme, Miss. (*Takes money.*)

DORA (*calling out names*).

Higgins, Jackson, Luscombe, Nokes, Oldham, Skipworth! (*All take money.*) Did you find that you worked at all the worse upon the cold tea than you would have done upon the beer?

HIGGINS.

Noä, Miss; we worked naw wuss upo' the cowd tea; but we'd ha' worked better upo' the beer.

DORA.

Come, come, you worked well enough, and I am much obliged to all of you. There's for you,

and you, and you. Count the money and see if it's all right.

MEN.

All right, Miss; and thank ye kindly.

[*Exeunt* LUSCOMBE, NOKES, OLDHAM, SKIPWORTH.

DORA.

Dan Smith, my father and I forgave you stealing our coals. [DAN SMITH *advances to* DORA.

DAN SMITH (*bellowing*).

Whoy, O lor, Miss! that wur sa long back, and the walls sa thin, and the winders brokken, and the weather sa cowd, and my missus a-gittin' ower 'er lyin'-in.

DORA.

Didn't I say that we had forgiven you? But,

Dan Smith, they tell me that you—and you have six children—spent all your last Saturday's wages at the ale-house; that you were stupid drunk all Sunday, and so ill in consequence all Monday, that you did not come into the hayfield. Why should I pay you your full wages?

DAN SMITH.

I be ready to taäke the pledge.

DORA.

And as ready to break it again. Besides it was you that were driving the cart—and I fear you were tipsy then, too—when you lamed the lady in the hollow lane.

DAN SMITH (*bellowing*).

O lor, Miss! noä, noä, noä! Ye sees the holler

laäne be hallus sa dark i' the arternoon, and wheere the big eshtree cuts athurt it, it gi'es a turn like, and 'ow should I see to laäme the laädy, and meä coomin' along pretty sharp an' all?

DORA.

Well, there are your wages; the next time you waste them at a pothouse you get no more from me. (*Exit* DAN SMITH.) Sally Allen, you worked for Mr. Dobson, didn't you?

SALLY (*advancing*).

Yeäs, Miss; but he wur so rough wi' ma, I couldn't abide 'im.

DORA.

Why should he be rough with you? You are as good as a man in the hayfield. What's become of your brother?

SALLY.

'Listed for a soädger, Miss, i' the Queen's Real Hard Tillery.

DORA.

And your sweetheart—when are you and he to be married?

SALLY.

At Michaelmas, Miss, please God.

DORA.

You are an honest pair. I will come to your wedding.

SALLY.

An' I thanks ye fur that, Miss, moor nor fur the waäge.

(*Going—returns.*)

'A cotched ma about the waaist, Miss, when 'e wur 'ere afoor, an' axed ma to be 'is little sweet-art,

an soä I knaw'd 'im when I seed 'im ageän an I telled feyther on 'im.

DORA.

What is all this, Allen?

ALLEN.

Why, Miss Dora, meä and my maätes, us three, we wants to hev three words wi' ye.

HIGGINS.

That be 'im, and meä, Miss.

JACKSON.

An' meä, Miss.

ALLEN.

An' we weänt mention naw naämes, we'd as lief talk o' the Divil afoor ye as 'im, fur they says the master goäs cleän off his 'eäd when he 'eärs the

naäme on 'im; but us three, arter Sally'd telled us on 'im, we fun' 'im out a-walkin' i' West Field wi' a white 'at, nine o'clock, upo' Tuesday murnin', and all on us, wi' your leave, we wants to leather 'im.

DORA.

Who?

ALLEN.

Him as did the mischief here, five year' sin'.

DORA.

Mr. Edgar?

ALLEN.

Theer, Miss! You ha' naämed 'im—not me.

DORA.

He's dead, man—dead; gone to his account—dead and buried.

ALLEN.

I beänt sa sewer o' that, fur Sally knaw'd 'im; Now then?

DORA.

Yes; it was in the Somersetshire papers.

ALLEN.

Then yon mun be his brother, an' we'll leather *'im.*

DORA.

I never heard that he had a brother. Some foolish mistake of Sally's; but what! would you beat a man for his brother's fault? That were a wild justice indeed. Let bygones be bygones. Go home! Good-night! (*All exeunt.*) I have once more paid them all. The work of the farm will go on still, but for how long? We are almost at the

bottom of the well: little more to be drawn from it—and what then? Encumbered as we are, who would lend us anything? We shall have to sell all the land, which Father, for a whole life, has been getting together, again, and that, I am sure, would be the death of him. What am I to do? Farmer Dobson, were I to marry him, has promised to keep our heads above water; and the man has doubtless a good heart, and a true and lasting love for me: yet—though I can be sorry for him—as the good Sally says, 'I can't abide him'—almost brutal, and matched with my Harold is like a hedge thistle by a garden rose. But then, he, too—will he ever be of one faith with his wife? which is my dream of a true marriage. Can I fancy him kneeling with me, and uttering the same prayer; standing up side by side with me, and singing the same hymn? I fear

not. Have I done wisely, then, in accepting him? But may not a girl's love-dream have too much romance in it to be realised all at once, or altogether, or anywhere but in Heaven? And yet I had once a vision of a pure and perfect marriage, where the man and the woman, only differing as the stronger and the weaker, should walk hand in hand together down this valley of tears, as they call it so truly, to the grave at the bottom, and lie down there together in the darkness which would seem but for a moment, to be wakened again together by the light of the resurrection, and no more partings for ever and for ever. (*Walks up and down. She sings.*)

'O happy lark, that warblest high
Above thy lowly nest,
O brook, that brawlest merrily by
Thro' fields that once were blest,

O tower spiring to the sky,
O graves in daisies drest,
O Love and Life, how weary am I,
And how I long for rest.'

There, there, I am a fool! Tears! I have sometimes been moved to tears by a chapter of fine writing in a novel; but what have I to do with tears now? All depends on me—Father, this poor girl, the farm, everything; and they both love me—I am all in all to both; and he loves me too, I am quite sure of that. Courage, courage! and all will go well. (*Goes to bedroom door; opens it.*) How dark your room is! Let me bring you in here where there is still full daylight. (*Brings* EVA *forward.*) Why, you look better.

EVA.

And I feel so much better that I trust I may be able by-and-by to help you in the business of the farm; but I must not be known yet. Has anyone found me out, Dora?

DORA.

Oh, no; you kept your veil too close for that when they carried you in; since then, no one has seen you but myself.

EVA.

Yes—this Milly.

DORA.

Poor blind Father's little guide, Milly, who came to us three years after you were gone, how should she know you? But now that you have been brought to us as it were from the grave, dearest

Eva, and have been here so long, will you not speak with Father to-day?

EVA.

Do you think that I may? No, not yet. I am not equal to it yet.

DORA.

Why? Do you still suffer from your fall in the hollow lane?

EVA.

Bruised; but no bones broken.

DORA.

I have always told Father that the huge old ash-tree there would cause an accident some day; but he would never cut it down, because one of the Steers had planted it there in former times.

EVA.

If it had killed one of the Steers there the other day, it might have been better for her, for him, and for you.

DORA.

Come, come, keep a good heart! Better for me! That's good. How better for me?

EVA.

You tell me you have a lover. Will he not fly from you if he learn the story of my shame and that I am still living?

DORA.

No; I am sure that when we are married he will be willing that you and Father should live with us; for, indeed, he tells me that he met you once in the old times, and was much taken with you, my dear.

EVA.

Taken with me; who was he? Have you told him I am here?

DORA.

No; do you wish it?

EVA.

See, Dora; you yourself are ashamed of me (*weeps*), and I do not wonder at it.

DORA.

But I should wonder at myself if it were so. Have we not been all in all to one another from the time when we first peeped into the bird's nest, waded in the brook, ran after the butterflies, and prattled to each other that we would marry fine gentlemen, and played at being fine ladies?

EVA.

That last was my Father's fault, poor man. And this lover of yours—this Mr. Harold—is a gentleman?

DORA.

That he is, from head to foot. I do believe I lost my heart to him the very first time we met, and I love him so much——

EVA.

Poor Dora!

DORA.

That I dare not tell him how much I love him.

EVA.

Better not. Has he offered you marriage, this gentleman?

DORA.

Could I love him else?

EVA.

And are you quite sure that after marriage this gentleman will not be shamed of his poor farmer's daughter among the ladies in his drawing-room?

DORA.

Shamed of me in a drawing-room! Wasn't Miss Vavasour, our schoolmistress at Littlechester, a lady born? Were not our fellow-pupils all ladies? Wasn't dear mother herself at least by one side a lady? Can't I speak like a lady; pen a letter like a lady; talk a little French like a lady; play a little like a lady? Can't a girl when she loves her husband, and he her, make herself anything he wishes her to be? Shamed of

me in a drawing-room, indeed! See here! 'I hope your Lordship is quite recovered of your gout?' (*Curtsies.*) 'Will your Ladyship ride to cover to-day? (*Curtsies.*) I can recommend our Voltigeur.' 'I am sorry that we could not attend your Grace's party on the 10th!' (*Curtsies.*) There, I am glad my nonsense has made you smile!

EVA.

I have heard that 'your Lordship,' and your 'Ladyship,' and 'your Grace' are all growing old-fashioned!

DORA.

But the love of sister for sister can never be old-fashioned. I have been unwilling to trouble you with questions, but you seem somewhat better to-day. We found a letter in your bedroom torn

into bits. I couldn't make it out. What was it?

EVA.

From him! from him! He said we had been most happy together, and he trusted that some time we should meet again, for he had not forgotten his promise to come when I called him. But that was a mockery, you know, for he gave me no address, and there was no word of marriage; and, O Dora, he signed himself 'Yours gratefully' —fancy, Dora, 'gratefully'! 'Yours gratefully'!

DORA.

Infamous wretch! (*Aside.*) Shall I tell her he is dead? No; she is still too feeble.

EVA.

Hark! Dora, some one is coming. I cannot and I will not see anybody.

DORA.

It is only Milly.

Enter MILLY, *with basket of roses.*

DORA.

Well, Milly, why do you come in so roughly? The sick lady here might have been asleep.

MILLY.

Pleäse, Miss, Mr. Dobson telled me to saäy he's browt some of Miss Eva's roses for the sick laädy to smell on.

DORA.

Take them, dear. Say that the sick lady thanks him! Is he here?

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss; and he wants to speak to ye partic'lar.

DORA.

Tell him I cannot leave the sick lady just yet.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss; but he says he wants to tell ye summut very partic'lar.

DORA.

Not to-day. What are you staying for?

MILLY.

Why, Miss, I be afeard I shall set him a-sweäring like onythink.

DORA.

And what harm will that do you, so that you do not copy his bad manners? Go, child. (*Exit* MILLY.) But, Eva, why did you write 'Seek me at the bottom of the river'?

EVA.

Why? because I meant it!—that dreadful night! that lonely walk to Littlechester, the rain beating in my face all the way, dead midnight when I came upon the bridge; the river, black, slimy, swirling under me in the lamplight, by the rotten wharfs—but I was so mad, that I mounted upon the parapet———

DORA.

You make me shudder!

EVA.

To fling myself over, when I heard a voice, 'Girl, what are you doing there?' It was a Sister of Mercy, come from the death-bed of a pauper, who had died in his misery blessing God, and the

Sister took me to her house, and bit by bit—for she promised secrecy—I told her all.

DORA.

And what then?

EVA.

She would have persuaded me to come back here, but I couldn't. Then she got me a place as nursery governess, and when the children grew too old for me, and I asked her once more to help me, once more she said, 'Go home;' but I hadn't the heart or face to do it. And then—what would Father say? I sank so low that I went into service—the drudge of a lodging-house—and when the mistress died, and I appealed to the Sister again, her answer—I think I have it about me—yes, there it is!

DORA (*reads*).

'My dear Child,—I can do no more for you. I have done wrong in keeping your secret; your Father must be now in extreme old age. Go back to him and ask his forgiveness before he dies.—SISTER AGATHA.' Sister Agatha is right. Don't you long for Father's forgiveness?

EVA.

I would almost die to have it!

DORA.

And he may die before he gives it; may drop off any day, any hour. You must see him at once. (*Rings bell. Enter* MILLY.) Milly, my dear, how did you leave Mr. Steer?

MILLY.

He's been a-moänin' and a-groänin' in 'is sleep, but I thinks he be wakkenin' oop.

DORA.

Tell him that I and the lady here wish to see him. You see she is lamed, and cannot go down to him.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss, I will. [*Exit* MILLY.

DORA.

I ought to prepare you. You must not expect to find our Father as he was five years ago. He is much altered; but I trust that your return—for you know, my dear, you were always his favourite—will give him, as they say, a new lease of life.

EVA (*clinging to* DORA).

Oh, Dora, Dora!

Enter STEER, *led by* MILLY.

STEER.

Hes the cow cawved?

DORA.

No, Father.

STEER.

Be the colt deäd?

DORA.

No, Father.

STEER.

He wur sa bellows'd out wi' the wind this murnin', 'at I tell'd 'em to gallop 'im. Be he deäd?

DORA.

Not that I know.

STEER.

What hasta sent fur me, then, fur?

DORA (*taking* STEER'S *arm*).

Well, Father, I have a surprise for you.

STEER.

I ha niver been surprised but once i' my life, and I went blind upon it.

DORA.

Eva has come home.

STEER.

Hoäm? fro' the bottom o' the river?

DORA.

No, Father, that was a mistake. She's here again.

STEER.

The Steers was all gentlefoälks i' the owd times, an' I worked early an' laäte to maäke 'em all gentlefoälks ageän. The land belonged to the Steers i' the owd times, an' it belongs to the Steers ageän: I bowt it back ageän; but I couldn't buy my darter back ageän when she lost hersen, could I? I eddicated boäth on 'em to marry gentlemen, an' one on 'em went an' lost hersen i' the river.

DORA.

No, father, she's here.

STEER.

Here! she moänt coom here. What would her mother saäy? If it be her ghoäst, we mun abide it. We can't keep a ghoäst out.

EVA (*falling at his feet*).

O forgive me! forgive me!

STEER.

Who said that? Taäke me awaäy, little gell. It be one o' my bad daäys.

[*Exit* STEER *led by* MILLY.

DORA (*smoothing* EVA'S *forehead*).

Be not so cast down, my sweet Eva. You heard him say it was one of his bad days. He will be sure to know you to-morrow.

EVA.

It is almost the last of my bad days, I think. I am very faint. I must lie down. Give me your arm. Lead me back again.

[DORA *takes* EVA *into inner room.*

Enter MILLY.

MILLY.

Miss Dora! Miss Dora!

DORA (*returning and leaving the bedroom door ajar*).

Quiet! quiet! What is it?

MILLY.

Mr. 'Arold, Miss.

DORA.

Below?

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss. He be saäyin' a word to the owd man, but he'll coom up if ye lets 'im.

DORA.

Tell him, then, that I'm waiting for him.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss.

[*Exit.* DORA *sits pensively and waits.*

Enter HAROLD.

HAROLD.

You are pale, my Dora! but the ruddiest cheek
That ever charm'd the plowman of your wolds
Might wish its rose a lily, could it look
But half as lovely. I was speaking with
Your father, asking his consent—you wish'd me—
That we should marry: he would answer nothing,
I could make nothing of him; but, my flower,
You look so weary and so worn! What is it
Has put you out of heart?

DORA.

It puts me in heart

Again to see you; but indeed the state
Of my poor father puts me out of heart.
Is yours yet living?

HAROLD.

No—I told you.

DORA.

When?

HAROLD.

Confusion!—Ah well, well! the state we all
Must come to in our spring-and-winter world
If we live long enough! and poor Steer looks
The very type of Age in a picture, bow'd
To the earth he came from, to the grave he goes to,
Beneath the burthen of years.

DORA.

More like the picture

Of Christian in my 'Pilgrim's Progress' here,
Bow'd to the dust beneath the burthen of sin.

HAROLD.

Sin! What sin?

DORA.

Not his own.

HAROLD.

That nursery-tale
Still read, then?

DORA.

Yes; our carters and our shepherds
Still find a comfort there.

HAROLD.

Carters and shepherds!

DORA.

Scorn! I hate scorn. A soul with no religion—
My mother used to say that such a one
Was without rudder, anchor, compass—might be
Blown everyway with every gust and wreck
On any rock; and tho' you are good and gentle,
Yet if thro' any want——

HAROLD.

Of this religion?
Child, read a little history, you will find
The common brotherhood of man has been
Wrong'd by the cruelties of his religions
More than could ever have happen'd thro' the want
Of any or all of them.

DORA.

—But, O dear friend,

If thro' the want of any—I mean the true one—
And pardon me for saying it—you should ever
Be tempted into doing what might seem
Not altogether worthy of you, I think
That I should break my heart, for you have taught me
To love you.

HAROLD.

What is this? some one been stirring
Against me? he, your rustic amourist,
The polish'd Damon of your pastoral here,
This Dobson of your idyll?

DORA.

No, Sir, no!
Did you not tell me he was crazed with jealousy,
Had threaten'd ev'n your life, and would say anything?

Did *I* not promise not to listen to him,
Not ev'n to see the man?

HAROLD.

Good; then what is it
That makes you talk so dolefully?

DORA.

I told you—
My father. Well, indeed, a friend just now,
One that has been much wrong'd, whose griefs are mine,
Was warning me that if a gentleman
Should wed a farmer's daughter, he would be
Sooner or later shamed of her among
The ladies, born his equals.

HAROLD.

More fool he!

What I that have been call'd a Socialist,
A Communist, a Nihilist—what you will!——

DORA.

What are all these?

HAROLD.

Utopian idiotcies.
They did not last three Junes. Such rampant weeds
Strangle each other, die, and make the soil
For Cæsars, Cromwells, and Napoleons
To root their power in. I have freed myself
From all such dreams, and some will say because
I have inherited my Uncle. Let them.
But—shamed of you, my Empress! I should prize
The pearl of Beauty, even if I found it
Dark with the soot of slums.

DORA.

But I can tell you,
We Steers are of old blood, tho' we be fallen.
See there our shield. (*Pointing to arms on mantel-piece.*) For I have heard the Steers
Had land in Saxon times; and your own name
Of Harold sounds so English and so old
I am sure you must be proud of it.

HAROLD.

Not I!
As yet I scarcely feel it mine. I took it
For some three thousand acres. I have land now
And wealth, and lay both at your feet.

DORA.

And *what* was
Your name before?

HAROLD.

Come, come, my girl, enough
Of this strange talk. I love you and you me.
True, I have held opinions, hold some still,
Which you would scarce approve of: for all that,
I am a man not prone to jealousies,
Caprices, humours, moods; but very ready
To make allowances, and mighty slow
To feel offences. Nay, I do believe
I could forgive—well, almost anything—
And that more freely than your formal priest,
Because I know more fully than *he* can
What poor earthworms are all and each of us,
Here crawling in this boundless Nature. Dora,
If marriage ever brought a woman happiness
I doubt not I can make you happy.

DORA.

You make me

Happy already.

HAROLD.

And I never said

As much before to any woman living.

DORA.

No?

HAROLD.

No! by this true kiss, *you* are the first

I ever have loved truly. [*They kiss each other.*

EVA (*with a wild cry*).

Philip Edgar!

HAROLD.

The phantom cry! *You*—did *you* hear a cry?

DORA.

She must be crying out 'Edgar' in her sleep.

HAROLD.

Who must be crying out 'Edgar' in her sleep?

DORA.

Your pardon for a minute. She must be waked.

HAROLD.

Who must be waked?

DORA.

I am not deaf: you fright me.

What ails you?

HAROLD.

Speak.

DORA.

You know her, Eva.

HAROLD.

Eva!

[EVA *opens the door and stands in the entry.*

She!

EVA.

Make her happy, then, and I forgive you.

[*Falls dead.*

DORA.

Happy! What? Edgar? Is it so? Can it be?
They told me so. Yes, yes! I see it all now.
O she has fainted. Sister, Eva, sister!
He is yours again—he will love *you* again;
I give him back to you again. Look up!
One word, or do but smile! Sweet, do you hear me?

[*Puts her hand on* EVA'S *heart.*

There, there—the heart, O God!—the poor young heart

Broken at last—all still—and nothing left
To live for. [*Falls on body of her sister.*

HAROLD.

Living . . . dead . . . She said 'all still.
Nothing to live for.'
She—she knows me—now . . .
(*A pause.*)
She knew me from the first, she juggled with me,
She hid this sister, told me she was dead—
I have wasted pity on her—not dead now—
No! acting, playing on me, both of them.
They drag the river for her! no, not they!
Playing on me—not dead now—a swoon—a scene—
Yet—how she made her wail as for the dead!

Enter MILLY.

MILLY.

Pleäse, Mister 'Arold—

HAROLD (*roughly*).

Well?

MILLY.

The owd man's coom'd ageän to 'issen, an' wants
To hev a word wi' ye about the marriage.

HAROLD.

The what?

MILLY.

The marriage.

HAROLD.

The marriage?

MILLY.

Yeäs, the marriage.
Granny says marriages be maäde i' 'eaven.

HAROLD.

She lies! They are made in Hell. Child, can't
you see?
Tell them to fly for a doctor.

MILLY.

O law—yeäs, Sir!
I'll run fur 'im mysen.

HAROLD.

All silent there,
Yes, deathlike! Dead? I dare not look: if dead,
Were it best to steal away, to spare myself,
And her too, pain, pain, pain?
My curse on all
This world of mud, on all its idiot gleams
Of pleasure, all the foul fatalities
That blast our natural passions into pains!

Enter DOBSON.

DOBSON.

You, Master Hedgar, Harold, or whativer
They calls ye, for I warrants that ye goäs
By haäfe a scoor o' naämes—out o' the chaumber.
[*Dragging him past the body.*

HAROLD.

Not that way, man! Curse on your brutal strength!
I cannot pass that way.

DOBSON.

Out o' the chaumber!
I'll mash tha into nowt.

HAROLD.

The mere wild-beast!

DOBSON.

Out o' the chaumber, dang tha!

HAROLD.

Lout, churl, clown!

[*While they are shouting and struggling* DORA *rises and comes between them.*

DORA (*to* DOBSON).

Peace, let him be: it is the chamber of Death!
Sir, you are tenfold more a gentleman,
A hundred times more worth a woman's love,
Than this, this—but I waste no words upon him:
His wickedness is like my wretchedness—
Beyond all language.

(*To* HAROLD.)

You—you see her there!
Only fifteen when first you came on her,
And then the sweetest flower of all the wolds,
So lovely in the promise of her May,

So winsome in her grace and gaiety,

So loved by all the village people here,

So happy in herself and in her home——

DOBSON (*agitated*).

Theer, theer! ha' done. I can't abeär to see her.

[*Exit.*

DORA.

A child, and all as trustful as a child!

Five years of shame and suffering broke the heart

That only beat for you; and he, the father,

Thro' that dishonour which you brought upon us,

Has lost his health, his eyesight, even his mind.

HAROLD (*covering his face*).

Enough!

DORA.

It seem'd so; only there was left

A second daughter, and to her you came
Veiling one sin to act another.

HAROLD.

No!

You wrong me there! hear, hear me! I wish'd, if
you—— [*Pauses.*

DORA.

If I——

HAROLD.

Could love me, could be brought to love me
As I loved you——

DORA.

What then?

HAROLD.

I wish'd, I hoped
To make, to make——

DORA.

What did you hope to make?

HAROLD.

'Twere best to make an end of my lost life.

O Dora, Dora!

DORA.

What did you hope to make?

HAROLD.

Make, make! I cannot find the word—forgive it—

Amends.

DORA.

For what? to whom?

HAROLD.

To him, to you!

[*Falling at her feet.*

DORA.

To *him!* to *me!*

No, not with all your wealth,
Your land, your life! Out in the fiercest storm
That ever made earth tremble—he, nor I—
The shelter of *your* roof—not for one moment—
Nothing from *you!*
Sunk in the deepest pit of pauperism,
Push'd from all doors as if we bore the plague,
Smitten with fever in the open field,
Laid famine-stricken at the gates of Death—
Nothing from you!
But she there—her last word
Forgave—and I forgive you. If you ever
Forgive yourself, you are even lower and baser
Than even I can well believe you. Go!

[*He lies at her feet. Curtain falls.*

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