





**REPRESENTATIVE ONE-ACT PLAYS
BY BRITISH AND IRISH AUTHORS**



REPRESENTATIVE ONE-ACT PLAYS
BY BRITISH AND IRISH
AUTHORS

SELECTED, WITH BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES,

BY

BARRETT H. CLARK



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PREFACE

The present is a companion volume to "Representative One-Act Plays by American Authors", edited by Margaret Gardner Mayorga and published in 1919. The book was originally undertaken by Mr. Clayton Hamilton who, finding himself unable to continue the work, turned it over to the present editor.

It is the duty of the present editor to record — as editors have before him recorded — that Barrie and Shaw must be excluded from collections of this sort, for reasons which others have euphemistically described as "limitations of copyright." One-act plays of Barrie and Shaw would have been made an integral part of this collection had the authors and their publishers seen fit to coöperate on a basis similar to that accepted by other authors and publishers; they did not, and the reader is therefore asked to fill in the breach as best he can.

To those who have understood the purpose of this book and helped both the editor and the publisher to make it as truly representative as possible, gratitude is hereby specifically acknowledged. Henry Arthur Jones, Granville Barker, Harold Brighouse, Lady Gregory, Alfred Sutro, Arnold Bennett, Laurence Housman, Sir Arthur Pinero, Elizabeth Baker, St. John Ervine, and Lord Dunsany have kindly corrected lists of their plays and furnished valuable data. Mr. E. M. Anderson, Mr. Harold Brighouse, and Mr. Harold Veasey have spared no pains in revising lists and furnishing data on the late Elizabeth Robins, Stanley Houghton, and Oliphant Down, respectively. Mr. Clayton Hamilton's assistance and advice on many matters and Mr. T. R. Edwards' coöperation in securing the rights of many English plays are thankfully acknowledged.



CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	v
THE ONE-ACT PLAY IN ENGLAND AND IRELAND	ix
THE WIDOW OF WASDALE HEAD. <i>Sir Arthur Pinero</i>	3
THE GOAL. <i>Henry Arthur Jones</i>	43
SALOME. <i>Oscar Wilde</i>	69
THE MAN IN THE STALLS. <i>Alfred Sutro</i>	107
'OP-O'-ME-THUMB. <i>Frederick Fenn and Richard Pryce</i>	131
THE IMPERTINENCE OF THE CREATURE. <i>Cosmo Gordon-Lennox</i>	161
✕ THE STEPMOTHER. <i>Arnold Bennett</i>	175
✕ ROCOCO. <i>Granville Barker</i>	197
JAMES AND JOHN. <i>Gilbert Cannan</i>	229
✕ THE SNOW MAN. <i>Laurence Housman</i>	247
✕ FANCY FREE. <i>Stanley Houghton</i>	265
LONESOME-LIKE. <i>Harold Brighouse</i>	283
MISS TASSEY. <i>Elizabeth Baker</i>	305
✕ MAKESHIFTS. <i>Gertrude Robins</i>	323
THE MAKER OF DREAMS. <i>Oliphant Downs</i>	345
THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE. <i>William Butler Yeats</i>	367
RIDERS TO THE SEA. <i>J. M. Synge</i>	391
SPREADING THE NEWS. <i>Lady Gregory</i>	409
THE MAGNANIMOUS LOVER. <i>St. John G. Ervine</i>	431
✕ THE GOLDEN DOOM. <i>Lord Dunsany</i>	455
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES	473
ONE-ACT PLAYS BY ENGLISH AND IRISH DRAMATISTS	476



THE ONE-ACT PLAY IN ENGLAND AND IRELAND

DESPITE the many inducements and encouragements now offered to the writer of one-act plays, I dare risk the statement that in the British Isles (and even in America) the one-act play occupies an anomalous position, and that it has yet to be accepted as an altogether legitimate and respectable form of drama. I am well aware that for a generation the Abbey Theater in Dublin and for many years the Gaiety Theater in Manchester have each not only produced one-act plays of merit, they have practically created "schools" of dramatists whose finest work is to be found in the one-act form. Still, despite facts to which I am by no means blind, I should like to record my impression that the one-act play, throughout the English-speaking world, has yet to win and hold its place in the public esteem.

The refutations to my statement are numerous and weighty; this volume itself seems to belie my words: Synge and Yeats, Barker and Ervine, Lady Gregory and Elizabeth Robins are undoubtedly the products of theaters that have made it a business to encourage the writing of one-act plays. Suppose I put it differently.

In France, for instance, one may pass as an artist and a gentleman as well as the author of a score of one-acters; in Germany there are — or were — half a dozen reputable dramatists whose chief claim to celebrity rested upon one or two volumes of one-act plays; in Spain and France there are theaters where none but short plays are ever produced. In England and America I can think of no dramatist whose fame rests entirely, or even principally, upon one-act

plays. Eugene O'Neill can scarcely be said to have "arrived" until his first long play, "Beyond the Horizon", reached Broadway; this in spite of his previous honorable record as the author of a dozen short plays of unusual merit.

And you may cite Barrie, whose one-act plays at their best are fully up to the standard of the long plays; but ask yourself whether Barrie's fame rests upon "Rosalind" and "Pantaloone" or upon "The Little Minister" and "The Admirable Crichton"? I shan't say that the public is right: I express merely my opinion as to what it thinks—or did think until recently.

The attitude of the public is rapidly changing; to-day the one-act play has come almost to be accepted as an independent art-form—by the general playgoing public, that is. I am not here speaking of the Earnest Thinkers who build Little Theaters; they are inclined to take the one-acter too seriously, largely because it is an altogether easier form to cope with than the long play, offering wider opportunity to dabbling amateurs. The Earnest Thinkers, however, to give them due credit, have undoubtedly opened the way for a keener appreciation and more intelligent appraisal of the form than was possible under the old system, where the "curtain raiser" was usually no more than a by-product written for the purpose of killing time.

Barrie and Synge and most of the dramatists who are represented in the present volume deserve the highest praise for bringing about the rehabilitation of the one-act form, for it is to them that a growing respect for the neglected one-acter is due. These men—and women—have taken the single act and made of it an independent art-work; they have not used it merely as a repository for discarded scenes from long plays, or considered it as an entertainment for the pit; they have deigned to study the form, and have been rewarded by finding it a delightful and effective medium for the expression of dramatic ideas quite as dignified if not as full and plastic as the three-act or the four-act form.

Nowadays every aspiring dramatist is given an oppor-

tunity of entering the theater the easiest way: that is, by writing a one-act play. That this has not always been so is evident in the words of the veteran dramatist, Henry Arthur Jones who, a few years ago, published in book form three one-act plays with a preface of Shavian proportions. No one speaks with greater authority than Mr. Jones, whose plays are known to playgoers throughout the Anglo-Saxon world. In the Preface to "The Theater of Ideas" he says:

"It is a discouraging sign that neither on the English nor American stage is there any demand for one-act plays. These should be widely supported, as a valuable school for young playwrights and young actors. 'The Goal' was written in 1897, and I had to wait seventeen years before I could get anything approaching a suitable representation." "The Goal", you will remark in passing, was produced in New York, by an American company. These lines were written in 1915, when they had just ceased to convey the whole truth. When "The Goal" was written, however, they were lamentably true. That little play was an outcast, in spite of the fact that Mr. Jones was known as the author of "The Silver King" and "The Liars."

Now "The Goal" is a very ably constructed and effective play, but I cannot help thinking that Mr. Jones would not claim for it the same measure of artistic merit as, say, for "The Liars" or "Dolly Reforming Herself." Is it not likely that when he wrote "The Goal", without, as was doubtless the case, any definite market in view for it, he regarded it as a by-product, a dramatic incident which he could not at the time work into another "Mrs. Dane's Defence"? Do I presume when I say that "The Goal" and "Grace Mary" and "Her Tongue", the three plays included in "The Theater of Ideas", are the unconsidered trifles of a serious dramatist, the products of his "lost moments"?

Perhaps Mr. Jones regards these plays as children that have never had a chance, children for whom there was no school? That he does not look upon them as fin-

ished masterpieces is evident from his remarks on "Her Tongue", which "pleasantly occupied me during a leisure week in Spain a few years ago." If Henry Arthur Jones were beginning his career to-day, he would not, I venture to believe, have thrown off a one-acter "during a leisure week in Spain"; he would, I am sure, have burned the midnight oil in London for six weeks and spent his vacation in Spain studying Velasquez. He would also find a dozen theaters ready to produce "The Goal", and not have to say of another product of his leisure hours, "however unlike it may be to Shakespearean tragedy" it would "probably be equally successful in keeping people out of the theater."

In other words, Mr. Jones has never taken the one-act form seriously. Why should he? He was not writing plays for antiquity, but for living actors and managers who pay for effective dramas. Mr. Jones' early contemporaries wrote one-act plays, but of what sort? Curtain raisers for the most part; and a curtain raiser is frankly a sop to the pit. That Mr. Jones refused to write curtain raisers is readily understood; that he refused to turn seriously to the writing of one-act plays not designed to amuse the pit is likewise conceivable. Mr. Jones' contribution to the modern drama is sufficient as it is; we do not ask him to write one-act masterpieces; he was ready to do so at one time, when there was no one to use them; to-day he must be content merely to observe radically different conditions, and recognize the fact that times have changed.

If there were no manager to welcome the author of "Michael and his Lost Angel" as a writer of one-act plays, there was fortunately an Abbey Theater ready and eager to demand of Synge his "Riders to the Sea." To the fact that there was such a theater in Ireland we owe the masterpieces of Yeats and Lady Gregory and the other Irish dramatists; and it is by no means certain that had it not been for Miss Horniman's Gaiety Theater, Stanley Houghton and Harold Brighouse might have remained at their desks in business offices.

If, then, there is finally a place for the production of one-act plays; if, as is evident, the one-act form is gradually being accepted as a "respectable" dramatic medium, I am convinced that the change is due largely to the fact that the one-act form is being accorded the respect due it by the dramatists themselves. And this in turn is due largely to the fact that a place has been made for the form. The wide gulf between literature and the drama has begun to be bridged: Yeats and Synge and Barrie have seen to that.

BARRETT H. CLARK

June, 1921.



**REPRESENTATIVE ONE-ACT PLAYS
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THE WIDOW OF WASDALE HEAD

SIR ARTHUR PINERO

ARTHUR WING PINERO—now Sir Arthur Pinero—was born at London in 1855. Trained at first for the law, he remained in his father's law office until he was nineteen, when he became an actor with Mr. and Mrs. Wyndham, playing minor rôles for a year in Edinburgh. His next venture was in Liverpool. In 1876 he came to London and played at the Globe Theater. He then entered Irving's company and remained at the Lyceum for five years. During this time the young actor had been writing plays, the first of which, "£200 a Year", was produced at the Globe in 1877. "Daisy's Escape" and "Bygones" were produced a short time after at the Lyceum. The success of "Daisy's Escape" and the conviction that he was not destined to become a great actor induced him, according to one of his biographers, to abandon acting and devote himself entirely to the writing of plays.

"The Squire" (1881) is the first of Pinero's plays that showed promise. The following year William Archer wrote of Pinero as "a thoughtful and conscientious writer with artistic aims, if not yet with full command of his artistic means." The "artistic means" rapidly developed, for in the farces "Dandy Dick", "The Schoolmistress", and "The Magistrate" the dramatist revealed extraordinary skill and a natural bent for comedy. "Sweet Lavender" and "The Profligate", plays of a more serious character, followed in the late eighties. "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" was acclaimed in 1893 as the finest English play of the time. It is indubitably one of the most effective plays of that generation

Pinero is master of the dramatic medium he has chosen to develop. That medium has been often criticized as formal, old-fashioned, conventional; the criticism is in some respects not unwarranted, though the spirit in which it is made is rather an indication of a desire to applaud other dramatists who have departed from Pinero's methods than properly to judge *his* achievements. Pinero is not a propagandist or a special pleader; he has no aim other than to write effective plays about the men and women of his time as he sees them.

Pinero's one-act plays are not an integral part of his work, but they are interesting by-products. Written for particular occasions, they reveal the skilled hand of an accomplished dramatist.

PLAYS

Plays marked with * are in one act only.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| *£200 a Year (1877) | Mayfair (1885) |
| *Two Can Play at That
Game (1877) | (Adaptation) |
| The Comet (1878) | The Schoolmistress (1886) |
| *Daisy's Escape (1879) | The Hobby-Horse (1886) |
| *Hester's Mystery (1880) | Dandy Dick (1887) |
| *Bygones (1880) | Sweet Lavender (1888) |
| The Money-Spinner (1880) | The Weaker Sex (1889) |
| Imprudence (1881) | The Profligate (1889) |
| The Squire (1881) | The Cabinet Minister
(1890) |
| Girls and Boys (1882) | Lady Bountiful (1891) |
| The Rector (1883) | The Times (1891) |
| Lords and Commons (1883) | The Amazons (1893) |
| The Rocket (1883) | The Second Mrs. Tanque-
ray (1893) |
| Low Water (1884) | The Notorious Mrs. Ebb-
smith (1895) |
| The Ironmaster (1884)
(Adaptation) | The Benefit of the Doubt
(1895) |
| In Chancery (1884) | |
| The Magistrate (1885) | |

The Princess and the Butterfly (1897)	The "Mind-the-Paint" Girl (1902)
Trelawney of the "Wells" (1898)	*The Widow of Wasdale Head (1912)
The Gay Lord Quex (1899)	*Playgoers (1913)
Iris (1901)	The Big Drum (1915)
Letty (1903)	*Mr. Livermore's Dream (1917)
A Wife Without a Smile (1904)	The Freaks (1918)
His House in Order (1906)	*Monica's Blue Boy (1918)
The Thunderbolt (1908)	(Wordless play to music by Sir Frederic Cowen)
Mid-Channel (1909)	Quick Work (1919)
Preserving Mr. Panmure (1911)	

"The Magistrate", "The Schoolmistress", "The Hobby-Horse", "Sweet Lavender", "The Weaker Sex", "The Profligate", "The Cabinet Minister", "Lady Bountiful", "The Times", "The Amazons", "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray", "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith", "The Gay Lord Quex", "Iris", "Letty", "A Wife Without a Smile", "His House in Order", "The Thunderbolt", "Mid-Channel", "Preserving Mr. Panmure", "The 'Mind-the-Paint' Girl", and "The Big Drum" are published separately by Walter H. Baker, Boston; "The Benefit of the Doubt" and "Trelawney of the 'Wells'", by the Dramatic Publishing Company, Chicago; "The Money-Spinner", "The Squire", "The Rocket", "In Chancery", "Hester's Mystery", "The Princess and the Butterfly", and "Playgoers", by Samuel French, New York.—"The Social Plays of Arthur Wing Pinero", of which three volumes have already appeared, under the editorship of Clayton Hamilton, includes "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray", "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith", "Letty", "Iris", "His House in Order", and "The Gay Lord Quex." These volumes are published by E. P. Dutton and Company, New York.

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THE WIDOW OF WASDALE HEAD
A FANTASY

By ARTHUR PINERO

“The Widow of Wasdale Head” was first produced at London in 1912.

Characters

SIR JOHN HUNSLET

MR. EDWARD FANE

TUBAL (*A servant at the inn*)

REUBEN (*Sir John's man*)

THE VISITOR

MRS. JESMOND

SCENE: A room in an inn at Wasdale Head in Cumberland.

TIME: In the reign of George the Third.

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THE WIDOW OF WASDALE HEAD

A gloomy, ancient room, partly panelled in oak, of the time of Henry the Eighth. Its ceiling, heavy with massive beams, is blackened by age; and altogether the apartment, which bears the appearance of having once belonged to a private mansion, is fallen considerably into decay. In the wall on the right there is a cavernous fireplace; facing the spectator is a deep bay-window, heavily shuttered and barred; on the left of the window, against the further wall, a steep staircase mounts to a landing from which a door opens into a narrow passage; and under the landing, in the left-hand wall and on the level of the floor, there is another door, also admitting to a passage.

In the middle of the room there is a round table with a chair on its right and left. A decanter of red wine and some glasses, a jar of tobacco and a tray of clay pipes, and a candlestick of two branches are on the table. Against the wall on the left, a chair on each side of it, is an escritoire, and on the top of the escritoire is a standish; and against the staircase, concealing the space beneath, there is an oaken dresser bright with crockery ware, pewter dishes and plates, and other utensils. In the bay of the window are a small table and stool. A riding-cloak is thrown over the stool, and lying upon the table are a hat, a riding-whip, a pair of gauntlets, and two pistols in their holster-cases. A capacious arm-chair stands before the fireplace, and within the fireplace, at the further side, there is a chimney-seat. A clock and a chest filled with logs occupy spaces against the right-hand wall; and on the wall against which runs the flight of stairs a number of hunting trophies are arranged, including a hunting-horn hanging by a cord from a nail.

The room is lighted by the candle on the round table and by candles in sconces attached to the wall on the left.¹ A fire is burning.

Seated at the round table, the one smoking and drinking, the other deep in thought, are Sir John Hunslet and Edward Fane. Tubal is engaged at the dresser. The wind is moaning.

SIR JOHN (*A gallant-looking gentleman of eight-and-twenty, accoutred in a handsome riding-dress and a periwig—on the left of the table*) Ned, my dear fellow, you don't drink!

EDWARD (*A grave young man of twenty-five, richly but soberly attired and wearing his own dark hair—rousing himself and filling his glass*) A thousand pardons, Jack! (*Drinking*) Welcome!

[*Tubal, bearing a pair of snuffers upon a dish, advances to the round table and trims the candles. The moaning of the wind rises to a howl.*]

SIR JOHN (*to Tubal*). A wild night, my friend.

TUBAL (*A venerable, wizen figure, half groom, half waiter*). Aye, an' 'tis like t' be warser afwore mworn. Theer'll be sleàts lowsed an' fleein' this neet, depend on't. Heav'n send th' chimley-stacks do hod oot!

SIR JOHN. Amen! (*Tubal replaces the snuffers upon the dresser. There is a sharp, shrill sound from without, resembling the cry of a bird*) What is that?

EDWARD. The sign of the house. 'Twill creak in that fashion, in the wind, for hours.

SIR JOHN. 'Gad, an agreeable prospect! (*Tubal, carrying a tray upon which are some remnants of a meal, goes out at the door under the landing. Sir John, glancing over his shoulder, assures himself that he and Edward are alone*) At last! (*Rekindling his pipe at the flame of one of the candles*) I thought that ancient servitor would never leave us. (*Edward rises and, walking away, stands gazing into the fire*) And now, my dear Ned—my very dear Ned—in *amicitiâ*

¹Throughout, "right" and "left" are the spectators' right and left, not the actor's.

autem nihil fictum, as we learned to say at school—let me inform you without further delay of the cause of this intrusion.

EDWARD. 'Tis no intrusion; and, to be candid, I have guessed the object of your visit already.

SIR JOHN. Indeed? That being the case——

EDWARD. Confound you, Jack, you don't suppose I attribute your sudden and unlooked-for appearance to mere inclination for a gossip over a bottle! A man—Jack Hunslet least of all—does not quit town at this time of the year, journeying three hundred miles into the bargain, without an urgent reason. (*Facing Sir John*) Confess you are upon a mission.

SIR JOHN (*smiling*). Since you press me——

EDWARD. You are sent by my mother.

SIR JOHN. The poor fond lady is vastly concerned at your absence.

EDWARD. In the name of patience, why? Her letters plague me to death, Jack.

SIR JOHN. My good Ned, do, I entreat, reflect. With your usual perspicacity you have just observed that it must be a strong inducement that draws a town man into the country at this season. And yet——

EDWARD. Such an inducement was mine. I came into Cumberland in fulfilment of a pledge to Sir Roger Boulton—a pledge of long standing——

SIR JOHN. To be his guest at Hawkshead Priory. Your stay at Hawkshead ended two months ago.

EDWARD. In the meanwhile I had become bitten by the romantic beauty of the district. By the Lord, Jack, 'tis a lovely locality, in spite of flood and tempest!

SIR JOHN. Ah, I am forgetting you are a poet, and a monstrous pretty one to boot!

EDWARD. Pshaw! Pray don't roast me for my follies.

SIR JOHN (*laying his pipe aside*). My dear fellow, if our follies ceased with the scribbling of verses, we should be warranted in esteeming ourselves wise. (*Rising*) And so

'tis solely the beauty of the district that detains you, hey, Ned?

EDWARD. Chance directed me to this particular spot; and my nag falling lame almost at the door here —

SIR JOHN (*approaching Edward*). You determined to cultivate the muse, and to seek inspiration, by this sombre lake; (*producing his snuff-box*) putting up at a bare inn, (*significantly*) and despatching your servant back to Kensington within a fortnight.

EDWARD (*embarrassed*). Why, as forth at, I — I found I had little need for Gregory. He did but kick his heels about the place discontentedly.

SIR JOHN (*taking snuff*). The sublimity of the scene proving less attractive to him than to his master. (*Closing his snuff-box*) Well?

EDWARD. W-well?

SIR JOHN. And when I have made my compliments at Hawkshead and, with your aid, explored this enchanting neighbourhood, do we travel home in company? (*There is a moment's hesitation on Edward's part, and then he moves to the middle of the room without speaking. Sir John looks after him inquiringly*) Ned!

EDWARD (*hanging his head*). Forgive me, Jack. I declare again 'tis the most beautiful district in the kingdom; nevertheless, I am deceiving you, Jack, woefully.

[*The door under the landing opens and Mrs. Jesmond enters followed by Tubal, the latter carrying a bowl of steaming punch, and instantly the wind increases in force and the sign-board resumes its squeaking. The loud slamming of distant doors is also heard. Mrs. Jesmond is an elegant, girlish young lady, charmingly but simply dressed. She curtsies to Sir John and to Edward and then takes the bowl from Tubal and places it upon the round table.*

MRS. JESMOND (*to Tubal*). Secure the doors of the buttery, Tubal; 'tis they that are banging. (*Tubal shuffles out and Mrs. Jesmond addresses Sir John, who is regarding her with respectful amazement. The wind lulls*) I am sorry I was not

by to receive you, sir. Late as it was, I was at my farm at Burnthwaite where I am in trouble with some sick beasts. I hear you have rid from Ulverston to-day, which is a weary road.

SIR JOHN (*stammering*). Why, yes, I—I——

EDWARD (*presenting Sir John*). This gentleman is my friend Sir John Hunslet——

MRS. JESMOND (*curtseying again*). Nay, if I had not been apprised of his arrival, there would be no necessity to name him. (*Advancing to Sir John*) I saw Sir John once, when I was a child, driving his curricule in Hyde Park, and am never likely to forget the fine show he made.

SIR JOHN (*bowing low*). Madam, I—I—I am vastly honoured by your recollection of the circumstance.

MRS. JESMOND. Mr. Fane is heartily glad to see you here, Sir John; of that I am assured. Wasdale Head is but a stern and solitary spot at all times, and March our dreariest month.¹

SIR JOHN. 'Faith, ma'am, Mr. Fane is no more rejoiced to see me than I him. We were *condiscipuli* at Winchester College and I hold him in great affection. (*Bowing again profoundly*) And suffer me to add that it increases my happiness in no inconsiderable degree——

MRS. JESMOND (*turning to Edward merrily*). La! I fear Sir John doth not even yet apprehend who and what I am. Pray enlighten him.

EDWARD (*on the left*). Mrs. Jesmond, Jack, is mistress of this inn and tenant also of lands adjacent to it. (*Another bow from Sir John, whose wonderment increases*) 'Twill make you better acquainted with her when I tell you that she was Miss Woodroffe—Miss Elizabeth Woodroffe of Appleby.

SIR JOHN. One of the Woodroffes of Appleby! (*Seizing Mrs. Jesmond's hand*) My dear madam!

MRS. JESMOND (*withdrawing her hand*). Nay, sir; my family and I are at enmity. (*Mournfully*) Widow of Mr. Henry

¹ WASDALE:—pronounced *Wassdale*, the *a* as in *was*.

Jesmond of Egremont; I prefer that description.

SIR JOHN. A widow, ma'am!

MRS. JESMOND (*dropping another curtsey*). Two years a widow, and a humble taverner and farmer; and at your service. (*To Edward*) I have brought you a bowl of punch, Mr. Fane, thinking it will be grateful to your friend after his long journey. (*To Sir John*) 'Tis of my mixing, and I beg your indulgence for the widow's offering.

SIR JOHN. 'Gad, madam, I swear you shall join us! (*To Edward, who goes to the dresser*) A third glass, Ned!

MRS. JESMOND (*hastening to the staircase*). Oh, mercy, Sir John — !

SIR JOHN (*following her and regaining possession of her hand*).

I insist! (*Leading her to the round table*) On my knees — !

MRS. JESMOND (*laughing*). Ha, ha, ha!

[*The wind howls again and the sign-board creaks. Edward carries three glasses to the table, and Mrs. Jesmond fills two of the glasses to the brim and hands them to the gentlemen who stand one on each side of her. As she ladles a little of the punch into the third glass, the wind abates.*]

SIR JOHN (*at the right of the table*). Come, ma'am; bumpers! Ah, but that's not fair! Bumpers! (*The men drink, and Mrs. Jesmond touches her lips with her glass*) 'Pon my soul, 'tis delicious! 'Tis nectar! *Ille facit dites animos deus*, Ned; you remember! (*To Mrs. Jesmond*) Permit me to compliment you on your skill, ma'am.

MRS. JESMOND (*replenishing the men's glasses, modestly*). The credit is none of mine, Sir John. (*In a sad voice*) 'Twas my dear Harry that taught me.

SIR JOHN (*coughing sympathetically*). Ahem! Ahem! (*Abruptly*) A toast! I call a toast, Ned! (*Raising his glass and looking at Mrs. Jesmond with admiration*) I give you —

MRS. JESMOND (*quickly, raising her glass*). The King!

SIR JOHN. Why, certainly, ma'am; and I am obleeged to you for the reminder. His Most Gracious Majesty King George!

EDWARD (*drinking*). The King!

SIR JOHN (*drinking*). God bless him! (*Looking at Mrs. Jesmond again*) Another!

MRS. JESMOND. Nay; spare me!

SIR JOHN. Ned! (*Raising his glass*) To the Lady of Wasdale!

EDWARD. The Lady of Wasdale!

[The wind gives a sudden roar as the men drink the toast, and then subsides.]

MRS. JESMOND (*curtseying once more*). The widow thanks you, gentlemen, for your amiability; and with a full heart. (*With a change of manner*) And now, if you will excuse me, I will go to your bedchambers and see that your beds are properly prepared.

SIR JOHN (*seizing the candlestick from the round table*). Allow me to light you, ma'am.

MRS. JESMOND (*running up the stairs*). 'Tis not necessary; a lantern hangs in the corridor.

[She makes a final curtsey on the landing and withdraws, leaving Sir John half-way up the stairs where he remains for a while as if rooted. Edward walks over to the fireplace and again gazes down into the burning logs.]

SIR JOHN (*after a silence*). As I live, an adorable creature! (*He descends the stairs softly, replaces the candlestick, and stands contemplating Edward*) Ned!

EDWARD. Jack?

SIR JOHN. 'Pon my conscience, you are right; Wasdale is the most beautiful district in the kingdom!

EDWARD (*turning to him*). Ah, Jack, 'tis no matter for jesting.

SIR JOHN. Jestin'! I swear I am all seriousness.

EDWARD (*ardently*). Nay, then, if you are in earnest, is she not charming?

SIR JOHN. Charming? A divinity! (*Walking about animatedly*) 'Gad, you may well describe this as a romantic locality! A Woodroffe of Appleby the mistress of a house of public entertainment! Prodigious! (*Sitting in the chair on the left of the round table*) How the devil——!

EDWARD (*coming to the right of the table*). 'Tis a simple story.

Young Mr. Henry Jesmond of Egremont, having squandered the greater part of his patrimony, established himself here, with what remained of his fortune, as farmer and innkeeper. A short time previously, he had met Miss Elizabeth Woodroffe at the Hunt Assembly at Kendal, and they had become desperately taken with each other. Her parents, discovering the undesirable attachment, intercepted communication between the lovers and confined their child within doors. Vain precautions! Elizabeth forced an escape, ran off with the object of her girlish infatuation, and married him.

SIR JOHN. 'Faith, since she hath been two years a widow, he must have carried her to church in a go-cart!

EDWARD. She was indeed but fifteen. She is little over seventeen now.

SIR JOHN. The deuce! 'Twas a brief wedded life.

EDWARD. A month.

SIR JOHN. Good Lud!

EDWARD. Riding homeward on a dark night with some boon companions from the hunt at Muncaster, Mr. Jesmond was thrown and mortally hurt. He breathed long enough, so the tale is told, to take his pistol from its holster and to shoot his poor mare, who had broke a leg; and then he laid his head upon her warm ribs and stirred no more.

SIR JOHN (*shocked*). My dear Ned! (*Fastidiously*) Leaving this delicately-bred young lady, estranged from her family, to brew punch, and to till the soil, for her subsistence!

EDWARD (*sitting at the right of the table*). Why, Jack, there's the wonder of it! Mrs. Jesmond's aptitude is amazing. Among the farmers hereabouts—statesmen, they term them in Cumberland—there's not one can match her in knowledge of crops and cattle. (*The wind murmurs gently, almost musically*) I have seen the oldest and wisest of them approach her, hat in hand, to ask her counsel in a difficulty; and her reply is always the same.

SIR JOHN. The same?

EDWARD. "Come back to me," she will say, "as soon as you please after Friday, and you shall have my advice."

SIR JOHN. Friday?

EDWARD (*checking himself and then nodding uneasily*). Er — 'tis on a Friday night, when her household is abed and the inn is silent, that she sits here alone and reads her farming-manuals, and makes up her books of account, and puts on her considering-cap, as she phrases it. (*Looking round*) We are in her parlour, Jack.

SIR JOHN (*listening*). How the wind sings! It hath a voice in it, positively! (*To Edward*) Her parlour?

EDWARD (*nodding again*). Aye; the principal guest-chambers are shut throughout the winter, and so she hath placed her room at my disposal. Every Friday night, at the stroke of ten, I leave her here, preparing for her vigil. (*Suddenly*) What is to-day?

SIR JOHN. Friday.

[*The wind utters a loud wail and the sign-board creaks.*

EDWARD (*rising and glancing at the clock*). And look; 'tis close on ten now.

[*He resumes his former position at the fireplace and the wind its tuneful murmuring.*

SIR JOHN (*after another silence*). Well, I own I am mightily relieved, Ned. (*Rising*) 'Tis precisely as I suspected — that you had become entangled in a petticoat; (*going to the punch-bowl and helping himself to punch*) but a Woodroffe of Appleby is naught to be ashamed of, though 'twill be the tittle-tattle of the clubs and tea-tables that your mistress hath kept a mug-house. (*Drinking*) Have you declared yourself yet?

EDWARD (*still staring into the fire*). No.

SIR JOHN (*smacking his lips*). 'Pon my honour, she is vastly genteel; she hath the *bel air* completely! I wager many of our town misses and madams — (*He breaks off, regarding Edward with surprise. The wind ceases*) Why, man, what ails you? If Mrs. Jesmond had declined your suit, you could hardly be more glum.

EDWARD (*confronting Sir John*). Jack!

SIR JOHN (*startled at Edward's aspect*). Ned?

EDWARD. Oh, Jack, I must confide in you! I am in torture!

SIR JOHN. Torture?

EDWARD. Terrible, grinding torment!

SIR JOHN (*joining Edward*). Odds life, what's this! Have you discovered that the widow wears a false curl or two?

EDWARD. For mercy's sake, don't take me lightly! (*In a whisper*) Jack, there is a mystery in this house.

SIR JOHN. Confusion!

EDWARD. A hideous mystery. (*Passing Sir John and pacing the room on the left*) And 'tis torturing me—driving me to distraction; and yet I lack the courage to attempt to unravel it.

SIR JOHN (*coming to the round table*). Explain, Ned!

EDWARD. Oh, Jack, 'tis true that I leave Mrs. Jesmond here, and alone, every Friday night; (*halting*) but—Heaven forgive me for doubting her!—(*laughing mirthlessly*) ha, ha, ha, ha!—I fear she doesn't remain alone, Jack.

SIR JOHN. The devil!

EDWARD (*gripping the back of the chair at the left of the round table*). Hell fury, no; unless she hath the habit of talking to herself, her vigil is no solitary one!

SIR JOHN. Talking to herself!

EDWARD (*sitting and putting his elbows on the table and digging his fingers into his hair*). Ha, ha, ha, ha! (*Groaning*) Oh, Jack, Jack!

[*Again there is a pause. Sir John slowly produces his snuff-box.*]

SIR JOHN. Humph! (*Tapping the box*) 'Gad, you disappoint me, Ned; you do really! Who would have thought it of her? (*Taking snuff*) Pish! The jades; they are all of a pattern! (*To Edward*) When——? [*The wind revives.*]

EDWARD (*raising his head*). 'Twas the Friday night in the second week of my lodging here, and I had retired to my bedchamber carrying with me the delightful vision of her graceful, slender form as she sate, in this chair, bending over

her books and papers. Some time after reaching my apartment, I recollected that I had left a letter from my mother lying upon the escritoire yonder; and I ordered my servant to fetch it. Presently the man reappeared, saying that, hearing Mrs. Jesmond's voice apparently in conversation, he had deemed it prudent not to risk incurring her displeasure by disturbing her.

SIR JOHN. In conversation?

EDWARD. I dismissed Gregory and stood for a while at my window, viewing the thick clouds scudding across the Pikes. Suddenly the idea possessed me to return, myself, to this room and recover my letter. Ha! The letter contained nothing of a private nature. I perceive now that 'twas merely a feeling of jealous surprise that impelled me.

SIR JOHN (*his foot upon the rail of the chair on the right of the round table*). You returned?

EDWARD. Yes. My ear was at the door, and I was wavering whether I should rap, when I was arrested by a sound behind me; and there was my servant, sheltered in an angle of the corridor, watching me curiously. I made an idle remark and again retired to my room; and the next morning I packed the fellow off to London, lest, his suspicions being aroused, he should play the spy on his own account.

SIR JOHN. What had you heard while listening at the door?

EDWARD. The low muttering of a voice, or of voices. I could distinguish nothing clearly, save that there was talking. (*Glancing at the door on the landing*) The door is stout and, as you see, distant.

SIR JOHN. And since then?

EDWARD. Every Friday night 'tis the same. I steal to the door, hear the same whisperings, and slink back irresolutely to my bedchamber. Stay! Twice or thrice I have heard a soft, wailful note, as if from an instrument, proceeding from this room.

SIR JOHN (*bringing himself erect*). A signal!

EDWARD. 'Sdeath, the thought hath crossed my mind! (*He rises and, ascending the stairs, removes the hunting-horn from*

its nail) 'Tis such an instrument as this that would produce the sound.

SIR JOHN (*following Edward and standing by the dresser*). A hunting-horn.

EDWARD. 'Twas the property of the late Mr. Jesmond, I suspect. (*Doubtfully*) But 'tis dull for want of use.

SIR JOHN. Nay, 'tis you that are dull. Look if its mouth is bright.

EDWARD (*examining the mouth of the horn*). Why, yes; the metal here shines like a guinea!

SIR JOHN. Ha! I lay five to four that is not the only mouth pressed by those lips of hers! (*Edward replaces the horn and descends the stairs*) My poor dear Ned, 'tis as plain as noonday; the widow's weekly vigil is but a ruse for entertaining her amoret at her ease. The trull! *Fronti nulla fides!* But you shall expose her, and to-night. (*Looking at the door on the landing and then pointing to the fire*) Quick; some ashes from the hearth! I'll fill the lock with 'em and stop her turning the key.

EDWARD (*who is again at the fireplace gazing into the logs*). There is no lock on either door. They are bolted from without.

SIR JOHN. Strange! The widow is somewhat incautious. However, 'twill make your task the easier. (*Edward faces Sir John with a gesture of protest*) Come, man, away with your scruples! We will leave the pretty witch to her pretence of poring over her damnable books; and then you shall return and walk boldly in, and interrupt her at her devotions.

EDWARD. By what right, Jack?

SIR JOHN. Pshaw! Do you imagine she isn't aware that you are honestly enamoured of her, though no word hath yet been spoke? *There is title sufficient for you.* (*Sharply*) Is your sword hanging in your bedchamber?

EDWARD. Yes.

SIR JOHN. Put it up at your side.

EDWARD. Why, would you have me a murderer as well as an eavesdropper?

SIR JOHN. 'Faith, I'd have you ready to defend yourself. A young lady of *ton* would scarcely dally with one of the clods of this beautiful district. (*Going to the table in the bay of the window and examining the pistols*) 'Tis to a gentleman of the road, probably — a cut-throat highwayman — that she extends her hospitality. (*Taking up his hat, whip, and gauntlets, and carefully laying his cloak over the pistols*) These pistols are well primed. I'll warn Reuben not to remove them.

EDWARD (*bursting out*). Oh, Jack, Jack, 'tis impossible!

SIR JOHN. Impossible?

EDWARD (*walking across the room*). 'Tis impossible that she should be frail. I'll not believe it. She hath the look and the bearing of an angel. Her eyes, Jack! Did you observe her eyes?

SIR JOHN (*standing with his back to the fire*). Hang 'em, they are brilliant!

EDWARD. Nay, they're not brilliant. They resemble the blue of a summer morning ere the mist is dispelled. (*Pacing up and down*) Her voice too! Her voice!

SIR JOHN. 'Tis most musical, I admit.

EDWARD. Her voice hath the quality of the harp in it, when its strings are half muffled. (*Fiercely*) Mark me, Jack, if I find her no better than she should be, I'll never trust woman again!

SIR JOHN (*taking snuff*). Ned ——

EDWARD. Never! Never!

SIR JOHN. Ned, I protest you recall Mr. Garrick to me, as the blackamoor in Shakespeare's play.

EDWARD. Ah ——!

SIR JOHN. When the great little man quits the stage, you shall fill his place, my dear Ned; I vow you shall.

[*The wind swells for a moment as Mrs. Jesmond enters at the door under the landing, followed by Tubal, with a lantern, and by Reuben who is carrying two lighted candles in candle-*

sticks. Tubal goes to the window and, raising the lantern above his head, passes his hand over the bars of the shutters.

MRS. JESMOND (*to Edward, sweetly but gravely*). 'Tis past ten o'clock. (*Glancing at Sir John*) You have told Sir John?

SIR JOHN (*advancing a few steps*). Why, yes, ma'am; and, to say the truth, I shall not be sorry to find myself in a soft bed, and between a pair of sweet-smelling sheets, at an earlier hour than is customable with me.

REUBEN (*a bluff, burly fellow — standing by the table*). Nor I either, sir. For of all the clattering, gusty places I've ever laid in, this Wasdale is the gustiest and the clatteringest — (*to Mrs. Jesmond*) saving your presence, ma'am.

SIR JOHN. Silence, Reuben! (*To Mrs. Jesmond, with a wave of the hand towards Reuben*) A good, faithful animal, Mrs. Jesmond, but plaguily rough-tongued.

REUBEN. Well, sir, my tongue can't be rougher than the Cumberland weather; that's one comfort. (*Going to Edward and presenting him with a candlestick as Mrs. Jesmond crosses to Sir John*) You'd best shield it with your hand, Mr. Fane —

MRS. JESMOND (*to Sir John*). Good-night, Sir John. (*Curt-seying*) 'Tis mighty civil of you to profess your willingness to be sent to bed like a bad child. (*Giving him her hand*) You must dream you are in London, sir, and card-playing *en petit comité* with some choice cronies.

SIR JOHN (*bending over her hand*). Nay, madam, my dreams shall be of a far more interesting sort, I promise you.

[*She curtsies to him again and returns to Edward who is watching her narrowly. Tubal is now at the fireplace, mending the fire, and Reuben at the table in the bay window.*

MRS. JESMOND (*giving her hand to Edward, a note of tenderness in her voice*). Good-night, Mr. Fane.

EDWARD (*with downcast eyes*). Good-night.

[*He moves away and Mrs. Jesmond goes to the escritoire and opens it with a key which dangles with others from her waist.*

Seeing that Reuben is taking up the riding-cloak and the pistols, Sir John hastens to him on tiptoe.

SIR JOHN (*under his breath, to Reuben*). No!

REUBEN (*astonished*). Sir!

SIR JOHN (*his finger to his lips*). Ssst! (*He motions to Reuben to replace the pistols and riding-cloak. Reuben does so*) And now, my dear Ned—(*taking his candle from Reuben and yawning demonstratively*) ah-h-h-h!—I declare I am as sleepy as the veriest owl. (*He signs to Edward to precede him, but Edward yields him the pas*) My dear fellow! (*He ascends the stairs, Edward following him, as Mrs. Jesmond carries some books to the round table and deposits them there. Sir John makes her a grand bow from the landing, Edward a lesser one*) My dear madam!

[*Mrs. Jesmond curtsies to them deeply and returns to the escritoire. Sir John and Edward retire. Tubal shuffles across the room on his way to the door under the landing.*]

REUBEN (*in a low voice, clapping Tubal on the back*). Good-night, old buck! (*Tubal has a fit of coughing*) Why, a man of your kidney should be in London. You'd turn all the girls' heads in London within a week. (*To Mrs. Jesmond, as he goes up the stairs*) Good-night, ma'am.

MRS. JESMOND (*bringing more books and some papers to the table*). Good-night, friend.

[*Reuben withdraws, closing the door.*]

TUBAL (*at the door under the landing, to Mrs. Jesmond*). Be theer owt else I can do fer 'ee?

MRS. JESMOND. No, I thank you, Tubal. Are the maids in their beds?

TUBAL. Aye, an' deid asleeap, I reckon, t'hussies! Good-neet, mistress.

MRS. JESMOND. Good-night.

[*Tubal disappears, closing the door, and the wind again becomes violent and the sign-board squeals as if in pain. Mrs. Jesmond remains quite still for a while; then, deliberately and*

methodically, and with an altered look on her face, she clears the table of the punch-bowl, the decanter and glasses, and the pipes and tobacco—carrying them to the dresser—and fetches the standish from the escritoire. Having neatly set out her books and papers and the standish upon the table, she goes to the lower door, opens it a few inches and, after peeping along the passage, shuts the door silently. She repeats this proceeding at the door on the landing and finally, apparently satisfied, comes half-way down the stairs and unhooks the hunting-horn from the wall and blows a long, faint blast upon it; whereupon the wind gives a thundering bellow, the flames of the candles flicker, and for a moment there is almost total darkness. Then a bluish light pervades the room and the Ghost of a young man in hunting-dress and a bob-wig is seen, standing in an easy attitude with its back to the fire. There is another loud gust, followed by the crash of falling slates.

MRS. JESMOND (*regarding the Ghost with a tender expression and speaking in soft, caressing tones*). That's the slates of the old lean-to in the stable-yard.

GHOST (*in a calm, matter-of-fact manner*). Well, you mun ha' 'em put on again, Betty. Gi' th' job to Hobbs at Ulverston. I'm sick o' Finch of Gosforth; leastways I *was*, before I met wi' my accident.

[Mrs. Jesmond replaces the hunting-horn and descends the stairs. Gradually the wind drops.]

MRS. JESMOND. 'Tis a terrible night for you to be abroad,

Hal. I had almost hoped you wouldn't obey my summons.

GHOST (*pulling off its filmy gloves*). Eh, there you go, lass!

How oft have I told thee th' weather makes no difference to me! (*Gloomily*) All weather's one t' a ghost.

MRS. JESMOND (*with a sigh*). Yes, I forget. (*Looking down at her books and papers*) Shall we get to work?

GHOST. Aye, sit thee doon. (*She seats herself at the left of the table and chooses a pen from the standish*) An' hark ye!

If these winds continue t' blow, thou'dst best bring th' ewe flock off th' fells into th' lowlands. D'ye hear?

MRS. JESMOND. I hear, my dear.

GHOST (*taking out a spectral snuff-box and making a pretence of snuffing*). Is there aught amiss this week here or at th' farms?

MRS. JESMOND. Four of the shorthorn bullocks at Burnthwaite are lame from kibe. What am I to do for 'em?

GHOST. Kibe! Why, I gave thee a remedy for kibe a year since.

MRS. JESMOND (*pouting*). I know you did, Hal; but I failed to note it.

GHOST (*dusting its neckcloth with the phantom of a pocket-handkerchief*). I'm sorely afeared you've no head, Betty; thou'rt but a heedless, gay-hearted wench. What ha' you an' th' lads *been* doing for 't?

MRS. JESMOND. Rubbing tallow-fat betwixt the claws of the poor brutes.

GHOST. Tallow-fat!

MRS. JESMOND. Y-y-y-yes.

GHOST. Zounds, I marvel you ha'n't rubbed in some o' th' sweet pomade thou hast sent thee from Lunnon for thy ringlets!

MRS. JESMOND (*sheepishly*). He, he, he, he!

GHOST. Ods-bobs, you may well grin! 'Twould vastly tickle *me*, were I alive. Come, dip thy pen in th' ink! (*Dictating*) "Kibe."

MRS. JESMOND (*writing in a book*). "Kibe——"

GHOST. "Anoint wi' blue vitriol an' hog's lard——"

MRS. JESMOND. "Blue vitriol——"

GHOST. Williams at St. Bridget's will sell thee blue vitriol. (*She goes on writing*) Mix th' stuff half-an'-half, an' within a fortnight th' beasts will be sound-footed.

MRS. JESMOND (*sanding her writing*). Thank you, dear Harry.

GHOST. What's thy next item, Bet?

MRS. JESMOND (*rummaging among her papers*). The next——? (*Breaking off and gazing at the apparition wistfully*) Hal——

GHOST. Hey?

MRS. JESMOND (*in a voice full of yearning*). Sit in thy chair to-night, yonder, while I am questioning thee, wilt thou?

GHOST (*with an air of patronage*). Certainly I will, child, if it will afford thee any gratification. (*Seating itself in the arm-chair*). 'Tis all th' same t' a ghost whether he be sitting or standing or lying.

MRS. JESMOND. Yes, but it seems more domestic to see thee ensconced in what was thy accustomed seat.

GHOST (*throwing one leg over the other and sticking its thumbs in the armholes of its waistcoat*). Which posture d'ye most fancy, Bet — this —?

MRS. JESMOND (*nodding*). I remember thee in it constantly.

GHOST (*extending its legs and resting his fists on its hips*). Or this?

MRS. JESMOND. That was your position when you were engaged in argument. I had rather the other. (*The Ghost resumes its previous attitude*) Oh! Oh, that I might fill thy pipe, and light it for thee at the candle, and slip the scarlet end of it into thy poor mouth, as I used to do!

GHOST. Nay, lass, that's talking sheer nonsense. (*She presses her eyes with the back of her hand*) Come, 'tis no good whimpering; whimpering won't mend matters. Get on wi' thy work.

MRS. JESMOND (*leaning back in her chair and beating her clenched hands on the table*). Oh! Oh, how cold you are! How cold you are!

GHOST (*annoyed*). Cold! 'Pon my soul, that's monstrously inconsiderate an' unkind!

MRS. JESMOND. Ah, have I hurt thee?

GHOST. *Hurt me!*

MRS. JESMOND. I ask your pardon, Hal.

GHOST. Nay, 'tis all very fine! (*Rising*) Thou know'st 'tis not in my power to console thee.

MRS. JESMOND (*snatching at her pen*) Ah, you're not vanishing! You'll not vanish so soon! Harry! (*The Ghost wags its head sulkily*) Harry! Harry!

GHOST. I'll not if thou'lt be reasonable an' polite, an' I can sarve thee.

MRS. JESMOND. I *will* be reasonable; I *will* be. Oh, 'tis as hard on you as on me that, being a shade, you cannot take me to your breast; and 'twas cruel of me to complain! I swear I won't offend again, Hal.

GHOST (*loftily, repeating its performance with the snuff-box*). Proceed, then.

MRS. JESMOND. Thank you, my dear. (*Drying her eyes hurriedly and referring to a paper*) Andrew Todd of Mickle Gill hath begged me to test an example of oats that he hath brought me. The germination of his oat-seed last season greatly discontented him.

GHOST (*curling its lip*). Zooks, but Andrew was ever a fool!

MRS. JESMOND (*humbly*). Nay, I am worse; for I am even more ignorant than Andrew how to make the test.

GHOST. I'll tell 'ee. Tear two strips from thine old flannel-petticoat an' lay th' seed between 'em an' float 'em in a crock full o' water. (*She again writes in her book*) Stand th' vessel in thy sunniest window, an' in less than three days thou'lt be able to show Todd how many of his oats are speared. (*With a hollow, vain laugh*) Ha, ha, Maister Todd!

MRS. JESMOND (*throwing down her pen suddenly and leaning her head upon her hands*). Oh, Hal, Hal!

GHOST. Why, what's wrong wi' thee now?

MRS. JESMOND. Alas, and alas, I am but an impostor!

GHOST. Impostor?

MRS. JESMOND (*starting up and walking about*). A cheat! I despise myself for fobbing off these dalesmen with the belief that 'tis I that helps them in their difficulties.

GHOST. Why, 'tis you that do it, Betty, in sober truth.

MRS. JESMOND (*reprovingly*). Harry!

GHOST. I say 'tis so. An' were I alive, I should be consumedly proud of you, Bet; I should, b' George, though I do upbraid thee on occasions when thou dost deserve it.

MRS. JESMOND. Thou wert never logical, Harry! Were you alive, 'twould be known that the cleverness is all thine. (*Leaning upon the dresser*) Oh, 'twould relieve my con-

science of a heavy burden, could I but reveal that you visit me in this manner!

GHOST. An' scare th' folks for miles round! Th' inn an' th' farms 'ud be shunned, an' thou'd be reduced to beggary.

MRS. JESMOND (*dejectedly*). Oh! Oh!

GHOST. Nay, you need ha' no qualms on that score, lass.

'Tis lucky, I confess, that I had a bent for farming as well as for dicing an' cock-fighting; but husband an' wife are one, an' so, I take it, are a widow an' her husband's ghost, till she falls in love wi' another chap. (*Drawing itself up*) There's logic for thee! (*The wind is heard again, and a whistle from the sign-board. The Ghost's expression changes*) 'Egad, but that reminds me, Bet ——!

MRS. JESMOND. Of what, Hal?

GHOST (*scowling*). Speaking o' falling in love, th' young gentleman that quartered himself here two months ago is still under thy roof. (*Her body slowly stiffens*) Thou didst mention his name an' quality to me once ——

MRS. JESMOND (*turning to the Ghost, but avoiding its eyes*).

Mr. Edward Fane? He resides with his mother, who is wealthy, at Kensington in London.

GHOST (*with a sneer*). That's him; a handsome, black young man, in 's own hair.

MRS. JESMOND (*advancing frigidly*). Why, indeed, Mr. Fane wears neither wig nor powder; but, for the rest, I have scarce observed his looks.

GHOST. 'Faith, he hath obsarved *thine!* I've seen him through th' shutters, as I've rid past thy window on my grey mare, an' he hath been sitting opposite thee at table an' gazing at thee most fixedly.

MRS. JESMOND (*shrugging her shoulders*). 'Tis when Mr. Fane and I have been playing a game of backgammon together that you must have remarked us.

GHOST. Eh, so you play backgammon wi' him, do 'ee, Betty?

MRS. JESMOND. To while away his evenings. (*Fingering the back of the chair on the left of the round table*) Wasdale hath few attractions for a man of fashion; and this one is so

excellent a customer that 'tis worth taking some pains to divert him.

GHOST. Nay, I wager he finds no lack of divarsion at Wasdale, or he'd not linger as he does. (*Lowering at her*) He's sweet on thee, lass, to a certainty.

MRS. JESMOND (*indignantly*). Hal!

GHOST. Aye, an' I warn thee, thou'lt be losing thy heart to *him*, if thou'rt not careful.

MRS. JESMOND. Harry!

GHOST (*bitterly*). An' then I shall hear th' blast o' th' horn no more o' Friday nights, in spite of all thy oaths an' tears an' protestations; an' thou'lt cast me aside, an' out o' thy thoughts, like thy worn padesoys!

MRS. JESMOND. Oh! Oh! As if I could ever be inconstant to thee, my first and last love! Shame on you, poor grisly thing that thou art, for thinking it of me!

GHOST. Dang it, there you go again! Grisly!

MRS. JESMOND (*moving about the room, in a heat*). Oh! Oh! I'll play no more backgammon with Mr. Fane from this time forth, I do assure you, nor with any other living man! Oh!

GHOST. 'Twas not backgammon you were playing when I last espied you both, Betty. Mr. Fane had a paper in 's hand an' appeared to be reciting to thee.

MRS. JESMOND (*halting*). Ah, yes; he hath a taste for writing poetry, and was reading one of his compositions. (*Returning to the table, eagerly*) That is the reason Mr. Fane lingers at Wasdale, Harry; the grandeur of the district elevates his mind, he declares. Immediately he reined up at this door, two months back, and I went out to greet him, he looked at me and said, "Why, madam, this is the very spot I have been searching for in my dreams!"

GHOST (*giving another hollow laugh*). Ha, ha, ha, ha!

MRS. JESMOND (*reproachfully*). Oh, Hal, thou wert never bookish; you never knew aught of poets and their ways!

GHOST. Not I. An' what's his poetry like, lass? I warrant 'tis all "love" an' "dove", an' that sort o' muck.

MRS. JESMOND. Nay, 'tis somewhat better than muck; though of no great merit perhaps.

GHOST. The piece he was reading when I watched thee —— ?

MRS. JESMOND. 'Twas called — how was it styled? — “To Aminta ——”

GHOST. Aminta?

MRS. JESMOND. “Aminta” is a fanciful conceit; she is no real person. 'Tis modish in a poet to inscribe his rhymes to Julia, or Chloe, or — or Aminta. Pshaw! Thou shalt judge how harmless the verses are. (*Disdainfully*) “To Aminta, a Lady Dwelling in the Country.”

GHOST (*suspiciously*). A lady dwelling i' th' country?

MRS. JESMOND (*reciting, at first with a show of indifference, then with genuine fervour*).

Belov'd Aminta, shall thy lone retreat
Hold thee for ever in his close embrace,
Whilst the vast waters stretching at thy feet
Capture the sole reflection of thy face?
Nay, let the lordly hill, the softer glen,
In Nature's sempiternal gifts secure,
Suffer thy charms t' illumine the haunts of Men,
Purge the vile Town and make the City pure!

[*She stands absorbed, looking into space. After a short silence, the sign-board creaks again gently.*]

GHOST. Ha, ha, ha, ha! (*She starts*) Why, thou hast learned every syllable of it!

MRS. JESMOND (*guiltily*). Oh, 'tis but simple stuff, and readily committed to memory.

GHOST. A lady dwelling i' th' country! 'Tis thee, o' course!

MRS. JESMOND. La, there are hundreds of ladies that dwell in solitude in the country, Hal!

GHOST. “Whilst the vast waters stretching at thy feet ——”! 'Tis our lake o' Wastwater!

MRS. JESMOND (*resuming her seat at the table and handling her papers in a flutter*). Nay, I am weary of talking about this Mr. Fane ——

GHOST. An' he'd bear thee off t' Lunnon, would he, t' th' haunts o' men, th'——!

MRS. JESMOND (*picking up a paper hastily*). I've a question to ask thee concerning the crooked field below Buckbarrow——

GHOST. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

MRS. JESMOND. Harry——! (*There is a sharp knocking at the upper door, followed by the click of the latch*) Ah! (*Again the wind thunders, and again the candle-flames flicker and the room is momentarily in semi-darkness. Then the room brightens and Edward is seen upon the landing. The Ghost has disappeared*) Who's there?

[*Edward shuts the door at which he has entered and, staring about him wildly, rapidly descends the stairs. The wind moderates.*]

EDWARD. 'Tis I. (*Running his eyes round the room*) Forgive me, madam.

MRS. JESMOND (*composedly, as though engrossed in work*). Indeed, sir, you might have waited till I bade you come in.

EDWARD (*bewildered*). M-m-may I have a word with you?

MRS. JESMOND. If you will remember that I am at my books and papers, and that even an innkeeper is not always at the beck-and-call of a guest.

EDWARD (*bowing*). Nay, ma'am, I have apologized for my fault. (*Looking keenly in the direction of the lower door and the space under the staircase*) The fact is that, hearing voices, I had less compunction in breaking in upon you than I should otherwise have had.

MRS. JESMOND (*with assumed surprise*). Voices?

EDWARD. The sounds of talking and laughing.

MRS. JESMOND. Why, Mr. Fane, 'tis not improbable that I chatter to myself while I am calculating my figures.

EDWARD. And laugh!

MRS. JESMOND. And laugh. (*Rising and moving to the fireplace*) The farmer——man or woman——that attempts to

cultivate this grudging valley may well laugh, sir, though the laugh be on the wrong side o' the mouth.¹

EDWARD. Oh, but this is evasion! Mrs. Jesmond——!

MRS. JESMOND. Evasion!

EDWARD. Is there anybody concealed here?

MRS. JESMOND. Concealed?

EDWARD (*peering into the space beneath the staircase and then returning and confronting her*). Nay, then, he must have left the room as I entered it, and by this door!

MRS. JESMOND. Mr. Fane!

EDWARD (*going to her*). I swear I heard more than one voice, and that a man's! By Heaven, you are deceiving me!

MRS. JESMOND. Deceiving *you*, sir! (*Haughtily*) Why, what am I to you, or you to me, that I should deceive you, or enlighten you, on any affair that doth not concern your abode at this inn? So that your bed is clean, and your food wholesome, and my charges are just and fairly reckoned, and you acquit them promptly, what obligations, pray, are we under to each other? (*Stamping her foot*) Withdraw from my room, Mr. Fane, and suffer me to resume my work! Stand aside, sir! (*He allows her to pass him but, as she does so, he catches her by the arms*) Unhand me!

EDWARD (*passionately*). Mrs. Jesmond——!

MRS. JESMOND (*releasing herself and facing him*). Oh, 'tis cowardly of you; and when my servants are abed, and I am unprotected! (*He retreats a step or two*) Oh! You that have writ such tender poems, and delivered them with so much sensibility!

EDWARD (*with dignity*). Nay, madam, you misinterpret my action. Believe me you have nothing to fear from my violence. (*Drawing himself erect*) And yet you are right; I am a coward, and an arrant one.

MRS. JESMOND. Mr. Fane!

¹ Her farm at Burnthwaite seems to have been decidedly unprosperous, for to-day not a trace of cultivation exists between Wasdale Head and the Buttermere valley.

EDWARD. A coward. What else am I when I have hesitated so long to free myself from the malign spell your beauty hath cast upon me——!

MRS. JESMOND (*faintly*). Malign——!

EDWARD. When, suspecting you to be false and unworthy—as I have for many weeks past, and as I have to-night proved you to be—I have foolishly persuaded myself, against my innermost convictions, of your probity and virtue!

MRS. JESMOND. False and unworthy! You are mad, sir! False to whom?

EDWARD. To *me*.

MRS. JESMOND. To—to you!

EDWARD. Why, madam, you know that I have loved you— (*she puts her hand to her heart with a quick motion*) do love you!

MRS. JESMOND (*tremblingly*). Indeed, and indeed, Mr. Fane——!

EDWARD (*sternly*). Hush! To deny it is a lie! (*She makes a movement, as if to escape, and again he detains her*) Stay! You shall hear me! (*She sinks into the chair at the right of the round table*) I have loved you from the first moment I saw you, when, on that evil day on which accident brought me to this inn, and I checked my bridle at the porch, you stood with your hand resting on my horse's shoulder and your eyes drooped before mine. I have loved you from that moment, I repeat; (*accusingly*) while you, with the quick instinct that wakes intelligence in a woman's brain, if not response within her bosom, have divined my feelings and cruelly allowed me to foster them!

MRS. JESMOND (*weakly*). I have oft been struck with the idea that you are exceeding well-disposed towards me——

EDWARD. Well-disposed! Ah, do not prevaricate!

MRS. JESMOND. But you have never spoke a word of love to me, I do protest.

EDWARD. Not expressly; for 'twas on the night previous to the day on which I had intended to throw myself at your

feet that, returning from my bedchamber to fetch a letter, I was startled by mysterious murmurs issuing from this room.

MRS. JESMOND (*raising her head*). Ah!

EDWARD. Since then (*pointing to the door on the landing*) I have listened there every Friday night ——

MRS. JESMOND. Listened!

EDWARD (*abashed*). I confess it — listened with my hand upon the latch, lacking the courage to enter and perhaps confirm the dreadful doubts that assailed me.

MRS. JESMOND (*scornfully*). You do yourself scant justice, Mr. Fane. You are full of courage to-night, sir, at any rate!

EDWARD. Because I have to-night heard what I have not hitherto clearly detected — the sound of a man's voice; and have convinced myself that, aided by a specious but ill-contrived stratagem, you are receiving a visitor clandestinely. (*She rises, standing before him with her head averted. The wind swells again*) Mrs. Jesmond, I set out for London to-morrow, carrying with me recollections that will remain with me till death — recollections of the hours we have spent together in this apartment; hours of bliss, before I mistrusted thee, and afterwards when your charms have lulled me into the belief that the possessor of so fair an exterior must be the most innocent, as you are assuredly the most captivating, of your sex; hours of anguish, when doubt hath gained supremacy and I have endured the torments of the damned. Farewell! Did I desire retaliation, 'twould be in the thought that at some future time you will reproach yourself for having shaken beyond repair the faith of one who would have crowned you with his honour and esteem, adored you with his body, defended you with his sword, and given you a heart to lean upon that hath been touched by no other woman.¹ (*Bowing low*) Madam —— !

MRS. JESMOND (*with a deep curtsey*). Farewell, sir. (*He goes*

¹ Compare Mr. George Napier's declaration to Lady Sarah in the "Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox."

towards the staircase. Suddenly, with a gasp, she runs to the foot of the stairs and intercepts him) Ah, no! Mr. Fane——!

EDWARD (*drawing back*). Mrs. Jesmond!

MRS. JESMOND. Mr. Fane, I cannot bear that we should part thus. Edward! 'Tis true; I *am* false and unworthy, as you have accused me of being. But 'tis my — my secret visitor that I am false to, and not to thee. (*Coming closer to him*) Edward——!

EDWARD (*repelling her with a gesture*). Ah——!

MRS. JESMOND. Nay, don't put me from thee, for this once. (*Simply*) Edward, I *have* known of thy love for me; I have known it from the beginning. And, oh — Heaven pardon me, my dear — (*laying her head against him*) — I have *loved* that thou shouldst love me!

EDWARD (*after a struggle*). Betty——!

[*He folds her in his arms. The wind roars and the sign-board screeches.*]

MRS. JESMOND (*feebly*). And now — enough. (*Looking up at him*) Only I beg thee to glance up at my window as you ride away tomorrow. Thou wilt do that for me, Edward?

EDWARD (*in sudden fury*). Oh——!

[*He catches up the riding-cloak from the table in the bay of the window, flings it aside, and seizes one of the pistols.*]

MRS. JESMOND. Pistols!

EDWARD (*examining the lock of the pistol*). They are Sir John Hunslet's. (*Grimly*) He left them lying here, lest I should encounter the wretch that hath obtained such a pernicious influence over thee.

MRS. JESMOND (*laughing wildly*). Ha, ha, ha, ha!

EDWARD (*grasping the pistol tightly*). The villain — he that visits thee — where is he hid?

MRS. JESMOND. Ha, ha, ha, ha! Thy bullet cannot harm *him*. 'Twould but whistle through him and strike the wall.

EDWARD (*gripping her wrist*). Collect thyself; thou art out of thy senses!

MRS. JESMOND (*desperately*). Am I! Thou shalt see! (*Point-*

ing to the hunting-horn) Unhook that horn from its nail and bring it to me.

EDWARD. The signal!

MRS. JESMOND. What, hast thou heard that also! (*Hurriedly he takes down the hunting-horn and hands it to her. Again she blows upon it, and again the wind gives a mighty bellow, the candles flicker, and the bluish light suffuses the rooms*) Look! [*Following the direction of her eyes, he turns and finds the Ghost at his elbow.*]

EDWARD (*under his breath*). Merciful Powers! (*The pistol drops from his relaxed fingers and rattles on the stones of the floor. Slowly, with measured tread and with its head bent, the Ghost walks to the fireplace and stands there, gazing into the fire. The force of the wind decreases*) A ghost! A ghost! A ghost!

MRS. JESMOND (*placing the horn upon the round table and addressing Edward in a hushed, steady voice*). 'Tis my husband's spirit, Mr. Fane. My grief called it to me in the young days of my bereavement, and it hath visited me since every week, and guided me in the conduct of my land and property; (*with a slight shiver*) and 'tis my resolve to remain as constant to this shadow as though 'twere blood and bone. (*Moving a little towards Edward*) You have been pleased to take a kindly interest in me, sir; and you will be glad, I am sure, when you quit Wasdale, to reflect that the poor widow that hath done her best for your comfort and entertainment is not entirely alone. (*Curtseying again*) Good-night. (*Speechless, Edward backs away from her and goes out at the door under the landing. She sees that the door is closed and then advances timorously. The Ghost does not stir*) Er — I hope thou'rt not angry, Hal. 'Twas Mr. Fane that interrupted us. He returned to this room for some purpose, and our talk and laughter reached him as he was opening the door. 'Twas indiscreet in us to speak so loud. (*Coming to the round table*) But, la, 'tis no matter; he is a person to be trusted! (*Lightly, toying with her books and papers*) Beside — ha, ha! — it hath afforded me the oppor-

tunity of hinting to my gentleman that, should he ever revisit Wasdale Head, 'twould be useless for him to pursue thy Betty with his attentions, were he so minded. (*Seating herself at the table again*) He doth depart to-morrow, I thank the Lord! (*Sorting her litter*) What was it I was about to ask thee? (*Picking up a paper*) Ah, yes; the crooked field by Buckbarrow—! (*The Ghost slowly turns and faces her and she stares at it agape. Its form and features have become less distinct*) Why—how—how dim you are, Harry!

GHOST (*harshly, but in fainter tones than before*). Dim! 'Egad, I should think so! Thou know'st that I owe this ghostly existence o' mine only to thy love for me.

MRS. JESMOND. W-w-well?

GHOST. Well! Ha, ha! I marvel, after witnessing what hath passed 'twixt you and Mr. Fane, that thou canst discern me at all, Betty.

MRS. JESMOND (*aghast*). Witnessing——!

GHOST. Aye. Did 'ee imagine I was out of eye-an'-ear-shot?

MRS. JESMOND. Y-y-y-yes.

GHOST. Not I. I've been wi' thee th' whole while. Ho, ho, ho, ho! (*There is a pause, and then Mrs. Jesmond, pressing her temples, falls back in her chair with a groan*) Nay, less, 'tis I that should be making a fuss; an', b' George, I would too, but that thou hast diminished me to that degree that I'm scarce capable of it!

MRS. JESMOND (*raising herself*). Oh! Oh! (*Dropping her outstretched arms upon the table and laying her head upon them*) Oh-h-h-h!

[*The wind gives a sigh and the sign-board creaks sympathetically.*]

GHOST (*wagging its head shakily*). Ah, Bet, Bet, I own I've never suspected you would sell me i' this fashion. (*With a low cry, she rises and throws herself at the Ghost's feet*) That thou shouldst prove such a smooth-tongued, double-faced hypocrite! Dang it, that beats *me*, that had such a vast knowledge o' women!

MRS. JESMOND. Oh, hush, hush! Were I a hypocrite, and merely feigning love for thee, there would be nothing of thee visible, Harry; not a vestige. (*Piteously*) Ah, I've told thee already to-night, logic was never thy strong point!

GHOST (*meditatively*). Zounds, I suppose 'tis possible for a woman to love a live man an' yet ha' a softish feeling for a dead one ——!

MRS. JESMOND (*grovelling and weeping*). Oh! Oh!

GHOST. But 'tis plain, Betty, that thy love for Fane is uppermost ——

MRS. JESMOND. Oh! Oh!

GHOST. An' so, to presarve a morsel o' dignity, 'twould be prudent o' me to bid thee good-bye before I fade from thee completely.

MRS. JESMOND. No, no, Hal! Listen! (*Sitting up and clasping her hands supplicatingly*) Oh, listen! (*The wind sighs again and the sign-board creaks*) Hal — Hal, when the grave closed over thee, I did indeed believe that I was done with love for ever, and that my heart was but a dry and withered plant; but, oh, there are seasons when it will persist in putting forth green shoots, and when I find strange hopes and joys quickening within me that are unbecfitting a woman that is devoted to the memory of her dead husband! Alas, Harry, 'twas at such a time that Mr. Fane came upon me! Though 'twas in January that he alighted at my door, the sun was shining in the valley, and our robins were chirping, and there was a tremble of Spring in the air; and 'twas then, when he had crossed my threshold and I filled him a cup of wine, and faced him while he drank — 'twas then that I felt those green shoots in my breast burst and spread their leaves. (*Wildly*) But, oh, my dear, he is going, as you are informed — he is going! — and 'tis not likely that he will come my way again, nor that another young man of his rank and character will ever resort to this lonely inn. And so you must pardon me this one stumble; and by all that I hold most sacred, Hal ——!

GHOST (*mournfully*). Nay, nay, thou shalt make no more promises. Thou hast perjured thyself enough as it is.

MRS. JESMOND. Perjured myself! Ah, yes! (*Laying her head in abasement upon the chair at the right of the round table*) Oh, Hal, Hal, Hal, Hal!

GHOST. Ah, I perceive now — an' so dost thou, Bet — 'tis a sad mistake for a widow in th' first flood of her grief to call her husband back from his tomb. What we do in heat we repent in cold. An' if 'tis so wi' widows in general, 'tis especially so wi' thee, that are still but a girl. (*She sobs*) Zooks, 'tis my fault for having answered thy cry! I should ha' had more brains; an' *would* ha' had, but that I lost some in my accident. (*She sobs again*) So, come, dry thine eyes. I tell 'ee I don't blame thee, nor bear thee malice; no, nor *him*. (*Attempting, with small success, to repeat his pretence of snuffing*) 'Tis th' way o' th' world. Ods-bobs, who is missed in't! (*Philosophically, flourishing his phantom pocket-handkerchief*) Why, I recollect losing my dog Pincher when I was a bachelor, that died o' jaundice. How I raved about 'un, an' stamped up an' down th' stable where he lay stiff! But a week or two later I was buying a couple o' pups at Gosforth fair, an' was in love wi' *them*, an' forgot Pincher; an' th' following week I met thee, and fell in love wi' *thee*, an' forgot th' pups. (*Producing its gloves and speaking in the tone of a person preparing to depart*) Well, lass ——!

MRS. JESMOND. Ah! (*Turning swiftly, with a hoarse scream*) Ah-h-h-h!

GHOST (*drawing on a glove*). Perhaps 'tis all for th' best, though 't has been a sore blow to my pride. (*Hopefully*) 'Egad, as I shall ride out no more, maybe 'twill settle th' question o' my future, one way or tother!

MRS. JESMOND (*frantically*). Harry! Harry ——!

GHOST. Th' grey mare too! She did but blunder once in her life; 'tis rough on her, poor slut, to have had her rest broke for a single slip.

[*The wind roars again furiously, and the room darkens as*

the Ghost glides towards the window. Struggling to her feet, Mrs. Jesmond staggers after the Ghost and tries to clutch it.

MRS. JESMOND. Harry! No, no! Hal! Ah, I can't hold thee! I can't hold thee! Oh!

GHOST (*softly*). Coom, mare, coom! Coom, coom, coom!

MRS. JESMOND. Wait! Wait—! (*The Ghost vanishes*) Ah-h-h-h! Come back! Harry! My husband! (*She rushes, still crying out, to the stairs and gropes for the hunting-horn; then, remembering that it is upon the round table, she flies to the table and seizes it*) Ah! Harry! Harry! I love thee! I swear I love thee! (*She blows the horn and instantly the shutters disappear and the Ghost is seen upon the grey mare, the wild country beyond. Again the wind bellows*) Oh! Wait! Ah-h-h-h! (*Holding the reins in its left hand, the Ghost waves its right hand in adieu; and then, with a hollow whoop, it claps its spurs to the mare's sides, and horse and rider plunge into the murk. The shutters reappear and the room is bright once more*) Oh, no! Thou'rt not gone! Thou'rt not gone! Harry! (*She puts the horn to her mouth again and blows a loud blast. Then she runs about the room, searching and calling*) Harry! Harry! I want thee! Where are you? (*Looking into the space under the staircase*) Are you there, Hal? (*In the bay of the window*) Hal, I've something to ask thee! 'Tis important! (*At the fireplace*) Harry! Oh, Harry—! (*Suddenly, throwing the horn from her*) Ah-h-h-h! He's gone! He's gone!

[*The door on the landing opens and Edward and Sir John Hunslet appear.*]

EDWARD. Mrs. Jesmond——!

MRS. JESMOND. He's gone! (*To Edward*) You have driven him away! I hate you! I—! Harry—!

[*She topples to the ground. Edward and Sir John descend the stairs rapidly and Edward, kneeling beside Mrs. Jesmond, lifts her into his arms. The wind lessens.*]

EDWARD. Mrs. Jesmond! Betty! Betty! (*To Sir John, in alarm*) Oh, Jack——!

[Sir John takes the candlestick from the round table and bends over Mrs. Jesmond.]

SIR JOHN (*quietly*). 'Tis only a swoon. (*Carrying the candlestick, he moves to the lower door*) I'll go and rouse one of her women. *[The sign-board creaks.]*

THE END



THE GOAL

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

The work of Henry Arthur Jones is doubly significant. In the first place, it marks the return of the best English dramatic traditions to the modern stage, for in spite of the innovations preached by Mr. Jones so assiduously for over thirty years, he remains in his best work a dramatist of the classical school. "The Liars", "The Case of Rebellious Susan", and "Dolly Reforming Herself", are genuine comedies, indigenously English, of the line of Sheridan and Goldsmith.

Henry Arthur Jones was born at Grandborough, Bucks, in 1851. His early education was received in his native district. He entered business at Bradford and was for some years a commercial traveler. Before reaching the age of thirty, however, he wrote his first play, "Only 'Round the Corner", which was produced at Exeter in 1878. During the succeeding four years he wrote a number of relatively unimportant plays. In 1882 he achieved his first and, in some respects, his most brilliant success, with a melodrama, "The Silver King", written in collaboration with Henry Herman. This celebrated play has seen the footlights in many countries and is still occasionally revived. "Saints and Sinners" (1884) is Mr. Jones' first significant play; it was a landmark in modern English drama, a work in which subject-matter and treatment were primarily English, and not—as was usual at the time—of French origin.

Aside from his seventy plays, Henry Arthur Jones has contributed a considerable mass of theory and propagandist literature on the modern drama, setting high standards in

dramatic art both for the dramatist and the public. To him is due a great part of that impetus which has resulted in what he himself calls the Renascence of the English drama.

Mr. Jones has written few one-act plays, but excepting "The Goal" and "The Knife", his short plays are not of the first importance. "The Goal", however, is an outstanding example of his skill in extracting from a situation the last ounce of its dramatic possibilities. The play is an incident, simple and unified; the art with which it is unfolded is direct and all-sufficient.

PLAYS

Plays marked with * are in one act only.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| *Only 'Round the Corner
(1878) | *Sweet Will (1890) |
| *Hearts of Oak (1879) | *The Deacon (1890) |
| *Harmony (1879) | The Dancing Girl (1891) |
| *Elopement (1879) | The Crusaders (1891) |
| *A Clerical Error (1879) | The Bauble Shop (1893) |
| *An Old Master (1881) | The Tempter (1893) |
| His Wife (1881) | The Masqueraders (1894) |
| Home Again (1881) | The Case of Rebellious Susan (1894) |
| *A Bed of Roses (1881) | The Triumph of the Philistines (1895) |
| The Silver King (1882) | Michael and his Lost Angel (1896) |
| (In collaboration with Henry Herman) | The Rogue's Comedy (1896) |
| Chatterton (1884) | The Physician (1897) |
| Saints and Sinners (1884) | The Liars (1897) |
| Hoodman Blind (1885) | *Grace Mary (1898) |
| The Lord Harry (1886) | The Manceuvres of Jane (1898) |
| The Noble Vagabond (1886) | Carnac Sahib (1899) |
| Hard Hit (1887) | The Lackey's Carnival (1900) |
| Heart of Hearts (1887) | Mrs. Dane's Defence (1900) |
| Wealth (1889) | |
| The Middleman (1889) | |
| Judah (1890) | |

The Princess's Nose (1902)	We Can't Be As Bad As All
Chance The Idol (1902)	That (1910)
Whitewashing Julia (1903)	*The Knife (1910)
Joseph Entangled (1904)	The Ogre (1911)
The Chevaleer (1904)	Lydia Gilmore (1912)
The Heroic Stubbs (1906)	The Divine Gift (1912)
The Hypocrites (1906)	Mary Goes First (1913)
*The Goal (1907)	The Lie (1914)
The Evangelist (1907)	Cock o' The Walk (1915)
Dolly Reforming Herself	*Her Tongue (1915)
(1908)	The Pacifists (1917)
*Fall In, Rookies! (1910)	

"Harmony", "Elopement", "Hearts of Oak", "A Clerical Error", "An Old Master", "A Bed of Roses", "The Deacon", "Sweet Will", "Joseph Entangled", "The Silver King", "The Dancing Girl", "The Hypocrites", "Mrs. Dane's Defence", "The Case of Rebellious Susan", "The Liars", "The Masqueraders", "Dolly Reforming Herself", "The Tempter", "The Manœuvres of Jane", "Judah", "The Physician", "Whitewashing Julia", "The Rogue's Comedy", "The Triumph of the Philistines", and "Mary Goes First" are published separately by Samuel French, New York; "The Crusaders", "Michael and his Lost Angel", and "Carnac Sahib" separately by Macmillan Company, New York; "The Divine Gift" and "The Lie" separately by George H. Doran Company, New York; and "The Goal", "Her Tongue", and "Grace Mary", in "The Theater of Ideas", by the same.

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Theater of Ideas”, “The Divine Gift”, and “The Case of Rebellious Susan.”

Magazines: *North American Review*, vol. clxxxvi, p. 205, New York; *The Reader*, vol. ix, p. 105, New York; *Blackwood's*, vol. xciv, p. 283, London.

THE GOAL
A DRAMATIC FRAGMENT

BY HENRY ARTHUR JONES

"The Goal" was first produced at London in 1897.

Characters

SIR STEPHEN FAMARISS, *the great Engineer*

DANIEL FAMARISS, *his son, Engineer*

SIR LYDDEN CRANE, M.D.

ADAMS, *Sir Stephen's Butler*

PEGGIE LOVEL

NURSE CLANDON

SCENE: SIR STEPHEN'S bedroom in Belgravia.

TIME: 1897.

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THE GOAL

SCENE. *The dressing room of Sir Stephen Famariss, Belgrave Square. A very richly furnished apartment, with every evidence of wealth and luxury. Up stage right an archway, set diagonally, shows a bedroom beyond with foot of brass bedstead placed sideways to audience. The bedroom is dimly lighted. A large bow-window, rather deeply recessed, runs along the left at back, and looks across a courtyard to another house, whose windows are brilliantly lighted. Figures dancing are seen moving across the windows in accordance with indications given through the play. Between archway and window a large handsome bureau. A door left down stage. Down stage right, fireplace with fire burning. A mirror over fireplace. A large comfortable sofa down stage right. A table left of sofa near centre of stage, with bottle of champagne and glasses on it. Another table up stage left above door. Upon it medicine bottles, spirit lamp, and other paraphernalia of a sick room. A large pier looking-glass up stage above sofa. Other furniture as required, all indicating great wealth and comfort. Time, about ten on an April evening. Discover on sofa, asleep, Sir Stephen Famariss. A rug is thrown over him, and his head is buried in a pillow, so that nothing is seen of him but a figure under the rug. Nurse Clandon, in nurse's costume, about thirty, is seated in chair at table, reading. The door, left, is very softly opened, and Sir Lydden Crane enters, a little, dry, shrewd, wizened old man about seventy, with manners of a London physician. Nurse rises and puts down her book.*

CRANE. Well? How has he been all the afternoon?

NURSE. Just as usual. He won't keep quiet. About an hour ago he fell asleep. [Pointing to Sir Stephen.

CRANE. Mr. Daniel Famariss has not arrived?

NURSE. No. He sent another telegram for him this evening. And he keeps on asking for the evening papers.

CRANE. Well?

NURSE. I've kept them from him. They all have long accounts of his illness. (*Taking an evening paper from under the table cover, giving it to Crane*) Look!

CRANE (*taking paper, reading*). "Sir Stephen Famariss, the great engineer, is dying——" Hum!

[*A very gentle knock is heard at door left. Nurse goes to it, opens it. Adams comes in a step.*]

ADAMS. I beg pardon. Mrs. Lovel has sent in to ask how Sir Stephen is; and to say that she's very sorry the ball-room is so near his bedroom; and if the noise of the ball will upset Sir Stephen, she'll be very pleased to put it off, and send her guests away?

NURSE. What do you think, Sir Lydden?

CRANE. All excitement is very dangerous for Sir Stephen. The next attack may be fatal. Will you give my compliments to Mrs. Lovel, and say that since she is so kind I will beg her to postpone the ball?

[*Sir Stephen stirs, throws off the quilt. He is in a rich dressing-gown. A wiry, handsome, very intellectual-looking man about seventy-five; well-seasoned, vigorous frame; pale, sharp, strong features, showing signs of great recent pain.*]

SIR STEPHEN. Will you give my compliments to Mrs. Lovel, and say that since she is so kind I will beg her to do nothing of the kind. What rubbish, Crane! Because I happen to be dying, to stop the innocent pleasure of a couple of hundred young people! Thank Mrs. Lovel very much, Adams, for sending in, and say that I'm not at all sure that I shall die to-night; but that if I do, her dancing won't in the least interfere with my dying, and I hope she won't allow my dying to interfere with her dancing. I very much wish the ball to take place. (*Very imperiously*) It's not to be put off! You understand?

ADAMS. Yes, Sir Stephen.

[*Going.*]

SIR STEPHEN. And, Adams, give my compliments to Mrs.

Lovel, and say that if she doesn't mind, I should like to see Miss Lovel in her ball dress for a moment before the ball. Say that I'm quite presentable, and I won't frighten Miss Lovel. [Exit Adams.]

SIR STEPHEN. Well, Crane, am I going off this time?

CRANE. This last attack coming so quickly after the other is very alarming and — very dangerous.

SIR STEPHEN. Yes, but am I going to pull through again, or must I put up the shutters?

CRANE. Well — well —

SIR STEPHEN (*seeing paper on table where Crane has put it*).

Is that to-night's paper? (*No reply*) Give it to me.

CRANE (*deprecatingly*). Famariss —

SIR STEPHEN. Give it to me.

[Crane gives it to him reluctantly.]

SIR STEPHEN (*reading from paper*). "Alarming illness of Sir Stephen Famariss. Angina Pectoris. Fatal symptoms. Sir Stephen Famariss, the great engineer, is dying —" There's nothing like making sure of your facts.

CRANE. Too sure!

SIR STEPHEN (*drily*). So I think. What do you say? How long am I going to live?

CRANE. Well —

SIR STEPHEN. Come out with it, old friend. I'm not afraid to hear.

CRANE. With the greatest care, I see no reason why you shouldn't live some weeks — or months.

SIR STEPHEN. Shall I live long enough to carry out my Milford Haven scheme? Tell me the truth.

CRANE. No. You certainly won't.

SIR STEPHEN (*shows intense disappointment*). You're sure?

CRANE. I'm sure.

SIR STEPHEN. But I shall live long enough to start it, to put it into other hands, into my son's hands — if the rebellious fool will only learn wisdom and make it up with me before I die. I shall live long enough for that?

CRANE. No. I fear not.

SIR STEPHEN (*going to bureau*). But I've got a third of it on paper. (*Taking out plans*) I've kept it here. I've worked at it when I couldn't sleep. If I can last out another six months, I can do it. Come, Crane, don't be stingy. Give me another six months! Eh?

CRANE. Famariss, you won't last six months even with the greatest care. You may not last six weeks —

SIR STEPHEN. Nor six days?

CRANE. Nor six days.

SIR STEPHEN. Nor six hours?

CRANE. Oh —!

SIR STEPHEN. Nor six hours. Thank you. I'm prepared.

CRANE. Your son hasn't come yet?

SIR STEPHEN. No. I've telegraphed him twice — and my terms.

CRANE. Is it worth while — of course, you know best — is it worth while to stick out for terms when —?

SIR STEPHEN. When one is in face of death. Yes — on a matter of principle. If Dan comes here, he comes on my terms. I'll keep my word; I won't set eyes on him — he shan't pass that door until he owns he was wrong.

CRANE. But —

SIR STEPHEN (*getting excited*). But he was wrong. He was wrong, and no power on earth shall make me —

CRANE (*soothing him*). Hush! If he does come, you must avoid all excitement in meeting him. Your only chance of prolonging your life is to keep absolutely quiet. You must lay up all day —

SIR STEPHEN. Lay up all day! Don't talk nonsense!

CRANE. If you don't —

SIR STEPHEN. If I don't —

CRANE. You may die at any moment.

SIR STEPHEN. But if I do, I'm dead already. No, Crane, I'll live to my last moment, whenever it comes. When I do take to my bed, I'll take to it once for all, in the churchyard, beside my Peggie! (*Very softly, very tenderly, half to himself*) My Peggie! My Peggie! If I do go off, I

shall see her again, I suppose — if it isn't all moonshine! Open the window, Nurse! It's getting hot here! (*The Nurse opens window*) Open that champagne, Crane, and pour yourself out a glass, and pour me out a glass. My Peggie! My Peggie! I wonder if it is all moonshine!

[*The musicians in the ballroom opposite begin to tune up their fiddles. Nurse comes down.*]

SIR STEPHEN. That's right! Tune up! Tune up! And Peggie Lovel promised me the first dance! Tune up!

NURSE. You must keep quiet —

SIR STEPHEN (*pettishly*). Run away! Run away!

[*Crane makes Nurse a sign, and she goes off into bedroom. Crane has opened the champagne and poured out two glasses. He brings one to Sir Stephen.*]

SIR STEPHEN. It's the eighty-four Saint Marceaux. I've left you half what's left of this, Crane, and I've left my mule of a boy the other half. He's my heir. I won't see him; no, not if I —

CRANE. Hush! Hush!

SIR STEPHEN. I won't see him unless he submits. But I've left him every penny, except what goes to charities and churches. It's very puzzling to know what to do with one's money, Crane. I've left a heap to charities, and I've squared all the churches. I hope it won't do much harm. (*A little chuckle*) There's one thing I regret in dying, Crane: I shan't be able to hear my funeral sermons. But you will —

CRANE. Don't make too sure. I may go off first; but if I am doomed, I hope the oratory will be of as good a vintage as this.

SIR STEPHEN. It ought to be, considering what I've left them all. Give them a hint, Crane, not to whitewash my sepulchre with any lying cant. Don't let them make a plaster-of-Paris saint of me! I won't have it! I won't have it! I've been a man, and never less than a man. I've never refused to do the work that came in my way, and, thank God, I've never refused to taste a pleasure.

And I've had a rare good time in this rare good world. I wish I'd got to live it all over again!

CRANE. You do?

SIR STEPHEN. Yes; every moment of it, good and evil, pleasure and pain, love and work, success and failure, youth and age, I'd fill the cup again, and I'd drain it to the dregs if I could. You wouldn't?

CRANE. No. Once is enough for me.

SIR STEPHEN. You see, Crane, before starting in life, I took the one great step to secure success and happiness.

CRANE. What's that?

SIR STEPHEN. I made an excellent choice of my father and mother. Not rich. Not aristocratic. But a good, sound, healthy stock on both sides. What's the cause of all the weak, sniyelling pessimism we hear? What's the cause of nine-tenths of the misery around us — ruined lives; shattered health; physical, moral, intellectual beggary? What's the cause of doctors' bills?

CRANE. Well, what is?

SIR STEPHEN. Men and women exercise no care in choosing their fathers and mothers. You doctors know it! You doctors know it! Once choose your father and mother wisely, and you can play all sorts of tricks with your constitution. You can drink your half bottle of champagne at seventy-five and enjoy it! Another glass!

CRANE. No, I must be going! (*Rising*) And (*tapping bottle*) you mustn't take any more.

SIR STEPHEN. Don't talk nonsense! Sit down! Sit down! Another glass! Hobnob, man; hobnob! Life's but a span! Why, this may be the last time, eh?

CRANE. Any time may be the last time. Any moment may be the last moment.

SIR STEPHEN. Well, then, let's enjoy the last moment! I tell you, Crane, I'm ready. All my affairs are in perfect order. I should have liked to finish that Milford Haven scheme; but if it isn't to be — (*deep sigh*) — Hobnob, man; hobnob!

CRANE. What a lovely wine!

SIR STEPHEN. Isn't it? I remember Goethe says that the man who drinks wine is damned, but the man who drinks bad wine is doubly damned. Pray God you and I may be only damned once, Crane.

CRANE. Oh, that's past praying for—in my case!

SIR STEPHEN. Eighty-four! I was boring a hole through the Rockies that summer—ah, Crane, what glorious summers I've had!—seventy-five glorious golden summers—and now—Hobnob, man; hobnob! You've had a good innings, too, Crane.

CRANE. Hum! Pretty fair. I eat well, drink well, sleep well, get my early morning jog in the Park and enjoy it, get my two months on the moors, and enjoy them. I feel as fit to-day as I did thirty years ago. There's only one pleasure that fails me—*(with a grimace at Sir Stephen)*—Gone! Gone! Gone!

SIR STEPHEN. Don't fret about that! We thought it a pleasure, old crony, while it lasted. Now it's gone, let's call it a plague and a sin, and thank God for giving us a little peace in our old age. Ah, dear, dear, what a havoc women have made of the best half of my life; but—*(brightening)*—I've left some good work behind me, in spite of the hussies! And, thank Heaven, my *throat* has held out to the last. *[Drinking.]*

CRANE *(drinking)*. And mine!

SIR STEPHEN. Crane, what was that joke that came up at poor Farley's funeral?

CRANE. Joke?

SIR STEPHEN. Don't you remember while we were waiting for them to bring dear old Farley downstairs, Maidment began telling that story about the geese and the Scotch-boy—

CRANE. Yes, yes; to be sure! *[Beginning to laugh.]*

SIR STEPHEN. And just as we were enjoying the joke, we suddenly remembered where we were, and you pulled us up, and spoilt the joke!

CRANE. Yes, yes, I remember.

SIR STEPHEN. Crane, if Maidment tells that story at my funeral, don't pull him up —

CRANE. Eh?

SIR STEPHEN. It's a good joke, man! Don't waste it! Have your laugh out, and say from me that, other conditions being favourable, I'm enjoying it as heartily as any of you! You will, eh? You will?

CRANE. Yes, I will! I will!

[They both laugh a little. Adams opens door left, and comes in a step.]

ADAMS. Miss Lovel has come, Sir Stephen.

SIR STEPHEN. Show her in, Adams. *[Exit Adams.]*

CRANE. I must be going.

[Reënter Adams, showing in Peggie Lovel, a débutante of eighteen, in her first ball dress; radiant, excited, beautifully dressed, a vision of girlish loveliness. She is frivolous and self-conscious, and full of little airs and graces, constantly glancing at herself in the two mirrors.]

ADAMS *(announcing)*. Miss Lovel. *[Exit Adams.]*

SIR STEPHEN. Come in, Peggie. I mustn't call you Peggie any more. Come in, Miss Lovel.

PEGGIE. Mamma said you would like to see me for a minute before the ball!

SIR STEPHEN. If you don't mind.

PEGGIE. How d'ye do, Sir Lydden? *[Shaking hands.]*

CRANE. How d'ye do, Miss Lovel? Good night, Sir Stephen. *[Holding out hand.]*

SIR STEPHEN. Don't go, old chum.

[Taking his hand, retaining it, keeping Crane.]

CRANE. I must. *(Taking out watch)* I have a consultation at eleven.

SIR STEPHEN *(piteously)*. Don't go, old chum.

CRANE. It's really pressing. It's Lord Albert Swale. He won't last till the morning.

SIR STEPHEN. Don't go. I may be meeting him soon, and I'll make your apologies. *(Very piteously)* Don't go, old chum!

CRANE. I must. (*Nurse enters from bedroom*) Nurse, I want a word with you downstairs. (*Nurse crosses to left, and exit. To Sir Stephen*) I'll look in, the first thing in the morning.

SIR STEPHEN. Do. You'll find me — at home.

CRANE. Good night. Good night, Miss Lovel.

PEGGIE. Good night, Sir Lydden.

CRANE (*in a low tone to Peggie*). You mustn't stay long, and you mustn't let Sir Stephen excite himself. (*To Sir Stephen*) I'd rather see you in bed —

SIR STEPHEN (*very impatiently*). Tut! Tut! Tut! I won't be buried before I'm dead. (*Rather curtly*) Good night. (*Crane waits. Imperiously*) Good night! (*Crane is going*) And, Crane, remember — no whitewash on my sepulchre! [*Exit Crane, left. Peggie meantime has taken off her cloak. All through she is eager and excited, glances at herself in the glasses very often.*]

PEGGIE. I'm so sorry you're ill, Sir Stephen.

SIR STEPHEN. I'm not ill, my dear. The old machine seems just as strong and tough as ever, only — it's gone "crack" in a weak place. Well, I've knocked it about all over the world for seventy-five years, and if it hadn't gone crack in one place, I suppose it would in another. Never mind me. Let's talk about you. Go and stand there, and let me look at you.

PEGGIE (*displaying her dress*). Do you like me? Do you like my dress?

SIR STEPHEN. It's a triumph!

PEGGIE (*chattering on*). You can't imagine what trouble mamma and I have taken over it. Long sleeves are coming in for evening wear. So I had long sleeves at first. I was all sleeves. So I had them taken out and short sleeves put in. The dressmaker made a horrible muddle of them. So we tried long sleeves again. I looked a perfect fright!

SIR STEPHEN. I won't believe it.

PEGGIE. Yes, I did, I assure you. So at the last moment

I had the long sleeves taken out and the short sleeves dodged up with lace. Which do you like best? Long sleeves or short sleeves?

SIR STEPHEN. Long sleeves for ugly arms — short sleeves for beautiful arms!

PEGGIE (*frowning at him and shaking her head*). Ah! What do you think of the bodice?

SIR STEPHEN. Enchanting!

PEGGIE. It is rather neat, isn't it?

SIR STEPHEN. Neat? I should call it gorgeous!

PEGGIE. Oh, you must see the one I've got for the Lardner's dance next Monday. Would you like to see it?

SIR STEPHEN. Very much — on Monday.

PEGGIE. I'll run in for a moment before I go.

SIR STEPHEN. Do.

PEGGIE. That's a square-cut bodice. This is a round-cut bodice. Which do you like best? Round-cut bodices, or square-cut bodices?

SIR STEPHEN. To-night I like round-cut bodices. On Monday I think I shall prefer square-cut bodices.

PEGGIE. I think I prefer a square-cut bodice. I had a square-cut bodice to this at first. I looked a perfect monster, so I had it taken out and this round-cut bodice put in. I'm not sure that it's quite right now, and I've tried it on fifty times — I'm worrying you to death.

SIR STEPHEN. No! no!

PEGGIE. Yes, I am, and I can't stay five minutes. Are you sure you wouldn't rather have the ball put off? We will put it off even now, if you wish.

SIR STEPHEN. Not for the world! not for the world!

PEGGIE. That's so good of you! But I really think you'll be better to-morrow. I'm sure you will. You aren't really very ill, are you? Do you like this embroidery?

[*Pointing to trimming on her skirt.*]

SIR STEPHEN. It's beautiful! Isn't it Indian work?

PEGGIE. Yes; handmade. It took a man twelve or fifteen years to make this one strip.

SIR STEPHEN. A quarter of a lifetime to decorate you for a few hours. It was time well spent. Ah, Peggie, that's the sum and meaning of all our toil and money-grubbing!

PEGGIE. What is?

SIR STEPHEN. To make our women-folk beautiful. It all comes to that in the end. Let Nature and Art knock their heads together till doomsday, they'll never teach one another any finer trick than to show a beautiful maiden to a handsome young fellow, or a handsome young fellow to a beautiful maiden.

[Peggie has got behind him and is admiring herself in the glass.]

PEGGIE. Really! Really! Yes, I suppose you're right. You're sure I'm not worrying you ——

SIR STEPHEN. No, no. Don't go. I'm quite at leisure now to the end of my life.

PEGGIE. Oh, you mustn't talk like that! So I may tell mamma that you like my dress? What do you think of the skirt?

SIR STEPHEN. Isn't there too much trimming on it?

PEGGIE. Oh, no! Oh, no!

SIR STEPHEN. Yes, there's too much trimming.

PEGGIE. Oh, no! Oh, no! The dressmaker said there wasn't enough.

SIR STEPHEN. Stupid hussies, dressmakers! They're like other folks! They're always the last to know anything about their own business. Tell your dressmaker that simplicity is the keynote of a great style in dressmaking, and engineering — subtle simplicity. The next time she is going to make you a dress, tell her to take a walk through our National Gallery ——

PEGGIE. Oh, Sir Stephen, you surely wouldn't dress me like those old guys in the National Gallery! What would my partners say?

SIR STEPHEN. Your partners! Ah, you pretty tyrant, you'll turn a great many heads, and set a great many hearts beating to-night!

PEGGIE. Shall I? Shall I?

SIR STEPHEN. Why, you've set my old worn-out heart fluttering, and, goodness knows, it ought to have done beating for pretty girls at seventy-five — it ought to know better at seventy-five! But it doesn't, and — (*rising with great determination*) — I've a great mind —

PEGGIE (*a little alarmed*). Sir Stephen, what are you going to do?

SIR STEPHEN. Don't you remember your promise?

PEGGIE. My promise?

SIR STEPHEN. Your birthday party six years ago! You danced with me, and you promised that I should be your first partner at your first ball after you came out!

PEGGIE. Of course — I'd forgotten!

SIR STEPHEN. But I hadn't! Will you keep your promise, Peggie? Will you keep your promise?

PEGGIE. Wouldn't it be dangerous, and — you don't really wish it?

SIR STEPHEN (*sinking down*). You're right, my dear. I'm foolish with old age. Forgive me!

PEGGIE. I'm sorry to disappoint you. But you'll be able to see us dancing across the garden. You can stand at that window and look on.

SIR STEPHEN. Look on! That's all I'm fit for now — to look on at life!

[*Turning away his head.*]

PEGGIE. Sir Stephen, what's the matter?

SIR STEPHEN. I've always been in the thick of the fight, Peggie. And I feel to-night as strong as ever I did, and they tell me I must lay up and look on — (*rising with great energy and determination*) — I won't! I won't!

PEGGIE. Sir Stephen.

SIR STEPHEN. I can't bear it, Peggie. I've enjoyed my life, and I don't want to leave it. I want to live, and live, and live — and I will! Ah, what a selfish old coward I am! I'm like a man who has sat down to a good table d'hôte, and eaten and drunk his fill, and now the host tells me my

place is wanted for another guest, I cry out and want to have my dinner over again! Don't take any notice of me, dear. Tell me about your partners. Who's going to dance with you to-night?

PEGGIE. Oh, I suppose Mr. Lascelles, Freddie Lister, Lord Doverbury, Johnny Butler, Sir Egerton Wendover, Dick French — amongst others.

SIR STEPHEN. Peggie —

PEGGIE. Yes —

SIR STEPHEN. You won't misunderstand me, dear. I'm old enough to be your grandfather. (*Takes her hand very tenderly*) You won't misunderstand me. (*Very seriously*) Take care how you choose your partner for life. You'll have a wide choice, and all your future happiness, and the happiness of many generations to come, will depend on the one moment when you say "Yes" to one of the scores of young fellows who'll ask you to be his wife. Take care, dear! Take care! Look him thoroughly up and down! Be sure that he has a good full open eye that can look you straight in the face; and be sure that the whites of his eyes are clear. Take care he hasn't got a queer-shaped head, or a low forehead. A good round head, and a good full high forehead, do you hear? Notice the grip of his hand when he shakes hands with you! Take care it's strong and firm, and not cold and dry. No young man should have a cold, dry hand. Don't say "Yes" till you've seen him out of trousers, in riding dress, or court dress. Look at the shape of his legs — a good, well-shaped leg, eh, Peggie? And take care it is his leg! See that he's well-knit and a little lean, not flabby; doesn't squint; doesn't stammer; hasn't got any nervous tricks or twitchings. Don't marry a bald man! They say we shall all be bald in ten generations. Wait ten generations, Peggie, and then don't marry a bald man! Can you remember all this, dear? Watch his walk! See that he has a good springy step, and feet made of elastic — can do his four or five miles an hour without turning a hair.

Don't have him if he has a cough in the winter or the spring. Young men ought never to have a cough. And be sure he can laugh well and heartily — not a snigger, or a wheeze, or a cackle, but a good, deep, hearty laugh right down from the bottom of his chest. And if he has a little money, or even a good bit, so much the better! There now! You choose a man like that, Peggie, and I won't promise you that you'll be happy, but if you're not, it won't be your fault, and it won't be his, and it won't be mine!

PEGGIE. Very well, Sir Stephen, I'll try and remember.

SIR STEPHEN. Do, my dear, do! It's a good legacy, my dear. I've left you another. You won't be disappointed when my will's read —

PEGGIE. Oh, Sir Stephen!

SIR STEPHEN. No, you won't; but remember my advice to-night. That's the best wedding present for any girl.

PEGGIE. Very well, Sir Stephen! I must be going. Good-bye.
[Giving her hand.]

SIR STEPHEN. Yes, I suppose you mustn't stay. (*Taking her hand, keeping it as he had kept Crane's, as if he couldn't bear to let her go*) Good-bye.

[*Looking longingly at her with a mute entreaty to stay. Peggie draws her hand away, puts on cloak, and goes to door, left. He watches her all the while.*]

PEGGIE (*at door, runs back to him*): Sir Stephen, I'll keep my promise. You shall be my first partner. (*Offering her card*) Write your name down for my first dance.

SIR STEPHEN. But I shan't be there.

PEGGIE. I'll sit out, and keep it for you.

SIR STEPHEN. No, no —

PEGGIE. Yes, yes! I insist. Put your name down!

[*He writes on her card. Enter Nurse, left.*]

PEGGIE. Good-bye, Sir Stephen.

SIR STEPHEN. Good-bye, Peggie! (*Softly*) Peggie! Her name was Peggie! My wife's name was Peggie!

[*She bends and kisses his forehead; then goes to door, turns and looks at him.*]

PEGGIE. Au 'voir.

[*Blows him a kiss and exit. Sir Stephen looks longingly after her, walks a little up and down the room.*]

NURSE (*anxiously*). Sir Stephen, don't you think you might lie down now?

SIR STEPHEN. Run away! Run away!

NURSE. Won't you rest a little on the sofa?

SIR STEPHEN. Run away! Run away!

NURSE. Can I get you anything?

SIR STEPHEN. Run away! Run away! (*Pacing up and down*) Mr. Daniel Famariss hasn't come yet?

NURSE. No. You know they said that he was away surveying in an out-of-the-way country, where no message could reach him.

SIR STEPHEN. If he should come too late, tell him — tell him — I've gone surveying in an out-of-the-way country — where no message can reach me! (*Changing tone*) Dear me, Nurse, I'm afraid this dying is going to be a very tiresome business for both of us!

NURSE. Oh, Sir Stephen, I'm sure I don't mind!

SIR STEPHEN. You don't mind? That's very good of you. You're in no hurry? Well, neither am I.

NURSE. Sir Stephen, don't you think —

SIR STEPHEN. What?

NURSE. Last night you said you'd send for a clergyman.

SIR STEPHEN. Did I? That was at two o'clock in the morning. How horribly demoralized a man gets at two o'clock in the morning!

NURSE. But, Sir Stephen —

SIR STEPHEN. Well?

NURSE. Don't you think you ought to begin to think of better things?

SIR STEPHEN. Well. I'm seventy-five. Perhaps it is nearly time. What better things?

NURSE. Death and — judgment.

SIR STEPHEN. Don't talk nonsense. I don't call death and judgment better things.

NURSE. But, Sir Stephen—you will be judged.

SIR STEPHEN. Judged? Yes. But I shan't be judged by the prayers I've said, and the psalms I've sung. I shan't be judged by the lies I've told, and the deceits I've practised, and the passions I've given way to. I shan't be judged by the evil and rottenness in me. No; I shall be judged by the railways I've made, and the canals I've scooped, and the bridges I've built—and let me tell you, my dear creature, my accounts are in good order, and ready for inspection at any moment, and I believe there's a good balance on my side. (*Guests have been assembling in the ballroom. Dance music bursts out. Dancing begins*) Ah! What tune is that?

[*Goes up to window, begins dancing a few steps, swaying with the music.*]

NURSE (*frightened*). Sir Stephen! Sir Stephen!

SIR STEPHEN. Run away! Run away!

NURSE. Sir Stephen, you wouldn't be found dancing at the end?

SIR STEPHEN. Why not? I've done my work! Why shouldn't I play for a little while? (*A bell is heard*) Hark! The front door bell——

NURSE. Yes.

[*Goes to door, left.*]

SIR STEPHEN. Go downstairs and see if that's my son. If it is, tell him——

[*Gentle knock at door, left. Adams enters a step. The dancing and music are continued in the ballroom.*]

ADAMS. I beg pardon, Sir Stephen. Mr. Daniel Famariss has arrived——

SIR STEPHEN. Ah!

[*Getting excited.*]

ADAMS. And would like to see you.

SIR STEPHEN. Tell him he knows the conditions.

NURSE. But, Sir Stephen——

SIR STEPHEN. Run away, my good soul! Run away. (*To Adams*) He knows the conditions. If he accepts them, I shall be pleased to see him.

DAN (*voice outside door*). Father!

SIR STEPHEN. Shut that door!

[*Adams nearly closes door, which is kept open a few inches from the other side.*]

DAN (*outside*). Father! You won't shut the door in my face?

SIR STEPHEN. Keep on that side of it, then. Adams, you can go. Leave the door ajar.

[*Exit Adams, left. Sir Stephen, with an imperious gesture, points Nurse to archway right. Exit Nurse, into bedroom, with an appealing gesture to Sir Stephen.*]

SIR STEPHEN (*goes to door, left; it is still open a few inches*). Are you there, Dan?

DAN (*outside*). Yes, father.

SIR STEPHEN. I vowed I'd never set eyes on you again, till you owned you were wrong about those girders. You were wrong? (*No reply*) You were wrong? (*No reply*) Do you hear? Confound you, you know you were wrong! (*No reply*) Do you hear, Dan? Why won't you say you were wrong? You won't! (*Slams door, goes right, has an outburst of anger, recovers, listens, goes back to door, opens it a little*) Are you there, Dan?

DAN (*outside*). Yes, father.

SIR STEPHEN. You were wrong, Dan. (*No reply*) I haven't got long to live, Dan. It's angina pectoris, and the next attack will kill me. It may come at any moment. (*Very piteously*) Dan, you were wrong? Why won't you say so? Even if you tell a lie about it?

DAN (*outside*). I was wrong.

SIR STEPHEN. Ah! (*Flings open the door, Dan runs in. Sir Stephen meets him, embraces him affectionately, with a half sob*) Why didn't you say it before? You knew how much I loved you. Why did you keep apart from me all these years?

DAN. I'm sorry, sir. But perhaps it was for the best. I've done very well.

SIR STEPHEN. Of course you have. You're my son. But how much better you'd have done if you had stuck to me! How much better we both should have done! I'm sorry, too, Dan. I was wrong, too—not about the girders. You *were* wrong about them, Dan. But I was wrong to be angry and to swear I wouldn't see you. Ah, what could I have done with you at my side! I could have carried out my Milford Haven scheme. Perhaps it isn't too late! (*Going to bureau, getting more and more excited*) I've got all the plans here——

[*Taking out a heap of plans.*]

DAN. Not now, father; not now!

SIR STEPHEN. Yes, now, my boy! To-morrow may be too late! (*Going to table*) Come here, my lad! Oh, Dan, what years we've wasted! Come here! I want you to carry this out. You'll have immense opposition. Beat it down! You'll have to buy Shadwell and his lot. They're a dirty gang. But you'll have to do it. I hate bribery, Dan; but when you've got to do it, do it thoroughly! Then there's Mincham. Buy him over, if you can, at a small figure—say a thousand pounds—he's a mean little cur; but offer him that, and if he won't take it, snap your fingers at him, and swamp him! Remember the trick, the scoundrel's trick, he served me over the granite for the viaduct. Remember it, Dan, and don't spare him! Swamp him! Swamp him!*

[*With great energy of hate.*]

DAN. Father——

SIR STEPHEN. Bring your chair up. I must go on now—while it's all before me! I want you to carry this Milford Haven scheme out! I want it to be said that what old Stephen Famariss couldn't do, young Dan Famariss could! The father was a great man, the son shall be a greater, eh?

* 1 Kings, chap. ii., verses 8, 9.

Look here, you must start on this side. I've had all the soundings made——

DAN. To-morrow, father; to-morrow!

SIR STEPHEN. No, now! There's no such thing as to-morrow! We'll go through it now—in case——There's a great world-tussle coming, Dan—I shan't live to see it—but it's coming, and the engineer that ties England and America will do a good turn to both countries. England to America in four days! I want that crown to rest on your head! Look! You must begin here! Look! Just there! You must throw a bridge over——

[Stops suddenly, puts his hand to his heart; his face indicates intense agony. Nurse enters from bedroom.]

DAN. Father——

SIR STEPHEN (*persisting, with a wild aimless gesture*). Throw a bridge from here—to the other side, and then——

DAN. Father, what is it?

SIR STEPHEN. The end, Dan. (*His face shows that he is suffering great pain. A great burst of dance music. They offer to support him. He waves them off*) No, thank you. I'll die standing. England to America in four days. (*Long pause. He stands bolt upright with great determination*) You were wrong about those girders, Dan—My Peggie—I wonder if it's all moonshine—Peggie—My Peggie——

[Dies, tumbles over table. Music and dancing in ballroom louder than ever.]

CURTAIN.



SALOME

OSCAR WILDE

OSCAR WILDE was born in Dublin in 1854. His early education was received in his native country; after three years at Trinity College, Dublin, he completed his academic course at Oxford. While still at Oxford his reputation as a wit and an "esthete" had begun to spread, and when in 1881 he published his first book, a volume of poems, he was already famous. His first play, "Vera, or the Nihilists", appeared two years afterward. "The Duchess of Padua", a verse tragedy, followed in 1891. In 1884 Wilde married, and devoted his time entirely to writing, editorial work, and lecturing. The important plays — "Lady Windermere's Fan", "A Woman of No Importance", "An Ideal Husband", and "The Importance of Being Earnest" — were performed in London during the height of the author's brilliant career, between 1892 and 1895. That career was cut short in 1895 when Wilde was sentenced to two years' imprisonment at hard labor following a trial that roused the entire civilized world. On leaving prison Wilde adopted the name of Sebastian Melmoth and went to France; there and at Naples he dragged out the few remaining years of his life. He died in Paris in 1900.

In his "De Profundis" Wilde said: "I took the drama, the most objective form known to art, and made of it as personal a mode of expression as the lyric or the sonnet; at the same time I widened its range and enriched its characterization." This refers particularly to the modern plays. "Salome", originally written in French for production by Sarah Bernhardt, is rather a decorative panel than the expression of a dramatic idea; it is, however, a distinctly personal expression of a mood; but about all, it is an effective drama.

PLAYS

Plays marked with * are in one act only.

Vera, or the Nihilists (1883)	An Ideal Husband (1895)
The Duchess of Padua (1891)	The Importance of Being
Lady Windermere's Fan	Earnest (1895)
(1892)	*Salome (1896)
A Woman of No Importance	
(1893)	

All of Wilde's finished plays are published in a single volume, "The Plays of Oscar Wilde", by H. S. Nichols, New York.

References: Leonard Cresswell Ingleby, "Oscar Wilde", T. Werner Laurie, London; Arthur Ransome, "Oscar Wilde", Mitchell Kennerly, New York; Robert Sherrard, "The Real Oscar Wilde", Greening and Company, London; Lord Alfred Douglas, "Oscar Wilde and Myself", John Lane, New York; Anna, Comtesse de Bremont, "Oscar Wilde and his Mother", Everett and Company, London; W. W. Kenilworth, "A Study of Oscar Wilde", Fenno, London; Archibald Henderson, "European Dramatists", Stewart and Kidd, Cincinnati.

Magazines: *Current Literature*, vol. xxxix, 156, vol. xli, 518, vol. xlv, 287, New York; *Arena*, vol. xxxviii, p. 134, New York; *Dial*, vol. xlvi, p. 261, New York; *Bookman*, vol. xxxiv, p. 389, New York; *Nation*, vol. xcviii, pp. 566 and 598, and vol. xcix, p. 374, New York.

SALOME /
BY OSCAR WILDE

“Salome” was first produced at Paris, in 1896.

Characters

HEROD ANTIPAS, *Tetrarch of Judæa*

IOKANAAN, *the Prophet*

THE YOUNG SYRIAN, *Captain of the Guard*

TIGELLINUS, *a Young Roman*

A CAPPADOCIAN

A NUBIAN

FIRST SOLDIER

SECOND SOLDIER

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

JEWS, NAZARENES, ETC.

A SLAVE

NAAMAN, *the Executioner*

HERODIAS, *Wife of the Tetrarch*

SALOME, *Daughter of Herodias*

THE SLAVES OF SALOME

SALOME

SCENE. *A great terrace in the Palace of Herod, set above the banqueting-hall. Some soldiers are leaning over the balcony. To the right there is a gigantic staircase, to the left, at the back, an old cistern surrounded by a wall of green bronze. The moon is shining very brightly.*

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. How beautiful is the Princess Salome to-night!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. Look at the moon. How strange the moon seems! She is like a woman rising from a tomb. She is like a dead woman. One might fancy she was looking for dead things.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. She has a strange look. She is like a little princess who wears a yellow veil, and whose feet are of silver. She is like a princess who has little white doves for feet. One might fancy she was dancing.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. She is like a woman who is dead. She moves very slowly.

[Noise in the banqueting-hall.]

FIRST SOLDIER. What an uproar! Who are those wild beasts howling?

SECOND SOLDIER. The Jews. They are always like that. They are disputing about their religion.

FIRST SOLDIER. Why do they dispute about their religion?

SECOND SOLDIER. I cannot tell. They are always doing it. The Pharisees, for instance, say that there are angels, and the Sadducees declare that angels do not exist.

FIRST SOLDIER. I think it is ridiculous to dispute about such things.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. How beautiful is the Princess Salome to-night!

- THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. You are always looking at her. You look at her too much. It is dangerous to look at people in such fashion. Something terrible may happen.
- THE YOUNG SYRIAN. She is very beautiful to-night.
- FIRST SOLDIER. The Tetrarch has a sombre aspect.
- SECOND SOLDIER. Yes; he has a sombre aspect.
- FIRST SOLDIER. He is looking at something.
- SECOND SOLDIER. He is looking at some one.
- FIRST SOLDIER. At whom is he looking?
- SECOND SOLDIER. I cannot tell.
- THE YOUNG SYRIAN. How pale the Princess is! Never have I seen her so pale. She is like the shadow of a white rose in a mirror of silver.
- THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. You must not look at her. You look too much at her.
- FIRST SOLDIER. Herodias has filled the cup of the Tetrarch.
- THE CAPPADOCIAN. Is that the Queen Herodias, she who wears a black mitre sewed with pearls; and whose hair is powdered with blue dust?
- FIRST SOLDIER. Yes; that is Herodias, the Tetrarch's wife.
- SECOND SOLDIER. The Tetrarch is very fond of wine. He has wine of three sorts. One which is brought from the Island of Samothrace, and is purple like the cloak of Cæsar.
- THE CAPPADOCIAN. I have never seen Cæsar.
- SECOND SOLDIER. Another that comes from a town called Cyprus, and is as yellow as gold.
- THE CAPPADOCIAN. I love gold.
- SECOND SOLDIER. And the third is a wine of Sicily. That wine is as red as blood.
- THE NUBIAN. The gods of my country are very fond of blood. Twice in the year we sacrifice to them young men and maidens; fifty young men and a hundred maidens. But I am afraid that we never give them quite enough, for they are very harsh to us.
- THE CAPPADOCIAN. In my country there are no gods left. The Romans have driven them out. There are some who say that they have hidden themselves in the mountains,

but I do not believe it. Three nights I have been on the mountains seeking them everywhere. I did not find them, and at last I called them by their names, and they did not come. I think they are dead.

FIRST SOLDIER. The Jews worship a God that one cannot see.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. I cannot understand that.

FIRST SOLDIER. In fact, they only believe in things that one cannot see.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. That seems to me altogether ridiculous.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. After me shall come another mightier than I. I am not worthy so much as to unloose the latchet of his shoes. When he cometh the solitary places shall be glad. They shall blossom like the rose. The eyes of the blind shall see the day, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened. The sucking child shall put his hand upon the dragon's lair, he shall lead the lions by their manes.

SECOND SOLDIER. Make him be silent. He is always saying ridiculous things.

FIRST SOLDIER. No, no. He is a holy man. He is very gentle, too. Every day when I give him to eat he thanks me.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. Who is he?

FIRST SOLDIER. A prophet.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. What is his name?

FIRST SOLDIER. Iokanaan.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. Whence comes he?

FIRST SOLDIER. From the desert, where he fed on locusts and wild honey. He was clothed in camel's hair, and round his loins he had a leathern belt. He was very terrible to look upon. A great multitude used to follow him. He even had disciples.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. What is he talking of?

FIRST SOLDIER. We can never tell. Sometimes he says things that affright one, but it is impossible to understand what he says.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. May one see him?

FIRST SOLDIER. No. The Tetrarch has forbidden it.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. The Princess has hidden her face behind her fan! Her little white hands are fluttering like doves that fly to their dove-cots. They are like white butterflies. They are just like white butterflies.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. What is that to you? Why do you look at her? You must not look at her. Something terrible may happen.

THE CAPPADOCIAN (*pointing to the cistern*). What a strange prison!

SECOND SOLDIER. It is an old cistern.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. An old cistern! That must be a poisonous place in which to dwell!

SECOND SOLDIER. Oh, no! For instance, the Tetrarch's brother, his elder brother, the first husband of Herodias, the Queen, was imprisoned there for twelve years. It did not kill him. At the end of the twelve years he had to be strangled.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. Strangled? Who dared to do that?

SECOND SOLDIER (*pointing to the executioner, a huge negro*). That man yonder, Naaman.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. He was not afraid?

SECOND SOLDIER. Oh, no! The Tetrarch sent him the ring.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. What ring?

SECOND SOLDIER. The death ring. So he was not afraid.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. Yet it is a terrible thing to strangle a king.

FIRST SOLDIER. Why? Kings have but one neck, like other folk.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. I think it terrible.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. The Princess is getting up! She is leaving the table! She looks very troubled. Ah, she is coming this way. Yes, she is coming towards us. How pale she is! Never have I seen her so pale.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. Do not look at her. I pray you not to look at her.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. She is like a dove that has strayed. She is like a narcissus trembling in the wind. She is like a silver flower.

[*Enter Salome.*]

SALOME. I will not stay. I cannot stay. Why does the Tetrarch look at me all the while with his mole's eyes under his shaking eyelids? It is strange that the husband of my mother looks at me like that. I know not what it means. Of a truth, I know it too well.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. You have left the feast, Princess?

SALOME. How sweet is the air here! I can breathe here! Within there are Jews from Jerusalem who are tearing each other in pieces over their foolish ceremonies, and barbarians who drink and drink, and spill their wine on the pavement, and Greeks from Smyrna with painted eyes and painted cheeks, and frizzed hair curled in columns, and Egyptians silent and subtle, with long nails of jade and russet cloaks, and Romans brutal and coarse, with their uncouth jargon. Ah! how I loathe the Romans! They are rough and common, and they give themselves the airs of noble lords.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Will you be seated, Princess?

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. Why do you speak to her? Oh! something terrible will happen. Why do you look at her?

SALOME. How good to see the moon! She is like a little piece of money, a little silver flower. She is cold and chaste. I am sure she is a virgin. She has the beauty of a virgin. Yes, she is a virgin. She has never defiled herself. She has never abandoned herself to men, like the other goddesses.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. Behold! the Lord hath come. The Son of Man is at hand. The centaurs have hidden themselves in the rivers, and the nymphs have left the rivers, and are lying beneath the leaves in the forests.

SALOME. Who was that who cried out?

SECOND SOLDIER. The prophet, Princess.

SALOME. Ah, the prophet! He of whom the Tetrarch is afraid?

SECOND SOLDIER. We know nothing of that, Princess. It was the prophet Iokanaan who cried out.

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. Is it your pleasure that I bid them bring your litter, Princess? The night is fair in the garden.

SALOME. He says terrible things about my mother, does he not?

SECOND SOLDIER. We never understand what he says, Princess.

SALOME. Yes; he says terrible things about her.

[Enter a slave.]

THE SLAVE. Princess, the Tetrarch prays you to return to the feast.

SALOME. I will not return.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Pardon me, Princess, but if you return not some misfortune may happen.

SALOME. Is he an old man, this prophet?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess, it were better to return. Suffer me to lead you in.

SALOME. This prophet, is he an old man?

FIRST SOLDIER. No, Princess, he is quite young.

SECOND SOLDIER. One cannot be sure. There are those who say that he is Elias.

SALOME. Who is Elias?

SECOND SOLDIER. A prophet of this country in bygone days, Princess.

THE SLAVE. What answer may I give the Tetrarch from the Princess?

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. Rejoice not, O land of Palestine, because the rod of him who smote thee is broken. For from the seed of the serpent shall come a basilisk, and that which is born of it shall devour the birds.

SALOME. What a strange voice! I would speak with him.

FIRST SOLDIER. I fear it may not be, Princess. The Tetrarch does not suffer any one to speak with him. He has even forbidden the high priest to speak with him.

SALOME. I desire to speak with him.

FIRST SOLDIER. It is impossible, Princess.

SALOME. I will speak with him.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Would it not be better to return to the banquet?

SALOME. Bring forth this prophet.

[Exit the slave.]

FIRST SOLDIER. We dare not, Princess.

SALOME (*approaching the cistern and looking down into it*).

How black it is down there! It must be terrible to be in so black a hole! It is like a tomb. (*To the soldiers*) Did you not hear me? Bring out the prophet. I would look on him.

SECOND SOLDIER. Princess, I beg you, do not require this of us.

SALOME. You are making me wait upon your pleasure.

FIRST SOLDIER. Princess, our lives belong to you, but we cannot do what you have asked of us. And indeed, it is not of us that you should ask this thing.

SALOME (*looking at the young Syrian*). Ah!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. Oh, what is going to happen? I am sure that something terrible will happen.

SALOME (*going up to the young Syrian*). Thou wilt do this thing for me, wilt thou not, Narraboth? Thou wilt do this thing for me. I have ever been kind towards thee. Thou wilt do it for me. I would but look at him, this strange prophet. Men have talked so much of him. Often I have heard the Tetrarch talk of him. I think he is afraid of him, the Tetrarch. Art thou, even thou, also afraid of him, Narraboth?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. I fear him not, Princess; there is no man I fear. But the Tetrarch has formally forbidden that any man should raise the cover of this well.

SALOME. Thou wilt do this thing for me, Narraboth, and to-morrow when I pass in my litter beneath the gateway of the idol-sellers, I will let fall for thee a little flower, a little green flower.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess, I cannot, I cannot.

SALOME (*smiling*). Thou wilt do this thing for me, Narraboth. Thou knowest that thou wilt do this thing for me. And on the morrow when I shall pass in my litter by the bridge of the idol-buyers, I will look at thee through the muslin veils; I will look at thee, Narraboth; it may be I will smile at thee. Look at me, Narraboth; look at me. Ah! thou knowest that thou wilt do what I ask of thee. Thou knowest it. I know that thou wilt do this thing.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN (*signing to the third soldier*). Let the prophet come forth. The Princess Salome desires to see him.

SALOME. Ah!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. Oh! How strange the moon looks! Like the hand of a dead woman who is seeking to cover herself with a shroud.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. She has a strange aspect! She is like a little Princess, whose eyes are eyes of amber. Through the clouds of muslin she is smiling like a little Princess.

[*The prophet comes out of the cistern. Salome looks at him and steps slowly back.*]

IOKANAAN. Where is he whose cup of abominations is now full? Where is he, who in a robe of silver shall one day die in the face of all the people? Bid him come forth, that he may hear the voice of him who hath cried in the waste places and in the houses of kings.

SALOME. Of whom is he speaking?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. No one can tell, Princess.

IOKANAAN. Where is she who saw the images of men painted on the walls, even the images of the Chaldæans painted with colors, and gave herself up unto the lust of her eyes, and sent ambassadors into the land of the Chaldæans?

SALOME. It is of my mother that he is speaking.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Oh, no, Princess.

SALOME. Yes; it is of my mother that he is speaking.

IOKANAAN. Where is she who gave herself unto the Captains of Assyria, who have baldricks on their loins, and crowns

of many colors on their heads? Where is she who hath given herself to the young men of the Egyptians, who are clothed in fine linen and hyacinth, whose shields are of gold, whose helmets are of silver, whose bodies are mighty? Go, bid her rise up from the bed of her abominations, from the bed of her incestuousness, that she may hear the words of him who prepareth the way of the Lord, that she may repent of her iniquities. Though she will not repent, but will stick fast in her abominations, go bid her come, for the fan of the Lord is in His hand.

SALOME. Ah, but he is terrible, he is terrible!

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Do not stay here, Princess, I beseech you.

SALOME. It is his eyes above all that are terrible. They are like black holes burned by torches in the tapestry of Tyre. They are like the black cavern where the dragons live, the black caverns of Egypt, in which the dragons make their lairs. They are like black lakes troubled by fantastic moons. Do you think he will speak again?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Do not stay here, Princess. I pray you do not stay here.

SALOME. How wasted he is! He is like a thin ivory statue. He is like an image of silver. I am sure he is chaste, as the moon is. He is like a moonbeam, like a shaft of silver. His flesh must be very cold, cold as ivory. I would look closer at him.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. No, no, Princess!

SALOME. I must look at him closer.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess! Princess!

IOKANAAN. Who is this woman who is looking at me? I will not have her look at me. Wherefore doth she look at me with her golden eyes, under her gilded eyelids? I know not who she is. I do not desire to know who she is. Bid her begone. It is not to hear her that I would speak.

SALOME. I am Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judæa.

IOKANAAN. Back! daughter of Babylon! Come not near the chosen of the Lord. Thy mother hath filled the earth with the wine of her iniquities, and the cry of her sinning hath come up even to the ears of God.

SALOME. Speak again, Iokanaan. Thy voice is as music to mine ear.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess! Princess! Princess!

SALOME. Speak again! Speak again, Iokanaan, and tell me what I must do.

IOKANAAN. Daughter of Sodom, come not near me! But cover thy face with a veil, and scatter ashes upon thine head, and get thee to the desert, and seek out the Son of Man.

SALOME. Who is he, the Son of Man? Is he as beautiful as thou art, Iokanaan?

IOKANAAN. Get thee behind me! I hear in the palace the beating of the wings of the angel of death.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess, I beseech thee to go within.

IOKANAAN. Angel of the Lord God, what dost thou here with thy sword? Whom seekest thou in the palace? The day of him who shall die in a robe of silver has not yet come.

SALOME. Iokanaan!

IOKANAAN. Who speaketh?

SALOME. I am amorous of thy body, Iokanaan! Thy body is white, like the lilies of the field that the mower hath never mowed. Thy body is white like the snows that lie on the mountains of Judæa, and come down into the valleys. The roses in the gardens of the Queen of Arabia are not so white as thy body. Neither the roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia, the garden of spices of the Queen of Arabia, nor the feet of the dawn when they light on the leaves, nor the breast of the moon when she lies on the breast of the sea. There is nothing in this world so white as thy body. Suffer me to touch thy body.

IOKANAAN. Back! daughter of Babylon! By woman came evil into the world. Speak not to me. I will not listen to thee. I listen but to the voice of the Lord God.

SALOME. Thy body is hideous. It is like the body of a leper. It is like a plastered wall, where vipers have crawled; like a plastered wall where the scorpions have made their nest. It is like a whited sepulchre, full of loathsome things. It is horrible; thy body is horrible. It is of thy hair I am enamoured, Iokanaan. Thy hair is like clusters of grapes, like the clusters of black grapes that hang from the vine-trees of Edom in the land of the Edomites. Thy hair is like the cedars of Lebanon, like the great cedars of Lebanon that give their shade to the lions and to the robbers who would hide them by day. The long black nights, when the moon hides her face, when the stars are afraid, are not so black as thy hair. The silence that dwells in the forest is not so black. There is nothing in the world that is so black as thy hair. Suffer me to touch thy hair.

IOKANAAN. Back, daughter of Sodom! Touch me not. Profane not the temple of the Lord God.

SALOME. Thy hair is horrible. It is covered with mire and dust. It is like a crown of thorns placed on thy head. It is like a knot of serpents coiled round thy neck. I love not thy hair. It is thy mouth that I desire, Iokanaan. Thy mouth is like a band of scarlet on a tower of ivory. It is like a pomegranate cut in twain with a knife of ivory. The pomegranate flowers that blossom in the gardens of Tyre, and are redder than roses, are not so red. The red blasts of trumpets that herald the approach of kings, and make afraid the enemy, are not so red. Thy mouth is redder than the feet of those who tread the wine in the wine-press. It is redder than the feet of the doves who inhabit the temples and are fed by the priests. It is redder than the feet of him who cometh from a forest where he hath slain a lion, and seen gilded tigers. Thy mouth is like a branch of coral that fishers have found in the twilight of the sea, the coral that they keep for the kings! It is like the vermilion that the Moabites find in the mines of Moab, the vermilion that the kings take from them. It

is like the bow of the King of the Persians, that is tinted with vermilion, and is tipped with coral. There is nothing in the world so red as thy mouth. Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

IOKANAAN. Never! daughter of Babylon! Daughter of Sodom! never!

SALOME. I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. I will kiss thy mouth.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess, Princess, thou who art like a garden of myrrh, thou who art the dove of all doves, look not at this man, look not at him! Do not speak such words to him. I cannot endure it. Princess, do not speak these things.

SALOME. I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Ah!

[He kills himself, and falls between Salome and Iokanaan.]

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. The young Syrian has slain himself! The young captain has slain himself! He has slain himself who was my friend! I gave him a little box of perfumes and ear-rings wrought in silver, and now he has killed himself! Ah, did he not say that some misfortune would happen? I, too, said it, and it has come to pass. Well I knew that the moon was seeking a dead thing, but I knew not that it was he whom she sought. Ah! why did I not hide him from the moon? If I had hidden him in a cavern she would not have seen him.

FIRST SOLDIER. Princess, the young captain has just slain himself.

SALOME. Suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan.

IOKANAAN. Art thou not afraid, daughter of Herodias? Did I not tell thee that I heard in the palace the beating of the wings of the angel of death, and hath he not come, the angel of death?

SALOME. Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

IOKANAAN. Daughter of adultery, there is but one who can save thee. It is He of whom I spake. Go seek Him. He is in a boat on the sea of Galilee, and He talketh with His

disciples. Kneel down on the shore of the sea, and call unto Him by His name. When He cometh to thee, and to all who call on Him He cometh, bow thyself at His feet and ask of Him the remission of thy sins.

SALOME. Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

IOKANAAN. Cursed be thou! Daughter of an incestuous mother, be thou accursed!

SALOME. I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan.

IOKANAAN. I will not look at thee. Thou art accursed, Salome; thou art accursed.

[He goes down into the cistern.]

SALOME. I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. I will kiss thy mouth.

FIRST SOLDIER. We must bear away the body to another place. The Tetrarch does not care to see dead bodies, save the bodies of those whom he himself has slain.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. He was my brother, and nearer to me than a brother. I gave him a little box of perfumes, and a ring of agate that he wore always on his hand. In the evening we were wont to walk by the river, and among the almond-trees, and he used to tell me of the things of his country. He spake ever very low. The sound of his voice was like the sound of the flute, of one who playeth upon the flute. Also he had much joy to gaze at himself in the river. I used to reproach him for that.

SECOND SOLDIER. You are right; we must hide the body. The Tetrarch must not see it.

FIRST SOLDIER. The Tetrarch will not come to this place. He never comes on the terrace. He is too much afraid of the prophet.

[Enter Herod, Herodias, and all the Court.]

HEROD. Where is Salome? Where is the Princess? Why did she not return to the banquet as I commanded her? Ah! there she is!

HERODIAS. You must not look at her! You are always looking at her!

HEROD. The moon has a strange look to-night. Has she not a strange look? She is like a mad woman, and a mad woman who is seeking everywhere for lovers. She is naked, too. She is quite naked. The clouds are seeking to clothe her nakedness, but she will not let them. She shows herself naked in the sky. She reels through the clouds like a drunken woman. I am sure she is looking for lovers. Does she not reel like a drunken woman? She is like a mad woman, is she not?

HERODIAS. No; the moon is like the moon, that is all. Let us go within. We have nothing to do here.

HEROD. I will stay here! Manasseh, lay carpets there. Light torches. Bring forth the ivory tables, and the tables of jasper. The air here is sweet. I will drink more wine with my guests. We must show all honor to the ambassadors of Cæsar.

HERODIAS. It is not because of them that you remain.

HEROD. Yes; the air is very sweet. Come, Herodias, our guests await us. Ah! I have slipped! I have slipped in blood! It is an ill omen. It is a very ill omen. Wherefore is there blood here? And this body, what does this body here? Think you I am like the King of Egypt, who gives no feast to his guests but that he shows them a corpse? Whose is it? I will not look on it.

FIRST SOLDIER. It is our captain, sire. It is the young Syrian whom you made captain of the guard but three days gone.

HEROD. I issued no order that he should be slain.

SECOND SOLDIER. He slew himself, sire.

HEROD. For what reason? I had made him captain of my guard!

SECOND SOLDIER. We do not know, sire. But with his own hand he slew himself.

HEROD. That seems strange to me. I had thought it was but the Roman philosophers who slew themselves. Is it not true, Tigellinus, that the philosophers at Rome slay themselves?

TIGELLINUS. There be some who slay themselves, sire. They are the Stoics. The Stoics are people of no cultivation. They are ridiculous people. I myself regard them as being perfectly ridiculous.

HEROD. I also. It is ridiculous to kill one's self.

TIGELLINUS. Everybody at Rome laughs at them. The Emperor has written a satire against them. It is recited everywhere.

HEROD. Ah! he has written a satire against them? Cæsar is wonderful. He can do everything. It is strange that the young Syrian has slain himself. I am sorry he has slain himself. I am very sorry. For he was fair to look upon. He was even very fair. He had very languorous eyes. I remember that I saw that he looked languorously at Salome. Truly, I thought he looked too much at her.

HERODIAS. There are others who look too much at her.

HEROD. His father was a king. I drove him from his kingdom. And of his mother, who was a queen, you made a slave, Herodias. So he was here as my guest, as it were, and for that reason I made him my captain. I am sorry he is dead. Ho! why have you left the body here? It must be taken to some other place. I will not look at it,—away with it! (*They take away the body*) It is cold here. There is a wind blowing. Is there not a wind blowing?

HERODIAS. No; there is no wind.

HEROD. I tell you there is a wind that blows. And I hear in the air something that is like the beating of wings, like the beating of vast wings. Do you not hear it?

HERODIAS. I hear nothing.

HEROD. I hear it no longer. But I heard it. It was the blowing of the wind. It has passed away. But no, I hear it again. Do you not hear it? It is just like a beating of wings.

HERODIAS. I tell you there is nothing. You are ill. Let us go within.

HEROD. I am not ill. It is your daughter who is sick to death. Never have I seen her so pale.

HERODIAS. I have told you not to look at her.

HEROD. Pour me forth wine. (*Wine is brought*) Salome, come drink a little wine with me. I have here a wine that is exquisite. Cæsar himself sent it me. Dip into it thy little red lips, that I may drain the cup.

SALOME. I am not thirsty, Tetrarch.

HEROD. You hear how she answers me, this daughter of yours?

HERODIAS. She does right. Why are you always gazing at her?

HEROD. Bring me ripe fruits. (*Fruits are brought*) Salome, come and eat fruits with me. I love to see in a fruit the mark of thy little teeth. Bite but a little of this fruit, that I may eat what is left.

SALOME. I am not hungry, Tetrarch.

HEROD (*to Herodias*). You see how you have brought up this daughter of yours.

HERODIAS. My daughter and I come of a royal race. As for thee, thy father was a camel driver! He was a thief and a robber to boot!

HEROD. Thou liest!

HERODIAS. Thou knowest well that it is true.

HEROD. Salome, come and sit next to me. I will give thee the throne of thy mother.

SALOME. I am not tired, Tetrarch.

HERODIAS. You see in what regard she holds you.

HEROD. Bring me——What is it that I desire? I forget. Ah! ah! I remember.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. Behold, the time is come! That which I foretold has come to pass. The day that I spake of is at hand.

HERODIAS. Bid him be silent. I will not listen to his voice. This man is forever hurling insults against me.

HEROD. He has said nothing against you. Besides, he is a very great prophet.

HERODIAS. I do not believe in prophets. Can a man tell what will come to pass? No man knows it. Also, he is forever insulting me. But I think you are afraid of him. I know well that you are afraid of him.

HEROD. I am not afraid of him. I am afraid of no man.

HERODIAS. I tell you you are afraid of him. If you are not afraid of him, why do you not deliver him to the Jews, who for these six months past have been clamoring for him?

A JEW. Truly, my lord, it were better to deliver him into our hands.

HEROD. Enough on this subject. I have already given you my answer. I will not deliver him into your hands. He is a holy man. He is a man who has seen God.

A JEW. That cannot be. There is no man who hath seen God since the prophet Elias. He is the last man who saw God face to face. In these days God doth not show Himself. God hideth Himself. Therefore great evils have come upon the land.

ANOTHER JEW. Verily, no man knoweth if Elias the prophet did indeed see God. Peradventure it was but the shadow of God that he saw.

A THIRD JEW. God is at no time hidden. He showeth Himself at all times and in all places. God is in what is evil even as He is in what is good.

A FOURTH JEW. Thou shouldst not say that. It is a very dangerous doctrine. It is a doctrine that cometh from Alexandria, where men teach the philosophy of the Greeks. And the Greeks are Gentiles. They are not even circumcised.

A FIFTH JEW. No man can tell how God worketh. His ways are very dark. It may be that the things which we call evil are good, and that the things which we call good are evil. There is no knowledge of anything. We can but bow our heads to His will, for God is very strong. He breaketh in pieces the strong together with the weak, for He regardeth not any man.

FIRST JEW. Thou speakest truly. Verily, God is terrible. He breaketh in pieces the strong and the weak as men break corn in a mortar. But as for this man, he hath never seen God. No man hath seen God since the prophet Elias.

HERODIAS. Make them be silent. They weary me.

HEROD. But I have heard it said that Iokanaan is in very truth your prophet Elias.

THE JEW. That cannot be. It is more than three hundred years since the days of the prophet Elias.

HEROD. There be some who say that this man is Elias the prophet.

A NAZARENE. I am sure that he is Elias the prophet.

THE JEW. Nay, but he is not Elias the prophet.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. Behold the day is at hand, the day of the Lord, and I hear upon the mountains the feet of Him who shall be the Saviour of the world.

HEROD. What does that mean? The Saviour of the world?

TIGELLINUS. It is a title that Cæsar adopts.

HEROD. But Cæsar is not coming into Judæa. Only yesterday I received letters from Rome. They contained nothing concerning this matter. And you, Tigellinus, who were at Rome during the winter, you heard nothing concerning this matter, did you?

TIGELLINUS. Sire, I heard nothing concerning the matter. I was but explaining the title. It is one of Cæsar's titles.

HEROD. But Cæsar cannot come. He is too gouty. They say that his feet are like the feet of an elephant. Also there are reasons of state. He who leaves Rome loses Rome. He will not come. Howbeit, Cæsar is lord, he will come if such be his pleasure. Nevertheless, I think he will not come.

FIRST NAZARENE. It was not concerning Cæsar that the prophet spake these words, sire.

HEROD. How?—it was not concerning Cæsar?

FIRST NAZARENE. No, my lord.

HEROD. Concerning whom then did he speak?

FIRST NAZARENE. Concerning Messias, who hath come.

A JEW. Messias hath not come.

FIRST NAZARENE. He hath come, and everywhere He worketh miracles!

HERODIAS. Ho! ho! miracles! I do not believe in miracles. I have seen too many. (*To the Page*) My fan.

FIRST NAZARENE. This Man worketh true miracles. Thus, at a marriage which took place in a little town of Galilee, a town of some importance, He changed water into wine. Certain persons who were present related it to me. Also He healed two lepers that were seated before the Gate of Capernaum simply by touching them.

SECOND NAZARENE. Nay; it was two blind men that He healed at Capernaum.

FIRST NAZARENE. Nay; they were lepers. But He hath healed blind people also, and He was seen on a mountain talking with angels.

A SADDUCEE. Angels do not exist.

A PHARISEE. Angels exist, but I do not believe that this Man has talked with them.

FIRST NAZARENE. He was seen by a great multitude of people talking with angels.

HERODIAS. How these men weary me! They are ridiculous! They are altogether ridiculous! (*To the Page*) Well! my fan? (*The Page gives her the fan*) You have a dreamer's look. You must not dream. It is only sick people who dream.

[*She strikes the Page with her fan.*]

SECOND NAZARENE. There is also the miracle of the daughter of Jairus.

FIRST NAZARENE. Yea, that is true. No man can gainsay it.

HERODIAS. Those men are mad. They have looked too long on the moon. Command them to be silent.

HEROD. What is this miracle of the daughter of Jairus?

FIRST NAZARENE. The daughter of Jairus was dead. This Man raised her from the dead.

HEROD. How! He raises people from the dead?

FIRST NAZARENE. Yea, sire; He raiseth the dead.

HEROD. I do not wish Him to do that. I forbid Him to do that. I suffer no man to raise the dead. This Man must be found and told that I forbid Him to raise the dead. Where is this Man at present?

SECOND NAZARENE. He is in every place, my lord, but it is hard to find Him.

FIRST NAZARENE. It is said that He is now in Samaria.

A JEW. It is easy to see that this is not Messias, if He is in Samaria. It is not to the Samaritans that Messias shall come. The Samaritans are accursed. They bring no offerings to the Temple.

SECOND NAZARENE. He left Samaria a few days since. I think that at the present moment He is in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem.

FIRST NAZARENE. No; He is not there. I have just come from Jerusalem. For two months they have had no tidings of Him.

HEROD. No matter! But let them find Him, and tell Him, thus saith Herod the King, 'I will not suffer Thee to raise the dead.' To change water into wine, to heal the lepers and the blind. He may do these things if He will. I say nothing against these things. In truth I hold it a kindly deed to heal a leper. But no man shall raise the dead. It would be terrible if the dead came back.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. Ah! The wanton one! The harlot! Ah! the daughter of Babylon with her golden eyes and her gilded eyelids! Thus saith the Lord God, Let there come up against her a multitude of men. Let the people take stones and stone her.

HERODIAS. Command him to be silent!

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. Let the captains of the hosts pierce her with their swords, let them crush her beneath their shields.

HERODIAS. Nay, but it is infamous.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. It is thus that I will wipe out all wickedness from the earth, and that all women shall learn not to imitate her abominations.

HERODIAS. You hear what he says against me? You suffer him to revile her who is your wife?

HEROD. He did not speak your name.

HERODIAS. What does that matter? You know well that it is I whom he seeks to revile. And I am your wife, am I not?

HEROD. Of a truth, dear and noble Herodias, you are my wife, and before that you were the wife of my brother.

HERODIAS. It was thou didst snatch me from his arms.

HEROD. Of a truth I was stronger than he was. But let us not talk of that matter. I do not desire to talk of it. It is the cause of the terrible words that the prophet has spoken. Peradventure on account of it a misfortune will come. Let us not speak of this matter. Noble Herodias, we are not mindful of our guests. Fill thou my cup, my well-beloved. Ho! fill with wine the great goblets of silver, and the great goblets of glass. I will drink to Cæsar. There are Romans here, we must drink to Cæsar.

ALL. Cæsar! Cæsar!

HEROD. Do you not see your daughter, how pale she is?

HERODIAS. What is it to you if she be pale or not?

HEROD. Never have I seen her so pale.

HERODIAS. You must not look at her.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. In that day the sun shall become black like sackcloth of hair, and the moon shall become like blood, and the stars of the heaven shall fall upon the earth like unripe figs that fall from the fig-tree, and the kings of the earth shall be afraid.

HERODIAS. Ah! ah! I should like to see that day of which he speaks, when the moon shall become like blood, and when the stars shall fall upon the earth like unripe figs. This prophet talks like a drunken man, but I cannot suffer the sound of his voice. I hate his voice. Command him to be silent.

HEROD. I will not. I cannot understand what it is that he saith, but it may be an omen.

HERODIAS. I do not believe in omens. He speaks like a drunken man.

HEROD. It may be he is drunk with the wine of God.

HERODIAS. What wine is that, the wine of God? From what vineyards is it gathered? In what winepress may one find it?

HEROD (*from this point he looks all the while at Salome*). Tigellinus, when you were at Rome of late, did the Emperor speak with you on the subject of —— ?

TIGELLINUS. On what subject, my lord?

HEROD. On what subject? Ah! I asked you a question, did I not? I have forgotten what I would have asked you.

HERODIAS. You are looking again at my daughter. You must not look at her. I have already said so.

HEROD. You say nothing else.

HERODIAS. I say it again.

HEROD. And that restoration of the Temple about which they have talked so much, will anything be done? They say that the veil of the Sanctuary has disappeared, do they not?

HERODIAS. It was thyself didst steal it. Thou speakest at random and without wit. I will not stay here. Let us go within.

HEROD. Dance for me, Salome.

HERODIAS. I will not have her dance.

SALOME. I have no desire to dance, Tetrarch.

HEROD. Salome, daughter of Herodias, dance for me.

HERODIAS. Peace. Let her alone.

HEROD. I command thee to dance, Salome.

SALOME. I will not dance, Tetrarch.

HERODIAS (*laughing*). You see how she obeys you.

HEROD. What is it to me whether she dance or not? It is nought to me. To-night I am happy. I am exceeding happy. Never have I been so happy.

FIRST SOLDIER. The Tetrarch has a sombre look. Has he not a sombre look?

SECOND SOLDIER. Yes, he has a sombre look.

HEROD. Wherefore should I not be happy? Cæsar, who is lord of the world, Cæsar, who is lord of all things, loves me well. He has just sent me most precious gifts. Also, he has promised me to summon to Rome the King of Cappadocia, who is mine enemy. It may be that at Rome he will crucify him, for he is able to do all things that he has a mind to do. Verily, Cæsar is lord. Therefore I do well to be happy. I am very happy; never have I been so happy. There is nothing in the world that can mar my happiness.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. He shall be seated on his throne. He shall be clothed in scarlet and purple. In his hand he shall bear a golden cup full of his blasphemies. And the angel of the Lord shall smite him. He shall be eaten of worms.

HERODIAS. You hear what he says about you. He says that you shall be eaten of worms.

HEROD. It is not of me that he speaks. He speaks never against me. It is of the King of Cappadocia that he speaks; the King of Cappadocia, who is mine enemy. It is he who shall be eaten of worms. It is not I. Never has he spoken word against me, this prophet, save that I sinned in taking to wife the wife of my brother. It may be he is right. For, of truth, you are sterile.

HERODIAS. I am sterile, I? You say that, you that are ever looking at my daughter, you that would have her dance for your pleasure? You speak as a fool. I have borne a child. You have gotten no child, no, not on one of your slaves. It is you who are sterile, not I.

HEROD. Peace, woman! I say that you are sterile. You have borne me no child, and the prophet says that our marriage is not a true marriage. He says that it is a marriage of incest, a marriage that will bring evils. I fear he is right; I am sure that he is right. But it is not the hour to speak of these things. I would be happy at this moment. Of a truth, I am happy. There is nothing I lack.

- HERODIAS. I am glad you are of so fair a humour to-night. It is not your custom. But it is late. Let us go within. Do not forget that we hunt at sunrise. All honours must be shown to Cæsar's ambassadors, must they not?
- SECOND SOLDIER. The Tetrarch has a sombre look.
- FIRST SOLDIER. Yes, he has a sombre look.
- HEROD. Salome, Salome, dance for me. I pray thee dance for me. I am sad to-night. Yes, I am passing sad to-night. When I came hither I slipped in blood, which is an ill omen; also I heard in the air a beating of wings, a beating of giant wings. I cannot tell what that may mean. I am sad to-night. Therefore dance for me. Dance for me, Salome, I beseech thee. If thou dancest for me thou mayest ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give it thee. Yes, dance for me, Salome, and whatsoever thou shalt ask of me I will give it thee, even unto the half of my kingdom.
- SALOME (*rising*). Will you indeed give me whatsoever I shall ask of you, Tetrarch?
- HERODIAS. Do not dance, my daughter.
- HEROD. Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, even unto the half of my kingdom.
- SALOME. You swear it, Tetrarch?
- HEROD. I swear it, Salome.
- HERODIAS. Do not dance, my daughter.
- SALOME. By what will you swear this thing, Tetrarch?
- HEROD. By my life, by my crown, by my gods. Whatsoever thou shalt desire I will give it thee, even to the half of my kingdom, if thou wilt but dance for me. O Salome, Salome, dance for me!
- SALOME. You have sworn an oath, Tetrarch.
- HEROD. I have sworn an oath.
- HERODIAS. My daughter, do not dance.
- HEROD. Even to the half of my kingdom. Thou wilt be passing fair as a queen, Salome, if it please thee to ask for the half of my kingdom. Will she not be fair as a queen? Ah! it is cold here! There is an icy wind, and I hear—wherefore do I hear in the air this beating of wings? Ah!

one might fancy a huge black bird that hovers over the terrace. Why can I not see it, this bird? The beat of its wings is terrible. The breath of the wind of its wings is terrible. It is a chill wind. Nay, but it is not cold, it is hot. I am choking. Pour water on my hands. Give me snow to eat. Loosen my mantle. Quick! quick! loosen my mantle. Nay, but leave it. It is my garland that hurts me, my garland of roses. The flowers are like fire. They have burned my forehead. (*He tears the wreath from his head, and throws it on the table*) Ah! I can breathe now. How red those petals are! They are like stains of blood on the cloth. That does not matter. It is not wise to find symbols in everything that one sees. It makes life too full of terrors. It were better to say that stains of blood are as lovely as rose-petals. It were better far to say that — But we will not speak of this. Now I am happy. I am passing happy. Have I not the right to be happy? Your daughter is going to dance for me. Wilt thou not dance for me, Salome? Thou hast promised to dance for me.

HERODIAS. I will not have her dance.

SALOME. I will dance for you, Tetrarch.

HEROD. You hear what your daughter says. She is going to dance for me. Thou doest well to dance for me, Salome. And when thou hast danced for me, forget not to ask of me whatsoever thou hast a mind to ask. Whatsoever thou shalt desire I will give it thee, even to the half of my kingdom. I have sworn it, have I not?

SALOME. Thou hast sworn it, Tetrarch.

HEROD. And I have never failed of my word. I am not of those who break their oaths. I know not how to lie. I am the slave of my word, and my word is the word of a king. The King of Cappadocia had ever a lying tongue, but he is no true king. He is a coward. Also he owes me money that he will not repay. He has even insulted my ambassadors. He has spoken words that were wounding. But Cæsar will crucify him when he comes to Rome. I

know that Cæsar will crucify him. And if he crucify him not, yet will he die, being eaten of worms. The prophet has prophesied it. Well! Wherefore dost thou tarry, Salome?

SALOME. I am waiting until my slaves bring perfumes to me and the seven veils, and take from off my feet my sandals.

[Slaves bring perfumes and the seven veils, and take off the sandals of Salome.]

HEROD. Ah, thou art to dance with naked feet! 'Tis well! 'Tis well! Thy little feet will be like white doves. They will be little white flowers that dance upon the trees. No, no, she is going to dance on blood! There is blood spilt on the ground. She must not dance on blood. It were an evil omen.

HERODIAS. What is it to thee if she dance on blood? Thou hast waded deep enough in it.

HEROD. What is it to me? Ah! look at the moon! She has become red. She has become red as blood. Ah! the prophet prophesied truly. He prophesied that the moon would become as blood. Did he not prophesy it? All of ye heard him prophesying it. And now the moon has become as blood. Do ye not see it?

HERODIAS. Oh, yes, I see it well, and the stars are falling like unripe figs, are they not? And the sun is becoming black like sackcloth of hair, and the kings of the earth are afraid. That, at least, one can see. The prophet is justified of his words in that at least, for truly the kings of the earth are afraid. Let us go within. You are sick. They will say at Rome that you are mad. Let us go within, I tell you.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. Who is this who cometh from Edom, who is this who cometh from Bozra, whose raiment is dyed with purple, who shineth in the beauty of his garments, who walketh mighty in his greatness? Wherefore is thy raiment stained with scarlet?

HERODIAS. Let us go within. The voice of that man mad-

dens me. I will not have my daughter dance while he is continually crying out. I will not have her dance while you look at her in this fashion. In a word, I will not have her dance.

HEROD. Do not rise, my wife, my queen; it will avail thee nothing. I will not go within till she hath danced. Dance, Salome, dance for me.

HERODIAS. Do not dance, my daughter.

SALOME. I am ready, Tetrarch.

[*Salome dances the dance of the seven veils.*]

HEROD. Ah! wonderful! wonderful! You see that she has danced for me, your daughter. Come near, Salome, come near, that I may give thee thy fee. Ah! I pay a royal price to those who dance for my pleasure. I will pay thee royally. I will give thee whatsoever thy soul desireth. What wouldst thou have? Speak.

SALOME (*kneeling*). I would that they presently bring me in a silver charger——

HEROD (*laughing*). In a silver charger? Surely yes, in a silver charger. She is charming, is she not? What is it that thou wouldst have in a silver charger, O sweet and fair Salome, thou that art fairer than all the daughters of Judæa? What wouldst thou have them bring thee in a silver charger? Tell me. Whatsoever it may be, thou shalt receive it. My treasures belong to thee. What is that thou wouldst have, Salome?

SALOME (*rising*). The head of Iokanaan.

HERODIAS. Ah! that is well said, my daughter.

HEROD. No, no!

HERODIAS. That is well said, my daughter.

HEROD. No, no, Salome. It is not that thou desirest. Do not listen to thy mother's voice. She is ever giving evil counsel. Do not heed her.

SALOME. It is not my mother's voice that I heed. It is for mine own pleasure that I ask the head of Iokanaan in a silver charger. You have sworn an oath, Herod. Forget not that you have sworn an oath.

HEROD. I know it. I have sworn an oath by my gods. I know it well. But I pray thee, Salome, ask of me something else. Ask of me the half of my kingdom, and I will give it thee. But ask not of me what thy lips have asked.

SALOME. I ask of you the head of Iokanaan.

HEROD. No, no; I will not give it thee.

SALOME. You have sworn an oath, Herod.

HERODIAS. Yes, you have sworn an oath. Everybody heard you. You swore it before everybody.

HEROD. Peace, woman! It is not to you I speak.

HERODIAS. My daughter has done well to ask the head of Iokanaan. He has covered me with insults. He has said unspeakable things against me. One can see that she loves her mother well. Do not yield, my daughter. He has sworn an oath; he has sworn an oath.

HEROD. Peace! Speak not to me! Salome, I pray thee be not stubborn. I have ever been kind toward thee. I have ever loved thee. It may be that I have loved thee too much. Therefore ask not this thing of me. This is a terrible thing, an awful thing to ask of me. Surely, I think thou art jesting. The head of a man that is cut from his body is ill to look upon, is it not? It is not meet that the eyes of a virgin should look upon such a thing. What pleasure couldst thou have in it? There is no pleasure that thou couldst have in it. No, no; it is not that thou desirest. Hearken to me. I have an emerald, a great emerald and round, that the minion of Cæsar has sent unto me. When thou lookest through this emerald thou canst see that which passeth afar off. Cæsar himself carries such an emerald when he goes to the circus. But my emerald is the larger. I know well that it is the larger. It is the largest emerald in the whole world. Thou wilt take that, wilt thou not? Ask it of me and I will give it thee.

SALOME. I demand the head of Iokanaan.

HEROD. Thou art not listening. Thou art not listening. Suffer me to speak, Salome.

SALOME. The head of Iokanaan!

HEROD. No, no, thou wouldst not have that. Thou sayest that but to trouble me, because that I have looked at thee and ceased not this night. It is true, I have looked at thee and ceased not this night. Thy beauty has troubled me. Thy beauty has grievously troubled me, and I have looked at thee overmuch. Nay, but I will look at thee no more. One should not look at anything. Neither at things, nor at people should one look. Only in mirrors is it well to look, for mirrors do but show us masks. Oh! oh! bring wine! I thirst! Salome, Salome, let us be as friends. Bethink thee — Ah! what would I say? What was't? Ah! I remember it! Salome, — nay, but come nearer to me; I fear thou wilt not hear my words, — Salome, thou knowest my white peacocks, my beautiful white peacocks, that walk in the garden between the myrtles and the tall cypress-trees. Their beaks are gilded with gold, and the grains that they eat are smeared with gold, and their feet are stained with purple. When they cry out the rain comes, and the moon shows herself in the heavens when they spread their tails. Two by two, they walk between the cypress trees and the black myrtles, and each has a slave to tend it. Sometimes they fly across the trees, and anon they couch in the grass, and round the pools of the water. There are not in all the world birds so wonderful. I know that Cæsar himself has no birds so fair as my birds. I will give thee fifty of my peacocks. They will follow thee whithersoever thou goest, and in the midst of them thou wilt be like unto the moon in the midst of a great white cloud. I will give them to thee, all. I have but a hundred, and in the whole world there is no king who has peacocks like unto my peacocks. But I will give them all to thee. Only thou must loose me from my oath, and must not ask of me that which thy lips have asked of me.

[He empties the cup of wine.]

SALOME. Give me the head of Iokanaan.

HERODIAS. Well said, my daughter! As for you, you are ridiculous with your peacocks.

HEROD. Peace! you are always crying out. You cry out like a beast of prey. You must not cry in such fashion. Your voice wearies me. Peace, I tell you! Salome, think on what thou art doing. It may be that this man comes from God. He is a holy man. The finger of God has touched him. God has put terrible words into his mouth. In the palace, as in the desert, God is ever with him! It may be that He is, at least. One cannot tell, but it is possible that God is with him and for him. If he die also, peradventure some evil may befall me. Verily, he has said that evil will befall some one on the day whereon he dies. On whom should it fall if it fall not on me? Remember, I slipped in blood when I came hither. Also did I not hear the beating of wings in the air, a beating of vast wings? These are ill omens. And there were other things. I am sure there were other things, though I saw them not. Thou wouldst not that some evil should befall me, Salome? Listen to me again.

SALOME. Give me the head of Iokanaan!

HEROD. Ah! thou art not listening to me. Be calm. As for me, am I not calm? I am altogether calm. Listen. I have jewels hidden in this place — jewels that thy mother even has never seen; jewels that are marvelous to look at. I have a collar of pearls, set in four rows. They are like unto moons chained with rays of silver. They are even as half a hundred moons caught in a golden net. On the ivory breast of a queen they have rested. Thou shalt be as fair as a queen when thou wearest them. I have amethysts of two kinds; one that is black like wine, and one that is red like wine that one has colored with water. I have topazes yellow as are the eyes of tigers, and topazes that are pink as the eyes of a wood-pigeon, and green topazes that are as the eyes of cats. I have opals that burn always, with a flame that is cold as ice, opals that make sad men's minds, and are afraid of the shadows. I

have onyxes like the eyeballs of a dead woman. I have moonstones that change when the moon changes, and are wan when they see the sun. I have sapphires big like eggs, and as blue as blue flowers. The sea wanders within them, and the moon comes never to trouble the blue of their waves. I have chrysolites and beryls, and chryso-prases and rubies; I have sardonyx and hyacinth stones, and stones of chalcedony, and I will give them all unto thee, all, and other things will I add to them. The King of the Indies has but even now sent me four fans fashioned from the feathers of parrots, and the King of Numidia a garment of ostrich feathers. I have a crystal, into which it is not lawful for a woman to look, nor may young men behold it until they have been beaten with rods. In a coffer of nacre I have three wondrous turquoises. He who wears them on his forehead can imagine things which are not, and he who carries them in his hand can turn the fruitful woman into a woman that is barren. These are great treasures. They are treasures above all price. But this is not all. In an ebony coffer I have two cups of amber that are like apples of pure gold. If an enemy pour poison into these cups they become like apples of silver. In a coffer incrustated with amber I have sandals incrustated with glass. I have mantles that have been brought from the land of the Seres, and bracelets decked about with carbuncles and with jade that come from the city of Euphrates. What desirest thou more than this, Salome? Tell me the thing that thou desirest, and I will give it thee. All that thou askest I will give thee, save one thing only. I will give thee all that is mine, save only the life of one man. I will give thee the mantle of the high priest. I will give thee the veil of the sanctuary.

THE JEWS. Oh! oh!

SALOME. Give me the head of Iokanaan!

HEROD (*sinking back in his seat*). Let her be given what she asks! Of a truth she is her mother's child! (*The first soldier approaches. Herodias draws from the hand of the*

Tetrarch the ring of death, and gives it to the soldier, who straightway bears it to the executioner. The executioner looks scared) Who has taken my ring? There was a ring on my right hand. Who has drunk my wine? There was wine in my cup. It was full of wine. Some one has drunk it! Oh! surely some evil will befall some one. (*The executioner goes down into the cistern*) Ah! wherefore did I give my oath? Hereafter let no king swear an oath. If he keep it not, it is terrible, and if he keep it, it is terrible also.

HERODIAS. My daughter has done well.

HEROD. I am sure that some misfortune will happen.

SALOME (*she leans over the cistern and listens*). There is no sound. I hear nothing. Why does he not cry out, this man? Ah! if any man sought to kill me, I would cry out, I would struggle, I would not suffer. Strike, strike, Naaman, strike, I tell you! No, I hear nothing. There is a silence, a terrible silence. Ah! something has fallen upon the ground. I heard something fall. It was the sword of the executioner. He is afraid, this slave. He has dropped his sword. He dares not kill him. He is a coward, this slave! Let soldiers be sent. (*She sees the page of Herodias and addresses him*) Come hither. Thou wert the friend of him who is dead, wert thou not? Well, I tell thee, there are not dead men enough. Go to the soldiers and bid them go down and bring me the thing I ask, the thing the Tetrarch has promised me, the thing that is mine. (*The page recoils. She turns to the soldiers*) Hither, ye soldiers. Get ye down into this cistern and bring me the head of this man. Tetrarch, Tetrarch, command your soldiers that they bring me the head of Iokanaan. (*A huge black arm, the arm of the executioner, comes forth from the cistern, bearing on a silver shield the head of Iokanaan. Salome seizes it. Herod hides his face with his cloak. Herodias smiles and fans herself. The Nazarenes fall on their knees and begin to pray*) Ah! thou wouldst not suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. Well! I will kiss it now. I will bite it with my teeth as one bites a ripe fruit. Yes,

I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. I said it; did I not say it? I said it. Ah! I will kiss it now. But wherefore dost thou not look at me, Iokanaan? Thine eyes that were so terrible, so full of rage and scorn, are shut now. Wherefore are they shut? Open thine eyes! Lift up thine eyelids, Iokanaan! Wherefore dost thou not look at me? Art thou afraid of me, Iokanaan, that thou wilt not look at me? And thy tongue, that was like a red snake darting poison, it moves no more, it speaks no words, Iokanaan, that scarlet viper that spat its venom upon me. It is strange, is it not? How is it that the red viper stirs no longer? Thou wouldst have none of me, Iokanaan. Thou rejectedest me. Thou didst speak evil words against me. Thou didst bear thyself toward me as to a harlot, as to a woman that is a wanton, to me, Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judæa! Well, I still live, but thou art dead, and thy head belongs to me. I can do with it what I will. I can throw it to the dogs and to the birds of the air. That which the dogs leave, the birds of the air shall devour. Ah, Iokanaan, Iokanaan, thou wert the man that I loved alone among men! All other men were hateful to me. But thou wert beautiful! Thy body was a column of ivory set upon feet of silver. It was a garden full of doves and lilies of silver. It was a tower of silver decked with shields of ivory. There was nothing in the world so white as thy body. There was nothing in the world so black as thy hair. In the whole world there was nothing so red as thy mouth. Thy voice was a censer that scattered strange perfumes, and when I looked on thee I heard a strange music. Ah! wherefore didst thou not look at me, Iokanaan? With the cloak of thine hands, and with the cloak of thy blasphemies thou didst hide thy face. Thou didst put upon thine eyes the covering of him who would see God. Well, thou hast seen thy God, Iokanaan, but me, me, thou didst never see. If thou hadst seen me thou hadst loved me. I saw thee, and I loved thee. Oh, how I loved thee! I love thee yet,

Iokanaan. I love only thee. I am athirst for thy beauty; I am hungry for thy body; and neither wine nor apples can appease my desire. What shall I do now, Iokanaan? Neither the floods nor the great waters can quench my passion. I was a princess, and thou didst scorn me. I was a virgin, and thou didst take my virginity from me. I was chaste, and thou didst fill my veins with fire. Ah! ah! wherefore didst thou not look at me? If thou hadst looked at me thou hadst loved me. Well I know that thou wouldst have loved me, and the mystery of Love is greater than the mystery of Death.

HEROD. She is monstrous, thy daughter; I tell thee she is monstrous. In truth, what she has done is a great crime. I am sure that it is a crime against some unknown God.

HERODIAS. I am well pleased with my daughter. She has done well. And I would stay here now.

HEROD (*rising*). Ah! There speaks my brother's wife! Come! I will not stay in this place. Come, I tell thee. Surely some terrible thing will befall. Manasseh, Issachar, Ozias, put out the torches. I will not look at things, I will not suffer things to look at me. Put out the torches! Hide the moon! Hide the stars! Let us hide ourselves in our palace, Herodias. I begin to be afraid.

[The slaves put out the torches. The stars disappear. A great cloud crosses the moon and conceals it completely. The stage becomes quite dark. The Tetrarch begins to climb the staircase.]

THE VOICE OF SALOME. Ah! I have kissed thy mouth, Iokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth. There was a bitter taste on thy lips. Was it the taste of blood? Nay; but perchance it was the taste of love. They say that love hath a bitter taste. But what matter? what matter? I have kissed thy mouth, Iokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth. *[A ray of moonlight falls on Salome and illumines her.]*

HEROD (*turning round and seeing Salome*). Kill that woman! *[The soldiers rush forward and crush beneath their shields.]* Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judæa.

CURTAIN.

THE MAN IN THE STALLS

ALFRED SUTRO

ALFRED SUTRO was born in London, 1863. He was educated in his native city and in Brussels. Since 1896, when he made his first theatrical venture, he has produced a large number of successful plays, including serious dramas and light sentimental comedies. His first play—"The Chili Widow", written in collaboration with the actor Arthur Bouchier—is an adaptation from the French. "The Walls of Jericho", "Mollentrave on Women", "The Fascinating Mr. Vanderveldt", and "John Glayde's Honour" are among the most successful of the earlier plays. Of late, Mr. Sutro has turned to satirical comedy, the best examples of which are "The Perplexed Husband" and "The Clever Ones."

Some of Mr. Sutro's most characteristic work is found in his numerous one-act plays, many of which were written as curtain raisers. These plays are well-knit technically and are particularly well adapted to the purpose for which they were intended. Mr. Sutro is essentially a man of the theater, in no sense an innovator; he is content to write about everyday people in a traditional form.

PLAYS

Plays marked with * are in one act only.

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|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| The Cave of Illusion (1900) | *The Gutter of Time (1902) |
| *Ella's Apology (1902) | *A Maker of Men (1902) |
| *A Game of Chess (1902) | *Mr. Steinmann's Corner
(1902) |
| *The Correct Thing (1902) | *The Salt of Life (1902) |
| *Carrots (1902) | |

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| *The Open Door (1903) | *The Man on the Kerb(1908) |
| Arethusa (1903) | Making a Gentleman (1909) |
| A Lonely Life (1903) | *The Man in the Stalls (1911) |
| The Walls of Jericho (1904) | The Perplexed Husband |
| *A Marriage Has Been Ar- | (1911) |
| ranged (1904) | The Fire-Screen (1912) |
| Mollentrave on Women | *The Bracelet (1912) |
| (1905) | The Clever Ones (1914) |
| The Perfect Lover (1905) | The Two Virtues (1914) |
| (In England, The Price of | Freedom (1915) |
| Money, 1906) | *The Great Redding Street |
| The Fascinating Mr. Van- | Burglary (1916) |
| derveldt (1906) | *The Marriage . . . Will |
| John Glayde's Honour(1907) | Not Take Place (1917) |
| The Barrier (1907) | *The Trap (1918) |
| The Builder of Bridges(1908) | The Choice (1919) |

“The Cave of Illusion” is published by Grant Richards, London; “The Fascinating Mr. Vanderveldt”, “The Barrier”, “John Glayde’s Honour”, “Mollentrave on Women”, “The Perfect Lover” (as “The Price of Money”), “The Walls of Jericho”, “Carrots”, “The Correct Thing”, “Ella’s Apology”, “A Game of Chess”, “The Marriage . . . Will Not Take Place”, “The Gutter of Time”, “A Maker of Men”, “A Marriage Has Been Arranged”, “The Open Door”, “Mr. Steinmann’s Corner”, “The Salt of Life”, “The Builder of Bridges”, “The Fire-Screen”, “The Perplexed Husband”, “The Two Virtues”, “The Bracelet”, “The Man on the Kerb”, are published by Samuel French, New York; “The Man in the Stalls”, “A Marriage Has Been Arranged”, “The Man on the Kerb”, “The Open Door” and “The Bracelet” are published in one volume as “Five Little Plays” by Brentano’s, New York; “Freedom” by the same.

THE MAN IN THE STALLS

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY ALFRED SUTRO

“The Man in the Stalls” was first produced at London in 1911.

Characters

HECTOR ALLEN
ELIZABETH ALLEN (BETTY)
WALTER COZENS

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THE MAN IN THE STALLS

The sitting-room of a little flat in Shaftesbury Avenue. At back is a door leading to the dining-room — it is open, and the dinner-table is in full view of the audience. To the extreme right is another door, leading to the hall.

The place is pleasantly and prettily, though quite inexpensively, furnished. To the left, at angles with the distempered wall, is a baby-grand piano; the fireplace, in which a fire is burning merrily, is on the same side, full centre. To the right of the door leading to the dining-room is a small side-table, on which there is a tray with decanter and glasses; in front of this, a card table, open, with two packs of cards on it, and chairs on each side. Another table, a round one, is in the centre of the room — to right and to left of it are comfortable armchairs. Against the right wall is a long sofa; above it hang a few good water-colours and engravings; on the piano and the table there are flowers. A general appearance of refinement and comfort pervades the room; no luxury, but evidence everywhere of good taste, and the countless feminine touches that make a room homelike and pleasant.

When the curtain rises, Hector Allen, a youngish man of forty, with an attractive intellectual face, is seen standing by the dining-table in the inner room, draining his liqueur-glass, with Walter Cozens to the right of him, lighting a cigarette. Walter is a few years younger than his friend, moderately good-looking, with fine, curly brown hair and a splendid silky moustache. His morning-clothes are conspicuously well-cut — he is evidently something of a dandy; Hector wears a rather shabby dress-suit, his boots are awkward, and his tie ready-made. Betty, a handsome woman of thirty, wearing a very pretty tea-gown, is talking to the maid at the back of the dining room.

Hector puts down his glass and comes into the sitting room, followed by Walter. Hector is puffing at a short, stumpy little black cigar.

HECTOR (*talking as he comes through, continuing the conversation—he walks to the fireplace, and stands with his back to it*).

I tell you, if I'd known what it meant, I'd never have taken the job! Sounded so fine, to be reader of plays for the Duke's Theatre—adviser to the great Mr. Honeyswill. And then—when the old man said I was to go to all the first nights—why, I just chortled! “It's the first nights that show you the grip of the thing—that teach you most”—he said. Teach you! As though there were anything to learn! Oh my stars! I tell you, it's a dog's life!

WALTER (*sitting to left of the round table*). I'd change places with you, sonny.

HECTOR. You would, eh? That's what they all say! Four new plays this week, my lad—one yesterday, one to-day—another to-morrow, and the night after! All day long I'm *reading* plays—and I spend my nights seeing 'em! D'you know, I read about two thousand a year? Divide two thousand by three hundred and sixty-five. A dog's life—that's what it is!

WALTER. Better than being a stockbroker's clerk—you believe *me!*

HECTOR. Is it? I wish *you* could have a turn at it, my bonny boy! *Your* hair'd go grey, like mine! And look here—what are the plays to-day? They're either so chock-full of intellect that they send you to sleep—or they reek of sentiment till you yearn for the smell of a cabbage!

WALTER. Well, you've the change, at any rate.

HECTOR (*snorting*). Change? By Jove, give me a Punch and Judy show on the sands—or performing dogs! Plays—I'm sick of 'em! And look here—the one I'm off to to-night. It's adapted from the French—well, we know what *that* means. Husband, wife and mistress. Or wife, husband, lover. That's what a French play means. And you make it English, and pass the Censor, by putting the lady in a mackintosh, and dumping in a curate!

BETTY (*coming in, and closing the door leading to the dining room*). You ought to be going, Hector.

[*She stands listening for a moment, then goes through the other door into the hall.*

HECTOR (*disregarding her, too intent on his theme*). And I tell you, of the two, I prefer the home-made stodge. I'm sick of the eternal triangle. They always do the same thing. Husband strikes attitudes — sometimes he strikes the lover. The lover never stands up to him — why shouldn't he? He would — in real life. (*Betty comes back with his overcoat and muffler — she proceeds affectionately to wrap this round his neck, and helps him on with his coat, he talking all the time*) He'd say, look here, you go to Hell. *That's* what he'd say — well, there you'd have a situation. But not one of the playwriting chaps dares do it. Why not, I ask you? There you'd have the truth, something big. But no — they're afraid — think the public won't like it. The husband's got to down the lover — like a big tom-cat with a mouse — or the author'd have to sell one of his motor-cars! That's just the fact of it!

BETTY (*looking at the clock on the mantelpiece*). Twenty-five past, Hector.

HECTOR (*cheerily*). All right, my lass, I'm off. By-bye, Walter — keep the old woman company for a bit. Good-bye, sweetheart. (*He kisses her*) Don't wait up. Now for the drama. Oh, the dog's life!

[*He goes. Betty waits till the hall door has banged, then she sits on the elbow of Walter's chair, and rests her head on his shoulder.*

BETTY (*softly*). Poor Hector!

WALTER (*uncomfortably*) . . . Yes . . .

BETTY. Doesn't it make you feel dreadful when he talks like that? (*She kisses him; then puts her arms round his neck, draws his face to her, and kisses him again, on the cheek*) Doesn't it?

[*She nestles contentedly closer to him.*

WALTER (*trying to edge away*). Well, it does. Yes.

BETTY (*dreamily*). I — like it.

WALTER. Betty!

BETTY. Yes, I like it. I don't know why. I suppose I'm frightfully wicked. Or the danger perhaps—I don't know.

WALTER (*making a futile effort to get up*). Betty——

BETTY (*tightening her arms around him*). Stop there, and don't move. How smooth your chin is—*his* scrapes. Why don't husbands shave better? Or is it that the forbidden chin is always smoother? Poor old Hector! If he could see us! He hasn't a suspicion. I think it's lovely—really, I do. He leaves us here together, night after night, and imagines you're teaching me bridge.

WALTER (*restlessly*). So I am. Where are the cards?

BETTY (*caressing him*). Silly, have you forgotten that this is Tuesday—Maggie's night out? She's gone—I told her she needn't wait to clear away. We've arranged master's supper. Master! *You're my master, aren't you?*

WALTER. . . . I don't know what I am

BETTY. Oh yes you do—you're my boy. Whom I love. There. (*She kisses him again, full on the lips*) That was a nice one, wasn't it? Poor old Hector, sitting in his stall—thinks he's so wonderful, knows such a lot! Yes, Maggie's out—with *her* young man, I suppose. The world's full of women, with their young men—and husbands sitting in the stalls And I suppose that's how it always has been, and always will be.

WALTER (*shifting uneasily*). Don't, Betty—I don't like it. I mean, he has such confidence in us.

BETTY. Of course he has. And quite rightly. Aren't you his oldest friend?

WALTER (*with something of a groan*). I've known him since I was seven.

BETTY. The first man he introduced me to—his best man at the wedding—do you remember coming to see us during the honeymoon? I liked you *then*.

WALTER (*really shocked*). Betty!

BETTY. I did. You had a way of squeezing my hand. . . . And then when we came back here. You know it didn't take me long to discover——

WALTER (*protesting*). I scarcely saw you the first two or three years!

BETTY. No—you were afraid. Oh I thought you so silly! (*He suddenly contrives to release himself—gets up, and moves to the card-table*) Why, what's the matter?

WALTER (*at the table, with his back to her*). I hate hearing you talk like this.

BETTY. Silly boy! (*She rises, and goes to him; he has taken a cigarette out of the box on the table, and stands, there with his head bent, tapping the cigarette against his hand*) Women only talk "like this," as you call it, to their lovers. They talk "like that" to their husbands—and that's why the husbands never know. That's why the husbands are always sitting in the stalls, looking on. (*She puts her arms round him again*) Looking and not seeing.

[*She approaches her lips to his—he almost fretfully unclasps her arms.*]

WALTER. Betty—I want to say a—serious word . . .

BETTY (*looking fondly at him*). Well, isn't what I'm saying serious?

WALTER. I'm thirty-eight.

BETTY. Yes. I'm only thirty. But I'm not complaining.

WALTER. Has it ever occurred to you—

[*He stops.*]

BETTY. What?

[*Walter looks at her—tries to speak, but cannot—then he breaks away, goes across the room to the fireplace and stands for a moment looking into the fire. She has remained where she was, her eyes following him wonderingly. Suddenly he stamps his foot violently.*]

WALTER. Damn it! DAMN it!

BETTY (*moving towards him in alarm*). What's the matter?

WALTER (*with a swift turn towards her*). I'm going to get married.

BETTY (*stonily, stopping by the round table*). You . . .

WALTER (*savagely*). Going to get married, yes. Married, married!

[She stands there and doesn't stir — doesn't speak or try to speak; merely stands there, and looks at him, giving no sign. Her silence irritates him; he becomes more and more violent, as though to give himself courage.]

WALTER. You're wonderful, you women—you really are. Always contrive to make us seem brutes, or cowards! I've wanted to tell you this a dozen times—I've not had the pluck. Well, to-day I must. Must, do you hear that? . . . Oh, for Heaven's sake, say something.

BETTY *(still staring helplessly at him)*. You . . .

WALTER *(feverishly)*. Yes, I, I! Now it's out, at least—it's spoken! I mean to get married, like other men—fooled, too, I dare say, like the others—at least I deserve it! But I'm tired, I tell you—tired—

BETTY. Of me?

WALTER. Tired of the life I lead—the beastly, empty rooms—the meals at the Club. And I'm thirty-eight—it's now or never.

BETTY *(slowly)*. And how about—me?

WALTER. You?

BETTY *(passionately)*. Yes. Me. Me!

WALTER. You didn't think this would last for ever?

BETTY *(nodding her head)*. I did—yes—I did. Why shouldn't it?

WALTER *(working himself into a fury again)*. Why? You ask that? Why? Oh yes, it's all right for *you*—you've your home and your husband—I'm there as an—annex. To be telephoned to, when I'm wanted, at your beck and call, throw over everything, come when you whistle. And it's not only that—I tell you it makes me feel—horrid. After all, he's my—friend.

BETTY. He has been that always. You didn't feel—horrid—before. . . . Who is she?

WALTER. *(Shortly, as he turns back to the fire.)* That doesn't matter.

BETTY. Yes, it does. Who?

WALTER (*fretfully*). Oh why should we——

BETTY. I want to know—I'm entitled to know.

WALTER (*still with his back to her*). Mary Gillingham.

BETTY. Mary Gillingham!

WALTER (*firmly, swinging round to her*). Yes.

BETTY. That child, that chit of a girl!

WALTER. She's twenty-three.

BETTY. Whom I introduced you to—my own friend?

WALTER (*grumbling*). What *has* that to do with it? And besides . . . (*He suddenly changes his tone, noticing how calm she has become—he takes a step towards her, and stands by her side, at the back of the table; his voice becomes gentle and affectionate*) But I say, really, you're taking it awfully well—pluckily. I knew you would—I knew I was an ass to be so—afraid. . . . And look here, we'll always be pals—the very best of pals. I'll . . . never forget—never. You may be quite sure . . . of that. I want to get married—I do—have a home of my own, and so forth—but you'll still be—just the one woman I really have loved—the one woman in my life—to whom I owe—everything.

BETTY (*with a mirthless laugh*). Do you tell all that—to Mary Gillingham?

WALTER (*pettishly, as he moves away*). Do I—don't be so absurd.

BETTY. You tell *her* she is the only *girl* you have loved.

WALTER (*moving back to the fire, with his back to her*).

I tell her—I tell her—what does it matter what I tell her? And one girl or another—she or some one else——

BETTY. But you haven't answered my question—what's to become of me?

WALTER (*angrily, facing her*). Become of you! Don't talk such nonsense. Because it is—really it is. You'll be as you were. And Hector's a splendid chap—and after all we've been frightfully wrong—treating him infernally badly—despicably. Oh yes, we have—and you know it.

Lord, there've been nights when I have — but never mind that — that's all over! In future we can look him in the face without feeling guilty — we can —

BETTY (*quietly*). You can.

WALTER. What do you mean?

BETTY. You can, because of this girl. Oh, I know, of course! You'll come here three or four times — then you'll drop off — you'll feel I'm not quite the woman you want your wife to know.

WALTER (*with genuine feeling, as he impulsively steps towards her*). Betty, Betty, what sort of cad do you take me for? What sort of cad, or bounder? Haven't I told you I'd never forget — never? And you think you'll pass out of my life — that I *want* you to? Why, good Heaven, I'll be your best friend as long as I live. Friend — yes — what I always should have been — meant to be! And Hector. Why, Betty, I tell you, merely talking to-night, as I've done, has made me feel — different — sort of lifted — a load. Because I've always had it — somewhere deep down in me — when I've thought of — him.

BETTY (*calmly*). Liar.

WALTER (*falling back*). Betty!

BETTY. Liar — yes. Why these stupid, silly lies? "Always, deep down in me!" Where was it, this beautiful feeling, when you got me to go to your rooms?

WALTER (*harshly*). We needn't —

BETTY. I liked you — I've said that — I liked you from the first. But I was straight enough. Liked you, of course — but I had no idea, not the slightest. . . . Thought it fun to play the fool, flirt just a bit. But it was you, you, *you* who —

WALTER (*breaking in sulkily and stamping his foot*). Never mind about who it was.

BETTY (*passionately*). Never mind! You dare!

WALTER (*doggedly*). Yes — I dare. And look here — since you force me to it — that's all rot — yes, it is — just rot. Just as you like it now, hearing Hector ask me to stop with

you, and kissing me the moment his back is turned — so you met me halfway, and more than halfway.

BETTY. You cur!

WALTER. That's what a woman always says, when a man speaks the truth. Because it *is* the truth — and you know it. "The way I squeezed your hand!" D'you think I *meant* to squeeze it — in a way! Why, as there's a Heaven above me, you were as sacred to me — as my own sister!

BETTY (*quietly, as she sits, to right of the table*). What I'm wondering is — you see, you're the only lover I've had — what I wonder is, when a man breaks off, tells a woman he's tired of her, wants to get married — does he *always* abuse the woman —

WALTER (*sulkily*). I haven't —

BETTY. Degrade, and throw mud on, the love she has had for him?

WALTER (*with a bitter shrug*). Love —

BETTY (*passionately, as she springs to her feet*). Love, love, yes, you — cruel man! Love, what else? I adore you, don't you know that? Live for you! would give up everything in the world — everything, everything! And Walter, Walter! If it's only *that* — that you want a home — well, let's go off together. He'll divorce us — we can get married. Don't go away, and leave me here, alone with him! I couldn't stand it — Walter, I couldn't, I couldn't!

[*She goes eagerly to him, flings her arms round his neck, and a dry sob bursts from her.*]

WALTER (*very gently*). Betty, Betty, you've been so brave . . . Betty, dear, the horrid things I've said were only to make you angry, to make you feel what a brute I was, how well you're rid of me. Oh, I'm not proud of myself! But look here, we must be sensible — we must, really. . . . You know, if you were divorced — if I were the co-respondent in a divorce case — I'd lose my berth, get the sack —

BETTY (*clinging to him*). We could go to Australia — anywhere —

WALTER. I've no money.

BETTY (*with a sudden movement, raising her head and leaving him*). And Mary Gillingham has lots?

WALTER. It's not for her money that I ——

BETTY (*with a start*). You love her?

WALTER (*dropping his head, and speaking under his breath*).

Yes.

BETTY (*wringing her hands*). You do, you do?

WALTER. Yes, that's the truth—I do. Oh, Betty, I'm so frightfully sorry ——

BETTY (*with a groan*). Then you don't love me any more . . .

WALTER. It's not that. But you see ——

BETTY (*moaning*). You don't, you don't!

[*She stands there, crushed, overwhelmed, dry-eyed, broken moans escaping from her; suddenly she hears a key turning in the lock of the hall-door outside, and rushes to the card-table.*]

BETTY. Hector! Quick, quick — the cards!

[*Walter flies to the table, and sits by her side. He seizes one pack and proceeds to shuffle it, she is dealing with the other. All this takes only a second. Hector comes in—they both spring up.*]

BETTY. Hector! You're not ill?

HECTOR (*kissing her*). Play postponed, my child — bit of luck!

When I got to the theatre I found that the actor-manager's car had collided with a cab outside the stage-door — he was thrown through the window — there's a magnificent exit for you! and has been cut about a bit. Nothing serious.

But the play's postponed for a week. Bit of luck!

WALTER (*sitting*). Not for him.

HECTOR. Oh *he* has had luck enough — tons of it! I'll get into a jacket — then we'll have some bridge. See what progress you've made, Betty!

[*He hurries out, and closes the door.*]

BETTY (*producing a little mirror from her bag, looking into it, touching her hair*). We were only just in time.

WALTER (*eagerly, as he bends across the table*). You're splendid — you are — splendid!

BETTY. Yes. All very nice and comfortable for you — isn't it?

[*She puts the mirror back into the bag.*]

WALTER (*coaxingly*). Betty.

BETTY. To-morrow you'll go to her — or to-night perhaps —

WALTER. To-night — ridiculous! At this hour!

BETTY. She's a deceitful little cat. I saw her last week — she never told me —

WALTER. I don't think she knew. I only proposed to-day.

BETTY (*flinging herself back in her chair, and opening wide eyes*). You — proposed — to-day!

WALTER (*very embarrassed*). Yes — I mean —

BETTY. You — proposed — to-day! And waited till she had accepted you — to tell *me* —

WALTER (*eagerly*). Don't be so silly — come, come, he'll be back in a minute. . . . And, believe me, I'm not worth making a fuss about!

BETTY (*looking contemptuously at him*). That's true.

WALTER. Yes, it is, worse luck! I deserve all you've said to me. And you'll be . . . much better . . . without me.

BETTY. Better?

WALTER. Yes, better, better — any way you choose to put it! I'm a — but never mind that! — Look here — you'd like me to stop?

BETTY. He wants to play bridge.

WALTER. Don't you think that I —

BETTY (*hearing Hector coming*). Sh.

[*Hector comes in — she is idly tossing the cards about. Hector has put on a smoking-jacket — he comes in, very jolly, fussing around, rubbing his hands, so glad to be home. He sits, to the right of Betty.*]

HECTOR. Now for a game!

[*He seizes a pack, and spreads out the cards.*]

BETTY (*leaning back*). Not sure that I want to play.

HECTOR. Don't be disagreeable, Betty! Why?

BETTY (*listlessly, as she rises and moves across the room*). No fun, being three.

HECTOR. Good practice for you. Come on.

BETTY (*leaning against the other table, and turning and facing them*). Besides, he has something to tell you.

HECTOR. Walter?

BETTY. Yes.

HECTOR (*looking inquiringly at Walter*). To tell me? What is it?

BETTY. That he's engaged.

HECTOR (*shouting, as he leans across the table*). Never! Walter! Engaged? You?

WALTER (*nervously*). Yes.

HECTOR (*noisily and affectionately*). You old scoundrel! You rascal and villain! Engaged—and you don't come and tell me first! Well I—am—damned!

WALTER (*trying to take it gaily*). I knew you'd chaff me about it.

HECTOR. Chaff you! Silly old coon! why I'm glad! Of course we shall miss you—but marriage—it's the only thing, my boy—the only thing! Who is she? Do I know her?

WALTER (*mumbling, as he fingers the cards*). A friend of Betty's—I fancy you've met her——

HECTOR. Who?

BETTY. Mary Gillingham. We're the first to know—he only proposed to-day.

HECTOR. Gillingham, Gillingham. . . . Oh yes, I've seen her, just seen her, but I don't remember. . . . I say, not the daughter of the sealing-wax man?

WALTER. Yes.

HECTOR. Then there's lots of tin! Fine! Oh you artful old dodger! Is she pretty?

WALTER. So-so.

BETTY (*still leaning against the table, and looking at them both*). She's excessively pretty. She has yellow hair and blue eyes.

HECTOR (*chuckling*). And she has caught old Wallie. The cynical old Wallie who sniffed at women! Though perhaps it's the money——

BETTY. No. He's in love with her.

HECTOR. That's good, I'm glad. And I congratulate you — heartily, my boy. (*He seizes Walter's hand, and wrings it*) We must drink to it! (*He gets up, goes to the side-table, and pours some whiskey into a tumbler*) Charge your glass, Walter! (*Walter rises and goes to the side-table*) Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the bride and bridegroom! (*He fills the glass from the syphon and passes it to Walter, then proceeds to fill his own*) Betty, you must join us.

BETTY (*quietly*). No.

HECTOR. You can't toast him in water, of course. Has she cleared away yet? I'll get you some Hock.

[*He puts his glass down and moves to the door at back.*]

BETTY. Don't be so silly. I won't drink at all.

HECTOR (*amazed*). Not to old Walter?

BETTY (*steadily*). No.

HECTOR. Why?

BETTY (*almost jeeringly*). Because — old Walter — has been my lover.

HECTOR (*stopping, and staring at her*). What?

BETTY (*calmly, looking full at him*). My lover . . . these last two years.

HECTOR (*staring stupidly at her*). He has been —

BETTY (*impatiently, as she taps the floor with her foot*). Yes, yes. How often must I tell you? My lover — don't you know what that means? Why do you stare at me with those fat goggle-eyes of yours? He has been my lover — and now he has fallen in love with this girl and means to marry her. That's all.

HECTOR (*turning towards Walter, who hasn't stirred from the side-table*). What? You?

[*Walter remains motionless and silent.*]

HECTOR (*in muffled tones, scarcely able to speak*). You! It's true what this woman says?

BETTY (*contemptuously*). This woman! Don't be so melodramatic! Have you forgotten my name?

HECTOR (*turning fiercely to her, roaring madly*). Silence, Jezebel! (*She shrinks back, in alarm, towards the fire*) Your name! Wait a bit, I'll tell you! (*He takes a step towards her—she crouches in terror against the wall*) You shall hear what your name is! Just now I'm dealing with him. (*He swings round to Walter*) You there, you skunk and thief! You, you lying hound! I was your best friend. So you've taken my wife, have you? And now mean to go off and marry this girl. That's it? Oh, it's so simple! Here—come here—sit down. Sit down, I tell you. Here, in this chair. Shall I have to drag you to it? I want to keep my hands off you. Here. (*Walter has moved slowly towards him. Hector has banged down a chair behind the centre table, Walter sits in it—Hector speaks over his shoulder to Betty*) And you—fetch pen and ink and paper—

BETTY (*in abject panic*). Hector—

HECTOR (*turning fiercely and scowling at her*). If you speak to me I'll brain you too. Just you go in there and fetch the things. D'you hear? Go. (*She moves into the other room. Hector swings round to Walter*) As for you, you're a scoundrel. A rogue, a thief, a liar, a traitor. Of the very worst kind, the blackest. Not an ordinary case of a husband and wife—I trusted you—you were my best friend. You spawn, you thing of the gutter, you foul-hearted, damnable slug!

[*Betty comes back, dragging her feet, carrying paper and envelopes and a stylograph—she puts them on the table.*]

HECTOR. Not that stylograph—that's mine—his dirty hands shan't touch it—I could never use it again. Fetch your pen—yours—you belong to him, don't you? Go in and fetch it. D'you hear?

[*Betty goes into the inner room again.*]

HECTOR. My wife. And you the man I've done more for than for any one else in the world. The man I cared for, you low dog. Used my house—came here because it was dull at the Club—and took my wife? I don't know why

I don't kill you. I've the right. But I won't. You shall pay for it, my fine fellow—you are going to pay—now.

[*Betty brings a pen and an inkstand; she places them on the table; Hector seizes them and pushes them in front of Walter. Betty slinks to the other side of the room, and stands by the sofa.*

HECTOR (*to Walter*). Now you write. You hear? You write what I dictate. Word for word. What's the old brute's name?

WALTER. Whose?

HECTOR. Whose! Her father, the sealing-wax man, old Gillingham?

WALTER (*staring*). Gillingham?

HECTOR. Gillingham. Yes. What is it?

WALTER. You want me to write to him?

HECTOR (*nodding*). To him. Who else? A confession? I've had that. His name?

WALTER (*dropping the pen and half rising*). I won't—

HECTOR (*springing upon him in a mad fury, and forcing him back into the chair*). You won't, you dog! You dare say that—to me! By Heaven, you will! You'll lick the dust off this floor, if I tell you! You'll go on your hands and knees, and crawl! Sit down, you! Sit down and take up your filthy pen. So. (*Thoroughly cowed, Walter has taken up the pen again*) And now—his name. Don't make me ask you again, I tell you, don't. What is it?

WALTER. Richard.

HECTOR. Very well, Richard. So write that down. To Richard Gillingham. I have to-day proposed to your daughter, and she has accepted me. Got that? She has accepted me. But I can't marry her—can't marry her—because I have seduced the wife of my friend Hector Allen—

WALTER (*appealingly, dropping his pen*). Hector!

HECTOR (*frantically gripping Walter by the throat, till he takes up his pen again*). The wife of my friend Hector Allen—

write it — and plainly, you hound, plainly — so — and because I am taking the woman away with me to-night.

BETTY (*with a loud cry*). Hector!

HECTOR (*over his shoulder, watching Walter write*). Silence, over there, you! Hold your tongue! Go into your room and put on your things — we've done with you here! Take what you want — I don't care — you don't show your face here again. And you — (*he taps his clenched hand against Walter's arm*) write. What are you stopping for? How far have you got? (*He peers over Walter's shoulder*) Because — I — am — taking — the — woman — away — with — me — to-night.

BETTY (*beside herself, wringing her hands*). Hector, Hector —

HECTOR (*savagely, as he makes a half-turn towards her*). You still there? Wait a bit. I'll come to you, when I've finished with him. If you haven't gone and put on your things, you shall go off without them. Into the street. You'll find other women there like you. (*He turns back to Walter*) Here, you, have you written? (*He looks over Walter's shoulder*) Go on — I'm getting impatient. Go on, I tell you. I — am — taking — the —

[*Walter is slowly writing down the words, Hector standing over him; Betty suddenly bursts into a peal of wild, uproarious laughter, and lets herself fall into a chair to the left of the card-table.*]

HECTOR (*madly*). You!

[*He leaves Walter, and almost springs at her.*]

BETTY (*brimming with merriment*). Oh, you old donkey! How we have pulled your leg!

HECTOR (*staring at her, stopping dead short*). You —

BETTY (*through her laughter, choking*). Hector, Hector! Conventional situations! The usual stodge! The lover and husband! You goose, you wonderful old goose!

[*Walter, with a mighty effort, has pulled himself together, and roars with laughter too. He jumps up. Hector is standing there blinking, paralysed.*]

WALTER (*merrily, to Betty*). Oh really, you shouldn't. You've given it away too soon!

BETTY. Too soon! He'd have strangled us. Did you ever see such a tiger?

WALTER (*chuckling hugely*). He didn't give the lover much chance to stand up to him, did he?

BETTY. And *wasn't* he original! Dog, hound, villain, traitor!

WALTER. To say nothing of Jezebel! Though, between ourselves, I think he meant Messalina!

BETTY. And I was to go into the street. But he *did* let me fill my bag!

WALTER. I think the playwrights come out on top, I do indeed. (*He goes to Hector, and stands to left of him*) Hector, old chap, here's the letter!

BETTY (*going to the other side of Hector, and dropping a low curtsey*). And please, Mr. Husband, was it to be a big bag, or a small bag, and might I have taken the silver teapot? [*Hector has been standing there stupid, dazed, dumbfounded, too bewildered for his mind to act or thoughts to come to him; he suddenly bursts into a roar of Titanic, overwhelming laughter. He laughs, and laughs, staggers to the sofa, falls on it, rocks and roars till the tears roll down his cheeks. He sways from side to side, unable to control himself — his laughter is so colossal that the infection catches the others; theirs becomes genuine too.*

BETTY (*with difficulty, trying to control herself*). The letter! Old Gillingham! "His name, scoundrel, his name!"

WALTER (*gurgling*). With his hand at my throat! Sit there, villain, and write!

BETTY. "I'll deal with *you* presently! Wait till I've finished with *him*!"

WALTER. "Into the street!?" At least, they *do* usually say "into the night!"

HECTOR (*rubbing his eyes and panting for breath*). Oh, you pair of blackguards! Too bad—no, really too bad! It was! I fell in, I did! Oh, Lord, oh, Lord, what a night-

mare! But it wasn't right, really it wasn't — no really! My Lord, how I floundered — head and shoulders — swallowed it all! Comes of reading that muck every day — never stopped to think! I didn't! Walter, old chap! (*He holds out his hand*) Betty! My poor Betty! (*He draws her towards him*) The things I said to you!

BETTY (*carelessly eluding the caress*). At least admit that you're rather hard on the playwriting people!

HECTOR (*getting up and shaking himself*). Oh, they be blowed! Well, you *have* had a game with me! (*He shakes himself again*). Brrrrr! Oh, my Lord! What I went through!

BETTY. It *was* a lark! you should have seen yourself! Your eyes starting out of your head! You looked like a murderer!

HECTOR. By Jove, and I felt it! For two pins I'd have —

BETTY. And Mary Gillingham! *That's* the funniest part! That you could have thought *he* was engaged — to *her*! [*Involuntarily the smile dies away on Walter's face; he turns and stares at her; she goes on calmly.*]

BETTY. When she happens to be the one girl in this world he can't stand!

WALTER (*with a movement that he can't control*). Betty!

BETTY (*turning smilingly to him*). No harm in my telling Hector — he scarcely knows her! (*She swings round to Hector again*) Why, Walter simply *loathes* the poor girl! That's what made it so funny! (*At the mere thought of it she bursts out laughing again, and goes on speaking through her laughter*) And I tell you — if you ever hear he's engaged to *her* — why, you can believe the rest of the story too!

HECTOR (*laughing heartily as he pats Walter on the shoulder*). Poor old Walter! And, d'you know, I was quite pleased at the thought of his getting married! I was! (*He turns to him*) But it's better, old chap, for us — we'd have missed you — terribly! (*With another pat on Walter's shoulder, he goes to the fire, and drops in the letter*) Mustn't leave that

lying about! (*He turns*) Well, by Jove, if any one had told me. . . . And drinking to him, and all!

BETTY. If you'll fetch me that glass of Hock now, I *will* drink to him, Hector. To Walter, the Bachelor!

HECTOR (*beaming*). So we will! Good. I'll get it.

[*He bustles into the dining room.*]

BETTY (*moving swiftly to Walter*). Well, now's your time. One thing or the other.

WALTER (*savagely*). You fiend!

BETTY. I'll go and see her to-morrow — see her constantly —

WALTER. Why are you doing this?

BETTY. You've ruined my life and his. At least, *you* shan't be happy.

WALTER. And you imagine I'll come back to *you* — that we'll go on, you and I?

BETTY (*scornfully*). No — don't be afraid! You've shown yourself to me to-day. That's all done with — finished. *His* friend now — with the load off you — but never *her* husband. Never!

[*Hector comes bustling back, with the bottle of Hock, and a wine-glass that he gives to Betty — she holds it, and he fills it from the bottle.*]

HECTOR. Here you are, my girl — and now, where's my whiskey? (*He trots round to the side table, finds his glass, and Walter's — hands one to Walter*) Here, Wallie — yours must be the one that's begun — I didn't have time to touch mine! Here. (*Walter takes it*) And forgive me, old man, for thinking, even one minute — (*He wrings him by the hand*) Here's to you, old friend. And Betty, to you! Oh, Lord, I just want this drink!

BETTY (*in cold, clear tones, as she holds up her glass*). To Walter, the Bachelor!

[*She drains her glass; Walter has his moment's hesitation; he drinks, and with tremendous effort succeeds in composing his face.*]

HECTOR (*gaily*). To Walter; the Bachelor! (*He drinks his glass to the dregs and puts it down*) And now — for a game.

WALTER. I think I——

HECTOR (*coaxingly*). Sit down, laddie—just one rubber. It's quite early. Do. There's a good chap. (*They all sit: Hector at back, Betty to the left of him, Walter to the right—he spreads out the cards—they draw for partners*) As we are—you and Betty—I've got the dummy. (*He shuffles the cards—Betty cuts—he begins to deal*) That's how I like it—one on each side of me. Also I like having dummy. Now, Betty, play up. Oh, Lord, how good it is, how good! A nightmare, I tell you—terrible! And really you must forgive me for being such an ass. But the way you played up, both of you! My little Betty—a Duse, that's what she is—a real Duse! (*He gathers up his cards*) And the gods are kind to me—I've got a hand, I tell you! I call No TRUMPS!

[*He beams at them—they are placidly sorting their cards. He puts his hand down and proceeds to look at his dummy, as the curtain falls.*]

CURTAIN

'OP-O'-ME-THUMB

FREDERICK FENN AND RICHARD PRYCE

FREDERICK FENN was born at Bishop Stortford in 1868. He is best known as an adapter of plays and the author of a number of successful one-act and full-length plays. His first successful play, "Judged by Appearances", was produced in 1902, by the popular actor, James Welch. "'Op-o'-Me-Thumb", written in collaboration with Richard Pryce, is the best-known work of either dramatist. It owes its popularity primarily to the fact that it has often been acted in this country by Maude Adams.

RICHARD PRYCE was born at Boulogne, France. Like Frederick Fenn, with whom he collaborated in several plays, he has adapted plays and is the author of a few original dramas. He has also written half a dozen novels.

PLAYS (FREDERICK FENN)

Plays marked with * are in one act only.

- | | |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| *Judged by Appearances
(1902) | Amasis (1906) |
| *The Honorable Ghost (1902) | *His Child (1906) |
| A Married Woman (1902) | (In collaboration with
Richard Pryce) |
| Saturday to Monday (1903) | *The Nelson Touch (1908) |
| (In collaboration with
Richard Pryce) | A Welsh Sunset (1908) |
| A Scarlet Flower (1903) | Liz the Mother (1909) |
| The Age of Innocence (1904) | (In collaboration with
Richard Pryce) |
| *'Op-o'-Me-Thumb (1904) | The Gay Lady Doctor (1912) |
| (In collaboration with
Richard Pryce) | (In collaboration with
Desmond Donovan) |
| *The Convict on the Hearth
(1906) | |

PLAYS (RICHARD PRYCE)

A Privy Council (1905)	(In collaboration with
(In collaboration with	Arthur Morrison)
W. P. Drury)	Little Mrs. Cummin (1910)
The Dumb Cake (1907)	The Visit (1910)

“ 'Op-o'-Me-Thumb”, “Little Mrs. Cummin”, “Privy Council”, “Dumb Cake”, “The Convict on the Hearth”, “The Nelson Touch”, and “The Visit” are published by Samuel French, New York.

'OP-O'-ME-THUMB

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY FREDERICK FENN AND RICHARD PRYCE

“ ‘Op-o’-Me-Thumb” was first produced at London in 1904.

Characters

MADAME JEANNE MARIE NAPOLEON DE GALLIFET DIDIER

CLEM (MRS.) GALLOWAY

ROSE JORDAN

CELESTE

AMANDA AFFLICK

HORACE GREENSMITH

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'OP-O'-ME-THUMB

SCENE. *Working room at Madame Didier's Laundry in Soho. In front of the large shop window that gives on to the street there hangs a lace curtain. Upon the glass of the upper half of a door "Madame Didier, Blanchisserie Française" may be read backwards.*

It is Saturday evening before an August bank-holiday. Madame with goffering iron is finishing a cap at stage back left. Rose Jordan stands on a chair putting paper packets of collars and cuffs into pigeon holes. Clem (Mrs.) Galloway is mending socks, etc., at small table right. Celeste is sitting on a centre table marking off collars, etc., in account book, or slipping pink tissue paper into a stack of shirts, and singing as she swings her feet.

CELESTE. *Eve in her garden she was a lady,
She never grew old n' fady.
She might 'a' bin there to-day-dy,
But she was inquisitive.
I'd never 'a bin s' crazy,
You wait till I'm 'alf a daisy,
See me with a chance to be lazy.
I'd keep you all alive!*

MADAME. *You have make out zose bills, Celeste?*

CELESTE (*nodding*).

*Oh wait till I'm 'alf a daisy,
Snakes! I'd send 'em all back to blazy.
You give me the chance to be lazy,
I'd——*

CLEM. *Couldn't be much lazier than what you are now, I should think — daisy or no daisy.*

CELESTE. *Couldn't I? I'd have a bit of a try!*

(Resumes)

Oh when I'm a real lady,

In a barouche I shall parady — (She breaks off suddenly) Where's Amanda?

CLEM (*sarcastically*). Want a little 'elp with y' singin'?

CELESTE. Where *is* Amanda?

ROSE. Gone to Strahan's.

CELESTE. What for?

ROSE. They never sent them things they wrote about.

CELESTE (*stopping in her work*). Do they expect us to do 'em this time o' day!

MADAME (*coming down*). No. No. Like always you excite yourself for nothing. Go on. Go on. What is Monday? 'Oliday, is it not? Very well. They close. I close. I 'ave the things 'ere for Tuesday, hein? You mind your business. Always wanting to know.

CELESTE (*appeased*). Well, you never do know with shops. It wouldn't be the first time. It was Strahan wanted the collars dressed in two hours last week, wasn't it, for some customer or other. I wouldn't 'a' done 'em, I know. Oh ho. (*She hums to herself for a moment or two*) Well, well. When I'm married and 'ave a 'usband to keep me —

MADAME. Keep you! Bah, you know nothing, you. A man wants a wife who will work. Mon Dieu, if one is to be lazy it will not be the wife. Look at me.

CLEM (MRS.) GALLOWAY (*who has gone up to table at back to fetch more things and who now comes down*). You're right, Madam. 'Usbands is all very well in their way, as I should be the first to deny, me of course bein' different and independent so to speak, but when it comes to which is to do the work —

CELESTE. Listen to Clem.

CLEM. Not so much of y'r Clem. Mrs. Galloway, if you please. You seem to forget who I am. I've got me ring, I 'ave, *and* me lines if I do come 'ere to oblige — Mr. Galloway 'avin' poor 'ealth — besides private means, bein' a pensioneer.

CELESTE. Pensioneer! Four pence a day, isn't it, dear? —and gone before twelve, they tell me, at the Pig or Whistle. A fine pensioneer! You wait until I bring mine along.

CLEM. Yes, I daresay there'll be some waitin' to do. What's your 'usband goin' to be if I may make so bold to inquire?

CELESTE. 'Aven't quite made up me mind. But I'm just about tired of this. I'm not sure as I shan't go and be a actress for a change, and stand in the limelight and 'ave bokays thrown at me — 'ere chuck us some of those things, Rose — (*begins to work frantically*) — and — and 'ave lords waitin' at the stage door to take the 'orses out of me carriage —

CLEM (*laughs*). You'll be wantin' to be a child of myst'ry next, like Amanda.

CELESTE (*pausing, seriously*). Do you think she is?

CLEM. Is what?

CELESTE. A child of myst'ry — what she says I mean. You know — all that about 'er father and about them jewels as somebody gives 'er. Do you know she washed that there shirt again last week. She says it'll be fetched one of these days and then there'll be a surprise for us.

ROSE. Surprise! Garn! A little image like 'er? Ain't room for much up 'er sleeve. Little 'aporth o' mis'ry!

CELESTE (*thoughtfully*). Well, I don't know. Things *do* 'appen, y' know. I wonder 'oo 'er father reely is. (*Mystified*) She's so close about 'im, ain't she? And then there *is* that shirt — there's no goin' against that.

CLEM (*shortly*). Lots of customers forgets things.

CELESTE. Yes, but the care she takes of it. It's bin 'ere best part of a year, and I don't know 'ow many times she 'asn't dressed it. There may be something in it, y' know.

ROSE (*pulling a long paper parcel out of one of the large pigeon holes — reading*). "Mr. 'Orris Greensmith, to be called for." (*Opening the paper a little and looking inside*) Blest if I don't believe she's done it up again. It 'ad pink

paper in last week and now it's blue. 'Ve we got any blue paper, madam? No. I thought not.

CLEM (*interested*). She must 'a' bought it.

CELESTE. There.

ROSE. Well! *It'll* never be fetched. If 'e's 'er mash why doesn't 'e come 'ere and fetch it?

CELESTE. She says it's a sort of a token, see? while 'e's away. Something to 'old by, she says. And then, 'e does send 'er things.

CLEM (*weightily*). 'As anybody seen 'em?

CELESTE. N-no, but there was a brooch, I b'lieve, and a necktie.

CLEM (*coming to the table centre to fetch scissors left and pausing in her work to gossip*). Well, why doesn't she wear 'em? That's it, y' see. Why doesn't she wear 'em?

CELESTE (*as if struck by this for the first time*). Yes. Why doesn't she?

CLEM (*sits at table right and talks confidentially*). That's where the test comes in. Why doesn't she wear 'em—'stead of that bit of crape, say? Not that I've anything to say against that. She 'as plenty of deaths in 'er family—that I will say for 'er.

ROSE (*contemptuously*). Lots of people 'as relations die. Any one can.

CLEM (*generously*). No, give everybody their due, I say, and she does 'ave her afflictions. I've been bereaved meself and I know what it is.

ROSE. Crape's cheap enough. And she don't ask us to none of 'er funerals.

CLEM (*forgetting Amanda and showing an inclination to lose herself in pleasant retrospect*). Fun'ral's—the fun'ral's I've been to in my time! There was me sister's 'usband (*she goes back to her place right as she speaks*)—all my family's married well, that I am thankful to say—and when she lost 'im she done the thing 'andsome I tell y'. (*To Celeste*) Gimme them vests—no—there by the socks. Under y' nose, stupid! There was as many as three

mournin' coaches an' a 'earse with plumes—and the 'atbands!—well!—and afterwards we—

CELESTE. That'll do, Clem. We know all about that—and y' cousins too as died at 'Ighb'ry. It's Amanda I'm talking about, not you. I wonder whether she could show us one of them presents. Good mind to ask 'er. Why don't she come in?

ROSE. Gone a errand, I tell y'.

CELESTE. Well, she might be back be now, I should think. Talk about 'ares and tortoise shells! I'd 'a' done it on me 'ead. She's a fair crawler, Amanda is.

ROSE (*laconically*). Legs is short.

CELESTE. So's time, and I don't want to be 'ere all night.

MADAME (*coming down*). She is little, but she is good. She work. She does not talk, talk, talk. She is not singing when she should be working. Where should I be, me, with another like you? And this Saturday and I forced to go out at five! Five, mon Dieu, and it wants but ten minutes.

[*She goes up left right.*]

CELESTE (*absently*). I wonder whether she's got anybody to take 'er out a Monday. Think she 'as?

ROSE. It'd be a funny sort o' feller as 'd want to. (*She looks over her shoulder towards the glass door*) 'Ere she is. 'Ere's Mandy.

[*The door right is pushed open and Amanda Afflick comes in backwards pulling after her a washing basket nearly as large as herself. She is an odd, forlorn looking little figure with big eyes and a pathetic expression. She has yet an air of being quite capable of taking care of herself.*]

ROSE. Well, Craipe.

MADAME. Ah, you have come back. You have brought the money. (*Amanda hands her a paper and some loose change*) That is right. Now I may go and you will help these good-for-nothings to finish.

[*She takes the cap on its stand and puts it on end of table*]

back, then goes into inner room left whence she returns a moment or two later with her cloak.

CELESTE (to Amanda). Didn't 'appen to meet ch' father, did y'?

CLEM. We thought perhaps as you was gone s' long that you'd ran away with that mash o' yours — 'im as goes without 'is shirt. 'Orris Whatsaname.

AMANDA. Oh. Did y'? (*She sidles past Clem who is leaning over a basket and giving her an intentional "shove," sends her sprawling across it*) Now then, Mrs., can't y' make room for a lady?

CLEM (*getting up, and angry*). They don't teach y' manners in the work'us, do they, Clumsy?

AMANDA. You'll find out when you get there, dear.

ROSE (*linking arms with Celeste left, coming towards Amanda in front of table center*) We've got a new bow to-day.

[*She points to a band of black crape round Amanda's arm.*]

CELESTE. So she 'as! Where did y' git that, S'rimp?

[*Amanda arranges the bow on her arm, pulling out the ends.*]

AMANDA. I've been doin' a little shoppin' this afternoon, and I bought this Rembrandt in case you was took off sudden, S'leste. S'leste! (*She gives a little chuckle*) It is a name, ain't it? Where did y' git it? Off the front of a shop, eh?

Pretty Celeste

'Ad a very weak chest.

If 'er chest 'd been stronger

Me tale 'd been longer.

[*She hoists herself on the table. Clem and Rose laugh shrilly. Celeste flushes.*]

CELESTE. Weak chest y'self. What's wrong with my chest?

AMANDA (*sitting on table*). Bit narrer, dear, isn't it? But p'raps it's the cut o' y' bodice. Some of those bodice-'ands can spoil things a treat, can't they?

CELESTE. What do y' know about it. You shut y' face. You! you ain't got no figger, you never dresses, you ain't

got enough 'air to go in a locket, and every feller I know says as you're a bloomin' little monkey without a stick. So, now, there!

MADAME (*bustling into outdoor things and interposing to prevent the quarrel developing*). Now, now, now! One would think that in life there was nothing to do. You quarrel, you talk, you sing. Do I sing? Mon Dieu, no. Celeste she sing till she make my 'ead ache, and then it is you. (*To Amanda, who gets off table*) And you all talk, talk, talk like I don't know what. For shame. Now I go, and you, Celeste, will go to Madame Jones with 'er things — they are listed, eh? — and Mrs. Galloway will take M. Gigot 'is waistcoat, and Rose, you will not forget Miss Smeet's dress. She must 'ave it to-night. Now quick all of you. Amanda will wait for me. I shall not be long. Now attention! No more singing, do you 'ear? You can sing if you want, in the street, and then you will be run in for drink to punish you.

[*She goes out left. Rose jumps off her chair.*]

ROSE. Is she gone? Lord, I wish it was Monday! I shan't git up all to-morrow so's to rest meself. Do 'ope it'll be fine.

CLEM. I expect it will. Makes such a difference, bank 'oliday, don't it? P'tickler when it's 'Am'stead.

ROSE. Course it's 'Am'stead. What d' you think.

CLEM (*crossing to Rose and Celeste right*). We should 'a' gone there too, only for Mr. Galloway 'avin' a aunt at Greenwich — though of course bein' married I'm different, so to speak. We shall go be tram, I expect, and then there 's th' 'ill in the Park, an' the 'eath close by an' all. But I don't know as I shouldn't like to be goin' with y'.

ROSE (*half ignoring her*). Wish you was, dear. (*Turning to Celeste*) S'leste, you an' Albert will be ready, won't you? You must be 'ere first thing, cause of me and my friend pickin' y' up.

[*Clem goes up left, presently returns to her work right.*]

CELESTE. We'll be ready. Rather. What ho! (*Seeing*

Amanda, who has been looking from one to another and who stands a little bit wistfully outside the group) Well, Mandy, got someone to take y' out Monday, eh?

AMANDA (*starts and pulls herself together*). I—I don't know as I can go out at all a Monday. Y' see prop'ly speakin' I'm in mournin'.

CELESTE. You're always in mournin' 'oliday time—you was at Easter, too. I believe meself——

AMANDA (*quickly*). Well, so I was. I lost me aunt on the mother's side just before Good Friday. This (*she touches crape bow*) is for me cousin's niece as passed away quietly last week in—in Kensington. We—we 'ad been estranged for some time, but now she is gone I bear 'er no malice, and she shall never 'ave it to say as I didn't pay 'er proper respect. And besides I don't know as I care to go out in my circumstances.

CELESTE. Your circumstances! What are they?

AMANDA. Oh, well—till—till 'e comes for me, y' know.

ROSE. Till 'e comes for 'is shirt, eh?—the tall 'andsome stranger as none of us 'as never seen—n' never wont. (*She jumps on a chair again and takes out parcel*) Garn. You've made it all up about 'im, I believe. “Mr. 'Orris Greensmith, to be called for”! “Miss Amanda Afflick, to be called for”! That's more like it. 'Ere, Clem! Ketch. [*She pitches parcel to Mrs. Galloway.*

AMANDA (*starting forward*). Give it 'ere.

CLEM (*holding it high*). Y' been washin' it again, Crapie, 'aven't y'?

AMANDA. Give it 'ere. 'Tain't yours.

CLEM. Ketch, S'leste.

[*She throws it to Celeste.*

CELESTE. Better not wash it any more. It's gettin' so thin it 'll blow away one of these days.

AMANDA (*fiercely*). Give it me.

CELESTE. Not so fast.

AMANDA. Give it to me!

CELESTE. Tell us the truth then. You been coddin' us

about it all this time, 'aven't you? 'Orris or whatever 'e's called 'as left it 'ere didn't take no notice of y' at all, now did 'e?

AMANDA (*at back of centre table as Celeste dances round with shirt*). Didn't 'e? P'raps 'e's never wrote to me neither, letters and letters on scented paper with crests and coats o' arms — and sealing wax too. You're jealous all the lot o' y'! Give it 'ere. You'll mess it. Oh (*half crying*) you'll mess it and 'e might come for it to-day. Give it 'ere.

CLEM. Let 'er 'ave it, S'leste.

CELESTE (*holds it high*). If I do will y' show me that brooch?

AMANDA. What brooch?

CELESTE. You know. The one you told us about. The minnycher set in diamonds.

AMANDA (*affecting unconcern*). Oh, 'aven't I shown it to y'?

CELESTE. No n' none of 'is presents. If I give it y', will y'?

AMANDA (*hesitates*). I—I don't know where I put it.

CELESTE. Well then the bracelet with the turquoise.

AMANDA. I—I lent that to me cousin for 'er niece's funeral. She 'asn't sent it back yet.

CELESTE. Well then one of the other things then—some presents as 'e's give y', will y'?

AMANDA. Give me my shirt.

CELESTE. Will y' then?

AMANDA. All right.

CELESTE. There y' are, Kipper! Ketch!

[*Amanda catches the shirt and with her back to the others gently fondles it for a moment as a mother might fondle a child. Then pulling a chair forward and climbing it she puts the parcel safely away on a shelf.*]

CELESTE. Secin's believin' y' know, and when we've seen—no 'anky-panky mindje!—some jewel or something.

AMANDA. All right.

CLEM (*indulgently*). Let 'er alone, S'leste. That'll do.

AMANDA (*standing on chair to put away the shirt, turns fiercely*).

'Ere what's it got to do with you. You keep your oar out of my wheel. I can take care of meself, Mrs. Clemen-

tina William Galloway. You think just because I'm not twelve feet 'igh and six foot round like some people as I can't 'old me own with a pack of chatterin' girls like S'leste 'ere and Rose Allelujah Jordan. One more river to cross! What ho! I spurn the lot of you. You're no more to me than a herd of buzzin' flies. (*Quieting down*) I go 'ome from 'ere and I set on the sofa and read 'is letters, and all what 'appens in this 'ouse o' bondage is no more to me than a dream of the night!

CLEM. Does 'e know what your temper is?

ROSE. Little spitfire!

AMANDA. There, dear, I don't mean it. Only y' see when y'r 'ead's full of more important things and there's wonderful changes loomin' before y' it's apt to make y' a bit 'asty. There, Clem, (*goes to her*) I didn't mean to be cross. One of these days you shall know all.

CELESTE (*impressed in spite of herself*). When did y' 'ear from 'im last?

AMANDA. Wednesday week — no, Tuesday it would be.

ROSE. Did 'e send y' anything then?

AMANDA. 'E's goin' to.

CELESTE. Something nice!

[*Amanda nods.*]

CELESTE. Is it a ring?

AMANDA. No.

CLEM. 'E's too sharp for that, eh, Mandy?

AMANDA. Better than that. (*Gets on the table again*) It's — it's a hairloom — one of those things you wear in it at the op'ra.

CELESTE. I know — a tarara.

AMANDA. Yes. (*The girls stop working and loll on the table listening open-mouthed*) It sticks in y'r 'ead with spikes and it's got diamonds and em'rals and stars all round — it sticks up like a crown and it glitters — fit to blind y'.

CELESTE. 'E must 'ave a lot o' money.

ROSE. Seems to chuck it about, don't 'e?

CELESTE. But you ain't *seen* 'im again?

AMANDA. No. But 'e's comin'.

CELESTE. 'Ere?

AMANDA. Yes. There's a understandin', y' see. There's clouds on the horizon — that why there's all this mystery. But when 'e fetches 'is shirt — it's a sort of a sign, see — I shall know that bright days are in store.

CLEM (*joining the table group after affecting indifference*). But what I want to know is — me of course 'avin' a 'ome of me own and bein' in a responsible p'sition so to speak — what I want to know — is 'e going to marry y'?

AMANDA. When 'e's asked me father.

ROSE. Asked y' father?

AMANDA. Everybody respectable does that. A young fella comes along and 'e says, isn't she beautiful, 'e says, I'd die for 'er, I wish she'd walk on me, through my 'eart first. But 'e don't say nothing to 'er, not till 'e's been to 'er father — if 'e's any class, y' know.

ROSE. But you're not beautiful. I'm a lot better lookin' than what you are and I shouldn't like any chap to go to my father.

AMANDA (*sweetly*). Of course if y' father 'appens to be doin' a bit in 'Olloway it makes a difference.

ROSE. 'Olloway! Jail bird y'self! I don't believe a word of it. I don't believe —

CELESTE. Easy, Rose. (*Pulling her away*) Let's 'ear. (*To Amanda*) 'As 'e seen y' father?

AMANDA. Not yet — because — because of law suits, and then there's a missin' will, y' see.

CELESTE. Missin' will?

AMANDA (*setting herself again on table centre*). Well, there should be rights, but I think we'd got over that. Y' see it's like this: My father wanted me to grow up without any rank or pearls or carriages so as I shall be loved just for myself alone —

CLEM. She's coddin'. She's only a workus girl and never 'ad no father.

AMANDA. I'm not. It's true. I've thought about it and

dreamt about it till I know it's true. Besides you'll see.
I'm goin' to 'im in oh such a little while.

CELESTE. And what about 'Orris?

AMANDA. I shall ask 'im if 'e loves me passionately, and if 'e says yes, I shall lay one white jew'ld 'and in 'is, and look into 'is pleadin' eyes and say, 'Orris, because you loved me truly when I was pore and in disguise, you shall 'ave your reward.

CELESTE (*to the others*). It sounds all right, don't it?

CLEM (*rises*). 'Ere, come along, girls. What's the good o' 'angin' about listenin' to all this rubbish when we got these things to take 'fore we can go. 'Ere, bustle up, S'leste. The old woman 'll be back again mongdewing like Lord-save-us-all if she finds they ain't gone. (*Celeste and Rose go into inner room to put on their hats and coats*) You show us that present, Corpsie, or find some one to take y' out a Monday, and then p'raps we'll see about believin' y'. Come, Rose.

[*She goes into inner room left.*]

AMANDA (*absently and waving her hand*). I have always loved you, 'Orris. Now your patience is rewarded. Rise and take me to my carriage.

ROSE (*putting on her hat and helping Celeste with her coat as she and Clem reappear with their things*). Carriage! You find somebody with a moke and a barrer to take y' to 'Amstead.

AMANDA (*loftily*). I'm not goin' on Monday. Bank 'olidy! It's just for ordinary people as 'ave no prospex and nothing better to think of.

ROSE. Oh, indeed. (*She picks up basket back centre*) Well, I 'ope, Miss Amander Afflick, as you'll enjoy yours all alone by y'r own self with nobody asked y' to go with 'em!

CLEM. Don't git run away with by a earl or anything like that while we're out.

CELESTE. So long, Corpsie. Y' got to show us one of them presents, y' know. 'Ere, wait for me, Rose.

[*They troop out left with their packages.*]

AMANDA (*when the door has closed behind them sits still for a moment or two. When she lifts her face it is seen to be working. To herself*). Monday! I should like to be goin' to 'Amstead — or anywheres. They might 'a' asked me to go with 'em. Somebody might. Nobody never won't. Never, never, never. 'Oo wants me? 'Oo could? I couldn't. Oh, well.

[She sniffs drily and getting up and moving to rack climbs the chair again and takes down the rescued shirt. Very carefully and lovingly she refolds it in its covering, holds it to her for a moment and puts it back on the shelf. She is turning once more to the room when the door is flung open and Horace Greensmith enters right. He is a young workman of sufficiently ordinary appearance, the type of navvy who may always be seen in London breaking up main thoroughfares with sledge-hammer and wedge.

HORACE. 'Ere, two-foot-nothing. Where's Mother Didier?

AMANDA (*getting off chair quickly*). Oh, Mr. Greensmith! I thought you was dead. Oh! (*Sits*) Oh!

HORACE. Mr. Greensmith! You know my name. And who might you be to think I was dead?

AMANDA. Oh — you must excuse me — but I did indeed.

[She puts her hand over her heart.

HORACE. Did y'. Well, I'm jolly well not.

AMANDA (*faintly*). Oh, it's like one from the grave. I shall be all right in a minute.

HORACE. Well, be quick about it. Now are y' better! Very well, then, touchin' a shirt I left 'ere. Has the old woman sold it or lost it? Is she goin' to fork it out or does she want me to summons her for it? Go an' arsk 'er. Look slippy.

AMANDA. It's all right, Mr. Greensmith. It's been took pertikler care of.

[Fetches it, and undoing the paper in which it is wrapped, displays the shirt to him proudly.

HORACE. Jeroosalem! Did y' wash it yesterday?

AMANDA. Yes, Mr. Greensmith.

HORACE. Not so much o' y' Mr. Greensmith. 'Oo told y' to wash it yesterday! Did the old woman twig I was comin'?

AMANDA. No, Mr. — 'Orris. I've washed it every week, *ever* since you left it so as to 'ave it ready for you.

HORACE. S'help me, Jimmy, you must be 'ard up for something to do! Y' don't think I'm going to pay for all that, do y'?

AMANDA. Oh, no, Mr. Greensmith. If you was to stuff the money down me throat wild horses wouldn't make me swallow it.

HORACE. H'm! Well, I ain't going to. What's the damage, anyhow?

AMANDA. We don't want you to pay anything, reelly.

HORACE. Oh, we don't, don't we! That suits me A1. You may stick over the door then, Washers by appointment to 'Orris Greensmith, Esquire. Do you do all y'r work like that? Is this a charitable institution or what is it?

AMANDA. Oh, no, Mr. 'Orris, we aren't charitable, oh, not at all. You see we — that is *I* thought we should never see you no more. You'd been away so long — there seemed nothing else to think —

HORACE. Well, I'm jiggered. Deaders on the free list, eh? 'Oly Moses!

AMANDA. You don't think it was a liberty, do you?

HORACE (*looks at her a moment and then bursts out laughing*). Strike me silly if I ever came across anything quite as dotty before. I was dead, was I, and this was a blasted souvenir. 'Oo the blazes wanted a blasted souvenir of me? Not you!

AMANDA. I know it was a liberty, Mr. Greensmith.

HORACE. 'Ere, 'andle me carefully. I shall faint.

AMANDA. I'm very sorry if you're angry.

HORACE. Was you 'ere when I come before?

AMANDA (*eagerly*). Oh, yes, Mr. Orris. It was at a quarter to five one Wednesday — don't you recklekt? It was in October, the 15th and there was a crool fog all the

morning. You was coughin' and saying things about the weather.

HORACE. Was I?

AMANDA. Don't you remember?

HORACE. I remember the fog—but then I remember a lot o' fogs.

AMANDA. I've thought of it every day since.

HORACE. 'Ere, what are you anyway?

AMANDA. I'm a orphin. I don't say so but I am—only to you I mean. I—what'll you think of me, Mr. Greensmith?—I—I was born in the Union.

HORACE. I got no call to think one way or the other.

AMANDA. I wouldn't 'a' told no one else. But I couldn't tell you—well, what I tell the others.

HORACE. The others? Are there any more 'ere like you?

AMANDA. Oh, no, I don't think there's any others anywhere like me.

HORACE. No, I dessay not.

AMANDA. Of course, I'm not very tall. We don't grow much in the work'ouse—but some o' them large girls is very fickle, don't you think so, Mr. Greensmith?

HORACE. No girls is any good.

AMANDA. Oh, Mr. Orris, you ain't married, are y'?

HORACE. Not much.

AMANDA (*relieved*). Oh—I thought jes fer a moment—you mustn't mind me. Oh, I am glad.

HORACE. Married. Yah. Knows too much about it.

AMANDA. I'm glad ye're not married, any way. Y' see, Mr. Greensmith, if you won't think it a liberty what I am telling you, I always thought of you as a sort of fairy prince, y' see; and they aren't never married, are they?

HORACE (*stretches out one leg and looks at it dubiously*). 'Ere, my 'ead 'll go if I stop much longer. A fairy—you've been ill, 'aven't you?

AMANDA. Oh, *no*, Mr. 'Orris, I'm never ill. I'm very strong, and work! Well, you should see me on a busy day! It's only—

HORACE. Only what?

AMANDA. Well, when you ain't got much of y'r own you do dream about beautiful things, don't you? That's how I came to think of you.

HORACE. Thank you — very kind of you, don't mention it.
(Pause) Well, chuck us the shirt.

AMANDA (*brings it to him slowly*). I suppose you'll send us some other things.

HORACE. Don't know; can't say. (*Amanda furtively wipes one eye*) Hello. What's the matter with y'?

AMANDA. Oh, nothing.

HORACE. What's that crape for?

AMANDA. I *say* it's for relations.

HORACE. Oh, well, pull up your socks and grin, y' can't 'ave y' relations always, y' know.

AMANDA. I never 'ad no relations.

HORACE. Well, what d' y' wear the bow for then? Y' don't know what y're talking about. Y' wears it for your relations and you never 'ad none. Rottin' sort of goin' into mourning that. Where's y' father? (*Amanda shakes her head*) Oh, well — where's y' mother, anyway?

AMANDA. She's dead — she died when I was quite little — oh, well, littler than I am now. But it ain't for 'er.

HORACE. 'Oo is it for?

AMANDA. You won't tell the other girls, will y'?

HORACE. No. What should I want t' go jawin' about you for?

AMANDA. You see, I tell *them* that I got a father who's rich — ever so rich — and who's coming to take me away, see, like in a story. I'm in disguise now, but one day 'e'll come and say "Apparel 'er in ermine," and then I shall go away and be a lady. I used to think he would really come, but now I guess 'e's dead, though I tell them 'e's comin'. I don't wear it for 'im though. I keep on changin' 'oo it's for. Y' see I felt I must wear it. (*Looks up shyly*) But I can take it off now, Mr. 'Orris.

[A pause.]

HORACE. Well of all. Give us the shirt.

AMANDA. Are y' goin' at once?

HORACE. Well, since you are so pressin' I got about 'alf a minute t' waste. *Now* then.

AMANDA. Nothin', I jes wanted to see you. Y' can smoke if y' like.

HORACE. Make meself at 'ome, eh, and what for!

[Sits on table.]

AMANDA (*coming near to him left standing beside him*). Y' said y' wasn't married. Are y' in love, Mr. Greensmith?

HORACE. Oh, chuck it. What's that to do with you?

AMANDA. I want to know pertickler.

HORACE. Well, I ain't jes' now.

AMANDA. I expect lots o' girls is in love with you.

HORACE. Oh, yes. I can't 'ardly get down the street for 'em.

AMANDA. You wouldn't say I was pretty, would y', Mr. Greensmith?

HORACE. I 'aven't thought about it.

AMANDA. You wouldn't think about it, would y'?

HORACE (*indulgently*). W-ell——

AMANDA. Eh? but looks ain't everything, are they? Some o' them pretty girls they aren't content when one feller likes 'em, they wants a lot o' chaps to say as they're beautiful.

HORACE. Don't I know it? 'Orris Greensmith ain't goin' to be one of them.

AMANDA. You ain't very 'asty, are you?

HORACE. Middlin'. What's up?

AMANDA. I don't hardly like to tell y'.

HORACE. 'Ere, what y' been doin' of?

[Stops in act of lighting pipe and stares at her with match in his hand.]

AMANDA (*wriggling in front of him*). I want to tell y', Mr. Greensmith, but I'm afraid you won't like it.

HORACE. Not knowing, can't say. Stand still, can't y'?

AMANDA. Y' might turn round, will y', and look out the winder? I don't like bein' looked at—then I'll tell y'.

HORACE (*stares at her hard a minute*). Well, there ain't much to look at, is there? Now then.

[*Turns round and lights up pipe.*]

AMANDA. Y' see — y' see — it's like this, Mr. 'Orris. You comin' in and seein' me last year and never comin' 'ere again all the girls what's 'ere says as 'ow you were in love with me.

HORACE (*turning round promptly*). What! Me! Wodder they take me for? In love —! Lord save us.

AMANDA. Y' know girls will talk, Mr. 'Orris.

HORACE. Yuss, they talks right enough if you give them 'alf a chance. Well, is that what y' wanted to tell me, 'cause if so y' could 'a kep' it to y'self.

AMANDA. That ain't all.

HORACE. 'Ope y' jolly well told 'em I wasn't.

AMANDA. No. I didn't tell 'em that.

HORACE. D'y' mean to tell me a pack o' girls thinks as I—
[*Roars with laughter. Amanda stands shamefaced and nervous.*]

AMANDA. I 'oped y' wouldn't laugh, Mr. 'Orris.

HORACE. Wouldn't laugh. Ho, no! but it is a bit thick, isn't it! So I'm in love with you, am I? Would y' like t' get on the table and then y'r lovin' 'usband could give y' a kiss.
[*Amanda begins to get on table.*]

HORACE (*amazed*). Did y' think I was really goin' to kiss y'?

AMANDA. I should like y' to kiss me, Mr. 'Orris.

HORACE (*sinks into chair*). Phew. 'Ere, I'm gettin' 'ot. Give us a chance. You go too quick fer me.

AMANDA (*squatting on the table and smoothing her dress and pulling it over her boots*). I didn't know as gentlemen didn't like bein' kissed.

HORACE. 'Ere, let's look at y'.

[*Pause.*]

AMANDA (*looking at him diffidently*). You are 'andsome, aren't you, Mr. 'Orris, but I s'pose you know that.

HORACE. I've 'eard something about it.

AMANDA. That ain't all what I told y' jes' now.

HORACE. What!

AMANDA. All the other girls they've got fellers to give 'em things.

HORACE. You don't say so. Well, you ain't goin' to catch me —

AMANDA. Oh, no, but I didn't like their sayin' as nobody ever giv' me anything, so I bin tellin' them as you gave me lots an' 'eaps o' things — dimonds and joolery and watches — 'andsome, y' know. I didn't know as you'd come back. I'd waited so long — and at last I went into mournin' — but I kep' on sayin' about the presents and letters, and now I 'aven't even anything to be in mournin' for, and they'll say as they always knew as I was kiddin', and (*sniffs*) they didn't — they reelly thought it was true what I told them. I know it was a liberty, Mr. 'Orris, but I 'oped you wouldn't mind.

HORACE (*whistles. Slowly*). They thinks as I've been stuffing you up with presents.

AMANDA. Yes, Mr. 'Orris.

HORACE. Well, you've just about made a nice mess of things, ain't y'?

AMANDA. Couldn't you —

HORACE. Couldn't I do it really. Not much.

AMANDA. I didn't mean that, but as you ain't dead couldn't you go on sayin' nothin' and let me go on pretendin'? —

HORACE. No.

AMANDA. It wouldn't cost y' nothin'. Why won't y'?

HORACE. Yes. Why won't I?

AMANDA (*walking away very much downcast*). I thought you might like to oblige a lady.

HORACE. What next! (*Amanda goes up to window and dries her eyes with her apron*) What 'r y' snuffling about, y' little beggar?

AMANDA. Nothin', Mr. 'Orris.

HORACE. They must be a precious lot o' mugs them girls if they swaller a tale like that. I never heard o' such a thing. [*He leans against table with his back to audience.*]

AMANDA. They didn't believe it for a long while, but now they believes it, an' about me father, too.

HORACE. Father! Didn't y' say he was a gonner ——

AMANDA (*faintly and tearfully*). I don't know, though I guess.

But (*rather proudly*) they think I've got a father as rich as ever 'e could be, and 'andsome, more 'andsome even than you.

HORACE. Pretty sort o' father to leave you in this 'ole then.

AMANDA. They think 'e's comin' to fetch me.

HORACE. Best 'urry up I should say.

AMANDA (*gives a little gesture*). Oh, don't you see! I got nothing, Mr. 'Orris —— nothing.

[*She subsides and burying her face in the hollow of her arm cries silently. Pause.*]

HORACE. 'Ere, funny, you needn't drown the place out.

Tell 'em what you blasted well like. I don't care. (*Kicks a clothes basket*) I don't care.

AMANDA. Oh, Mr. 'Orris.

HORACE. Yes, oh, Mr. 'Orris, but you don't catch me coming 'ere no more.

AMANDA. You won't come 'ere again!

HORACE. No fear. Is it likely? What d'ye take me for?

AMANDA. Then I don't know as I'll tell 'em anything then.

HORACE. Suit yourself.

AMANDA. I'd rather —— oh, I don't care what they think.

HORACE. Look 'ere, nipper. (*He comes to her*) I'm goin' to talk like a father to you. You're puttin' y'r money on the wrong 'orse —— not as I'm a wrong'un mindje, but if you was to talk to some chaps like this ——

AMANDA (*quickly*). Oh, but I wouldn't.

HORACE. That's all right then. Now you give me my shirt and I'll be off and (*generously*) you tell those girls just what you damn well please.

AMANDA (*looking at the parcel lingeringly*). You're goin' to take it.

HORACE. Time I did, isn't it?

AMANDA. I shan't 'ave nothin' to remember y' by.

HORACE. Would y' like a lock o' me 'air? 'Ere—'ere's a present for y'. (*He takes a pin out of his tie*) Gold pin, 42 carat, diamond mounted, pearl centre, em'rald border encrusted with rubies. (*Polishes it on his sleeve*) New cut 2-9. There, my dear.

AMANDA (*delighted*). Oh, Mr. 'Orris!

HORACE. Now we're quits.

AMANDA (*excitedly*). I did want something to show to S'leste, and it is lovely, lovely, but — but —

HORACE. What now?

AMANDA. It means as you're goin' for ever. Couldn't — couldn't you keep it and not —

HORACE. Not what?

AMANDA. Not go. It — it's like you dyin' all over again.

HORACE. Well of all the treats —

AMANDA (*with a new thought*). Where are y' goin' now?

HORACE. 'Ome, I s'pose.

AMANDA. We — we do send things —

HORACE. What are y' drivin' at?

AMANDA. Say I was to bring y' this. Or if you'd wait a little bit I might carry it out for you. It's nice strollin' in the summer evenin's, Mr. 'Orris, and it'd be no trouble.

HORACE (*stooping, with his hands on his knees, and thus bringing his face on to a level with hers*). Come with me, d'y' mean?

AMANDA. Yes.

HORACE. Yes. We could go for strolls every evenin', eh?

AMANDA (*with a long breath*). Oh — ye-es.

HORACE (*mimicking her*). Ye-es! What d' y' think my friends 'd say? Why, as we was walkin' out.

AMANDA. I wouldn't mind, Mr. 'Orris.

HORACE. But what price me?

AMANDA. I shouldn't expect y' to marry me.

HORACE. Much obliged. Thank y'.

AMANDA. I didn't even dream as y'd marry me really.

HORACE. Well then, if you was to come messin' about with me what'd your girls 'ere say? You don't want to lose y' character, I s'pose.

AMANDA. I wouldn't mind, Mr. 'Orris.

HORACE. So 'elp me, Bob. You don't seem to mind anything. (*He walks half-way to the door and pauses*) 'Ere. Are all o' you girls goin' out a Monday?

AMANDA. The others are, Rose and S'leste and Clem. — that's Mrs. Galloway.

HORACE. But what about you?

AMANDA. I — I'm supposed to be in mournin'.

HORACE. 'As nobody asked y'? (*Amanda hangs her head*)
'As nobody asked y'?

AMANDA. I — (*she bites her lips*) — I can't pretend any more. (*Breaking down*) No. Nobody's never asked me. (*She sobs*) I s'pose now nobody never will. I see 'em all start times and times with their fellas. Oh, it don't matter. Only I didn't mean as *you* should know.

[*Sits.*]

HORACE. Where are they goin'?

AMANDA (*sobbing gently*). 'Amstead. Oh, it don't matter, Mr. 'Orris.

HORACE. Yes it do. (*He moves about restlessly for a minute, then stares at her intently*) Look 'ere. Shall I take y'?

AMANDA. D' y' mean it?

HORACE. Did I say it? Very well then.

AMANDA. Oh, Mr. 'Orris.

HORACE. I'll get a trap and we'll go to 'Amstead.

AMANDA (*in ecstasy*). Oh, Mr. 'Orris.

HORACE. All right. That's settled. I'll call for you 'ere at nine sharp Monday mornin'.

AMANDA. Y' won't change y' mind.

HORACE. No. If I say I'll do a thing I'll do it.

AMANDA. And I may tell S'leste and the others.

HORACE. Tell the 'ole world if y' like. Tell all Soho.

AMANDA (*dancing and clapping her hands and singing*). Oh, it'll be joyful, joyful, joyful, joyful! I'll wear me blue dress that buttons up the back, and I've got a 'at as I 'ardly worn yet. Won't the other girls stare! Not one of 'em's got a fella like you. Rose's Jim — why 'e's not

much bigger than me. And S'leste's Albit — 'e's only a dustman. And as for Mr. Galloway — if 'e's sober be nine o'clock in the mornin' Clem'll 'ave something to be thankful for. Oh, Mr. 'Orris. Sat'dy, Sundy, Mondy. A 'ole day to look forward in. There won't be a 'appier lady anywhere Monday than what I shall be. You'll be 'ere be nine. (*Coming back to him*) That's when the others go.

HORACE. D' they start from 'ere?

AMANDA. Yes.

HORACE (*shifting his feet*). Nine o'clock, that's all right, but I think it'd be better to meet by the Dispens'ry, see — in Paul street.

AMANDA (*her face falling a little*). Paul street — right down there?

HORACE. What's the matter with Paul street? Everyone knows the Dispens'ry. It's a good place to meet, ain't it?

AMANDA. I should 'a' liked you to come 'ere.

HORACE. What's the difference?

AMANDA (*reluctantly*). I should 'a' liked 'em all to see me goin' off with y'. They won't more than 'alf believe else.

HORACE. Paul street's much more convenient.

AMANDA. There won't be the crowd there is 'ere.

HORACE. No. That's it. We don't want no crowds, do we? It'll be much better to go quietly from Paul street, won't it? You *be* there at nine and I'll come along and pick y' up. Then we shan't 'ave no waitin' about. (*Amanda looks at him slowly*) You could be at the corner, couldn't you, where that little court is, and come out when I whistled.

AMANDA (*still looking at him*). Yes. I needn't show me-self till you come.

HORACE. That's right. (*A little pause*) And er — I was thinkin' there's such 'undreds of people goes to 'Amstead. We don't want to go there, do we? What'd y' say to the forest?

AMANDA. Eppin'?

HORACE. Yes. I know a nice quiet little bit of it where we could go.

AMANDA (*meekly*). I don't mind, Mr. 'Orris.

[*She walks away from him.*]

HORACE. All right then. Monday, nine o'clock. Paul street. Blest if I wasn't goin' without me shirt after all.

Ta-ta.

[*Is about to go.*]

AMANDA (*calling him back just as he is at the door*). Mr. 'Orris.

HORACE. Yes.

AMANDA. I—I can't go after all.

HORACE (*coming back*). Can't go!

AMANDA. No.

HORACE. What d' y' mean, can't go?

AMANDA. What I say. I—(*recovering herself with an effort*)—I been pretendin'. Just to see what you'd do.

HORACE. Pretendin'!

AMANDA. Yes. (*Nervous and excited, but gaining confidence as she proceeds*) You see I shouldn't be allowed to go out with strangers. My people wouldn't let me. I've been brought up different. I'm afraid you'll be very angry, but none of that about me bein' a orphin or born in the Union is true. I'm the child of poor but respectable parents, and I've bin very strictly brought up, and so, though I'm very much obliged to you, Mr. Greensmith, I mustn't accept your kind invitation.

HORACE. Strike me pink!

AMANDA. You don't mind me 'avin' a bit of a lark with y', do y'? It was so dull 'ere while the others was out. I couldn't 'elp it. Ha, ha, ha. If you was to seen y'r own face! You got a soft 'eart, that I will say. Ha, ha, ha.

HORACE. Made a fool of me, 'ave y'. All right my girl. Wait till I bring y' more washin' to do.

AMANDA. There, don't be angry.

HORACE. Angry. 'Oo's angry? It's enough to make any one angry. Why——

AMANDA. Garn. You know very well as it's a relief.

HORACE. Relief?

AMANDA (*half hysterical*). Not to 'ave to take me out—a little 'op-o'-me-thumb like me. Ain't it now? And 'ave everybody laughin' at y', and askin' y' what it was, and where y'd picked it up, and why they 'adn't drowned it when it was born. Ho, ho. It'd be a poor world, eh, if we didn't get a bit o' fun out of it some'ow, and some of us was meant to supply all the fun for the others, it's my opinion. Lord, when you thought I was cryin' I thought I should 'a' died. Laugh! Whenever I think of it I shall most split meself. Y' don't mind, old man, do y'?

HORACE. I've a good mind to wring y' neck for y'.

AMANDA. No, don't do that. May I keep the pin?

HORACE. Keep what y' like.

AMANDA. I will then. Now say y' ain't angry before y' go.

HORACE. I'll be blowed if I do.

AMANDA. Jes' to show there's no ill feelin'.

HORACE. Git out.

AMANDA. Say it.

[She stands looking up at him tremulously.]

HORACE. 'Ere. (*Stares at her hard, then takes her hands and pulls her round to the light*) Why! What'r-ye playin' at? Tell the truth and shame the devil. Twig? I was a fool to say as I'd take y'. We wasn't made for each other—what d'ye call yerself, 'op-o'-me-thumb? but you're a game little 'un, and 'Orris Greensmith's goin' to sling 'is bloomin' 'ook. See! Now gi' us that kiss I asked y' for.

[Kisses her quickly and in a shame-faced manner, but very kindly, then whips up hat and shirt and goes out quietly. She stands for a moment or two swaying. When she looks up he is gone.]

AMANDA. 'E kissed me! (*Wonderingly*) 'E kissed me.

O-oh. (*She looks round and begins mechanically to put the room tidy. Presently she bethinks her of the pin. She takes it out of the bosom of her dress where she has stuck it*) 'E was ashamed of me, too. I s'pose I ought to spurn it. I ought really to 'a' thrown it at 'is false feet and said: "Take

back the jew'ls with which you 'ave loaded me, they are poisonin' me," but (*shaking her head and rubbing the stones on her sleeve to make them shine*) I can't. Oh, Mr. 'Orris, you've broken my 'cart and stuek a pin in it. But you did kiss me. You can't take back y' kiss. I shan't wait to hear their talk. Me pretendin's over and done with. (*She pulls off her crape bow and holds it to her lips*) There's nobody — nobody now for me to pretend. Oh, Mr. 'Orris — Mr. 'Orris.

[*She crouches in a shabby little heap in the middle of the empty room as the*

CURTAIN FALLS

THE IMPERTINENCE OF THE CREATURE

COSMO GORDON-LENNOX

COSMO GORDON-LENNOX was born in 1869. For some years, between 1894 and 1906, he enjoyed wide experience as an actor under the name Cosmo Stuart. His most important rôles were in Wilde's "An Ideal Husband", Anthony Hope's "The Adventure of Lady Ursula", and Henry Arthur Jones' "The Princess' Nose." He retired from the stage in 1906, devoting a large part of his time to the writing of plays, many of which were written in collaboration.

The plays of Mr. Gordon-Lennox are preëminently stage plays, written by an actor for actors. They are soundly constructed, conventionally effective, — little more. "The Impertinence of the Creature" is one of those "circumstance pieces" that are intended solely to amuse. The circumstance for which it was prepared was a Royal performance; it was first performed at Marlborough House in presence of "T.M. the King and Queen, T.M. the King and Queen of Denmark, T.R.H. the Prince and Princess of Wales," in 1907.

PLAYS

Plays marked with * are in one act only.

Becky Sharp (1901)	The Marriage of Kitty
(In collaboration with	(1903)
R. S. Hichens)	The Freedom of Suzanne
The Little French Milliner	(1904)
(1902)	

The Indecision of Mr. Kings- bury (1905)	Helena's Path (1910) (In collaboration with Anthony Hope)
Miquette (1907)	Primrose (1912) (From the French)
The Thief (1907) (From the French)	The New Secretary (1913) Frisco Sal (1913) (In collaboration with Dion Clayton Calthorp)
*The Impertinence of the Creature (1907)	*The Van Dyck (1914) (From the French)
Her Sister (1907) (In collaboration with Clyde Fitch)	
Angela (1907)	

“The Marriage of Kitty” and “The Impertinence of the Creature” are published by Samuel French, New York.

THE IMPERTINENCE OF THE CREATURE

A DUOLOGUE

BY COSMO GORDON-LENNOX

“The Impertinence of the Creature” was first produced at London in 1907.

Characters

LADY MILLICENT, *A widow*
AN UNKNOWN GENTLEMAN

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THE IMPERTINENCE OF THE CREATURE

SCENE. *A boudoir leading from a London ballroom.*

Enter Lady Millicent. Her manner is flurried and annoyed; she looks off as she hurries on.

LADY MILLICENT. The impertinence of the creature! Thank heavens at last I've got rid of him! (*She sits, fanning herself. Enter a gentleman, timidly and shyly; he advances awkwardly toward the Lady; she sees him*) Oh! (*She turns her head away from him, he advances nearer to her. She crosses and sits on the opposite side of the stage. A pause; he follows her shyly; she rises and goes to exit; he crosses and gets before her*) Really, this is outrageous—and absurd. How dare you persecute me in this way?

GENTLEMAN. I didn't mean——

LADY MILLICENT. You didn't mean. Have you or have you not been following me about the room ever since I came to this horrid ball?

GENTLEMAN. Well, I——

LADY MILLICENT. Don't deny it.

GENTLEMAN. I don't—I——

LADY MILLICENT. And I don't know you, I'm sure I don't know you. Do I?

GENTLEMAN. No—I——

LADY MILLICENT (*violently*). Then how dare you? How dare you? How dare you? (*She breaks her fan*) If you don't answer me, I shall lose my temper in a minute.

GENTLEMAN. Well—er—er——

LADY MILLICENT. For heaven's sake, don't stammer. It's extremely fortunate for you that I don't see a man I know here, whom I can ask to protect me from your insolence. But I don't know a soul in the room. I never saw such

an extraordinary lot of people; wherever they come from, I can't think. What an entertainment!

GENTLEMAN. It *is* dull.

LADY MILLICENT. It's extremely bad manners to criticise the hospitality that's offered to you. If you find it dull, why don't you go home to bed?

GENTLEMAN. I can't!

LADY MILLICENT. I suppose you mean that for an exaggerated compliment. How dare you annoy me in this way?

GENTLEMAN. I don't want to annoy you. I——

LADY MILLICENT. In heaven's name, then, what *do* you want?

GENTLEMAN. I—I wanted to ask you—er——

LADY MILLICENT. If it's a subscription to a charity, I don't usually take my purse with me to a ball.

GENTLEMAN. I don't want a subscription. I want—er—to take you down to supper.

LADY MILLICENT. Rien que ça! Really! I suppose you'll say next I look as if I was starving, and could only be saved from inanition by lukewarm soup and bad champagne.

GENTLEMAN (*with a smile*). The champagne's all right.

LADY MILLICENT. If you mean you've been indulging in too much of it, I shan't take that as an excuse. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

GENTLEMAN. Do you mean to say I'm drunk?

LADY MILLICENT. It wasn't I said so. You said so——

GENTLEMAN. I—never!

LADY MILLICENT. Please—please don't contradict me. I've been lenient with you up till now, but I will not be insulted.

GENTLEMAN. I didn't mean to insult you. My name is——

LADY MILLICENT. I don't want to know your name. It doesn't interest me in the least. Now listen to me. It's true I don't know a soul at this ball, I don't even know my hostess. My sister Eleanor sent me an invitation. She knows these people, and I can't think why she hasn't arrived instead of leaving me to battle with these horrid

creatures and their dreadful guests. Eleanor's so dreadfully selfish.

GENTLEMAN. I'm so sorry that——

LADY MILLICENT. Please don't insult my relations. My sister's selfishness has nothing to do with you. But what I was going to say was this, although I don't know my hostess, I could easily have complained to her of your conduct, but I'm too kindhearted. Be reasonable; if you wanted to make my acquaintance——why didn't you get someone to introduce you to me properly?

GENTLEMAN. I hardly know anyone here.

LADY MILLICENT. Well, I don't blame you for that. I never saw such a gathering in my life.

GENTLEMAN. Ha! ha!!

LADY MILLICENT. Don't laugh in that idiotic way. The fact of your knowing no one——(*suddenly*) Young man, were you invited to this ball? Have you got an invitation?

GENTLEMAN. No, I——

LADY MILLICENT. Of course I don't mean have you got one in your pocket. But did you have one sent to you?

GENTLEMAN. No!

LADY MILLICENT. Good heavens, of all the brazen creatures! You must leave the house at once.

GENTLEMAN. I can't!

LADY MILLICENT. But supposing you're turned out. It will be too dreadful. Think of the scandal!

GENTLEMAN. You needn't worry! I——

LADY MILLICENT. Don't flatter yourself I care what happens to you. I don't in the least. But if there's a scandal, my name will be mixed up in it. People will say you came here to see me.

GENTLEMAN. I did want to see you awfully——but when I tell you——

LADY MILLICENT. I knew it. It's really too absurd. I've never set eyes on you before to-night.

GENTLEMAN. I've seen you, though, often since I've been in London. Whenever I've had the chance.

LADY MILLICENT (*a little mollified*). Don't be so absurd.

You know that your desire to see me is no excuse. It's not as if I were a beautiful woman.

GENTLEMAN. You're — ripping.

LADY MILLICENT (*half pleased*). Really!

GENTLEMAN. Your dress is — ripping, and that thing in your hair — you look — er — ripping.

LADY MILLICENT. You don't seem to have much command of the English language. This is rather a nice gown.

[*Smiling.*]

GENTLEMAN. You look so nice when you smile. So good-tempered and — and ——

LADY MILLICENT (*chaffing*). Ripping?

GENTLEMAN. Yes, ripping.

LADY MILLICENT. I thought so.

GENTLEMAN. You're awfully clever, too, I expect.

LADY MILLICENT. I expect you're awfully silly.

GENTLEMAN. Perhaps I am. But I like clever people. I think they're awfully — awfully ——

LADY MILLICENT. Ripping.

GENTLEMAN. No — jolly. (*He laughs, she laughs at him*)

There, you're not angry any more now. Let me tell you what I was going to say when I asked you to come down to supper with me. The fact is, I ——

LADY MILLICENT. Oh, really, you are the most persistently annoying person! I can't leave the house myself, because I've promised my sister to go down to supper with someone.

GENTLEMAN. You can't go down with anyone but me, because I am ——

LADY MILLICENT. Please, please, I've told you I don't want to get you into trouble because you seem to be a gentleman, and I'm sorry for you; you seem to be rather nice — I mean a silly sort of person, and I daresay you've no friends to advise you and take you in hand.

GENTLEMAN. I wish you'd take me in hand.

LADY MILLICENT. Well, if you'll only go away now, you shall

find someone to introduce you to me another day, and I'll forget your conduct to-night. Please go. I ask you to. I must stay to supper. It's really unfair of you. Please go quietly—you're making me talk like a policeman.

GENTLEMAN. I won't go unless you tell me who you want to go down to supper with.

LADY MILLICENT. I decline——

[*Rising.*

GENTLEMAN (*very entreatingly*). Oh, please, do. I like hearing you talk. You were beginning to be so nice just now. Please tell me. Don't be unkind.

LADY MILLICENT. Well, I——

GENTLEMAN. Please.

LADY MILLICENT. I'm sure I don't know why I consent. Well, will you go away after I've told you?

GENTLEMAN. I will, as soon as possible.

LADY MILLICENT. Well, then, as you're not invited, perhaps you don't know that our hostess is receiving the guests of her brother, who is really giving this dreadful ball. Poor man!

GENTLEMAN. Ha, ha!

LADY MILLICENT. What?

GENTLEMAN. I coughed.

LADY MILLICENT. Her brother is Herbert Barwell, the great explorer—who only returned to London the other day. I've been dying to meet him.

GENTLEMAN (*pleased*). Have you?

LADY MILLICENT. Dying to meet him.

GENTLEMAN. Why?

LADY MILLICENT. He's such a splendid fellow. I've read all the story of what he's done. He's a hero.

GENTLEMAN (*deprecatingly*). Oh, a hero!

LADY MILLICENT. Yes, a hero, and I adore brave men. Think of the privations he endured.

GENTLEMAN. Oh, they weren't so bad.

LADY MILLICENT. Not so bad! Without water—in that awful climate, with his men dying round him like flies.

He carried his servant on his back for three days and three nights, and saved his life. He's an honor to his country.

GENTLEMAN. Oh, you make too much of it.

LADY MILLICENT (*rising*). Do I? I'm sorry to hear you say you think so. I'm sorry for any man who can think so. But it's of no importance what you think. I am to be introduced to Mr. Barwell, and he is to take me down to supper. Now I have kept my promise — keep yours — go. (*He sits*) I've had enough of this. I shall go to our hostess — she looks a vulgar, fat old woman, but she won't refuse me. I shall ask her to tell her brother to turn you out of the house.

GENTLEMAN. You can't do that.

LADY MILLICENT. Can't I?

GENTLEMAN. No!

LADY MILLICENT. Why not?

GENTLEMAN. Because I've to take you down to supper. I'm him.

LADY MILLICENT. You're talking neither grammar nor sense.

GENTLEMAN. I am the man who is giving this dreadful ball; you're quite right, it is rather dreadful — my sister — you're right again, she is rather vulgar and very fat — told me to find you and introduce myself, and take you down to supper.

LADY MILLICENT. What?

GENTLEMAN. I am Herbert Barwell.

LADY MILLICENT. Why on earth didn't you say so before?

GENTLEMAN. Well —

LADY MILLICENT. Oh, can you ever forgive me for the dreadful things I've been saying?

GENTLEMAN. You said some nice things about me. May I say some nice things to you — some very nice things indeed?

LADY MILLICENT. Don't you think it's time you took me down to have some —

GENTLEMAN. Of the bad champagne?

LADY MILLICENT. I expect it's ripping.

[*She takes his arm, and they go off laughing.*]

CURTAIN.

THE STEPMOTHER

ARNOLD BENNETT

ARNOLD BENNETT was born in the Shelton district, in 1867, not far from the "Five Towns" which he later celebrated in his novels. Although he received his early education at Newcastle-under-Lyme, near to his birthplace, he matriculated at London University about 1885 and studied law in his father's office. In 1889 he left the "Five Towns" to establish himself definitely at London. It is probable that he received his first encouragement to write as a result of his work as London correspondent of a newspaper in his home district. He also won a prize for a contribution to a London paper, and in the early nineties he had seriously entered the field of literature as a contributor to the "Yellow Book." From 1895 on, Bennett turned "free-lance journalist, contributing all manner of articles to all manner of magazines. He attained very soon a position of some security and responsibility, as sub-editor and subsequently as editor of the woman's journal, *Woman*. . . ." He also "acted, during this period, as a fluent and omniscient reviewer, a dramatic critic, a playwright and a publisher's reader."

The years of apprenticeship were almost over. "Already he had decided to be a successful author, and, as he viewed it, the keeping of a journal was a most valuable part of the apprenticeship to that career." A passage from this journal (1899) reveals not only the extent of work accomplished, but throws light on the young author's perseverance and his pride in work achieved. "This year I have written 335,340

words, grand total 224 articles and stories, and four installments of a serial called 'The Gates of Wrath' have actually been published; also my book of plays, 'Polite Farces.' My work included six or eight short stories not yet published, also the greater part of a 55,000 word serial . . . and the whole draft, 80,000 words, of my Staffordshire novel, 'Anna Tellwright.' "

Arnold Bennett's most characteristic work is found in his novels, not in his plays. "The Stepmother", one of the earliest plays, is a slight trifle, better adapted to the stage, however, than some of his later efforts. In a Note prefacing the volume "Polite Farces", he says:

"The three farces comprising the present book have been written for drawing-room performance. Dumas *père*, the father of modern drama, once said that all he needed was 'four trestles, four boards, two actors, and a passion.' For myself I have dispensed with the trestles, the boards, and the passion, since none of these things is suitable for a drawing-room."

PLAYS

*The Stepmother (1899)	Milestones (1912)
*A Good Woman (1899)	(In collaboration with Edward Knoblauch)
*A Question of Sex (1899)	The Title (1918)
Cupid and Commonsense (1908)	Judith (1919)
What the Public Wants (1909)	Sacred and Profane Love (1920)
The Honeymoon (1911)	Body and Soul (1920)
The Great Adventure (1911)	

All of Bennett's plays, with the exception of the "Polite Farces" ("The Stepmother", "A Good Woman", and "A Question of Sex"), are published separately by George H. Doran Company, New York. "Polite Farces", as a single volume, by the same publisher.

References: F. J. Harvey Darton, "Arnold Bennett", Henry Holt and Company, New York; F. T. Cooper, "Some English Story Tellers", Holt; H. T. and W. Follett, "Some Modern Novelists", Holt; R. A. Scott-James, "Personality in Literature", Martin Secker, London.

Magazines: *Bookman*, vol. 34, p. 325, New York; *Living Age*, Series 8, vol. 4, p. 771, Boston.



THE STEPMOTHER

FARCE IN ONE ACT

By ARNOLD BENNETT

“The Stepmother” has not been produced professionally.

Characters

CORA PROUT, *a Popular Novelist and a Widow*, 30

ADRIAN PROUT, *her Stepson*, 20

THOMAS GARDNER, *a Doctor*, 35

CHRISTINE FEVERSHAM, *Mrs. Prout's Secretary*, 20

THE STEPMOTHER

SCENE. *Mrs. Prout's study: luxuriously furnished; large table in centre, upon which are a new novel, press-cuttings, and the usual apparatus of literary compositions. Christine is seated at the large table, ready for work, and awaiting the advent of Mrs. Prout. To pass the time she picks up the novel, the leaves of which are not cut, and glances at a page here and there. Enter Mrs. Prout, hurried and preoccupied; the famous novelist is attired in a plain morning gown, which in the perfection of its cut displays the beauty of her figure. She nods absently to Christine, and sits down in an armchair away from the table.*

CHRISTINE. Good morning, Mrs. Prout. I'm afraid you are still sleeping badly.

MRS. PROUT. Do I look it, girl?

CHRISTINE. You don't specially look it, Mrs. Prout. But I observe. You are my third novelist, and they have all taught me to observe.) Before I took up novelists I was with a Member of Parliament, and he never observed anything except five-line whips.

MRS. PROUT. Really! Five-line whips! Oblige me by putting that down in Notebook No. 2. There will be an M.P. in that wretched thirty-thousand-word thing I've promised for the Christmas number of the *New York Surpriser* and it might be useful. I might even make an epigram out of it.

CHRISTINE. Yes, Mrs. Prout. (*Writes.*)

MRS. PROUT. And what are your observations about me?

CHRISTINE (*while writing*). Well, this is twice in three weeks that you've been here five minutes late in the morning.

MRS. PROUT. Is that all? You don't think my stuff's falling off?

CHRISTINE. Oh, *no*, Mrs. Prout! I *know* it's not falling off. I was just going to tell you. The butler's been in, and wished me to inform you that he begged to give notice. (*Looking up*) It seems that last night you ordered him to cut the leaves of our new novel. (*Patting book maternally*) He said he just looked into it, and he thinks it's disgraceful to ask a respectable butler to cut the leaves of such a book. So he begs to give warning. Oh, *no*, Mrs. Prout, your stuff isn't falling off.

MRS. PROUT (*grimly*). What did you say to him, girl?

CHRISTINE. First I looked at him, and then I said, "Brown, you will probably be able to get a place on the reviewing staff of *The Methodist Recorder*."

MRS. PROUT. Christine, one day, I really believe, you will come to employ a secretary of your own.

CHRISTINE. I hope so, Mrs. Prout. But I intend to keep off the morbid introspection line. *You* do that so awfully well. I think I shall go in for smart dialogue, with marquises and country houses, and a touch of old-fashioned human nature at the bottom. It appears to me that's what's coming along very shortly. . . . Shall we begin, Mrs. Prout?

MRS. PROUT (*disinclined*). Yes, I suppose so. (*Clearing her throat*) By the way, anything special in the press-cuttings?

CHRISTINE. Nothing very special. (*Fingering the pile of press-cuttings*) *The Morning Call* says, "genius in every line."

MRS. PROUT (*blasé*). Hum!

CHRISTINE. *The Daily Reporter*: "Cora Prout may be talented—we should hesitate to deny it—but she is one of several of our leading novelists who should send themselves to a Board School in order to learn grammar."

MRS. PROUT. Grammar again! They must keep a grammar in the office! Personally I think its frightfully bad form to talk about grammar to a lady. But they never had any taste at the *Reporter*. Don't read me any more. Let us commence work.

CHRISTINE. Which will you do, Mrs. Prout? (*Consulting*

a diary of engagements) There's the short story for the *Illustrated Monthly*, six thousand, promised for next Saturday. There's the article on "Women's Diversions" for the *British Review* — they wrote for that yesterday. There's the serial that begins in the *Sunday Daily Sentinel* in September — you've only done half the first instalment of that. And of course there's *Heart Ache*.

MRS. PROUT. I think I'll go on with *Heart Ache*. I feel it coming. I'll do the short story for the *Illustrated* tomorrow. Where had I got to?

CHRISTINE (*choosing the correct notebook, reads*). "The inanimate form of the patient lay like marble on the marble slab of the operating-table. 'The sponge, Nurse,' said the doctor, 'where is it?'" That's where you'd got to.

MRS. PROUT. Yes. I remember. New line. "Isabel gazed at him imperturbably." New line. Quote-marks. "'I fear, Doctor,' she remarked, 'that in a moment of forgetfulness you have sewn it up in our poor patient.'" New line. Quote-marks. "'Damn!' said the doctor, 'so I have.'" Rather good, that, Christine, eh?
[*Christine writes in shorthand.*]

CHRISTINE. Oh, Mrs. Prout, I think it's beautiful. So staccato and crisp. By the way, I forgot to tell you that there's a leader in the *Daily Snail* on that frightful anonymous attack in the *Forum* against your medical accuracy. (*Looking at Mrs. Prout, who is silent, but shows signs of agitation*) You remember — "Medicine in Fiction." The *Snail* backs up the *Forum* for all it's worth. . . . Mrs. Prout, you *are* ill. I was sure you were. What can I get for you?

MRS. PROUT (*weakly wiping her eyes*). Nonsense, Christine. I am a little unstrung, that is all. I want nothing.

CHRISTINE. Your imagination is too much for you.

MRS. PROUT (*meekly*). Perhaps so.

CHRISTINE (*firmly*). But it isn't all due to an abnormal imagination. You've never been quite cheerful since you turned Mr. Adrian out.

MRS. PROUT. You forget yourself, Christine.

CHRISTINE. I forget nothing, Mrs. Prout, myself least of all. Mr. Adrian is your dead husband's son, and you turned him out of your house, and now you're sorry.

MRS. PROUT. Christine, you know perfectly well that I—er—requested him to go because he would insist on making love to you, which interfered with our work. Besides, it was not quite nice for a man to make love to the secretary of his stepmother. I wonder you are indelicate enough to refer to the matter. You should never have permitted his advances.

CHRISTINE. I didn't permit them. I wasn't asked to. I tolerated them. I hadn't been secretary to a lady-novelist with a stepson before, and I wasn't quite sure what was included in the duties. I always like to give satisfaction.

MRS. PROUT. You do give satisfaction. Let that end the discussion.

CHRISTINE (*pouting; turning to her notebook; reads*). “ ‘Damn!’ said the doctor, ‘so I have.’” (*Pause*) “ ‘Damn!’ said the doctor, ‘so I have.’”

[*Pause.*]

MRS. PROUT. Christine, did you find out who was the author of that article on “Medicine in Fiction”?

CHRISTINE. Is *that* what's bothering you, Mrs. Prout? Of course it was a nasty attack, but it is very unlike you to trouble about critics.

MRS. PROUT. It has hurt me more than I can say. That was why I asked you to make a few discreet inquiries.

CHRISTINE. I did ask at my club.

MRS. PROUT. And what did they think there?

CHRISTINE. They laughed at me, and said every one knew you had written it yourself just to keep the silly season alive, July being a sickly month for reputations.

MRS. PROUT. What did you say to that?

CHRISTINE. I should prefer not to repeat it.

MRS. PROUT. Christine, I insist. Your modesty is becoming a disease.

CHRISTINE. I said they were fools——

MRS. PROUT. A little abrupt, perhaps, but effective.

CHRISTINE. Not to see that the grammar was different from ours.

MRS. PROUT. Oh! that was what you said, was it?

CHRISTINE. It was, and it settled them.

MRS. PROUT (*assuming a confidential air*). Christine, I believe I know who wrote that article.

CHRISTINE. Who?

MRS. PROUT. Dr. Gardner.

[*Bursts into tears.*]

CHRISTINE (*soothing her*). But he lives on the floor below, in the very flat underneath this.

MRS. PROUT (*choking back her sobs*). Yes. It is too dreadful.

CHRISTINE. But he comes here nearly every evening.

MRS. PROUT (*sharply*). Who told you that?

CHRISTINE. Now, Mrs. Prout, let me implore you to be calm. The butler told me. I didn't ask him, and as I cannot be expected to foretell what my employer's butler will say before he opens his mouth, I am not to blame. (*Compresses her lips*) Shall we continue?

MRS. PROUT. Christine, do you think it was Dr. Gardner? I would give worlds to know.

CHRISTINE (*coldly analytic*). Do you mean that you would give worlds to know that it was Dr. Gardner, or that it wasn't Dr. Gardner? Or would give worlds merely to know the author's name—no matter who he might be?

MRS. PROUT (*sighing*). You are dreadfully unsympathetic this morning.

CHRISTINE. I am placid, nothing else. Please recollect that when you engaged me you asked if you might rely on me to be placid, as your previous secretary, when you dictated the pathetic chapters, had wept so freely into her notebook that she couldn't transcribe her stuff, besides permanently

injuring her eyesight. Since you ask my opinion as to Dr. Gardner being the author of this attack on you, I say that he isn't. Apart from the facts that he lives on the floor below, and that he is, so the butler says, a constant visitor in the evenings, there is the additional fact — a fact which I have several times observed for myself without the assistance of the butler — that he likes you.

MRS. PROUT. You have noticed that. It is true. But the question is: Does he like me sufficiently not to attack my work in the public press? That is the point. The writer of that cruel article begins by saying that he has no personal animus, and that he is actuated solely by an enthusiasm for the cause of medicine and the medical profession.

CHRISTINE. You mean to infer, Mrs. Prout, that the author of the article might, as a man, like you, while as a doctor he despised you?

MRS. PROUT (*whimpering again*). That is my suspicion.

CHRISTINE. But Dr. Gardner does more than like you. He adores you.

MRS. PROUT. He adores my talent, my genius, my fame, my wealth; but does he adore me? I am not an ordinary woman, and it is no use pretending that I am. I must think of these things.

CHRISTINE. Neither is Dr. Gardner an ordinary doctor. His researches into toxicology —

MRS. PROUT. His researches are nothing to me. I wish he wasn't a doctor at all.

CHRISTINE. Even doctors have their place in the world, Mrs. Prout.

MRS. PROUT. They should not meddle with fiction, poking their noses —

CHRISTINE. But if fiction meddles with *them*? . . . You know fiction is really very meddlesome. It pokes its nose with great industry.

MRS. PROUT (*pulling herself together*). Christine, you have never understood me. Let us continue.

CHRISTINE (*with an offended air, turning once more to her notebook*). “‘Damn!’ said the doctor, ‘so I have.’”

MRS. PROUT (*coughing*). New line. “A smile flashed across the lips of Isabel as she took up a glittering knife——” (*Gives a great sob*) Oh, Christine! I’m sure Dr. Gardner wrote it.

CHRISTINE. Very well, madam. He wrote it. We have at last settled something. (*Mrs. Prout buries her face in her hands. Christine looks up, and after an instant’s pause springs toward her*) You poor dear! You are perfectly hysterical this morning. You must go and lie down for a little. A horizontal posture is what you need.

MRS. PROUT. Perhaps you are right. I will leave you for an hour. (*Totters to her feet*) Take down this note for Dr. Gardner. He may call this morning. In fact, I rather think he will. “The answer to the question is ‘No’” — capital N.

CHRISTINE. Shall I sign it?

MRS. PROUT. Yes; sign it “C. P.” And if he comes, give it him yourself, and say that I can see no one. And, Christine, would you mind (*crying gently again*) seeing the b-b-butler, and try to reason him into a sensible attitude towards my n-n-novels. In my present state of health I couldn’t stand any change. And he is so admirable at table.

CHRISTINE. Shall I offer some compromise in our next novel? I might inquire what is the irreducible minimum of his demands.

MRS. PROUT (*faintly*). Anything, anything, if he will stay.

CHRISTINE (*following Mrs. Prout to the door, and touching her shoulder caressingly*). Try to sleep.

[*Exit Mrs. Prout. Christine whistles in a low tone as she returns meditatively to her seat.*]

CHRISTINE (*looking at notebook*). “Isabel took up a glittering knife,” did she? “The answer to the question is ‘No,’” with a capital N. “C. P.” sounds like Carter Paterson. Now, as I have nothing to do, I think I will

devote the morning to an article on "Hysteria in Lady Novelists." Um! Ah! "The answer to the question is 'No' "—capital *N*. What question? Can it be that the lily-white hand of the author of *Heart Ache* has . . .
(*knock*) Come in.

[*Enter Dr. Gardner.*]

GARDNER. Oh, good morning, Miss Feversham.

CHRISTINE. Good morning, Dr. Gardner. You seem surprised to see me here. Yet I am to be found in this chair daily at this hour.

GARDNER. Not at all, not at all. I assure you I fully expected to find both you and the chair. I also expected to find Mrs. Prout.

CHRISTINE. Are you capable of interrupting our literary labours? We do not receive callers so early, Dr. Gardner. Which reminds me that I have several times remarked that this study ought not to have a door opening into the corridor.

GARDNER. As for that, may I venture to offer the excuse that I had an appointment with Mrs. Prout?

CHRISTINE. At what hour? She never makes appointments before noon.

GARDNER. I believe she did say twelve o'clock.

CHRISTINE (*looking at her watch*). And it is now twenty-five minutes to ten. Punctuality is a virtue. You may be said to have raised it to the dignity of a fine art.

GARDNER. I will wait. (*Sits down*) I trust that I do not interrupt?

CHRISTINE. Yes, Doctor, I regret to say that you do. I was about to commence the composition of an article.

GARDNER. Upon what?

CHRISTINE. Upon "Hysteria in Lady Novelists." It is my specialty.

GARDNER. Surely lady novelists are not hysterical?

CHRISTINE. The increase of hysteria among that class of persons is one of the saddest features of the age.

GARDNER. Dear me! (*Enthusiastically*) But I can tell you

the name of one lady novelist who isn't hysterical — and that, perhaps, the greatest name of all — Mrs. Prout.

CHRISTINE. *Of course* not, of course not, Doctor. Nevertheless, Mrs. Prout is somewhat indisposed this morning.

GARDNER. Cora — ill! What is it? Nothing serious?

CHRISTINE. Rest assured. The merest slight indisposition. Just sufficient to delay us an hour or two with our work. Nothing more. Nerves, you know. The imagination of a great artist, Dr. Gardner, is often too active, too stressful, for the frail physical organism.

GARDNER. Ah! You regard Mrs. Prout as a great artist?

CHRISTINE. Doctor — even to ask such a question . . . !
Do not you?

GARDNER. I? To me she is unique. I say, Miss Feversham, were you ever in love?

CHRISTINE. In love? I have had preferences.

GARDNER. Among men?

CHRISTINE. No; among boys. Recollect I am only twenty, though singularly precocious in shrewdness and calm judgment.

GARDNER. Twenty? You amaze me, Miss Feversham. I have often been struck by your common sense and knowledge of the world. They would do credit to a woman of fifty.

CHRISTINE. I am glad to notice that you do not stoop to offer me vulgar compliments about my face.

GARDNER. I am incapable of such conduct. I esteem your mental qualities too highly. And so you have had your preferences among boys?

CHRISTINE. Yes, I like to catch them from eighteen to twenty. They are so sweet and fresh then, like new milk. The *employé* of the Express Dairy Company who leaves me my half-pint at my lodgings each morning is a perfectly lovely dear. I adore him.

GARDNER. He is one of your preferences, then?

CHRISTINE. A preference among milkmen, of whom, as I change my lodgings frequently, I have known many.

Then there is the postman — not a day more than eighteen, I am sure, though that is contrary to the regulations of St. Martin's-le-Grand. Dr. Gardner, you *should* see my postman. When *he* brings them I can receive even rejected articles with equanimity.

GARDNER. I should be charmed to see him. But tell me, Miss Feversham, have you had no serious preferences?

CHRISTINE. You seem interested in this question of preferences.

GARDNER. I am.

CHRISTINE. Doctor, I will open my heart to you. It is conceivable you may be of use to me. You are on friendly terms with Adrian, and doubtless you know the history of his exit from this house. (*Gardner nods, with a smile*) Doctor, he and I are passionately attached to each other. Our ages are precisely alike. It is a beautiful idyll, or rather it would be, if dear Mrs. Prout did not try to transform it into a tragedy. She has not only turned the darling boy out, but she has absolutely forbidden him the house.

GARDNER. Doubtless she had her reasons.

CHRISTINE. Oh, I'm *sure* she had. Only, you see, her reasons aren't ours. Of course we could marry at once if we chose. I could easily keep Adrian. I do not, however, wish to inconvenience dear Mrs. Prout. It is a mistake to quarrel with the rich relations of one's future husband. But I was thinking that perhaps you, Doctor, might persuade dear Mrs. Prout that my marriage to Adrian need not necessarily interfere with the performance of my duties as her secretary.

GARDNER. Anything that I can do, Miss Feversham, you may rely on me doing.

CHRISTINE. You are a dear.

GARDNER. But why should you imagine that I have any influence with Mrs. Prout?

CHRISTINE. I do not imagine; I know. It is my unerring insight over again, my faultless observation. Doctor, you

did not begin to question me about love because you were interested in *my* love affairs, but because you were interested in your own, and couldn't keep off the subject. I read you like a book. You love Mrs. Prout, my dear Doctor. Therefore you have influence over her. No woman is uninfluenced by the man who loves her.

GARDNER (*laughing between self-satisfaction and self-consciousness*). You have noticed that I admire Mrs. Prout? It appears that nothing escapes you.

CHRISTINE. That is a trifle. The butler has noticed it.

GARDNER. The butler!

CHRISTINE. The butler.

GARDNER (*with abandon*). Let him. Let the whole world notice. Miss Feversham, be it known that I love Mrs. Prout with passionate adoration. Before the day is out I shall either be her affianced bridegroom — or I shall be a dead man.

CHRISTINE (*leaning forward; in a low, tense voice*). You proposed to her last night?

GARDNER. I did.

CHRISTINE. And you were to come for the answer this morning?

GARDNER. Yes. Can you not guess that I am eager — excited? Can you not pardon me for thinking it is noon at twenty-five minutes to ten? Ah, Miss Feversham, if Adrian adores you with one-tenth of the fire with which I adore Mrs. Prout —

CHRISTINE. Stop, Doctor, I do not wish to be a burnt sacrifice. Now let me ask you a question. You have seen that attack on Mrs. Prout, entitled "Medicine in Fiction", in this month's *Forum*. Do you know the author of it?

GARDNER. I don't. Has it disturbed Mrs. Prout?

CHRISTINE. It has. Did she not mention it to you?

GARDNER. Not a word. If I did know the author of it, if I ever do know the author of it, I will tear him (*fiercely*) limb from limb.

CHRISTINE. I trust you will chloroform him first. It will be horrid of you if you don't.

GARDNER. I absolutely decline to chloroform him first.

CHRISTINE. You must.

GARDNER. I won't.

CHRISTINE. Never mind. Perhaps you will be dead. Remember that you have promised to kill yourself to-day on a certain contingency. Should you really do it? Should you really put an end to your life if Mrs. Prout gave you a refusal?

GARDNER. I swear it. Existence would be valueless to me.

CHRISTINE. By the way, Mrs. Prout told me that if you called I was to say that she could see no one.

GARDNER. See no one! But she promised . . .

CHRISTINE. However, she left a note.

GARDNER (*starting up*). Give it me instantly. Why didn't you give it me before?

CHRISTINE. I had no opportunity. Besides, I haven't transcribed it yet. It was dictated.

GARDNER. *Dictated?* Are you sure?

CHRISTINE (*seriously*). Oh, yes, she dictates *everything*.

GARDNER. Well, well, read it to me, read it to me. Quick, I say.

CHRISTINE (*turning over leaves rapidly*). Here it is. Are you listening?

GARDNER. Great Heaven!

CHRISTINE (*reads from her shorthand note*). "The answer to your question is ——"

GARDNER. Go on.

CHRISTINE (*drawing her breath first*). "Yes. — C. P." There! I've saved your life for you.

GARDNER. You have indeed, my dear girl. But I must see her. I must see my beloved Cora.

CHRISTINE (*taking his hand*). Accept my advice, Doctor — the advice of a simple, artless girl. Do not attempt to see her to-day. There are seasons of emotion when a woman

(stops) . . . Go downstairs and write to her, and then give the letter to me.

[Pats him on the back.]

GARDNER. I will, by Jove. Miss Feversham, you're a good sort. And as you've told me something, I'll tell you something. Adrian is going to storm the castle to-day.

CHRISTINE. Adrian!

[A knock. Enter Adrian.]

ADRIAN. Since you command it, I enter.

GARDNER. Let me pass, bold youth.

[Exit Dr. Gardner hurriedly.]

ADRIAN (overcome by Gardner's haste). Why this avalanche? Has something happened suddenly?

CHRISTINE. Several things have happened suddenly, Adrian, and several more will probably happen when your mamma discovers that you are defying her orders in this audacious manner. Why are you here? (Kisses him) You perfect duck!

ADRIAN (gravely). I am not here, Miss Feversham —

CHRISTINE. "Miss Feversham" — and my kiss still warm on his lips!

ADRIAN. I repeat, Miss Feversham, that I am not here. This (pointing to himself) is not I. It is merely a rather smart member of the staff of the *Daily Snail*, come to interview Cora Prout, the celebrated novelist.

CHRISTINE. And I have kissed a *Snail* reporter. Ugh!

ADRIAN. Impetuosity has ruined many women.

CHRISTINE. It is a morning of calamities. (Assuming the secretarial pose) Your card, please.

ADRIAN (handing card). With pleasure.

CHRISTINE (taking card by the extreme corner, perusing it with disdain, and then dropping it on the floor). We never see interviewers in the morning.

ADRIAN. Then I will call this afternoon.

CHRISTINE. You must write for an appointment.

ADRIAN. Oh! I'll take my chances, thanks.

CHRISTINE. We never give them: it is our rule. We have

to be very particular. The fact is, we hate being interviewed, and we only submit to the process out of a respectful regard for the great and enlightened public. Any sort of notoriety, any suggestion of self-advertisement, is distasteful to us. What do you wish to interview us about? If it's the new novel, we are absolutely mum. Accept that from me.

ADRIAN. It isn't the new novel. The *Snail* wishes to know whether Mrs. Prout feels inclined to make any statement in reply to that article, "Medicine in Fiction", in the *Forum*.

CHRISTINE. Oh, Adrian, do you know anything about that article?

ADRIAN. Rather! I know *all* about it.

CHRISTINE. You treasure! You invaluable darling! I will marry you to-morrow morning by special license——

ADRIAN. Recollect, it is a *Snail* reporter whom you are addressing. Suppose I were to print that!

CHRISTINE. Just so. You are prudence itself, while I, for the moment, happen to be a little—a little abnormal. I saved a man's life this morning, and it is apt to upset one's nerves. It is a dreadful thing to do—to save a man's life. And the consequences will be simply frightful for me.

[*Buries her face in her hands.*]

ADRIAN. Christine (*taking her hands*), what are you raving about? You are not yourself.

CHRISTINE. I wish I wasn't. (*Looking up with forced calm*) Adrian, there is a possibility of your being able to save me from the results of my horrible act, if only you will tell me the name of the author of that article in the *Forum*.

ADRIAN (*tenderly*). Christine, you little know what you ask. But for you I will do anything. . . . Kiss me, my white lily.

[*She kisses him.*]

CHRISTINE (*whispers*). Tell me.

[*He folds her in his arms. Enter Mrs. Prout, excitedly.*]

MRS. PROUT (*as she enters*). Christine, that appalling butler

has actually left the house . . . (*Observing group*)
Heavens!

CHRISTINE (*quietly disengaging herself*). You seem a little better, Mrs. Prout. A person to interview you from the *Daily Snail*. [*Pointing to Adrian*].

MRS. PROUT. Adrian!

ADRIAN. Yes, mamma.

MRS. PROUT (*opening her lips to speak and then closing them*).
Sit down.

ADRIAN. Certainly, Mamma. [*Sits*].

MRS. PROUT. How dare you come here?

ADRIAN. I don't know how, Mamma.

[*Picks up his card from the floor and hands it to her; then resumes his seat*].

MRS. PROUT (*glancing at card*). Pah!

CHRISTINE. That's just what I told the person, Mrs. Prout.
[*Mrs. Prout burns her up with a glance*].

MRS. PROUT. You have, then, abandoned your medical studies, for which I had paid all the fees?

ADRIAN. Yes, Mamma. You see, I was obliged to earn something at once. So I took to journalism. I am getting on quite nicely. The editor of the *Snail* says that I may review your next book.

MRS. PROUT. Unnatural stepson, to review in cold blood the novel of your own stepmother! But this morning I am getting used to misfortunes.

ADRIAN. It cuts me to the heart to hear you refer to any action of mine as a misfortune for you. Perhaps you would prefer that I should at once relieve you of my presence?

MRS. PROUT. Decidedly, yes — that is, if Christine thinks she can do without the fifth act of that caress which I interrupted.

CHRISTINE. The curtain was already falling, madam.

MRS. PROUT. Very well. (*To Adrian*) Good-day.

ADRIAN. As a stepson I retire. As the "special" of the *Daily Snail* I must insist on remaining. A "special" of the *Daily Snail* is incapable of being snubbed. He knows

what he wants, and he gets it, or he ceases to be a "special" of the *Daily Snail*.

MRS. PROUT. I esteem the press, and though I should prefer an existence of absolute privacy, I never refuse its demands. I sacrifice myself to my public, freely acknowledging that a great artist has no exclusive right to the details of his own daily life. A great artist belongs to the world. What is it you want, Mr. Snail?

ADRIAN. I want to know whether you care to say anything in reply to that article on "Medicine in Fiction" in the *Forum*.

MRS. PROUT (*sinking back in despair*). That article again! (*Sitting up*) Tell me — do you know the author?

ADRIAN. I do.

MRS. PROUT. His name!

ADRIAN. He is a friend of mine.

MRS. PROUT. His name!

ADRIAN. I am informed that in writing it he was actuated by the highest motives. His desire was not only to make a little money, but to revenge himself against a person who had deeply injured him. He didn't know much about medicine, being only a student, and probably the larger part of his arguments could not be sustained, but he knew enough to make a show, and he made it.

MRS. PROUT. His name! I insist.

ADRIAN. Adrian Spout or Prout — I have a poor memory. . . .

MRS. PROUT. Is it possible?

CHRISTINE. Monster!

ADRIAN. Need I defend myself, Mamma? Consider what you had done to me. You had devastated my young heart, which was just unfolding to its first passion. You had blighted the springtime of the exquisite creature (*looking at Christine, who is moved by the feeling in his tones*) — the exquisite creature who was dearer to me than all the world. In place of the luxury of my late father's house you offered me — the street. . . .

CHRISTINE. Yes . . . and Gower Street.

ADRIAN. You, who should have gently fostered and encouraged the frail buds of my energy and intelligence—you cast me forth . . .

CHRISTINE. Cast *them* forth.

ADRIAN. Cast *them* forth, untimely plucked, to wither, and perhaps die, in the deserts of a great city. And for what? For what?

CHRISTINE. Merely lest she should be deprived of *my* poor services. Ah! Mrs. Prout, can you wonder that Mr. Adrian should actively resent such conduct—you with your marvellous knowledge of human nature?

MRS. PROUT. Adrian, did you really write it?

ADRIAN. Why, of course. You seem rather pleased than otherwise, Mamma.

MRS. PROUT (*after cogitating*). Ah! You didn't write it, really. You are just boasting. It is a plot, a plot!

ADRIAN. I can prove that I wrote it, since you impugn my veracity.

MRS. PROUT. How can you prove it?

ADRIAN. By producing the cheque which I received from the *Forum* this very morning.

MRS. PROUT. Produce it, and I will forgive all.

ADRIAN (*with a sign to Christine that he entirely fails to comprehend the situation*). I fly. It is in my humble attic, round the corner. Back in two minutes.

[*Exit Adrian.*]

MRS. PROUT. Christine, *did* he really write it?

CHRISTINE. Can you doubt his word? Was it for lying that you ejected the poor youth from this residence?

MRS. PROUT. Ah! If he did! (*Smiles*) Of course Dr. Gardner has not called?

CHRISTINE. Yes, he was in about twenty minutes ago.

MRS. PROUT (*agonised*). Did you give him my note?

CHRISTINE. No.

MRS. PROUT. Thank Heaven!

CHRISTINE. I had not copied it out, so I read it to him.

MRS. PROUT. You read it to him?

CHRISTINE. Yes; that seemed the obvious thing to do.

MRS. PROUT (*in black despair*). All is over.

[*Sinks back. Enter Dr. Gardner hastily.*]

GARDNER (*excited*). I was looking out of the window of my flat when I saw Adrian tear along the street. I said to myself, "A man, even a reporter, only runs like that when a doctor is required, and urgently required. Some one is ill, perhaps my darling Cora." So I flew upstairs.

MRS. PROUT (*with a shriek*). Dr. Gardner!

GARDNER. You are indeed ill, my beloved. (*Approaching her*) What is the matter?

MRS. PROUT (*waving him off*). It is nothing, Doctor. Could you get me some salts? I have mislaid mine [*Sighs*].

GARDNER. Salts! In an instant.

[*Exit Dr. Gardner.*]

MRS. PROUT. Christine, you said you read my note to Dr. Gardner.

CHRISTINE. Yes, Mrs. Prout.

MRS. PROUT. His behaviour is singular in the extreme. He seems positively overjoyed, while the freedom of his endearing epithets— What were the precise terms I used? Read me the note.

CHRISTINE. Yes, Mrs. Prout. (*Reads demurely*) "The answer to your question is 'Yes,'"—with a capital N.

MRS. PROUT. "Yes" with a capital N?

CHRISTINE (*calmly*). I mean with a capital Y.

[*Christine and Mrs. Prout look steadily at each other. Then they both smile. Enter Dr. Gardner.*]

GARDNER (*handing the salts*). You are sure you are not ill?

MRS. PROUT (*smiling at him radiantly*). I am convinced of it. Christine, will you kindly reach me down the dictionary from that shelf?

[*While Christine's back is turned Dr. Gardner gives, and Mrs. Prout returns, a passionate kiss.*]

CHRISTINE (*handing dictionary*). Here it is, Mrs. Prout.

MRS. PROUT (*after consulting it*). I thought I could not be mistaken. Christine, you have rendered me a service

(*regarding her affectionately*) — a service for which I shall not forget to express my gratitude; but I am obliged to dismiss you instantly from my service.

CHRISTINE. Dismiss me, madam?

GARDNER. Cora, can you be so cruel?

MRS. PROUT. Alas, yes! She has sinned the secretarial sin which is beyond forgiveness. She has misspelt.

GARDNER. Impossible!

MRS. PROUT. It is too true.

GARDNER. Tell me the sad details.

MRS. PROUT. She has been guilty of spelling "No" with a "Y."

GARDNER. Dear me! And a word of one syllable, too! Miss Feversham, I should not have thought it of you.

[*Enter Adrian.*]

ADRIAN (*as he hands a cheque for Mrs. Prout's inspection*).

Here again, Doctor?

GARDNER. Yes, and to stay.

MRS. PROUT. Adrian, the Doctor and I are engaged to be married. And talking of marriage, you observe that girl there in the corner. Take her and marry her at the earliest convenient moment. She is no longer my secretary.

ADRIAN. What! You consent?

MRS. PROUT. I consent.

ADRIAN. And you pardon my article?

MRS. PROUT. No, my dear Adrian, I ignore it. Here, take your ill-gotten gains. (*Returning cheque*) They will bring you no good. And since they will bring you no good, I have decided to allow you the sum of five hundred pounds a year. You must have something.

ADRIAN. Stepmother!

CHRISTINE (*advancing to take Mrs. Prout's hand*). Stepmother-in-law!

GARDNER. Cora, you are an angel.

MRS. PROUT. Merely an artist, my dear Tom, merely an artist. I have the dramatic sense — that is all.

ADRIAN. Your sense is more than dramatic, it is common; it is even horse. What about the *Snail* "special", mummy?

MRS. PROUT. My attitude is one of strict silence.

ADRIAN. But I must go away with something.

MRS. PROUT. Strict silence. The attack is beneath my notice.

ADRIAN. But what can I *say*?

CHRISTINE. Say that Mrs. Prout's late secretary, Miss Feversham, having retired from her post, has already entered upon a career of original literary composition. That will be a nice newsy item, won't it?

ADRIAN (*taking out notebook*). Rather! What is she at work on?

CHRISTINE. Oh, well, I scarcely —

GARDNER. I know — "Hysteria in Lady Novelists."

MRS. PROUT. What?

GARDNER (*to Christine*). Didn't you tell me so?

CHRISTINE. Of course I didn't, Doctor. What a shocking memory you have! It is worse than my spelling.

GARDNER. Then what did you say?

CHRISTINE. I said, "Generosity in Lady Novelists."

CURTAIN

ROCOCO

GRANVILLE BARKER

H. GRANVILLE BARKER was born at London in 1877. He appears to have begun his stage career at an early age, when he became an actor in a provincial company. His first London appearance was in 1892. He subsequently acted with Lewis Waller, Ben Greet, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell, and participated in the productions of the Elizabethan Stage Society. Becoming identified later with the Stage Society, he produced and acted in a number of Bernard Shaw's early plays. In 1904 he undertook, together with J. E. Vedrenne, the management of the Court Theater, where he successfully experimented in a repertory scheme, producing many new plays by Shaw, St. John Hankin, Barrie and Galsworthy. He continued his managerial activities at the Duke of York's Theater, the Savoy — where his Shakespearian revivals were produced — the St. James, and the Kingsway. During the past few years Mr. Barker has adapted plays, written about the theater, and lectured, both in England and the United States.

Granville Barker's plays are, in the best sense of the word, experiments in form. They are a good deal more than technical feats, to be sure, but one feels that they are primarily quests after a newer and more flexible medium than that which the workers in the traditional form habitually use. "The Madras House", for example, judged by the standards of Pinero, is hardly a play at all; its artistic unity lies rather in the theme than in the actual plot. In "Waste", the theme again — more concrete than in "The Madras House" — dominates the form. "The Voysey Inheritance", a study of upper middle-class English life, comes nearer to the tradi-

tional dramatic form. It is Mr. Barker's most successful play.

"Rococo" is the best of the short plays; it reveals the dramatist, as in the more ambitious works, as an artist in quest of the proper means of expression, the most effective medium for the dramatic presentation of human character and ideas.

PLAYS

The Weather Hen (1899)	Waste (1909)
(In collaboration with Herbert Thomas)	The Madras House (1910)
The Marrying of Ann Leete (1901)	*Rococo (1912)
Prunella (1904)	The Harlequinade (1913)
(In collaboration with Laurence Housman)	(In collaboration with Dion Clayton Calthrop)
The Voysey Inheritance (1905)	Vote by Ballot (1914)
	Farewell to the Theatre (1916)

"The Marrying of Ann Leete", "Prunella", "The Voysey Inheritance", "Waste", "The Madras House", and "The Harlequinade" are published separately by Little, Brown and Company, Boston; "The Marrying of Ann Leete", "The Voysey Inheritance", and "Waste", also in a single volume, by Little, Brown and Company; "Rococo", "Vote by Ballot", and "Farewell to the Theater" in a single volume only, as "Three Short Plays", by Little, Brown and Company.

References: Granville Barker, Prefaces to his own editions of "A Midsummer Night's Dream", "Twelfth Night", and "A Winter's Tale", Sidgwick and Jackson, London; and to "Three Plays of Maeterlinck", Gowans and Gray, London; William Archer and Granville Barker, "Schemes and Estimates for a National Theater", Duffield and Company, New York.

Magazines: *Bookman*, July, 1914, London; *The Forum*, vol. xlv, p. 159, New York; *Bookman*, vol. xxxv, p. 195, New York; *Fortnightly Review*, vol. xcv, p. 60, and vol. c, p. 100, London; *Nation*, vol. xci, p. 19, and vol. xciv, p. 445, New York; *Harper's Weekly*, vol. lvi, p. 6, New York; *North American Review*, vol. cxcv, p. 5720, New York; *The Drama*, No. 2, Chicago.



ROCOCO

A FARCE

By GRANVILLE BARKER

"Rococo" was first produced at London in 1911.

Characters

THE VICAR

REGINALD, *his nephew*

MRS. REGINALD

MRS. UNDERWOOD, *the Vicar's wife*

MISS UNDERWOOD, *the Vicar's sister*

MORTIMER UGLOW, *Reginald's father*

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ROCOCO

Do you know how ugly the drawing-room of an English vicarage can be? Yes, I am aware of all that there should be about it; the old-world grace and charm of Jane-Austenism. One should sit upon Chippendale and glimpse the grey Norman church-tower through the casement. But what of the pious foundations of a more industrial age, churches built in mid-nineteenth century and rather scamped in the building, dedicated to the Glory of God and the soul's health of some sweating and sweated urban district? The Bishop would have a vicarage added, grumbled the church-donor. Well, then, consider his comfort a little, but to the glory of the Vicar nothing need be done. And nothing was. The architect (this an added labour of but little love to him) would give an ecclesiastical touch to the front porch, a pointed top to the front door, add some stained glass to the staircase window. But a mean house, a stuffy house, and the Vicar must indeed have fresh air in his soul if mean and stuffy doctrine was not to be generated there.

The drawing-room would be the best room, and not a bad room in its way, if it weren't that its proportions were vile, as though it felt it wanted to be larger than it was, and if the window and the fireplace and the door didn't seem to be quarrelling as to which should be the most conspicuous. The fireplace wins.

This particular one in this particular drawing-room is of yellow wood, stained and grained. It reaches not quite to the ceiling. It has a West Front air, if looking-glass may stand for windows; it is fretted, moreover, here and there, with little trefoil holes. It bears a full assault of the Vicar's wife's ideas of how to make the place "look nice." There is the clock, of course, which won't keep time; there are the vases which won't hold water; framed photographs, as many as can be crowded on the shelves; in every other crevice knickknacks. Then, if you

stand, as the Vicar often stands, at this point of vantage you are conscious of the wall-paper of amber and blue with a frieze above it measuring off yard by yard a sort of desert scene, a mountain, a lake, three palm trees, two camels; and again; and again; until by the corner a camel and a palm tree are cut out. On the walls there are pictures, of course. Two of them convey to you in a vague and water-coloury sort of way that an English countryside is pretty. There is "Christ among the Doctors", with a presentation brass plate on its frame; there is "Simply to Thy Cross I Cling." And there is an illuminated testimonial to the Vicar, a mark of affection and esteem from the flock he ministered to as senior curate.

The furniture is either very heavy, stuffed, sprung, and tapestry-covered, or very light. There are quite a number of small tables (occasional-tables they are called), which should have four legs but have only three. There are several chairs, too, on which it would be unwise to sit down.

In the centre of the room, beneath the hanging, pink-shaded, electric chandelier, is a mahogany monument, a large round table of the "pedestal" variety, and on it tower to a climax the vicarage symbols of gentility and culture. In the centre of this table, beneath a glass shade, an elaborate reproduction of some sixteenth-century Pietà (a little High Church, it is thought; but Art, for some reason, runs that way). It stands on a Chinese silk mat, sent home by some exiled uncle. It is symmetrically surrounded by gift books, a photograph album, a tray of painted Indian figures (very jolly! another gift from the exiled uncle), and a whale's tooth. The whole affair is draped with a red embroidered cloth.

The window of the room, with so many sorts of curtains and blinds to it that one would think the Vicar hatched conspiracies here by night, admits but a blurring light, which the carpet (Brussels) reflects, toned to an ugly yellow.

You really would not expect such a thing to be happening in such a place, but this carpet is at the moment the base of an apparently mortal struggle. The Vicar is undermost, his baldish

head, when he tries to raise it, falls back and bumps. Kneeling on him, throttling his collar, is a hefty young man conscientiously out of temper, with scarlet face glowing against carrotty hair. His name is Reginald and he is (one regrets to add) the Vicar's nephew, though it be only by marriage. The Vicar's wife, fragile and fifty, is making pathetic attempts to pull him off.

"Have you had enough?" asks Reginald and grips the Vicar hard.

"Oh, Reginald . . . be good," is all the Vicar's wife's appeal.

Not two yards off a minor battle rages. Mrs. Reginald, coming up to reinforce, was intercepted by Miss Underwood, the Vicar's sister, on the same errand. The elder lady now has the younger pinned by the elbows and she emphasises this very handsome control of the situation by teeth-rattling shakes.

"Cat . . . cat . . . cat!" gasps Mrs. Reginald, who is plump and flaxen and easily disarranged.

Miss Underwood only shakes her again. "I'll teach you manners, miss."

"Oh, Reginald . . . do drop him," moans poor Mrs. Underwood. For this is really very bad for the Vicar.

"Stick a pin into him, Mary," advises her sister-in-law. Whereat Mrs. Reginald yelps in her iron grasp,

"Don't you dare . . . it's poisonous," and then, "Oh . . . if you weren't an old woman I'd have boxed your ears."

Three violent shakes. "Would you? Would you? Would you?"

"I haven't got a pin, Carinthia," says Mrs. Underwood. She has conscientiously searched.

"Pull his hair, then," commands Carinthia.

At intervals, like a signal gun, Reginald repeats his query: "Have you had enough?" And the Vicar, though it is evident that he has, still, with some unsundering school-days' echo answering in his mind, will only gasp, "Most undignified . . . clergyman of the Church of England . . . your host, sir . . . ashamed of you . . . let me up at once."

Mrs. Underwood has failed at the hair; she flaps her hands in despair. "It's too short, Carinthia," she moans.

Mrs. Reginald begins to sob pitifully. It is very painful to be tightly held by the elbows from behind. So Miss Underwood, with the neatest of twists and pushes, lodges her in a chair, and thus released herself, folds her arms and surveys the situation. "Box my ears, would you?" is her postscript.

MRS. REGINALD. Well . . . you boxed father's.

MISS UNDERWOOD. Where is your wretched father-in-law?

[Her hawklike eye surveys the room for this unknown in vain.

REGINALD *(the proper interval having apparently elapsed)*. Have you had enough?

[Dignified he cannot look, thus outstretched. The Vicar, therefore, assumes a mixed expression of saintliness and obstinacy, his next best resource. His poor wife moans again. . . .

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, please, Reginald . . . the floor's so hard for him!

REGINALD *(a little anxious to have done with it himself)*. Have you had enough?

THE VICAR *(quite supine)*. Do you consider this conduct becoming a gentleman?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. And . . . Simon! . . . if the servants have heard . . . they must have heard. What will they think?

[No, even this heart-breaking appeal falls flat.

REGINALD. Say you've had enough and I'll let you up.

THE VICAR *(reduced to casuistry)*. It's not at all the sort of thing I ought to say.

MRS. UNDERWOOD *(so helpless)*. Oh . . . I think you might say it, Simon, just for once.

MISS UNDERWOOD *(grim with the pride of her own victory)*. Say nothing of the sort, Simon!

[The Vicar has a burst of exasperation; for, after all, he is on the floor and being knelt on.

THE VICAR. Confound it all, then, Carinthia, why don't you do something?

[*Carinthia casts a tactical eye over Reginald. The Vicar adds in parenthesis . . . a human touch! . . .*]

THE VICAR. Don't kneel there, you young fool, you'll break my watch!

MISS UNDERWOOD. Wait till I get my breath.

[*But this prospect raises in Mrs. Underwood a perfect dithyramb of despair.*]

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, please, Carinthia . . . No . . . don't start again. Such a scandal! I wonder everything's not broken. (*So coaxingly to Reginald*) Shall I say it for him?

MRS. REGINALD (*fat little bantam, as she smooths her feathers in the armchair*). You make him say it, Reggie.

[*But now the servants are on poor Mrs. Underwood's brain. Almost down to her knees she goes.*]

MRS. UNDERWOOD. They'll be coming up to see what the noise is. Oh . . . Simon!

[*It does strike the Vicar that this would occasion considerable scandal in the parish. There are so few good excuses for being found lying on the carpet, your nephew kneeling threateningly on the top of you. So he makes up his mind to it and enunciates with musical charm; it might be a benediction. . . .*]

THE VICAR. I have had enough.

REGINALD (*in some relief*). That's all right.

[*He rises from the prostrate church militant; he even helps it rise. This pleasant family party then look at each other, and, truth to tell, they are all a little ashamed.*]

MRS. UNDERWOOD (*walking round the re-erected pillar of righteousness*). Oh, how dusty you are!

MISS UNDERWOOD. Yes! (*The normal self uprising*) Room's not been swept this morning.

[*The Vicar, dusted, feels that a reign of moral law can now be resumed. He draws himself up to fully five foot six.*]

THE VICAR. Now, sir, you will please apologise.

REGINALD (*looking very muscular*). I shall not.

[*The Vicar drops the subject. Mrs. Reginald mutters and crows from the armchair.*]

MRS. REGINALD. Ha . . . who began it? Black and blue I am! Miss Underwood can apologise . . . your precious sister can apologise.

MISS UNDERWOOD (*crushing if inconsequent*). You're running to fat, Gladys. Where's my embroidery?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. I put it safe, Carinthia. (*She discloses it and then begins to pat and smooth the dishevelled room*) Among relations too! One expects to quarrel sometimes . . . it can't be helped. But not fighting! Oh, I never did . . . I feel so ashamed!

MISS UNDERWOOD (*Britannia-like*). Nonsense, Mary.

MRS. REGINALD. Nobody touched you, Aunt Mary.

THE VICAR (*after his eyes have wandered vaguely round*). Where's your father, Reginald?

REGINALD (*quite uninterested. He is straightening his own tie and collar*). I don't know.

[*In the little silence that follows there comes a voice from under the mahogany monument. It is a voice at once dignified and pained, and the property of Reginald's father, whose name is Mortimer Uglow. And it says . . .*]

THE VOICE. I am here.

MRS. UNDERWOOD (*who may be forgiven nerves*). Oh, how uncanny!

REGINALD (*still at his tie*). Well, you can come out, father, it's quite safe.

THE VOICE (*most unexpectedly*). I shall not. (*And then more unexpectedly still*) You can all leave the room.

THE VICAR (*who is generally resentful*). Leave the room! whose room is it, mine or yours? Come out, Mortimer, and don't be a fool.

[*But there is only silence. Why will not Mr. Uglow come out? Must he be ratted for? Then Mrs. Underwood sees why. She points to an object on the floor.*]

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Simon!

THE VICAR. What is it?

[*Again, and this time as if to indicate some mystery, Mrs. Underwood points. The Vicar picks up the object,*

some dissection of the fight he thinks, and waves it mildly.

THE VICAR. Well, where does it go? I wonder everything in the room's not been upset!

MRS. UNDERWOOD. No, Simon, it's not a mat, it's his . . .
[She concludes with an undeniable gesture, even a smile. The Vicar, sniffing a little, hands over the trophy.]

REGINALD *(as he views it)*. Oh, of course.

MRS. REGINALD. Reggie, am I tidy at the back?

[He tidies her at the back—a meticulous matter of hooks and eyes and oh, his fingers are so big. Mrs. Underwood has taken a little hand-painted mirror from the mantelpiece, and this and the thing in question she places just without the screen of the falling tablecloth much as a devotee might place an offering at a shrine. But in Miss Underwood dwells no respect for persons.]

MISS UNDERWOOD. Now, sir, for Heaven's sake put on your wig and come out.

[There emerges a hand that trembles with wrath; it retrieves the offerings; there follow bumpings into the tablecloth as of a head and elbows.]

THE VICAR. I must go and brush myself.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Simon, d'you think you could tell the maids that something fell over . . . they are such tattlers. It wouldn't be untrue. *[It wouldn't.]*

THE VICAR. I should scorn to do so, Mary. If they ask me, I must make the best explanation I can.

[The Vicar swims out. Mr. Mortimer Uglow, his wig assumed and hardly awry at all, emerges from beneath the table. He is a vindictive-looking little man.]

MRS. UNDERWOOD. You're not hurt, Mortimer, are you?

[Mr. Uglow's only wound is in the dignity. That he cures by taking the situation oratorically in hand.]

MR. UGLOW. If we are to continue this family discussion and if Miss Underwood, whom it does not in the least concern, has not the decency to leave the room and if you, Mary, cannot request your sister-in-law to leave

it, I must at least demand that she does not speak to me again.

[Whoever else might be impressed, Miss Underwood is not. She does not even glance up from her embroidery.]

MISS UNDERWOOD. A good thing for you I hadn't my thimble on when I did it.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Carinthia, I don't think you should have boxed Mortimer's ears . . . you know him so slightly.

MISS UNDERWOOD. He called me a Futile Female. I considered it a suitable reply.

[The echo of that epigram brings compensation to Mr. Uglow. He puffs his chest.]

MR. UGLOW. Your wife rallied to me, Reginald. I am much obliged to her . . . which is more than can be said of you.

REGINALD. Well, you can't hit a woman.

MR. UGLOW (*bitingly*). And she knows it.

MISS UNDERWOOD. Pf!

[The sound conveys that she would tackle a regiment of men with her umbrella: and she would.]

REGINALD (*apoplectic, but he has worked down to the waist*). There's a hook gone.

MRS. REGINALD. I thought so! Lace torn?

REGINALD. It doesn't show much. But I tackled Uncle Simon the minute he touched Gladys . . . that got my blood up all right. Don't you worry. We won.

[This callously sporting summary is too much for Mrs. Underwood: she dissolves.]

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, that such a thing should ever have happened in our house! . . . in my drawing-room!! . . . real blows!!! . . .

MRS. REGINALD. Don't cry, Aunt Mary . . . it wasn't your fault.

[The Vicar returns, his hair and his countenance smoother. He adds his patting consolations to his poor wife's comfort.]

MRS. UNDERWOOD. And I was kicked on the shin.

MRS. REGINALD. Say you're sorry, Reggie.

THE VICAR. My dear Mary . . . don't cry.

MRS. UNDERWOOD (*clasping her beloved's arm*). Simon did it . . . Reggie was throttling him black . . . he couldn't help it.

THE VICAR. I suggest that we show a more or less Christian spirit in letting bygones be bygones and endeavour to resume the discussion at the point where it ceased to be an amicable one. (*His wife, her clasp on his coat, through her drying tears has found more trouble*) Yes, there is a slight rent . . . never mind.

[*The family party now settles itself into what may have been more or less the situations from which they were roused to physical combat. Mr. Uglow secures a central place.*]

MR. UGLOW. My sister-in-law Jane had no right to bequeath the Vase . . . it was not hers to bequeath.

[*That is the gage of battle. A legacy! What English family has not at some time shattered its mutual regard upon this iron rock. One notices now that all these good folk are in deepest mourning, on which the dust of combat stands up the more distinctly, as indeed it should.*]

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, Mortimer, think if you'd been able to come to the funeral and this had all happened then . . . it might have done!

MISS UNDERWOOD. But it didn't, Mary . . . control yourself.

MR. UGLOW. My brother George wrote to me on his death-bed . . . (*and then fiercely to the Vicar, as if this concerned his calling*) . . . on his death-bed, sir. I have the letter here. . . .

THE VICAR. Yes, we've heard it.

REGINALD. And you sent them a copy.

[*Mr. Uglow's hand always seems to tremble; this time it is with excitement as he has pulled the letter from his pocket-book.*]

MR. UGLOW. Quiet, Reginald! Hear it again and pay attention. (*They settle to a strained boredom*) "The Rococo Vase presented to me by the Emperor of Germany" . . . Now there he's wrong. (*The sound of his own reading has uplifted him: he condescends to them*) They're German

Emperors, not Emperors of Germany. But George was an inaccurate fellow. Reggie has the same trick . . . it's in the family. I haven't it.

[He is returning to the letter. But the Vicar interposes, lamblike, ominous though.]

THE VICAR. I have not suggested on Mary's behalf . . . I wish you would remember, Mortimer, that the position I take up in this matter, I take up purely on my wife's behalf. What have I to gain?

REGINALD (*clodhopping*). Well, you're her husband, aren't you? She'll leave things to you. And she's older than you are.

THE VICAR. Reginald, you are most indelicate. (*And then, really thinking it is true . . .*) I have forborne to demand an apology from you. . . .

REGINALD. Because you wouldn't get it.

MRS. UNDERWOOD (*genuinely and generously accommodating*).

Oh, I don't want the vase . . . I don't want anything!

THE VICAR (*he is gradually mounting the pulpit*). Don't think of the vase, Mary. Think of the principle involved.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. And you may die first, Simon. You're not strong, though you look it . . . all the colds you get . . . and nothing's ever the matter with me.

MR. UGLOW (*ignored . . . ignored!*). Mary, how much longer am I to wait to read this letter?

THE VICAR (*ominously, ironically lamblike now*). Quite so. Your brother is waiting patiently . . . and politely. Come, come; a Christian and a businesslike spirit!

[Mr. Uglow's very breath has been taken to resume the reading of the letter, when on him . . . worse, on that tender top-knot of his . . . he finds Miss Underwood's hawklike eye. Its look passes through him, piercing Infinity as she says . . .]

MISS UNDERWOOD. Why not a skull-cap . . . a sanitary skull cap?

MR. UGLOW (*with a minatory though fearful gasp*). What's that?

THE VICAR. Nothing, Mortimer.

REGINALD. Some people look for trouble!

MISS UNDERWOOD (*addressing the Infinite still*). And those that it fits can wear it.

THE VICAR (*a little fearful himself. He is terrified of his sister, that's the truth. And well he may be*). Let's have the letter, Mortimer.

MISS UNDERWOOD. Or at least a little gum . . . a little glue . . . a little stickphast for decency's sake.

[*She swings it to a beautiful rhythm. No, on the whole, Mr. Uglow will not join issue.*]

MR. UGLOW. I trust that my dignity requires no vindication. Never mind . . . I say nothing. (*And with a forgiving air he returns at last to the letter*) "The Rococo Vase presented to me by the Emperor of Germany" . . . or German Emperor.

THE VICAR. Agreed. Don't cry, Mary. Well, here's a clean one.

[*Benevolently he hands her a handkerchief.*]

MR. UGLOW. "On the occasion of my accompanying the mission."

MISS UNDERWOOD. Mission!

[*The word has touched a spot.*]

THE VICAR. Not a real mission, Carinthia.

MR. UGLOW. A perfectly real mission. A mission from the Chamber of Commerce at . . . Don't go on as if the world were made up of low church parsons and . . . and . . . their sisters!

[*As a convinced secularist behold him a perfect fighting cock.*]

REGINALD (*bored, but oh, so bored!*). Do get ahead, father.

MR. UGLOW (*with a flourish*). "Mission et cetera." Here we are. "My dear wife must have the enjoyment" . . . (*Again he condescends to them*) Why he called her his dear wife I don't know. They hated each other like poison. But that was George all over . . . soft . . . never would face the truth. It's a family trait. You show signs of it, Mary.

THE VICAR (*soft and low*). He was on his death-bed.

REGINALD. Get on . . . father.

MR. UGLOW. "My wife" . . . She wasn't his dear wife. What's the good of pretending it? . . . "must have the enjoyment of it while she lives. At her death I desire it to be an heirloom for the family." (*And he makes the last sentence tell, every word*) There you are!

THE VICAR (*lamblike, ominous, ironic, persistent*). You sit looking at Mary. His sister and yours. Is she a member of the family or not?

MR. UGLOW (*cocksure*). Boys before girls . . . men before women. Don't argue that . . . it's the law. Titles and heirlooms . . . all the same thing.

MRS. UNDERWOOD (*worm-womanlike, turning ever so little*). Mortimer, it isn't as if we weren't giving you all the family things . . . the miniature and the bust of John Bright and grandmother's china and the big Shakespeare . . .

MR. UGLOW. Giving them, Mary, giving them?

THE VICAR. Surrendering them willingly, Mortimer. They have ornamented our house for years.

MRS. REGINALD. It isn't as if you hadn't done pretty well out of Aunt Jane while she was alive!

THE VICAR. Oh, delicacy, Gladys! And some regard for the truth!

MRS. REGINALD (*no nonsense about her*). No, if we're talking business let's talk business. Her fifty pounds a year more than paid you for keeping her, didn't it? Did it or didn't it?

REGINALD (*gloomily*). She never ate anything that I could see.

THE VICAR. She had a delicate appetite. It needed teasing . . . I mean coaxing. Oh, dear, this is most unpleasant!

REGINALD. Fifty pound a year is nearly a pound a week, you know.

THE VICAR. What about her clothes . . . what about her little holidays . . . what about the doctor . . . what

about her temper to the last? (*He summons the classics to clear the sordid air*) Oh: *De mortuis nil nisi bonum!*

MRS. UNDERWOOD. She was a great trouble with her meals, Reginald.

MR. UGLOW (*letting rip*). She was a horrible woman. I disliked her more than any woman I've ever met. She brought George to bankruptcy. When he was trying to arrange with his creditors and she came into the room, her face would sour them . . . I tell you, sour them.

MRS. REGINALD (*she sums it up*). Well, Uncle Simon's a clergyman and can put up with unpleasant people. It suited them well enough to have her. You had the room, Aunt Mary, you can't deny that. And anyway she's dead now . . . poor Aunt Jane! (*She throws this conventional verbal bone to Cerberus*) And what with the things she has left you . . . ! What's to be done with her clothes?

[*Gladys and Mrs. Underwood suddenly face each other like two ladylike ghouls.*]

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Well, you remember the mauve silk . . .

THE VICAR. Mary, pray allow me. (*Somehow his delicacy is shocked*) The Poor.

MRS. REGINALD (*in violent protest*). Not the mauve silk! Nor her black lace shawl!

MISS UNDERWOOD (*shooting it out*). They will make soup.

[*It makes Mr. Uglow jump, physically and mentally too.*]

MR. UGLOW. What!

MISS UNDERWOOD. The proceeds of their sale will make much needed soup . . . and blankets. (*Again her gaze transfixes that wig and she addresses Eternity*) No brain under it! . . . No wonder it's loose! No brain.

[*Mr. Uglow just manages to ignore it.*]

REGINALD. Where is the beastly vase? I don't know that I want to inherit it.

MR. UGLOW. Yes, may I ask for the second or third time to-day? . . .

MISS UNDERWOOD. The third.

MR. UGLOW (*he screws a baleful glance at her*). May I ask for the second or third time . . .

REGINALD. It is the third time, father.

MR. UGLOW (*his own son, too!*). Reginald, you have no tact.

May I ask why the vase is not to be seen?

MISS UNDERWOOD (*sharply*). It's put away.

MRS. REGINALD (*as sharp as she. Never any nonsense about Gladys*). Why?

MR. UGLOW. Gladys . . . ignore that, please, Mary?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Yes, Mortimer.

MR. UGLOW. It has been chipped.

THE VICAR. It has not been chipped.

MR. UGLOW. If it has been chipped . . .

THE VICAR. I say it has not been chipped.

MR. UGLOW. If it had been chipped, sir . . . I should have held you responsible! Produce it.

[He is indeed very much of a man. A little more and he'll slap his chest. But the Vicar, lamblike, etc. . . . we can now add dangerous. . . .]

THE VICAR. Oh, no, we must not be ordered to produce it.

MR. UGLOW (*trumpet-toned*). Produce it, Simon.

THE VICAR. Neither must we be shouted at.

MISS UNDERWOOD. . . . or bawled at. Bald at! Ha, ha!

[And she taps her grey-haired parting with a thimble finger to emphasise the pun. Mr. Uglow rises, too intent on his next impressive stroke even to notice it, or seem to.]

MR. UGLOW. Simon, if you do not instantly produce the vase I shall refuse to treat this any longer in a friendly way. I shall place the matter in the hands of my solicitors.

[This, in any family—is it not the final threat? Mrs. Underwood is genuinely shocked.]

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, Simon!

THE VICAR. As a matter of principle, Mary. . . .

REGINALD (*impartially*). What rot!

MRS. UNDERWOOD. It was put away, I think, so that the sight of it might not rouse discussion . . . wasn't it, Simon?

REGINALD. Well, we've had the discussion. Now get it out.

THE VICAR (*lamblike . . . etc.; add obstinate now*). It is my principle not to submit to dictation. If I were asked politely to produce it. . . .

REGINALD. Ask him politely, father.

MR. UGLOW (*why shouldn't he have principles, too?*). I don't think I can. To ask politely might be an admission of some right of his to detain the property. This matter will go further. I shall commit myself in nothing without legal advice.

MRS. REGINALD. You get it out, Aunt Mary.

MRS. UNDERWOOD (*almost thankful to be helpless in the matter*).

I can't. I don't know where it is.

MR. UGLOW (*all the instinct for Law in him blazing*). You don't . . . ! This is important. He has no right to keep it from you, Mary. I venture to think . . .

THE VICAR. Husband and wife are one, Mortimer.

MR. UGLOW. Not in Law. Don't you cram your religion down my throat. Not in Law any longer. We've improved all that. The married woman's property act! I venture to think. . . .

[*Miss Underwood has disappeared. Her comment is to slam the door.*]

MRS. UNDERWOOD. I think perhaps Carinthia has gone for it, Mortimer.

MR. UGLOW (*the case given him, he asks for costs, as it were*).

Then I object. . . . I object most strongly to this woman knowing the whereabouts of a vase which you, Mary. . . .

THE VICAR (*a little of the mere layman peeping now*). Mortimer, do not refer to my sister as "this woman."

MR. UGLOW. Then treat my sister with the respect that is due to her, Simon.

[*They are face to face.*]

THE VICAR. I hope I do, Mortimer.

MR. UGLOW. And will you request Miss Underwood not to return to this room with or without the vase?

THE VICAR. Why should I?

MR. UGLOW. What has she to do with a family matter of mine? I make no comment, Mary, upon the way you allow yourself to be ousted from authority in your own house. It is not my place to comment upon it and I make none. I make no reference to the insults . . . the unwomanly insults that have been hurled at me by this Futile Female. . . .

REGINALD (*a remembered schoolmaster joke. He feels not unlike one as he watches his two elders squared to each other*).

Apt alliteration's artful aid . . . what?

MR. UGLOW. Don't interrupt.

MRS. REGINALD. You're getting excited again, father.

MR. UGLOW. I am not.

MRS. REGINALD. Father!

[There is one sure way to touch Mr. Uglow. She takes it. She points to his wig.]

MR. UGLOW. What? Well . . . where's a glass . . . where's a glass?

[He goes to the mantelpiece mirror. His sister follows him.]

MRS. UNDERWOOD. We talked it over this morning, Mortimer, and we agreed that I am of a yielding disposition and I said I should feel much safer if I did not even know where it was while you were in the house.

MR. UGLOW (*with every appropriate bitterness*). And I your loving brother!

THE VICAR (*not to be outdone by Reginald in quotations*). A little more than kin and less than kind.

MR. UGLOW (*his wig is straight*). How dare you, Simon? A little more than ten minutes ago I was struck . . . here in your house. How dare you quote poetry at me?

[The Vicar feels he must pronounce on this.]

THE VICAR. I regret that Carinthia has a masterful nature. She is apt to take the law into her own hands. And I fear there is something about you, Mortimer, that invites violence. I can usually tell when she is going to be unruly; there's a peculiar twitching of her hands. If you had not

been aggravating us all with your so-called arguments, I should have noticed it in time and . . . taken steps.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. We're really very sorry, Mortimer. We can always . . . take steps. But . . . dear me! . . . I was never so surprised in my life. You all seemed to go mad at once. It makes me hot now to think of it.

[The truth about Carinthia is that she is sometimes thought to be a little off her head. It's a form of genius.]

THE VICAR. I shall have a headache to-morrow . . . my sermon day.

[Mr. Uglow now begins to glow with a sense of coming victory. And he's not bad-natured, give him what he wants.]

MR. UGLOW. Oh, no, you won't. More frightened than hurt! These things will happen . . . the normal gross-feeding man sees red, you know, sees red. Reggie as a small boy . . . quite uncontrollable!

REGINALD. Well, I like that! You howled out for help.

THE VICAR (*lamblike and only lamblike*). I am willing to obliterate the memory.

MRS. REGINALD. I'm sure I'm black and blue . . . and more torn than I can see.

MR. UGLOW. But what can you do when a woman forgets herself? I simply stepped aside . . . I happen to value my dignity.

[The door opens. Miss Underwood with the vase. She deposits it on the mahogany table. It is two feet in height. It is lavishly blotched with gold and white and red. It has curves and crinkles. Its handles are bossy. My God, it is a Vase!]

MISS UNDERWOOD. There it is.

MR. UGLOW (*with a victor's dignity*). Thank you, Miss Underwood. (*He puts up gold-rimmed glasses*) Ah . . . pure Rococo!

REGINALD. The Vi-Cocoa vase!

MR. UGLOW. That's not funny, Reginald.

REGINALD. Well . . . I think it is.

[The trophy before him, Mr. Uglow mellows.]

MR. UGLOW. Mary, you've often heard George tell us. The Emperor welcoming 'em . . . fine old fellow . . . speech in German . . . none of them understood it. Then at the end . . . Gentlemen, I raise my glass. Hock . . . hock . . . hock!

REGINALD (*who knows a German accent when he hears it*). A little more spit in it.

MR. UGLOW. Reginald, you're very vulgar.

REGINALD. Is that Potsdam?

[*The monstrosity has coloured views on it, one back, one front.*]

MR. UGLOW. Yes . . . home of Friedrich der Grosse! A great nation. We can learn a lot from 'em!

[*This was before the war. What he says of them now is unprintable.*]

REGINALD. Yes. I suppose its' a jolly handsome piece of goods. Cost a lot.

MR. UGLOW. Royal factory . . . built to imitate Sèvres!

[*Apparently he would contemplate it for hours. But the Vicar . . . Lamblike, etc.; add insinuating now.*]

THE VICAR. Well, Mortimer, here is the vase. Now where are we?

MRS. REGINALD (*really protesting for the first time*). Oh . . . are we going to begin all over again! Why don't you sell it and share up?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Gladys, I don't think that would be quite nice.

MRS. REGINALD. I can't see why not.

MR. UGLOW. Sell an heirloom . . . it can't be done.

REGINALD. Oh, yes, it can. You and I together . . . cut off the entail . . . that's what it's called. It'd fetch twenty pounds at Christie's.

MR. UGLOW (*the sight of it has exalted him beyond reason*). More . . . more! First class rococo. I shouldn't dream of it.

[*Miss Underwood has resumed her embroidery. She pulls a determined needle as she says. . . .*]

MISS UNDERWOOD. I think Mary would have a share in the proceeds, wouldn't she?

MR. UGLOW. I think not.

THE VICAR. Why not, Mortimer?

MR. UGLOW (*with fine detachment*). Well, it's a point of law. I'm not quite sure . . . but let's consider it in Equity. (*Not that he knows what on earth he means!*) If I died . . . and Reginald died childless and Mary survived us . . . and it came to her? Then there would be our cousins the Bamfords as next inheritors. Could she by arrangement with them sell and . . . ?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. I shouldn't like to sell it. It would seem like a slight on George . . . because he went bankrupt perhaps. And Jane always had it in her bedroom.

MISS. UNDERWOOD (*thimbling the determined needle through*). Most unsuitable for a bedroom.

MRS. UNDERWOOD (*anxious to please*). Didn't you suggest, Simon, that I might undertake not to leave it out of the family?

THE VICAR (*covering a weak spot*). In private conversation with you, Mary . . .

MR. UGLOW (*most high and mighty, oh most!*). I don't accept the suggestion. I don't accept it at all.

THE VICAR (*and now taking the legal line in his turn*). Let me point out to you, Mortimer, that there is nothing to prevent Mary's selling the vase for her own exclusive benefit.

MR. UGLOW (*his guard down*). Simon!

THE VICAR (*satisfied to have touched him*). Once again, I merely insist upon a point of principle.

MR. UGLOW (*but now flourishing his verbal sword*). And I insist . . . let everybody understand it . . . I insist that all thought of selling an heirloom is given up! Reginald . . . Gladys, you are letting me be exceedingly upset.

REGINALD. Well . . . shall I walk off with it? They couldn't stop me.

[He lifts it up; and this simplest of solutions strikes them all stupent; except Miss Underwood, who glances under her bushy eyebrows.]

MISS UNDERWOOD. You'll drop it if you're not careful.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, Reggie, you couldn't carry that to the station . . . everyone would stare at you.

THE VICAR. I hope you would not be guilty of such an unprincipled act.

MRS. REGINALD. I won't have it at home, Reg, so I tell you.

One of the servants 'd be sure to . . . ! *(She sighs desperately)* Why not sell the thing?

MR. UGLOW. Gladys, be silent.

REGINALD *(as he puts the vase down, a little nearer the edge of the table)*. It is a weight.

[So they have argued high and argued low and also argued round about it; they have argued in a full circle. And now there is a deadly calm. Mr. Uglow breaks it; his voice trembles a little as does his hand with its signet ring rattling on the table.]

MR. UGLOW. Then we are just where we started half an hour ago . . . are we, Simon?

THE VICAR *(lamblike in excelsis)*. Precisely, Mortimer.

MR. UGLOW. I'm sorry. I'm very sorry. *(He gazes at them with cool ferocity)* Now let us all keep our tempers.

THE VICAR. I hope I shall have no occasion to lose mine.

MR. UGLOW. Nor I mine.

[He seems not to move a muscle, but in some mysterious way his wig shifts: a sure sign.]

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, Mortimer, you're going to get excited.

MR. UGLOW. I think not, Mary. I trust not.

REGINALD *(proffering real temptation)*. Father . . . come away and write a letter about it.

MR. UGLOW *(as his wrath swells)*. If I write a letter . . . if my solicitors have to write a letter . . . there are people here who will regret this day.

MRS. UNDERWOOD (*trembling at the coming storm*). Simon, I'd much sooner he took it . . . I'd much rather he took everything Jane left me.

MR. UGLOW. Jane did not leave it to you, Mary.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, Mortimer, she did try to leave it to me.

MR. UGLOW (*running up the scale of indignation*). She may have tried . . . but she did not succeed . . . because she could not . . . because she had no right to do so. (*And reaching the summit*) I am not in the least excited. [*Suddenly Miss Underwood takes a shrewd hand in the game.*]

MISS UNDERWOOD. Have you been to your lawyer?

MR. UGLOW (*swivelling round*). What's that?

MISS UGLOW. Have you asked your lawyer?

[*He has not.*]

MR. UGLOW. Gladys, I will not answer her. I refuse to answer the . . . the . . . the female.

[*But he has funk'd the "futile."*]

MRS. REGINALD (*soothing him*). All right, father.

MISS UNDERWOOD. He hasn't because he knows what his lawyer would say. Rot's what his lawyer would say!

MR. UGLOW (*calling on the gods to protect this woman from him*).

Heaven knows I wish to discuss this calmly!

REGINALD. Aunt Mary, might I smoke?

MISS UNDERWOOD. Not in the drawing-room.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. No . . . not in the drawing-room, please, Reginald.

MR. UGLOW. You're not to go away, Reginald.

REGINALD. Oh, well . . . hurry up.

[*Mr. Uglow looks at the Vicar. The Vicar is actually smiling. Can this mean defeat for the house of Uglow? Never.*]

MR. UGLOW. Do I understand that on your wife's behalf you entirely refuse to own the validity of my brother George's letter . . . where is it? . . . I read you the passage written on his death-bed.

THE VICAR (*measured and confident. Victory gleams for him now*). Why did he not mention the vase in his will?

MR. UGLOW. There were a great many things he did not mention in his will.

THE VICAR. Was his widow aware of the letter?

MR. UGLOW. You know she was.

THE VICAR. Why did she not carry out what you think to have been her husband's intention?

MR. UGLOW. Because she was a beast of a woman.

[Mr. Uglow is getting the worst of it, his temper is slipping.]

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Mortimer, what language about the newly dead!

THE VICAR. An heirloom in the family?

MR. UGLOW. Quite so.

THE VICAR. On what grounds do you maintain that George's intentions are not carried out when it is left to my wife?

[And indeed, "Mr. Uglow is against the ropes", so to speak.]

MISS UNDERWOOD. The man hasn't a wig to stand on. . . . I mean a leg.

MR. UGLOW *(pale with fury, hoarse with it, even pathetic in it)*.

Don't you speak to me . . . I request you not to speak to me.

[Reginald and Gladys quite seriously think this is bad for him.]

REGINALD. Look here, father, Aunt Mary will undertake not to let it go out of the family. Leave it at that.

MRS. REGINALD. We don't want the thing, father . . . the drawing-room's full already.

MR. UGLOW *(the pathos in him growing; he might flood the best Brussels with tears at any moment)*. It's not the vase. It's no longer the vase. It's the principle.

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, don't, Mortimer . . . don't be like Simon. That's why I mustn't give in. It'll make it much more difficult if you start thinking of it like that.

MISS UNDERWOOD *(pulling and pushing that embroidery needle more grimly than ever)*. It's a principle in our family not to be bullied.

MRS. REGINALD *(in almost a vulgar tone, really)*. If she'd go and mind her own family's business!

[The vicar knows that he has his Uglows on the run. Suavely he presses the advantage.]

THE VICAR. I am sorry to repeat myself, Mortimer, but the vase was left to Jane absolutely. It has been specifically left to Mary. She is under no obligation to keep it in the family.

MR. UGLOW (*control breaking*). You'll get it, will you . . . you and your precious female sister?

THE VICAR (*quieter and quieter; that superior quietude*). Oh, this is so unpleasant.

MR. UGLOW (*control broken*). Never! Never!! . . . not if I beggar myself in law-suits.

MISS UNDERWOOD (*a sudden and vicious jab*). Who wants the hideous thing?

MR. UGLOW (*broken, all of him. In sheer hysterics. Tears starting from his eyes*). Hideous! You hear her? They'd sell it for what'd it would fetch. My brother George's rococo vase! An *objet d'art et vertu* . . . an heirloom . . . a family record of public service! Have you no feelings, Mary?

MRS. UNDERWOOD (*dissolved*). Oh, I'm very unhappy.

[Again are Mr. Uglow and the Vicar breast to breast.]

THE VICAR. Don't make your sister cry, sir.

MR. UGLOW. Make your sister hold her tongue, sir. She has no right in this discussion at all. Am I to be provoked and badgered by a Futile Female?

[The Vicar and Mr. Uglow are intent on each other, the others are intent on them. No one notices that Miss Underwood's embroidery is very decidedly laid down and that her fingers begin to twitch.]

THE VICAR. How dare you suppose, Mortimer, that Mary and I would not respect the wishes of the dead?

MR. UGLOW. It's nothing to do with you, either.

[Miss Underwood has risen from her chair. This Gladys does notice.]

MRS. REGINALD. I say . . . Uncle Simon.

THE VICAR. What is it?

REGINALD. Look here, Uncle Simon, let Aunt Mary write a letter undertaking. . . . There's no need for all this row. . . .

MRS. UNDERWOOD. I will! I'll undertake anything!

THE VICAR (*the Church on its militant dignity now*). Keep calm, Mary. I am being much provoked, too. Keep calm.

MR. UGLOW (*stamping it out*). He won't let her . . . he and his sister . . . he won't give way in anything. Why should I be reasonable?

REGINALD. If she will undertake it, will you . . . ?

MRS. REGINALD. Oh, Aunt Mary, stop her!

[In the precisest manner possible, judging her distance with care, aiming well and true, Miss Underwood has for the second time to-day, soundly boxed Mr. Uglow's ear. He yells.

MR. UGLOW. I say . . . I'm hurt.

REGINALD. Look here now . . . not again!

THE VICAR (*he gets flustered. No wonder*). Carinthia! I should have taken steps! It is almost excusable.

MR. UGLOW. I'm seriously hurt.

MRS. REGINALD. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

MISS UNDERWOOD. Did you feel the thimble?

MRS. UNDERWOOD. Oh, Carinthia, this is dreadful!

MR. UGLOW. I wish to preserve my dignity.

[He backs out of her reach that he may the better do so.

MISS UNDERWOOD. Your wig's crooked.

MRS. REGINALD (*rousing: though her well-pinched arms have lively recollections of half an hour ago*). Don't you insult my father.

MISS UNDERWOOD. Shall I put it straight? It'll be off again.

[She advances, her eyes gleaming. To do . . . Heaven knows what!

MR. UGLOW (*still backing*). Go away.

REGINALD (*who really doesn't fancy tackling the lady either*).

Why don't you keep her in hand?

MR. UGLOW (*backed as far as he can, and in terror*). Simon,

you're a cad and your sister's a mad cad. Take her away. [*But this the Vicar will not endure. He has been called a cad, and that no English gentleman will stand, and a clergyman is a gentleman, sir. In ringing tones and with his finest gesture you hear him. "Get out of my house!" Mr. Uglow doubtless could reply more fittingly were it not that Miss Underwood still approaches. He is feebly forcible merely. "Don't you order me about," he quavers. What is he but a fascinated rabbit before the terrible woman? The gentlemanly Vicar advances — "Get out before I put you out," he vociferates — Englishman to the backbone. But that is Reginald's waited-for excuse. "Oh, no, you don't," he says and bears down on the Vicar. Mrs. Underwood yelps in soft but agonized apprehension: "Oh, Simon, be careful." Mr. Uglow has his hands up, not indeed in token of surrender, — though surrender to the virago poised at him he would, — but to shield his precious wig.*

"Mind my head, do," he yells; he will have it that it is his head. "Come away from my father," calls out Mrs. Reginald, stoutly clasping Miss Underwood from behind round that iron-corseted waist. Miss Underwood swivels round. "Don't you touch me, Miss," she snaps. But Gladys has weight and the two are toppling groundward while Reginald, one hand on the Vicar, one grabbing at Miss Underwood to protect his wife ("Stop it, do!" he shouts), is outbalanced. And the Vicar making still determinedly for Mr. Uglow, and Mr. Uglow, his wig securer, preparing to defy the Vicar, the *mêlée* is joined once more. Only Mrs. Underwood is so far safe.

The fighters breathe hard and sway. They sway against the great mahogany table. The Rococo Vase totters; it falls; it is smashed to pieces. By a supreme effort the immediate authors of its destruction — linked together — contrive not to sit down among them. Mrs. Underwood is heard to breathe, "Oh . . . Thank goodness."



JAMES AND JOHN

GILBERT CANNAN

GILBERT CANNAN was born in 1884. He received his early education in Manchester. He later attended King's College, Cambridge, and was called to the Bar in 1908. He evidently practised very little or not at all, for the next year he became dramatic critic on *The Star*.

Cannan's most significant work so far is found not in his plays, but in his novels. The plays are to be judged as experiments rather than the complete expression of the author's dramatic intention. In a letter to the editor, written not long ago, he declares: "I must correct your impression that I was *once* interested in the drama. I think I have never really been interested in anything else, all my researches, however remote they may appear, having been made to that end. I have lately resumed dramatic criticism for the *London Nation* and before very long shall discard novels for plays."

Cannan's small plays display a variety of technique and material indicating uncertainty on his part as to the direction his future dramatic activities will take. However, he appears to consider his career as novelist at an end, as he recently declared that his essays in novel form were merely a preparation for his career as a dramatist.

PLAYS

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| *James and John (1910) | Three (1913) |
| Miles Dixon (1910) | *Everybody's Husband
(1917) |
| *Mary's Wedding (1912) | The Arbour of Refuge(1913) |
| The Perfect Widow (1912) | |
| *A Short Way with Authors
(1913) | |

“James and John”, “Miles Dixon”, “Mary’s Wedding”, and “A Short Way with Authors” are published in a volume—“Four Plays”, by Sidgwick and Jackson, London; “Every, body’s Husband”, by B. W. Huebsch, New York. The plays originally included in “Four Plays” have recently appeared singly, published by LeRoy Phillips, Boston.

References: Gilbert Cannan, “The Joy of the Theater”, E. P. Dutton and Company, New York.

Magazines: *Current Opinion*, vol. 69, p. 80, New York; *The Dial*, vol. 68, p. 173, New York; *Theater Arts*, January, 1920, New York.

JAMES AND JOHN

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By GILBERT CANNAN

“James and John” was first produced at London in 1910

Characters

JOHN BETTS
JAMES BETTS
MRS. BETTS
MR. BETTS

SCENE: Their parlour.

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JAMES AND JOHN

It is half past nine of an evening and the scene is the parlour of a little house in a gaunt row of houses in a street in a London suburb. By the fireplace at the back James and John Betts are playing backgammon, the board on a little table between them. They are both grey. James has a beard. John is clean-shaven. John wears glasses. Both wear morning-coats and both have carpet slippers. James smokes, John does not. John has a glass of whisky on the mantelpiece within reach: James is teetotal. They are absorbed in their game and pay no attention to their mother, a stout old lady who is sitting in her chair reading a novel, sleeping, and knitting. Her chair is by another little table on which the solitary lamp of the room is placed so as to cast its light on her book. She is directly in front of the fire so that her back is towards the audience. John is sitting with his back towards her.

The room is ugly and Mid-Victorian. Its door is to the right. Its windows to the left. In the window is a stand of miserable-looking ferns and an india-rubber plant.

JAMES (*looking up, abruptly*). Very nice. I think I shall gammon you, John.

JOHN. H'm.

[He rattles the dice furiously, seeing the game go against him.]

JOHN (*triumphantly*). I take you there and there . . .

JAMES. We shall see.

[Silence.]

MRS. BETTS. Did you say it was raining when you came in, John?

JOHN (*turning irritably*). I have said so four times.

[Silence. They devote themselves to their game again.]

MRS. BETTS (*plaintively, as though she knew full well that her remarks would fall on deaf ears. She lays down her book*).

This isn't a very interesting book. . . . I don't think books are so interesting as they used to be . . . they all seem to be trying to be like real life. . . . I must say I like to know who marries who . . . and I don't like stories about married life. . . . I suppose the authors must be thinking of their own. . . . Depressing. . . . You haven't said how you like my new cap, Jamie. . . . You did say it was raining, John? (*No answer—only a frenzied rattle of the dice*) I don't think anything has happened. . . . The next-door people have had trouble with the servant again. . . . A thief this one. . . . I wonder if it is raining. . . . I wouldn't like it to be wet for him. . . . [*James and John look at each other and James looks over at his mother. She is fumbling for her handkerchief.*]

JOHN. Gammon. . . .

[*He rises and looks down at his brother in triumph. Each takes a little note-book from his pocket and makes a note of the game.*]

JAMES. I still lead by two hundred and twenty-three games. . . .

[*Mrs. Betts is wiping her eyes and snuffling. John goes to her and pats her shoulder kindly.*]

JOHN. Would you like a game, mamma? . . .

MRS. BETTS. No—no-o-o . . . I couldn't—not to-night. . . .

JAMES. I thought we had agreed not to talk of it nor to think of it. . . .

MRS. BETTS. It—it is all very well for you boys to talk . . . b-b-but . . . I can't help but remember . . . all these years . . .

JOHN. Shall Jamie read to you, mamma?

MRS. BETTS. It—it was so—so dreadful . . .

JAMES. Yes, yes, mamma. . . . But we agreed that we would . . .

MRS. BETTS. It all comes back to me so. . . . The whole thing. . . . I suppose they never talk of it at the bank now, Jamie . . . ?

JAMES (*exploding*). I wish to God he had never lived to come back again . . .

JOHN. Tssh!—Tssh! . . .

JAMES. I say that he has ruined mamma's life, and your life and mine. . . . I say again that I wish to God he had never lived to come back. . . .

JOHN. Think of mamma. . . .

MRS. BETTS. Your own father . . .

[She weeps.]

JAMES. It is against my wish that he is allowed to come here at all. . . .

JOHN. Do let us try to forget the whole affair until . . . until he comes. . . . Don't you think it would be better if you went to bed, mamma?

[James has fallen to pacing up and down the room.]

MRS. BETTS. No; I must stay . . . to . . . to see him . . .

JOHN. You must be brave, then . . .

MRS. BETTS (*making an effort and gulping down her sobs*).

Ye-yes. . . . (*She takes John's hand and pats it, while she anxiously tries to watch James in his pacing*) But, John

. . . I'm afraid—afraid of Jamie. . . .

[She says this almost in a whisper but James hears her. He stops by the fireplace and stands with his back to the fire and glares at his mother.]

JAMES. I am, I hope, a just man . . .

JOHN. We have argued enough. . . . We must wait. . . .

We can't have mamma breaking down before he comes. . . .

JAMES. John, you're a soft fool. . . . This man has done us all an injury. . . . He has brought misery upon this house. . . . He has no other place to which to turn: for a while he may rest under our roof. . . . Is that understood?

JOHN. Quite. . . . Can't you leave it alone?

JAMES. I wish to make myself clearly understood. . . .

JOHN. I think we both understand you . . . and you need not speak so loud.

JAMES. There must be no sentiment and he must be made

to understand the terms on which I have consented to receive him. . . .

MRS. BETTS. We — we must be kind, Jamie — we must be kind. . . . He was always a kind man . . .

JAMES. Kind! . . . To treat you in the way he did — and you can call him kind. Oh! the foolishness of women. . . .

MRS. BETTS. He was never a bad man. . . . Is it raining, John?

[John goes to the window and peeps out.]

JOHN. Yes, mamma, it is raining.

MRS. BETTS. Oh! . . . It isn't too late for one of you to meet him at the station . . . is it?

JAMES. You know that that is impossible. . . . It is enough that he is permitted to come here at all. . . . It is my house. . . . The ordering of this affair is in my hands. . . . Let it be . . .

MRS. BETTS. He has been punished enough for his sin. . . .

JAMES. *We* have been punished. *I* have been punished. . . . Year after year I have been passed over and men younger than myself have been promoted. . . . For years I was made to feel that my continued presence in the bank was an act of charity. . . . For years I have felt rather than heard the miserable story whispered to every raw lad who came to the place . . . and suffered . . . because my father betrayed his trust. . . . And you say he was not a bad man . . .

JOHN. Jamie — Jamie —

[Mrs. Betts beats feebly with her hands against him.]

JAMES. Jamie! — Jamie! — Well enough for you, John — you were out of it. . . .

[John folds his arms as though he realised the hopelessness of endeavouring to stem the stream of his brother's indignation, and to indicate that he also has suffered but is too much a man to talk about it. This goads James only to further indignation. John mutters unintelligibly.]

JAMES. What do you say? What do you say?

JOHN. I say that what's done is done and let the past bury its dead.

JAMES. It is not dead. . . .

MRS. BETTS. Don't quarrel — don't quarrel. I cannot bear it. . . .

JAMES. Mother, we must understand each other — you, John, and I — we must see this thing as it is. . . . Set aside the fact that this man is our father and your husband. . . . We must see what he did coldly, dispassionately, and judge accordingly.

JOHN. I read in a book that no man has the right to judge another man . . .

JAMES. Facts are facts. . . .

JOHN. We don't know what drove him to do what he did. . . .

JAMES. We know — what we know. We know the injury that he has done to ourselves. We know that because our father — because our father . . . (*Mrs. Betts now has her face in her handkerchief; James is for a moment stopped but stiffens himself*) because our father robbed the clients of the branch of which he was manager in order to keep the women whom he had bought . . .

JOHN. You . . .

[*James raises his hand.*]

JAMES. I will end where I have begun. . . . It is true that he was revered as an upright gentleman, that he gave large sums in charity, that he did much good for the poor of this district, that he did this, that, and the other thing which kept him conspicuous as a righteous man. . . . We know that he was an excellent man of business and that the directors gave him the opportunity to escape. . . . There is that to his credit that he had the courage to face the consequences of his actions. . . . But even in that he had no thought for us, to whom rather than to himself his thoughts should have turned. . . . We know only too well the shame and disgrace of the arrest, the infamous revelations, the position irretrievably lost. . . . We

know — you and I, John — we know the ruin that it has been to us. . . . We have seen other men of our own age fulfill their lives . . .

JOHN. Will you cease? —

JAMES. We know that we have been chained here, you and I, to rot and rot . . . men wasted . . . without pride of home or pride of work. . . . We have sat here year in, year out, waiting, waiting . . . for nothing . . . knowing that nothing could ever come to us. . . .

MRS. BETTS. O-o-oh. . . .

JAMES. We have suffered enough, I say, and if now that he has served his punishment and is free we take him under our roof again, to live here in this town, with us whom he has so — has so — so wrecked, in this town where he is still infamous . . . then that which is only now whispered of of us will be common talk. . . . We shall be lower than we have ever been and lose all that we have. . . . That is all.

[He takes a pipe from his pocket, fills it with tobacco, lights it, and stalks out of the room. Mrs. Betts sobs quietly for a little.]

MRS. BETTS. John, dear — John . . .

JOHN (*without moving*). Yes, mother?

MRS. BETTS. He was never a bad man.

JOHN. No . . . mother.

MRS. BETTS. It must have been bitter for Jamie . . .

JOHN. Yes, mother, it has not been . . . easy.

MRS. BETTS. He was always a kind man . . . always. . . . I don't understand — I never shall understand what made him do . . . do . . . what he did. . . . He . . . he used to be so fond of children. . . . You don't think hardly of him, John? . . .

JOHN. Not — not for a long time now, mother.

MRS. BETTS. I never shall understand what made him to . . . because — because he — he never really turned from me . . . I should have known if — if he had done that. . . . Do you understand, John?

JOHN. I am trying, mother —

MRS. BETTS. He was sometimes impatient with me . . . and . . . and I was a foolish woman. . . . Such a clever man he was. . . . But he never turned from me . . .

JOHN. No —

MRS. BETTS. I remember now . . . often . . . when he told me. . . . How kind he was . . . and gentle. . . . He had been ill and worried for a long time, and then one day he came home and sat without a word all through the evening. . . . It was raining then. . . . About ten o'clock . . . (*John is sitting with his head in his hands on the sofa between the fire and the window*) about ten o'clock . . . he came and kissed me, and told me to go to bed. Then he went out. . . . I do not know where he went, but he came back wet through, covered with mud, and his coat was all torn. . . . I was awake when he came back, but he spoke no word to me. . . . He came to bed and lay trembling and cold. . . . I took his hand. . . . He shook and he was very cold. . . . He—he turned to me like a child and sobbed, sobbed. . . . Then, dear, he told me what he had done. . . . He told me that . . . that he had tried — tried to do away with himself . . . and — and could not. . . . He never asked me to forgive him. . . . He told me how the directors had asked him to go away to avoid prosecution. . . . He said that he must bear his punishment. . . . He is not a bad man, John. . . . Men and women are such strange creatures . . . there is never any knowing what they will do . . .

JOHN. You want him to come back, mother?

MRS. BETTS. Why, yes. . . . Where else should he go? . . .

JOHN. You know, mother . . . Jamie wanted to be married . . .

MRS. BETTS. Oh! yes — yes — yes. . . . Poor boy. . . .

JOHN. We're men. It has been a long time. We're old men . . . now . . .

[*John mends the fire and takes his whisky and soda.*]

MRS. BETTS. John, dear . . . (*John turns from poking the fire*) I would like him to have his old chair that he used to sit in . . . and his old slippers . . . and there's an old pipe that he had—in my room . . . you know . . .

JOHN. Very well. . . .

[*John goes out. Mrs. Betts sniffs and dries her eyes. She takes up her book, reads it for a little, then lays it down, takes her knitting, plies her needles for a little, then lays that down. She fixes her spectacles and looks anxiously at the clock on the mantelpiece. It has an aggressively loud tick. Then she looks towards the window and, rising slowly to her feet, shuffles across, and looks out. James returns and finds her there.*

JAMES (*sternly*). I think you should sit quietly and calm yourself.

MRS. BETTS (*meekly*). Yes, Jamie.

[*She shuffles back to her chair.*

JAMES. Would you like me to read to you?

MRS. BETTS. Please, Jamie.

[*James goes to the little dwarf bookcase in the recess by the fireplace and takes down a book. He moves the table with the backgammon board, and draws up his chair to the right side of the fireplace, and then sits so as to have the light of the lamp on his book.*

JAMES (*reading—"Pickwick," Chap. xxxii*). "There is a repose about Lant Street, in the Borough, which sheds a gentle melancholy upon the soul. There are always a good many houses to let in the street;—"

MRS. BETTS. Like our street.

JAMES. "It is a by-street and its dulness is soothing. A house in Lant Street would not come within the denomination of a first-rate residence, in the strict acceptance of the term; but it is a most desirable spot nevertheless. If a man wished to abstract himself from the world—to remove himself from within reach of temptation—to place himself beyond the possibility of any inducement to look out of the window—he should by all means go to Lant Street.

“Mr. Bob Sawyer embellished one side of the fire in his first-floor front, early on the evening for which he had invited Mr. Pickwick: and Mr. Ben Allen the other. The preparations for the visitors appeared to be completed. The umbrellas in the passage had been heaped into a little corner outside the best parlour door, the bonnet and shawl of the landlady’s servant had been removed from the bannisters: there were not more than two pairs of pattens on the street door mat, and a kitchen candle, with a very long snuff, burnt cheerfully on the ledge of the staircase window. — ” Are you listening?

MRS. BETTS. Yes, dear.

JAMES. “Mr. Bob Sawyer had himself purchased the spirits at a wine vaults in High Street and had returned home preceding the bearer thereof, to preclude the possibility of their delivery at the wrong house. The punch was ready made in a saucepan in the bedroom: — ”

[The door is thrown open and John comes staggering in with a great chair which he places on the left side of the fireplace. He takes a pair of red leather slippers from his pockets and places them in front of the fire to warm. From another pocket he produces a pipe and an old tin of tobacco and lays them on the mantelpiece. James stops in his reading and scowls. The old lady starts up in her seat and watches John’s movements intently. John takes not the slightest notice of James but goes out of the room again. James opens his mouth to speak but decides to go on reading as though nothing had happened.]

JAMES. “Notwithstanding the highly satisfactory nature of all these arrangements, there was a cloud on the countenance of Mr. Bob Sawyer as he sat by the fireside. There was a sympathising expression too in the features of Mr. Ben Allen, as he gazed intently on the coals: and a tone of melancholy in his voice as he said, after a long silence: “ ‘Well, it is unlucky that she should have taken it into her head to turn sour, just on this occasion. She might at least have waited till to-morrow.’ ”

[John returns with a glass, a decanter of whisky, and a jug of water. These he places on the table by his mother's side. She looks up at him gratefully. John, a little ostentatiously, takes a book and sits on the sofa. James shuts "Pickwick" and remains gazing into the fire. They sit in silence for some time.]

MRS. BETTS. Is the clock right, John?

JOHN (*looking at his watch*). A little fast. . . . I told Jane she might go to bed. I thought it better.

MRS. BETTS. Yes —

[John is conscious that James is scrutinising him narrowly, and becomes a little uneasy. He sits so that the chair he has brought is between himself and his brother. He can see his mother from this position. They sit again in silence for some time.]

MRS. BETTS. There was a funeral in the street to-day. Quite a grand affair. . . . (*Silence*) There have been quite a number of deaths in the district lately. . . . (*Silence*) They go on having babies, though . . . I wonder why . . . (*Silence*) I suppose everything happens for the best. . . . (*Her prattle becomes intolerable to James, who springs to his feet and walks furiously up and down the room. He subsides finally, having scared her into silence, and they sit mum while the aggressive clock tick-ticks, and faint noises from the street come into the room—the sound of wheels on cobblestones, of whistling boys, of a street-brawl. Then comes the boom of a great distant clock striking ten*) That's the Town Hall. When you hear it so clearly as that it means rain. . . .

[Silence again. The bell of the house is heard to tinkle. John leaps to his feet and goes from the room. Mrs. Betts starts up trembling and fearful. James sits bolt upright and stern in his chair. They both turn and watch the door. John returns alone.]

JOHN. Only the post.

JAMES. Anything for me?

JOHN. No; for me. . . .

[He reads his letter and throws it in the fire. James and Mrs.]

Betts subside into their former attitudes. John returns to the sofa and takes up his book again.

MRS. BETTS. Who was it from, John?

JOHN. It was nothing of any consequence.

[They relapse into silence.]

JAMES. It is past your bed-time, mother. *(Mrs. Betts takes no notice)* It is past ten o'clock mother. . . .

MRS. BETTS. I KNOW. . . . *(They are silent again. James falls to plucking his beard, and Mrs. Betts to watching him)* How like you are to your father, James! . . . I suppose that is why you could never get on together. . . .

[James winces, but ignores the remark.]

JOHN. I think, mother, if we agreed not to talk it would be easier for all of us. . . .

MRS. BETTS. Very well, John . . . only — I — couldn't bear the silence. . . .

[James opens "Pickwick" again and pretends to be absorbed.]

JOHN. If you would read, Jamie . . .

JAMES. She does not listen . . . *(Mrs. Betts has caught the sound of something outside the house. She turns and looks, half in fear, half in eagerness, towards the window. She lifts her hand and seems to point in that direction. The house bell is heard again. John looks up, sees her agitation, and comes to soothe her. He moves towards the door, and has reached it when James shakes himself and holds up a hand)* Stop! *(John turns)* I will go.

JOHN. I beg your pardon. I will go.

[He opens the door and goes out. James assumes a commanding attitude by the fireplace. Mrs. Betts turns and watches the door. She hears murmurs of voices, and, rising to her feet, begins to shuffle towards the door.]

JAMES *(without looking at her; in a firm, quiet voice)*. Mother — sit down. *(He never takes his eyes from the door. Mrs. Betts stands turning piteously between his command and her instinctive inclination. Then slowly she returns and subsides into her chair, but never takes her eyes from the door. Mrs. Betts begins to whimper)* Tssh! Tssh!

[The door slowly opens and John comes in, grave, solemn. He holds the door open and presently Mr. Betts comes in. He is a big man, but a broken and a wretched; and yet there is a fine dignity in him. He stands by the door for some moments, his eyes fixed on his wife. He comes towards her slowly as though he were afraid, were not sure; that breaks in him, and he stumbles towards her and kisses her.]

BETTS. Wife . . .

[She breaks into a little moaning cry, fondles, and kisses his hand. John comes and stands behind them. Mr. Betts turns from his wife to James and holds out his hand. James bows stiffly, and for a moment there is silence. The old antagonism leaps in both.]

JAMES *(with stiff dignity)*. You are welcome, sir. . . .

[Mr. Betts stretches to his full height and bows with a dignity no less stiff than that of his son. James stands cold, while the other three are grouped together. Mrs. Betts tugs at her husband's hand.]

MRS. BETTS. Your chair, dear . . . John brought it down for you. . . .

[Mr. Betts moves and sits in the chair by the fireplace. James waits for a little and then, without a word, sits in his chair. John brings up a chair and sits between his mother and father, nearer to his mother. They sit so in awkward silence, during which Mr. Betts turns his eyes from one to another of his family. James alone does not look at his father, but studiously away from him. John turns and mixes a glass of whisky and water for his father. This the old man takes gladly. He is reminded that he is cold by this attention, and shivers. He holds out a hand towards the blazing fire, then finds James looking at it vindictively and withdraws it hastily.]

JOHN. Your slippers are there. . . . *(Mr. Betts takes off his boots and gives them to John, who takes them out of the room)* Will you . . . smoke?

MR. BETTS. Thank you. *(He takes his old pipe and tobacco and lights, looking at James the while. He blows out a cloud of smoke gratefully. He thrusts out a leg towards the fire)*

The value of tobacco is best appreciated when it is the last you possess and there is no chance of getting more. . . . Bismarck said that . . .

MRS. BETTS (*who has been weeping quietly*). I think — I think I must go to — to bed. (*She rises to her feet and shuffles slowly over to her husband. She bends over him and kisses him and with her weak old hands pats his cheek*) I — I hope you are not wet, dear. . . . It must be raining terribly. . . .

[*She shuffles over to James, kisses him, and John sees her to the door, then comes back and sits in her chair. Mr. Betts has watched his wife with burning eyes as she moved.*

MR. BETTS. How long? How long?

JAMES (*icily*). It is six months since she was out of doors. . . . It is almost six years since she has been well enough to stay away from . . . from home. . . .

[*Mr. Betts draws the back of his hand over his eyes.*

JOHN. Be just, James, be just.

JAMES (*in the same hard monotone*). It is twelve years since we came to this house in this melancholy street. . . . In this room she has sat, day in, day out, year in, year out. . . . Day by day we have set out, I for the bank, John there for his office: . . . Year by year we have known that there was nothing to be done . . . that we must sacrifice everything to her. . . . We have known that. . . . We have known that we could bring her nothing, that she could bring us nothing. . . . There she sat . . .

[*Mr. Betts sits with bowed head, offering no protest.*

JOHN. Be just, James, be just. . . . She has been waiting for this day . . .

JAMES (*ignoring him*). We have known that such an existence was futile . . . sterile. . . . We have all been . . . prisoners.

JOHN. Shame on you . . .

JAMES. I have told you in my letter the terms on which I bid you welcome to my house. . . . What have you to say?

[*Mr. Betts looks at John, then to James. Their eyes meet and for a moment they are man to man, enmity between them, the man judging and the man being judged. A little nervous laugh escapes from Mr. Betts. He puts up his hand to the place where his wife kissed him and caressed his face, and his eyes follow her slow path to the door. He shrugs, seems to shrink. He flings up his hands.*

MR. BETTS. Nothing. . . . There is nothing to say. . . .
We are all so . . . so old . . .

[*There is a silence. The clock ticks more wickedly than ever. James and John sit with bowed heads.*

JOHN (*to his father*). Shall I show you your room?

MR. BETTS. Thank you, John.

[*James rises, goes to the door, and opens it. As John and Mr. Betts reach the door, James holds out his hand to his father.*

JAMES. Good night — father.

MR. BETTS. Good night, James.

[*John and Mr. Betts go out. James puts out the light and follows.*

CURTAIN

THE SNOW MAN

LAURENCE HOUSMAN

LAURENCE HOUSMAN is not a professional dramatist. Although he has written many plays he is not to be classed with the playwright whose business it is to supply the stage regularly with effective pieces. Born in 1867, he has turned his hand to poetry, fiction, translation, and the drama, while he is well known as an illustrator and a lecturer on social subjects. His best known plays—"Prunella", written in collaboration with Granville Barker, and "The Chinese Lantern"—belong to the realm of fancy; they are not only effective plays, they are genuine literature. Of late years Mr. Housman has written a number of one-act plays, in verse and prose, on mythical and pseudo-historical subjects, and some based upon modern subjects.

Laurence Housman is gifted with a fine sense of the theater; as an "outsider" he still clings to the notion that a good play need not necessarily be written in poor English.

PLAYS

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Bethlehem (1902) | *As Good as Gold (1916) |
| Prunella (1906) | *The Snow Man (1916) |
| (In collaboration with
Granville Barker) | *Bird in Hand (1916) |
| The Chinese Lantern (1908) | *Nazareth (1916) |
| Lysistrata (1910) | *The Return of Alcestis
(1916) |
| *A Likely Story (1910) | *Apollo in Hades (1920) |
| *The Lord of the Harvest
(1910) | *The Death of Alcestis (1920) |
| Pains and Penalties (1911) | *The Doom of Admetus
(1920) |
| Alice in Ganderland (1911) | *The Christmas Tree (1920) |

“Bethlehem” is published by Macmillan Company, New York; “Prunella” by Little, Brown and Company, Boston; “The Chinese Lantern”, “As Good as Gold”, “A Likely Story”, “The Snow Man”, “The Lord of the Harvest”, “Bird in Hand”, “Nazareth”, “The Return of Alcestis”, separately, by Samuel French, New York; “Apollo in Hades”, “The Death of Alcestis”, and “The Doom of Admetus” in one volume entitled “The Wheel”, by Samuel French; “Pains and Penalties” by Sidgwick and Jackson, London; “Lysistrata” by The Woman’s Press, London; and “The Christmas Tree” in *The Drama* magazine, Chicago, December, 1920.

Reference: Literary Supplement, *New York Evening Post*, May 8, 1920.

THE SNOW MAN

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY LAURENCE HOUSMAN

“The Snow Man” has not been professionally produced.

Characters

JOAN, *A peasant woman*

MARY ANN

MATTHEW MARK } *Her children*

JASPAR, *Her husband*

THE SNOW MAN

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THE SNOW MAN

SCENE. *A poor peasant dwelling, barely furnished with articles of the roughest description, a trestle-table, two benches, — a large one serving as a window-seat, and a smaller one standing by the hearth, — a wooden chair, a spinning wheel, a large bread pan, a shell containing household crockery, and on the inner wall of the ingle a few pots and pans hanging on the wall. The room is wide and low; to the left is a deep hooded fireplace with containing walls on either side of it, — to one side a bread oven, to the other a cubby-bed with doors; opposite to the fireplace is a door leading to the woodshed. The house door is at the back, rather to the right; to its left a long low window extends almost to a line with the fireplace. In the right hand corner stands a large chest. The roof is of heavy beams gray with smoke, and between them shows an inner surface of thatch. The walls are of blue plaster marked by mildew, with patches here and there where the plaster has peeled off. It is winter and daylight is drawing on. Outside the world is white with snow. A peasant-woman moves to and fro with quick dogged pace. The pace of a hard worker tired but always pushed for time. She takes black bread out of the oven, and puts the remainder into the bread-pan. Then she takes down the garments from before the fire, presses them with a heavy iron, and puts them away in the chest. While crossing the room to and fro she economizes her time, never going empty-handed. She puts milk to warm on the fire, and gets down two small mugs from a shelf. She also gets from the cubby-bed two night garments, and hangs them to warm over the bench by the hearth. While she is thus engaged, children's voices are heard outside, laughing and shouting. The woman, absorbed in her work, pays no attention. Two small romping figures occasionally pass the window. Presently they begin to sing.*

CHILDREN. Here we have a snow man, a snow man, a snow man!

Oh, where does he come from, and what shall be his name?
He says his name is no man, no man, no man!
And nowhere and nowhere the land from which he came.

(Now again)

Oh, why did you come here, oh, snow man, oh, snow man?
And will you now a friend be, or will you be a foe?
"Oh, whether I a friend am, or whether I'm a foeman,
It's here I mean to stay now, until I have to go!"

(Now again)

But what should you go for, oh, snow man, oh, snow man?
And why would you leave us, when home lies at hand?
"Oh, when the sun calls me, then I can wait for no man,
But back I must go again, to my own land!"
And now we've made him, he'll have to stay,
Ha! Ha! Ha! He can't get away.

[The door bursts open, the two children run in: Matthew Mark and Mary Ann.]

MARY. Oh, mother, come and look at our snow man.

MATTHEW. Mother, do look at him.

MARY. When we began

A-building him, we didn't ever know
How big he'd get to be — he seemed to grow
All by himself!

MATTHEW. Mother, do look!

JOAN. There, there!

It's "look," "look," "look," all day!

(She speaks in a good-humored scolding tone which the children seem not in the least afraid of. She goes and looks out)

Well, I declare,

You've done a silly thing — made 'im to stand
Right in the door! — with no room either 'and
For folks to get by.

MATTHEW. Yah!

MARY. Yah! Ah, ha! That's why.

MATTHEW. We didn't want to let no folk get by
To steal our muvver!

(He rubs against her)

JOAN. Here, and what d'yer mean

Getting yourself all wet like this? You've been
And clammed yourself, — you too. Now off you go!
Take all those things off! One can't ever know
What children will be up to next. Come here!

(Catches hold of Matthew)

Now you undress yourself.

(To Mary)

You get in there

Into the warm. Stand still, stand still, I say,
And put this round yer. Oh, so that's the way
You do when I ain't looking? All day long
You're up to mischief. Always something wrong
Soon as my back is turned. That heap o' snow
How long's that to stay there, I'd like to know?
Here, take your milk, and there's a bit o' bread
For both on yer. Don't want it? Ah, it's bed
You'd best be off to! There, put your mug down!
Now come and get into your nighty-gown.
Ah, you sweet thing! Well, kiss your mother then!
But you mind what I say — no more snow men
To-morrow!

[Crosses the room.]

MARY. Mother — Mother — will there be
Anyone here to-morrow? Shan't we see
Someone?

JOAN. See someone?

MARY. I mean, won't there no

Man come with a spade and clear away the snow?
Last year one come.

JOAN. That was your father, — he

Haven't been near since, and where he be

God alone knows. Here! Don't fill your 'ead
With silly fancies! You get on to bed.

[She goes out into the woodshed.]

MATTHEW. Say! Say! She's gone! come along, Mary Ann
And have another look at our snow man.

(They run across to the window)

Snow man! Snow man!

MARY. It's no good, he don't hear, he's gone to sleep.

(Re-enter Joan)

JOAN. Ah, what are you up to there? Back you go, quick.
Or else you'll get the rod! *(They skip back to the fireplace)*
Now you kneel down and say your prayers. "Pray
God" —

[The two children kneel at bench with their backs to the fire.]

CHILDREN. "Pray God" —

JOAN *(as she moves about folding up clothes, etc.)*. "Pray God
make Baba good" —

CHILDREN. Pray God make Baba good.

JOAN. "Give Baba bread."

CHILDREN. Give Baba bread.

JOAN. "Give all the hungry food" —

CHILDREN. Give all the hungry food.

JOAN. "Peace to the dead." *[Crosses herself.]*

CHILDREN. Peace to the dead.

[Joan stands lost in reverie and speaks unconsciously by rote.]

JOAN. "God bless" — *[She turns and looks out.]*

CHILDREN. God bless — *[They wait to be prompted.]*

MATTHEW. Say, muvver, shall we pray for the snow man
too? Shall us? Shall us?

JOAN *(still musing)*. Nay, nay! You leave the snow man
out! He knows his way — he knows his way.

CHILDREN. Bless mother,

{	brother	}
	sister	

 kind friends all about,

Bring Dada home, and leave the snow man out. Amen.

[Joan stands lost in her own thoughts. The children creep behind her toward the window.]

MARY. Good-night, snow man!

MATTHEW. Good-night!

[They approach Joan.]

MARY. Good-night, mother!

JOAN. Good-night, darling!

MATTHEW. Night, mother.

JOAN. Night-night, my dear, — night-night!

*[Mary Ann goes and opens cubby-bed and begins to climb in.
Matthew stops outside.]*

MATTHEW. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
Guard the bed that I lie on;
Four corners to my bed,
Four angels at my head,
One to watch, and one to pray,
And two to —

JOAN. There, you get in! you've prayed enough to-night.

[She goes to close doors.]

MARY. Don't shut it up yet, mother, leave a light.

JOAN. Just you be quiet. Be thankful you lie warm,
There's some as won't to-night. I can hear storm
A-coming on.

[She leaves door of cubby-bed half open.]

MATTHEW. Sing, mother, will ye sing?

JOAN *(putting away the bread and the milk-mugs and folding
up the strewn garments; starts to sing in a dull toneless voice
with little tune)*.

There comes a man to a maid, and said,
All in a year and a day —
“So thou be mine now let us be wed
Out of the world and away.”

Said the maid to the man, “If I thee wed
Out of the world and away,
Bide 'e at home, and find me bread —
Just for a year and a day.”

They hadn't been wed, the maid and the man,
 For a year, for a year and a day,
 Before a want in his heart began,
 To be out to the world and away.

"Oh, wife, there's come a call to my blood,
 To be out in the world and away,
 By road and river, by field and flood,
 Just for a year and a day."

Out and away to the world he went,
 By road and river and sea.
 Oh, man of the road, is your heart content?
 Will 'e never come back to me?

(She goes and looks at the children and sees that they are asleep)

Oh, man of the road, is your heart content?
 Will 'e never come back to me?

(While she sings, the firelight dies down and the light of the candle loses its warmth. Outside is a sound of rising wind, and the soft lash of snow against the pane. She goes and looks out of window)

Ah, there be storm, black blast with icy breath!
 The night's gone colder now, aye cold like death,
 Cold!

(She shivers — three knocks are struck on the door)
 Who be there? Who is it? Whence do 'e come?
(Another knock, very faint)

Have you no word? What, are ye deaf and dumb? Or —
 dead?

(Knock. The light burns blue. She opens the door. Pause. Slowly the snow man enters and moves across the room toward the bed)

No, stop! Not there, not there!

[She interposes and lays hold of him. A cold rigour seizes her,

SNOW MAN. Why do you touch me?

JOAN. Why do you come here? Who are you? Answer!

(*He again moves forward*) No, you don't go there! You shan't, you shan't come nigh of 'em.

SNOW MAN. Take care! My touch is — cold!

JOAN. You think I'm feard o' that?

You think them eyes as I be looking at
Have any fear for me, or shape of dread?

Worse than what life 'ave?

(*With a sort of exultation*)

Why, if I were dead!

[*Pause. The snow man lifts his hand and points toward the bed. Joan sees his meaning.*]

SNOW MAN. If you were dead?

JOAN. No, no, I say you lie!

My little 'uns? God wouldn't let 'em die.

'A wouldn't have the heart, 'a wouldn't have the heart.

SNOW MAN. Yet there's a heart,

Now quick to beat,

Which, this same night,

Must lose its heat.

To give strength to a lame man's feet.

JOAN. A lame man?

SNOW MAN. Gray-headed, bent,

He scarce can go,

His strength is spent

In drifts of snow,

And all the icy blasts that blow.

JOAN. I don't know who you mean.

SNOW MAN. Give me your hand,

And you shall see,

Here, close at hand, snow-bound goes he.

Give me your hand,

And come with me.

JOAN. With you? Why do you think I'd come with you?

I've got my children, I've a husband, too,

One as I love.

SNOW MAN. And he — does he love you?

JOAN. That's no concern o' yours!

Aye, a' did once, Aye! and a' will again,
 Some day, perhaps. When he first married me,
 'A did, — 'a did! We've sat here in this room
 A-kissing by the hour! That were before
 The children come. Children do make a house
 No comfort to a man. He had his right
 To go. He didn't want 'em, but I did!
 I did!

Aye! and I've 'ad 'em now a whole seven years,
 Worked for 'em, I lived for 'em, starved for 'em,
 And I'd die
 So it could better 'em.

SNOW MAN. And what — for him?

JOAN. I've broke my 'eart for 'im; it's past its work,
 And now it ain't no use — no use — to 'im.

SNOW MAN. Its use has come. Oh, woman, give
 Your heart to me, I'll make it live.
 And what you lend he shall receive.

JOAN. You can't. You can't do that —

You can't raise up the sun when once it's set;
 You can't put new roots in us, when we're old,
 Dried up, and withered.

SNOW MAN. Within kind earth

Dry seed goes sown
 And springs again to birth.

JOAN. I've 'ad enough of earth. I've sowed, I've reaped,
 I've gathered, and I've strawed. But me and 'im
 We won't meet any more. He 'aven't come,
 Nigh me — not for a year.
 And when he did come back — he went again
 Next day.

SNOW MAN. Went? Where?

JOAN. Nowhere. He roves about. Seeing the world, 'e
 calls it. Roving blood. That's been 'is curse; and mind,
 'is roving blood, it haven't always roved. He liked his

ease, he liked the victuals I give him well enough, he liked his fireside, and he liked his bed when I was by 'im. Ah! And then one day he'd 'ad enough of comfort, and was off, — looking for what? 'Ardship? He might have 'ad that 'ere if he'd but stayed. Aye, that 'e could — for it's been 'ard enough — with they two there. Ah, you may look at 'em, they 'aven't known trouble — yet they was with me all the time. Why, there've been days when I've not 'ad enough to eat myself. And what 'ave fed me? Just to 'ear 'em laugh and think they 'aven't known. What do you look at me like that for? What do you know? What did you come for? Say!

SNOW MAN. To bring you comfort.

JOAN. Comfort? I've got no place for comfort in me now.

It isn't that I want — it's rest.

SNOW MAN. 'Tis rest I bring.

JOAN. Where's 'e?

SNOW MAN. Here — near at hand. Come, come and do not be afraid.

[He takes her hand.]

JOAN. Oh, dearie me. This feels like death. Like death!

[As they touch hands a mist draws over the stage, the walls of the house seem to fade away, the sound of the storm grows loud around them. They stand in a white world full of obscure movement and pale drifting forms.]

SNOW MAN. What do you see?

JOAN. A waste of snow.

SNOW MAN. Anyone there?

JOAN. No one I know. No — only you. What? You say you saw him on the road, coming? How do you know that it was 'im? Yes — yes — 'e was like that. But younger, 'andsomer than that, — not lame — No, he was never lame — a young, young man, And strong! —

Oh, lost his way? You say 'e'd lost his way?

Well, maybe that might tire 'im just a bit,

But oh, e'd find it! Oh, trust him for that!

He's been all round the world — and lost his way
 Through coming 'ome. Yes, yes, he's coming 'ome.
 Ah! Now I see 'im. Yes, I'm 'ere, I'm 'ere!
 Waiting for yer, — waiting — expecting yer.
 Ah, never mind. Though yer don't love me, still
 It's back to me you come! Yer can't 'elp that
 That's 'ow God made yer. That's why He made me.
 No! I can't reach yer. No, he's got my hand,
 Holding it, holding it, — and won't leave go!
 I'd 'elp yer, if I could. I'd die for yer!
 But he won't let me go.
 — I'm cold, I'm cold!

Can't see! — I've lost my way,

And I shan't — never — any more come home!

[The snow man looses her hand, and she falls. The mist clears from a dark stage, the walls close in again, the chamber remains in darkness. A figure stumbles past the window, the door is thrown open, the Snow man stands aside. Enter Jasper.]

JASPAR. Home! Home, at last! Who's there? Anyone there?

What? Nobody? No fire? Oh, bitter cold — it feels like death!
(Fumbles for match-box)

Here, fool, give me a light!

Light, can't yer? Ah, what's that, what's that, what's that?

Who are yer? What for are you lying there?

Get up! Get up! What makes 'e be so cold?

So clammed?

(Strikes a light)

What the — ! My wife! It be my wife!

Wife! Don't 'e hear me? It be I, come back,

Jaspar come back — Jaspar come home again —

Jaspar — why don't 'e answer? There, now there!

Have that to warm yer. Oh, ye'll soon come round,

Ye've starved yourself, ye — ! Ah — she's dead, she's dead!

(He lifts her onto the chair by the hearth and now holds the

candle to her face, then draws away with a growing fear of what other deaths may be there. He advances to the crib, and looks in on the sleeping children. He assures himself that they are alive. It startles him to fresh hope; he turns back to his wife)

No, she ain't dead, she can't be, they're alive!

She wouldn't leave 'em. No, she can't be dead.

Wife, do 'e hear? The children be alive.

You wouldn't go and leave 'em, no, not you ——

'Twouldn't be like yer. There, my — there, come, come!

Take warmth o' me, — out of my 'cart and soul!

I'll make ye warm.

(He takes her to his heart)

Why, I was coming 'once.

I'd 'a been yere before, but I lost my way,

Got buried in the snow. Then I 'eard you

A-callin' me! I thought I saw your face,

Then it all went, and then, my feet grew strong,

Life come to me, and warmth, and here I be !

Can't 'e speak to me? Be ye gone so far

As 'e can't 'ear me? Not the word I'd say

To tell 'e how I loved 'e?

Ah, now I be in 'ell, I be in 'ell!

And 'a won't never know.

(Her hand falls out across chair, pointing toward the crib)

What's that to say?

Oh, the dear hand. Yes, I'll look after 'em.

They shan't know want — and I won't go away ——

The way I'd wish to go. I'll bear my life

And all the burden of it. There, there, my lass,

Rest ye in peace, I'll do my best by 'em!

I'll do my best.

[He bends and kisses her on the lips. The Snow man makes a pass toward her with his hand. She moves, and opens her eyes, all dazed and dreaming.]

JOAN. Who's that, who's that got hold o' me? Let go! I must go to 'im.

JASPAR. No, no, bide 'e still. Here's Jaspar!

JOAN. Jaspar!

JASPAR. Oh, you be alive!

[He sinks down broken, with his head on her breast. She takes his head in her hands stroking it softly. The Snow man moves slowly to the door, fades through it, and disappears.]

JOAN. So you've come back, I knew you'd come — some day. What's this?

[She touches the coat.]

JASPAR. My coat. I found you lyin' there cold, so I put it around yer. But you made no sign — until I thought as yer was dead.

JOAN. Dead? Would I leave 'em? Leave my little 'uns?

JASPAR. Ah, there you do get home. It's a true charge. It's what I done.

JOAN. You 'ad the roving blood. You couldn't 'elp it.

JASPAR. It ain't brought me no joy.

JOAN. Jaspar, I think you've come here in a dream

Put your arms round me and 'old me. Don't let go.

Help me to dream, I'd like for it to last

Just one more hour — put your 'ead on my heart.

And don't you speak — don't speak — I want to dream,

You be come back again! I want to dream.

[They lie still in each other's arms. Dawn light begins to creep in. A sound of sliding snow is heard on the roof, a sharp twittering of birds; down across the window masses of snow fall in soft thunder. There follows a sound of dropping water: the thaw has begun. The outer world grows radiant with light. The doors of the cubby-bed fly open, the two children peep out. A soft but heavy crash of falling snow is heard. It strikes the door.]

MARY. Mother, what's that? Get up, get up, it's light!

(Jumps out of bed, followed by Matthew) Oh, come and

look! The snow's all falling—right down off the roof.

Look how it's letting go!

MATTHEW. Oh, the snow man. Look at the snow man!

Oh! *[Opens door.]*

MARY. Mother, the snow man's tumbled in the night.

[*Joan opens her eyes.*]

JOAN. Hush, hush, don't wake 'im. Come 'e and look 'ere.

[*The children approach softly, curious and surprised.*]

MARY. Who is it, mother?

JOAN. The snow man, my dear. He's come to stay.

CURTAIN



FANCY FREE

STANLEY HOUGHTON

WILLIAM STANLEY HOUGHTON was born at Ashton-upon-Mersey in 1881. At the age of sixteen he entered his father's law office in Manchester, where he worked until 1912. That year he witnessed the successful production of his "Hindle Wakes", a play which was later performed in London and throughout the United States. From 1912 until the end of his short life, he devoted all his time to the writing of plays. Early in 1913 he went to Paris, fell ill, recovered, and returned to London in June of the same year. He soon left England once again, on his way to Venice. From Italy, after an attack of influenza and appendicitis, he was brought to Manchester, where he died in December.

At the time of his death, Stanley Houghton was perhaps the best known dramatist of the so-called "Manchester School." "Hindle Wakes" is without doubt his best play, but in his short dramas and comedies he attempted—and in the best of them successfully—to portray with exactitude and sympathy the characters of his native Lancashire.

The one-act plays were, fortunately, not intended merely as curtain raisers: they were written as independent works, and not in order to amuse the pit before the stalls are filled. The Manchester dramatists were encouraged to develop the one-act form, not to regard it as a convenient repository for material otherwise not suitable for use.

PLAYS

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| *The Dear Departed (1908) | *The Fifth Commandment (1913) |
| Independent Means (1909) | Trust the People (1913) |
| *The Master of the House (1910) | *The Old Testament and the New (1914) |
| The Younger Generation (1910) | Partners (1914) |
| *Fancy Free (1911) | Marriages in the Making (1914) |
| Hindle Wakes (1912) | The Hillarys (1915) |
| *Pearls (1912) | (In collaboration with Harold Brighthouse) |
| *Phipps (1912) | |
| The Perfect Cure (1913) | |
| Ginger (1913) | |

“The Dear Departed”, “The Master of the House”, “Fancy Free”, “Phipps”, and “The Fifth Commandment” are published as “Five One-Act Plays”, by Samuel French, New York; “Independent Means”, “The Younger Generation”, and “Hindle Wakes”, separately, by the same; all the plays, except “Trust the People”, “Ginger”, “Pearls”, and “The Hillarys”, are included in “The Works of Stanley Houghton”, 3 volumes, Constable and Company, London.

References: Harold Brighthouse, Introduction to “The Works of Stanley Houghton”, Constable and Company, London; Gerald Cumberland, “Set Down in Malice”, Brentano’s, New York.

Magazines: *The Bookman*, vol. xxxvi, p. 641, New York; *Manchester Playgoer*, vol. xi, No. 1; *Manchester Quarterly*, vol. xxxiii, p. 213; *The Living Age*, vol. cclxxx, p. 413, Boston; *McClure’s*, vol. xl, p. 69, New York.

FANCY FREE

By STANLEY HOUGHTON

“Fancy Free” was first produced at London in 1912.

Characters

FANCY

ALFRED

ETHELBERT

DELIA

The Scene represents the writing-room of the Hotel Cosmopolitan, Babylon-on-Sea.

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FANCY FREE

The writing-room of the Hotel Cosmopolitan is a tall, handsome apartment, exquisitely furnished. The great fireplace faces the spectator, with a lounge chair on each side. Near him, on his left, is a double writing-table containing two desks opposite one another. Chairs face each desk. Still further left is a settee against the wall. On his right a settee placed at right angles to the wall, a small low table, and a low padded armchair. There is another writing-table on the right of the fireplace, and a book-case on the left. The two entrances, each with double doors, are set diagonally across the two visible corners of the room, one right and one left.

The fire is burning, and the electric lights are on. It is a little after ten o'clock.

Fancy, in an evening gown, is sitting on the right hand of the double desk, trying to compose a letter. She is petite, dark and pretty. Alfred comes in from the left in evening dress. He is tall, fair, clean-shaven and handsome.

FANCY (looking up). Well?

ALFRED. I find that the last post goes at midnight. It is now exactly a quarter-past ten.

FANCY. Then I have still an hour and three-quarters in which to finish the letter.

[Alfred kneels on the chair on the other side of the double desk and watches Fancy.]

ALFRED. I am disappointed in you, Fancy. I knew that I should be disappointed in you some day, but I did not expect it to come so soon.

FANCY. My dear Alfred, pray do not forget that this is no ordinary letter.

ALFRED. It ought not to be so difficult to tell one's husband that one has run away from him.

FANCY. But I have had so little experience. I daresay I shall improve with practice.

ALFRED. How far have you got?

FANCY. I'll read it to you. "Darling Ethelbert ——"

ALFRED. Stop! Ought you to call him darling now?

FANCY. Why not?

ALFRED. A sensitive mind might detect something inappropriate in the adjective.

FANCY. I always call him darling when I write to him. I feel sure he would feel hurt if I omitted to do so on this occasion. Besides, I am still very fond of him.

ALFRED. Perhaps you are right. We cannot too scrupulously avoid wounding him.

FANCY (*reading*). "DARLING Ethelbert,

"You will be interested to hear that since you went to Scotland on Thursday last I have decided to run away with Alfred. You cannot have forgotten the promises we made each other on our wedding-day. I am not referring to those we made publicly during the marriage ceremony, but to our private understanding that each should be entirely free and untrammelled provided that the other's health and comfort was not interfered with. You will understand, therefore, that in leaving you and going away with Alfred I am doing nothing that is contrary to our agreement. You would have been entitled to complain only if I had insisted on bringing Alfred home with me."

That's logic, isn't it?

ALFRED. Yes. Feminine logic.

FANCY. That is all Ethelbert has any right to expect from me.

ALFRED. How do you proceed?

FANCY. I don't. That is the difficulty.

ALFRED. At any rate, Fancy, you have made it clear to Ethelbert that you have left him. That is all that is essential. You have only to wind up now.

FANCY. How? "Yours faithfully"?

ALFRED. Why not "Yours formerly"?

FANCY. But I am afraid that is too abrupt. Ethelbert is so sensitive. I should like to wind up with something kind.

ALFRED. Let me see. "You will be glad to hear that we are having an awfully jolly time here."

FANCY. I doubt whether Ethelbert would be glad to hear it.

ALFRED. Then something chatty or discursive. "The *Cosmopolitan* is an exceedingly nice hotel. It contains no fewer than 250 bedrooms, each elaborately furnished with all modern conveniences."

FANCY. Ethelbert will hardly care for such details. Besides, I do not consider that the *Cosmopolitan* is such a nice hotel.

ALFRED. It is an exceedingly expensive one. Let us endeavour to extract as much enjoyment out of it as possible.

FANCY. I am sure that I should have preferred the *Grand Rendezvous*.

ALFRED. The *Grand Rendezvous* is, if possible, still more expensive.

FANCY. What does that matter?

ALFRED. To you, little or nothing. It is I who have to pay the bill.

FANCY. Alfred, you have the soul of a stockbroker.

ALFRED. Do not flatter me. I have sometimes hoped I had.

FANCY. If I had realized how useless you would be in an emergency, I doubt whether I should have run away with you.

ALFRED. My dear Fancy, I did not run away with you in order to conduct your correspondence. You should have advertised for a private secretary. I had hoped to be something more to you than that.

FANCY (*rising*). I shall go to my room. It is quite impossible for me to finish this letter here.

ALFRED. Why?

FANCY. This room is far too crowded.

ALFRED. This is not a quarrel, I trust, Fancy.

FANCY. Certainly not. I hope I have too much tact to quarrel with you on the first day of our elopement.

[Fancy goes to the door with her letter.]

ALFRED. When may I expect to see you again?

FANCY. The last post goes at midnight.

[Fancy goes out left. Hardly has she gone than Ethelbert comes in right. He is a good-looking, dark man, in evening dress.]

ALFRED (*thunderstruck*). Ethelbert!

ETHELBERT. Alfred!

ALFRED. My dear fellow.

ETHELBERT. How are you, old chap?

ALFRED. What brings you here? I understood you were travelling on business.

ETHELBERT. So I am. Extremely private business.

ALFRED. How singular that we should meet!

ETHELBERT. Are you here on business too?

ALFRED. Er — yes. Extremely private business also.

ETHELBERT. Come. Let us sit down and talk.

[He sits in the armchair right of the fire.]

ALFRED. With pleasure. But do not let us talk here.

ETHELBERT. Why not?

ALFRED. This is an exceedingly dull room.

ETHELBERT. It is a very charming room.

ALFRED. But I assure you, I have been here quite half an hour, and nothing whatever has happened.

ETHELBERT. Then we can talk the more comfortably.

[Alfred sits down reluctantly.]

ALFRED. Where were you going when you came in here?

ETHELBERT. I was looking for the American Bar.

ALFRED. Excellent! We will go and look for it together.

[He rises.]

ETHELBERT. Presently. There is no hurry.

[Alfred sits down.]

ALFRED (*yawning*). Do you know, Ethelbert, I feel I ought to be getting to bed.

ETHELBERT. Bed? Why, it is only half-past ten.

ALFRED. I promised my mother, before she died, that whenever practicable I would be in bed by half-past ten.

ETHELBERT. But I want to talk to you about Fancy.

ALFRED. About Fancy! Do you think you ought to talk to me about Fancy? The relations of a husband and wife should be sacred, surely.

ETHELBERT. I want to ask your advice, Alfred. I have begun to suspect that Fancy is growing tired of me.

ALFRED (*looking at his watch*). I must positively be in bed before half-past ten o'clock——

ETHELBERT. Why does a woman grow tired of a man?

ALFRED. Because the last post goes at midnight.

ETHELBERT. No. Because she prefers somebody else.

ALFRED (*interested*). Do you suspect that Fancy is in love with somebody else?

ETHELBERT. I do.

ALFRED. Who is he?

ETHELBERT. I have no idea. I wish I had.

ALFRED. Don't you think you will be much happier if you remain in ignorance?

ETHELBERT. Oh, I am not thinking of myself. I am thinking of him.

ALFRED. Indeed.

ETHELBERT. Yes. I should like to warn him.

ALFRED. To warn him?

ETHELBERT. I'm afraid she'll be running away with the poor fellow.

ALFRED (*uneasily*). Why do you call him a poor fellow?

ETHELBERT. Fancy is so terribly extravagant. She spends money like water, especially when it is not her own.

ALFRED (*unthinkingly*). Have you found that out, too?

ETHELBERT. Of course I've found it out, and so would you if you had been married to her as long as I have. Candidly, I'm afraid Fancy will ruin the poor fellow.

ALFRED. What has that to do with you?

ETHELBERT. I hope I am a humane person, Alfred. I would not willingly see my worst enemy reduced to the work-

house, and this poor fellow may be one of my friends. I should be intensely sorry if one of my friends ruined himself for the sake of my wife. I can assure you that she is not worth it. In my experience, very few women are.

ALFRED. Ethelbert, forgive me if I point out that you are not looking at this affair in the proper way.

ETHELBERT. Indeed? In what way do you consider that I ought to look at it?

ALFRED. Do you mean to say that you are not indignant at the idea of another man eloping with your wife?

ETHELBERT. Not in the least.

ALFRED (*warmly*). Then you ought to be, that's all.

ETHELBERT. When I married Fancy we arranged to leave each other absolutely free. I am a gentleman, Alfred; you would not have me break my word.

ALFRED. But it is quite inconceivable! You are without any sense of moral responsibility. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

ETHELBERT. I very often am. Aren't you?

ALFRED. Certainly not. I regulate my life, I am thankful to say, by a strict rule of conduct, which I observe as closely as possible. If I have lapses, so much the worse. They are regrettable, but not unnatural. At any rate, I have the immense consolation of knowing that my principles are not lax, but that I have merely failed to adhere to them for once in a way.

ETHELBERT. Believe me, Alfred, it is a mistake to have too many principles.

ALFRED. Why?

ETHELBERT. Because if you have too many it is quite impossible to stick to them all. I content myself with one only.

ALFRED. What is that?

ETHELBERT. Never be a hypocrite. It is an excellent maxim. It permits you to do whatever you please, provided you don't pretend you are not doing it. I advise you to adopt it and to drop all your other principles.

ALFRED. Do you insinuate that I am a hypocrite?

ETHELBERT. Not at all.

ALFRED. Then you are wrong. I am.

ETHELBERT. Really? You grow more interesting every day.

ALFRED. Please do not flatter me. I am conscious that I do not deserve it. Ethelbert, your deplorable views about morality have awakened my conscience. I must conceal the truth from you no longer. Besides, I think it is extremely probable that you would have found it out in any case very shortly.

ETHELBERT. What do you mean?

ALFRED. I knew, all the time, that Fancy was in love with another man.

ETHELBERT. How?

ALFRED. Because I am that other man.

ETHELBERT. You don't say so! Permit me to offer you my sincere condolences.

ALFRED. Thank you.

[They shake hands gravely.]

ETHELBERT. How fortunate that I should be able to warn you before it is too late!

ALFRED. Ethelbert, you must know all. It is too late. I have already run away with your wife.

ETHELBERT. Already! When did it happen?

ALFRED. This morning.

ETHELBERT. This morning? Then ——

ALFRED. Yes. You are right. Fancy is actually in this hotel at the present moment.

ETHELBERT. Upon my soul, Alfred, this is most unfriendly of you.

ALFRED. Go on. I am conscious that I merit all your reproaches.

ETHELBERT. I call it grossly indelicate to bring Fancy to the very hotel in which I am staying.

ALFRED. But, hang it all, we did not know that you were staying here. You don't suppose we chose it for that reason, do you? We thought you were in Scotland.

ETHELBERT. Ah, true. I did go to Scotland. I spoke without reflecting. I beg your pardon, Alfred.

ALFRED (*politely*). Not at all.

[*A pause.*]

ETHELBERT. Well, and how do you get on with Fancy?

ALFRED. I hardly think I am justified in venturing upon an opinion upon such a slight acquaintance.

ETHELBERT. I wonder if I may presume to offer you some advice?

ALFRED. By all means.

ETHELBERT. If you are going to succeed in managing Fancy, you will have to put your foot down at once.

ALFRED. Put my foot down?

ETHELBERT. How much have you spent to-day?

ALFRED. About seven hundred and fifty pounds.

ETHELBERT. I thought so.

ALFRED. Fancy bought a motor-car this afternoon.

ETHELBERT. She will buy another to-morrow.

ALFRED. But I can't afford it. How did you succeed in curbing her extravagance?

ETHELBERT. I threatened to advertise in the papers that I should not be responsible for any debts contracted by my wife.

ALFRED. Since she is not my wife I can hardly do that, can I?

ETHELBERT. You might advertise that you will not be responsible for any debts contracted by *my* wife.

ALFRED. Don't you think that would be a little pointed?

ETHELBERT. Perhaps it would.

ALFRED. No, Ethelbert, there is only one way out of the difficulty. I will resign Fancy to you.

ETHELBERT. Not on any account.

ALFRED (*rising*). Yes. I cannot allow you to outbid me in generosity. I will go and find her and bring her to you.

ETHELBERT (*rising*). For Heaven's sake, don't tell my wife I am staying here.

ALFRED. Why not?

ETHELBERT. Because I am not alone.

ALFRED. Not alone?

ETHELBERT. Her name is Delia.

ALFRED (*indignantly*). Ethelbert!

ETHELBERT. Well, Alfred?

ALFRED. You shock me, gravely.

ETHELBERT. You are very thin-skinned. Have you already forgotten what errand brought you to this hotel?

ALFRED (*with dignity*). There is no reason why you should make my lapse an excuse for your own. Have you thought of your wife?

ETHELBERT. She need never know, unless you tell her.

ALFRED. I thought you said that Fancy and you agreed to leave each other entirely free.

ETHELBERT. We gave each other our word of honour.

ALFRED. Then why do you wish to hide the truth from her?

ETHELBERT. Fancy is not a gentleman. She is a woman. She does not understand the meaning of honour.

ALFRED. You are trifling. I regret to say, Ethelbert, that I shall consider it my duty to inform your wife immediately of the whole deplorable business.

ETHELBERT. So be it. Far be it from me to try and induce you to act contrary to the dictates of your conscience.

[*Fancy comes in left, with a letter.*]

FANCY. Ethelbert!

ETHELBERT. Fancy!

FANCY. How fortunate! I can give you this letter now. That will save a penny stamp.

ETHELBERT. Thank you. I will destroy the letter.

[*He tears it and throws it in the fire.*]

FANCY. Oh, why did you do that? It took me such a long time to write.

ETHELBERT. I am already aware of its contents.

FANCY. You have told him, Alfred?

ALFRED. Yes.

FANCY. Then, Ethelbert, may I ask what you are doing here? I consider it grossly indelicate of you to follow us about like this. You wouldn't like it yourself.

ALFRED. Ethelbert has not followed us. He has come here for a reason of his own.

FANCY. A reason of his own?

ALFRED. Yes. How can I tell you? (*A pause*) Her name is Delia.

FANCY. Oh! Oh! Ethelbert, how dare you?

ETHELBERT. My dear Fancy, you remember what we arranged.

FANCY. I don't care what we arranged. You have had the bad taste to prefer another woman to me. I shall never forgive you.

ETHELBERT. But, Fancy, listen.

FANCY. I shall not listen. I don't want to hear a single word about her. Where did you meet her?

ETHELBERT. She was staying at my hotel in Edinburgh.

FANCY. That was no reason why you should have spoken to her.

ETHELBERT. I didn't. She spoke to me. We were sitting at adjoining tables in the Winter Garden.

FANCY. She dropped a glove? A handkerchief?

ETHELBERT. How did you know that?

FANCY. Never mind.

ETHELBERT. Of course I picked it up.

FANCY. And what did she say to you?

ETHELBERT. She said, "Do you know, you've got the most delightfully wicked eyes." That was how it began.

[*Delia comes in right. She is a tall, gorgeously-dressed and beautiful woman, with a mass of red-gold hair.*]

DELIA (*in a fury*). Really, Bertie, this is too bad. I've been looking for you all over the hotel.

ALFRED. This, I presume, is the lady in question.

ETHELBERT. My dear Delia, I am exceedingly sorry that I have been detained, but this lady is an old acquaintance of mine. She is, in fact, my wife.

DELIA. Indeed. (*To Fancy*) So you are his wife?

FANCY. As it happens.

DELIA. I am very glad to meet you, if only to have the opportunity of complaining about the way you have trained your husband.

FANCY. I did not train him.

DELIA. That is just what I complain about. Under the circumstances I can forgive his leaving me alone in the Lounge of a strange hotel, but his table manners are frankly uncivilized. Do you know that he reads the morning paper during breakfast?

FANCY. He never does so at home.

DELIA. You must not expect to make me believe that.

FANCY. But it is perfectly true. During breakfast I always read the morning paper myself.

DELIA. Ah, no doubt in self-defence.

FANCY. Not at all.

DELIA. I suppose one can become inured to anything, in time, even to Bertie's light breakfast conversation.

FANCY. That shows how superficial your acquaintance with Ethelbert is. I like his breakfast conversation because he goes on talking without stopping. Consequently, it is not necessary for me to pay any attention to him, and I can read the morning paper in peace.

ETHELBERT. This is most unkind of you both. My light breakfast conversation has always been much admired, especially by ladies. (*To Delia*) I am sure you will alter your opinion if you will only do me the favour, Delia, of listening a little more carefully to-morrow morning.

FANCY. Certainly not.

ETHELBERT. I beg your pardon?

FANCY. She will have no opportunity of listening to you more carefully.

ETHELBERT. Why not?

FANCY. Because you will breakfast with me to-morrow morning.

ETHELBERT. Oh, very well, then perhaps *you* will do me the favour of listening more carefully.

FANCY. I fancy that during breakfast to-morrow you will be fully occupied in listening to me, for once in a way. I do not think that I shall have sufficient time to say all I wish to say to you to-night. You have provided me with a very fruitful topic.

ETHELBERT. But, my dear Fancy, I fear we can hardly pursue it to-night. We both appear to have previous engagements.

DELIA (*to Ethelbert*). You have no previous engagement.

ETHELBERT. Delia!

DELIA. It is cancelled.

ETHELBERT. You are cruel, Delia.

DELIA. It is your own fault. How can you expect any self-respecting woman to put up with the treatment I have received from you?

FANCY. May I ask what further complaint you have to make about my husband?

DELIA. He has no sense of decency. I consider it grossly indelicate of him to bring me to this hotel whilst you are stopping here. I have never been treated in such a manner before.

FANCY. I think you take a very proper view of the affair. Ethelbert ought to be thoroughly ashamed of himself.

DELIA. Good-bye, Bertie. (*She holds out her hand*) I shall never listen to your light breakfast conversation again.

FANCY. And good-bye, Alfred. (*She holds out her hand*) My only regret is that I shall never know what your light breakfast conversation is like.

ALFRED. Don't say that, Fancy. Why shouldn't we all four have breakfast together in the morning?

DELIA. No. I am sorry, but I must draw the line somewhere.

FANCY. You are right. You have the most perfect taste. I am begining to admire you immensely. Good-bye.

DELIA. Good-bye.

FANCY. Good night, Alfred.

ALFRED. Good night, Fancy.

FANCY. Come, Ethelbert.

[She takes his arm.]

ETHELBERT *(to Delia and Alfred)*. Good night.

[Fancy and Ethelbert go out left. A pause.]

DELIA *(raising her eyebrows)*. Well?

ALFRED. Well?

DELIA. And what do we do now?

ALFRED. Would you like some supper?

DELIA. No, thanks. *(She sits in an armchair by the fire)*

You may order me some champagne if you like.

ALFRED. Willingly.

[Alfred rings an electric bell, and then sits facing Delia in the other armchair. They look straight at each other for a time.]

DELIA *(at length, leaning forward)*. Do you know, you've got the most delightfully wicked eyes.

CURTAIN

(This play should be acted with the most perfect seriousness and polish. It should not be played in a spirit of burlesque. It should be beautifully acted, beautifully costumed and beautifully staged.)



LONESOME-LIKE

HAROLD BRIGHOUSE

THE author of "Lonesome-Like" was born in Lancashire in 1882, and was educated at the Manchester Grammar School. Harold Brighouse has been closely identified with the "Manchester School" of drama, because some of his best known plays are concerned with the people of his native Lancashire and were first produced by Miss Horniman's Repertory Company at the Gaiety Theater in Manchester. That his work is too closely identified with this movement is regretted by Mr. B. Iden Payne in his preface to "Hobson's Choice", as it "tends to give the impression that all his plays have a local character. Actually the sixteen plays, long and short, which have already [1916] been performed cover a wide range in setting and subject, and out of this number only five have a Lancashire background, and only six have been played by Miss Horniman's company."

Mr. Brighouse's first characteristic dramatic venture was "The Doorway", "little more than a dialogue between two outcasts, a man and a woman, strangers to each other, who meet by chance in the shelter of a factory door and find mutual comfort in telling over their misfortunes and their past adventures as they huddle together in the biting cold of the small hours of a winter's morning."

The author is interested primarily in human character; in all his plays one remembers longest the people, not the situations. His best work is found in his comedies, "Hobson's Choice" and "Lonesome-Like" being without doubt his most characteristic pieces.

Brighouse's technical art is exercised to the end that human beings may be exhibited within an interesting framework, not that the framework may be an end in itself. Says Brighouse in his Preface to "Three Lancashire Plays": "It

is those plays which exhibit in high degree the use of action in the form of dialogue that are the more comfortable reading; and, always postulating that a play is a play . . . a thing practicable, actable and effective on the stage—the more physical action is subordinated to character, to the exploration of human nature, the better it is for reading purposes and the better for all purposes.”

PLAYS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| *The Doorway (1909) | The Northerners (1914) |
| *The Price of Coal (1909) | Hobson's Choice (1915) |
| Dealing in Futures (1909) | *Converts (1915) |
| Graft (1911) | The Road to Raebury(1915) |
| The Polygon (1911) | *Followers (1915) |
| *Lonesome-Like (1911) | The Hillarys (1915) |
| *The Oak Settle (1911) | (In collaboration with |
| *Spring in Bloomsbury(1911) | Stanley Houghton) |
| *The Scaring-Off of Teddy | Zack (1916) |
| Dawson (1911) | The Clock Goes Round |
| *Little Red Shoes (1912) | (1916) |
| The Odd Man Out (1912) | Maid of France (1917) |
| The Game (1913) | Other Times (1920) |
| Garside's Career (1914) | |

“The Doorway”, “Dealing in Futures”, “Graft”, “The Oak Settle”, “The Scaring-Off of Teddy Dawson”, and “The Odd Man Out” are published separately by Samuel French, New York; “The Game”, “The Northerners”, and “Zack”, in “Three Lancashire Plays”, by the same; “The Price of Coal”, “Lonesome-Like”, “Converts”, and “Maid of France”, by Gowans and Gray, London; “Garside's Career”, by A. C. McClurg and Company, Chicago; and “Hobson's Choice”, by Doubleday, Page and Company, Garden City, Long Island.

References: Introduction to “Hobson's Choice”, Doubleday, Page and Company, Garden City, Long Island.

Magazines: *Manchester Quarterly*, vol. 33, p. 213.

LONESOME-LIKE

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By HAROLD BRIGHOUSE

“Lonesome-Like” was first produced at Glasgow in 1911.

Characters

SARAH ORMEROD

EMMA BRIERLY

SAM HORROCKS

THE REV. FRANK ALLEYNE

The Scene is laid in a Lancashire village.

LONESOME-LIKE

THE SCENE represents the interior of a cottage in a Lancashire Village. Through the window at the back the grey row of cottages opposite is just visible. The outside door is next to the window. Door left. As regards furniture the room is very bare. The suggestion is not of an empty room, but a stripped room. For example, there are several square patches where the distemper of the walls is of a darker shade than the rest, indicating the places once occupied by pictures. There is an uncovered deal table and two chairs by it near the fireplace right. Attached to the left wall is a dresser and a plate rack above it containing a few pots. The dresser has also one or two utensils upon it. A blackened kettle rests on the top of the cooking range, but the room contains only the barest necessities. The floor is uncarpeted. There are no window curtains, but a yard of cheap muslin is fastened across the window, not coming, however, high enough to prevent a passer-by from looking in should he wish to do so. On the floor, near the fire, is a battered black tin trunk, the lid of which is raised. On a peg behind the door left is a black silk skirt and bodice and an old-fashioned beaded bonnet. The time is afternoon. As the curtain rises the room is empty. Immediately, however, the door left opens and Sarah Ormerod, an old woman, enters carrying clumsily in her arms a couple of pink flannelette night-dresses, folded neatly. Her black stuff dress is well worn, and her wedding-ring is her only ornament. She wears elastic-sided boots, and her rather short skirt shows a pair of grey worsted stockings. A small plaid shawl covers her shoulders. Sarah crosses and puts the night-dresses on the table, surveying the trunk ruefully. There is a knock at the outside door and she looks up.

SARAH. Who's theer?

EMMA (without). It's me, Mrs. Ormerod, Emma Brierly.

SARAH. Eh, coom in, Emma, lass.

[Enter Emma Brierly. She is a young weaver, and, having just left her work, she wears a dark skirt, a blouse of some indeterminate blue-grey shade made of cotton, and a large shawl over her head and shoulders in place of a jacket and hat. A coloured cotton apron covers her skirt below the waist, and the short skirt displays stout stockings similar to Sarah's. She wears clogs, and the clothes — except the shawl — are covered with ends of cotton and cotton-wool fluff. Even her hair has not escaped. A pair of scissors hangs by a cord from her waist.]

SARAH. Tha's kindly welcoom. It's good o' thee to think o' coomin' to see an ould woman like me.

EMMA (*by door*). Nought o' th' sort, Mrs. Ormerod. Th' mill's just loosed and A thowt A'd step in as A were passin' and see 'ow tha was feeling like.

SARAH (*crossing to box*). Oh, nicely, nicely, thankee. It's only my 'ands as is gone paralytic, tha knaws, an' a weaver's no manner o' good to nobody without th' use o' 'er 'ands. A'm all reeght in masel'. That's worst of it.

EMMA. Well, while A'm 'ere, Mrs. Ormerod, is theer nought as A can do for thee?

SARAH. A dunno as theer is, thankee, Emma.

EMMA (*taking her shawl off, looking round and hanging it on a peg in the door*). Well, A knaws better. What wert doin' when A coom in? Packin' yon box?

SARAH. Aye. Tha sees theer's a two three things as A canna bear thowt o' parting from. A don't reeghtly knaw if they'll let me tak' 'em into workus wi' me, but A canna have 'em sold wi' rest of stuff.

EMMA (*crosses below Sarah to box, and kneels*). Let me help yo.

SARAH. Tha's a good lass, Emma. A'd tak' it kindly of thee.

EMMA. They'd do wi' packin' a bit closer. A dunno as they'd carry safe that road.

SARAH. A know. It's my 'ands tha sees, as mak's it difficult for me.

[Sits on chair left centre.]

EMMA. Aye. A'll soon settle 'em a bit tighter.

[Lifts all out. Burying her arms in the box and rearranging its contents.]

SARAH. But what's 'appened to thy looms, lass? They'll not weave by 'emselves while thee's 'ere, tha knows.

EMMA (*looking round*). Eh, looms is all reeght. Factory's stopped. It's Saturday afternoon.

SARAH. So 'tis. A'd clean forgot. A do forget time o' th' week sittin' 'ere day arter day wi' nought to do.

EMMA. So that's all reeght. Tha's no need to worry about me. Tha's got trouble enough of thy own.

[Resuming at the box.]

SARAH. Aye, th'art reeght theer, lass. Theer's none on us likes to think o' going to workus when we're ould.

EMMA. 'Appen it'll be all reeght after all. Parson's coomin' to see thee.

SARAH. Aye, A knaw 'e is. A dunno, but A'm in 'opes 'e'll do summat for me. Tha can't never tell what them folks can do.

EMMA (*kneeling up*). Tha keep thy pecker oop, Mrs. Ormerod. That's what my mooter says to me when A tould 'er A were coomin' in to thee. Keep 'er pecker oop, she says. It's not as if she'd been lazy or a wastrel, she says; Sal Ormerod's bin a 'ard worker in 'er day, she says. It's not as if it were thy fault. Tha can't 'elp tha 'ands going paralytic.

[She continues rummaging in the trunk while speaking.]

SARAH. Naw. It's not my fault. God knaws A'm game enough for work, ould as A am. A allays knawed as A'd 'ave to work for my living all th' days o' my life. A never was a savin' sort.

EMMA. Theer's nowt against thee for that. Theer's some as can be careful o' theer brass an' some as can't. It's not a virtue, it's a gift. That's what my mooter allays says.

[Resumes packing.]

SARAH. She's reeght an' all. We never 'ad the gift o' savin', my man and me. An' when Tom Ormerod took

an' died, the club money as A drew all went on 'is funeral an' is gravestone. A warn't goin' to 'ave it said as 'e warn't buried proper.

EMMA. It were a beautiful funeral, Mrs. Ormerod.

SARAH. Aye.

EMMA. A will say that, beautiful it were. A never seen a better, an' A goes to all as A can. (*Rises*) A dotes on buryin's. Are these the next?

[*Crosses centre before table for night-dresses. Takes the night-dresses, and resumes packing.*]

SARAH. Aye. (*Emma puts them in and rests on her knees listening to Sarah's next speech. Pause*) A've been a 'ouseproud woman all my life, Emma, an' A've took pride in 'aving my bits o' sticks as good as another's. Even th' manager's missus oop to factory 'ouse theer, she never 'ad a better show o' furniture nor me, though A says it as shouldn't. An' it tak's brass to keep a decent 'ouse over your yead. An' we allays 'ad our full week's 'ollydain' at Blackpool reglar at Wakes time. Us didn't 'ave no childer o' our own to spend it on, an' us spent it on ourselves. A allays 'ad a plenty o' good food in th' 'ouse an' never stinted nobody, an' Tom 'e liked 'is beer an' 'is baccy. 'E were a pigeon-fancier too in 'is day, were my Tom, an' pigeon-fancying runs away wi' a mint o' money. No. Soom'ow theer never was no brass to put in th' bank. We was allays spent oop coom wages neeght.

EMMA. A know, Mrs. Ormerod. May be A'm young, but A know 'ow 'tis. We works cruel 'ard in th' mill, an', when us plays, us plays as 'ard too (*pause*), an' small blame to us either. It's our *own* we're spendin'.

SARAH. Aye. It's a 'ard life, the factory 'and's. A can mind me many an' many's the time when th' warnin' bell went on th' factory lodge at ha'f past five of a winter's mornin' as A've craved for another ha'f hour in my bed, but Tom 'e got me oop an' we was never after six passin'

through factory gates all th' years we were wed. There's not many as can say they were never late. "Work or Clem," that were what Tom allays tould me th' ould bell were sayin'. An' 'e were reeght, Emma, "Work or Clem" is God's truth. (*Emma's head in box*) An' now th' time's coom when A can't work no more. But Parson's a good man, 'e'll mak' it all reeght. (*Emma's head appears*) Eh, it were good o' thee to coom in, lass. A bit o' coompany do mak' a world o' difference. A'm twice as cheerful as A were.

EMMA. A'm glad to 'ear tha say so, Mrs. Ormerod. (*Rises from the box*) Is theer owt else?

SARAH. A were thinking A'd like to tak' my black silk as A've worn o' Sundays this many a year, but A canna think its reeght thing for workus.

EMMA. Oh, thee tak' it, Mrs. Ormerod.

SARAH. A'd dearly love to. Tha sees A'm noan in debt, nobbut what chairs an table 'ull pay for, and A doan't like thowt o' leaving owt as A'm greatly fond of.

EMMA. Yo doan't, Mrs. Ormerod. Thee tak' it. Wheer is it? A'll put un in. Their's lots o' room on top. A'll see un's noan crushed.

SARAH. It's hanging theer behind door. (*Emma crosses back to door, gets clothes*) A got un out to show Parson. A thowt A'd ask un if it were proper to tak' it if A've to go. My best bonnet's with it, an' all.

[*Emma goes below table, takes the frock and bonnet, folds it on the table and packs it.*]

EMMA. A'll put un in.

SARAH. A'm being a lot o' trouble to thee, lass.

EMMA. That's nowt, neighbours mun be neighbourly.

[*Gets bonnet from table and packs it.*]

SARAH (*pause. Looking round*). Place doan't look much, an' that's a fact. Th' furniture's bin goin' bit by bit, and their ain't much left to part wi' now.

EMMA. Never mind, it 'ull be all reeght now Parson's taken thee oop.

SARAH. A'm hopin' so. A *am* hopin' so. A never could abide th' thowt o' th' workus — me as 'as bin an 'ard workin' woman. A couldn't fancy sleepin' in a strange bed wi' strange folk round me, an' when th' Matron said "Do that" A'd 'ave to do it, an' when she said "Go theer" A'd 'ave to a' gone wheer she tould me — me as 'as allays 'eld my yead 'igh an' gone the way A pleased masel'. Eh, it's a terrible thowt, the workus.

EMMA (*rising*). Now tha's sure that's all?

SARAH (*pause. Considers*). Eh, if A havna forgot my neeghtcaps. (*Rises, moves centre and stops*) A suppose they'll let me wear un in yonder. A doan't reeghtly think as A'd get my rest proper wi'out my neeghtcaps.

EMMA. Oh, they'll let thee wear un all reeght.

SARAH (*as she goes*). A'll go an' get un. (*Exit right. Returning presently with the white nightcaps*) That's all now. [*Giving them to Emma, who meets her center.*]

EMMA (*putting them in*). Yo never 'ad no childer, did yo, Mrs. Ormerod?

SARAH. No, Emma, no—may be that's as broad as 's long. (*Sits above fire*) Yo never knaw 'ow they go. Soom on 'em turn again yo when they're growed or they get wed themselves an' forget all as yo've done for 'em, like a many A could name, and they're allays a worrit to yo when they're young.

EMMA. A'm gettin' wed masel' soon, Mrs. Ormerod.

SARAH. Are yo, now, Emma? Well, tha art not one o' them graceless good-for-nowts. Tha'll never forget thy moother, A knaw, nor what she's done for thee. Who's tha keepin' coompany with?

EMMA. It's Joe Hindle as goes wi' me, Mrs. Ormerod.

SARAH. 'Indle, 'Indle? What, not son to Robert 'Indle, 'im as used to be overlooker in th' factory till 'e went to foreign parts to learn them Roossians 'ow to weave?

EMMA. Aye, that's 'im.

SARAH. Well, A dunno ought about th' lad. 'Is faither were a fine man. A minds 'im well. But A'll tell thee this,

Emma, an' A'll tell it thee to thy faice, 'e's doin' well for 'isself is young Joe 'Indle.

EMMA. Thankee, Mrs. Ormerod.

SARAH. Gettin' wed! Think o' that. Why, it seems as t'were only t'other day as tha was running about in short frocks, an' now tha's growed up and gettin' thasel' wed! Time do run on. Sithee, Emma, tha's a good lass. A've gotten an ould tea-pot in yonder (*indicating her bedroom*) as my mooter give me when A was wed. A weren't for packing it in box because o' risk o' breaking it. A were going to carry it in my 'and. A'd a mind to keep it till A died, but A reckon A'll 'ave no use for it in workus.

EMMA. Tha's not gone theer yet.

SARAH. Never mind that. (*Slowly rises*) A'm going to give it thee, lass, for a weddin'-gift. Tha'll tak' care of it, A knaw, and when thy eye catches it, 'appen tha'll spare me a thowt.

EMMA. Oh no, Mrs. Ormerod, A couldn't think o' takkin' it.

SARAH. Art too proud to tak' a gift from me?

EMMA. No. Tha knaws A'm not.

SARAH. Then hold thy hush. A'll be back in a minute. Happen A'd best tidy masel' up too against Parson cooms.

EMMA. Can A help thee, Mrs. Ormerod?

SARAH. No, lass, no. A can do a bit for masel'. My 'ands isn't that bad. A canna weave wi' 'em, but A can do all as A need to.

EMMA. Well, A'll do box up.

[Crosses to table right and gets cord.]

SARAH. Aye.

EMMA. All reeght.

(Exit Sarah. A man's face appears outside at the window. He surveys the room, and then the face vanishes as he knocks at the door) Who's theer?

SAM (*without*). It's me, Sam Horrocks. (*Emma crosses left and opens door*) May A coom in?

EMMA. What dost want?

SAM (*on the doorstep*). A want a word wi' thee, Emma Brierly. A followed thee oop from factory and A've bin waitin' out thee till A'm tired o' waitin'.

EMMA. Well, tha'd better coom in. A 'aven't time to talk wi' thee at door.

[*Emma lets him in, closes door, and, leaving him standing in the middle of the room, resumes work on her knees at the box. Sam Horrocks is a hulking young man of a rather vacant expression. He is dressed in mechanic's blue dungarees. His face is oily and his clothes stained. He wears boots, not clogs. He mechanically takes a ball of oily black cotton-waste from his right pocket when in conversational difficulties and wipes his hands upon it. He has a red muffler round his neck without collar, and his shock of fair hair is surmounted by a greasy black cap, which covers perhaps one-tenth of it.*]

SAM (*after watching Emma's back for a moment*). Wheer's Mrs. Ormerod?

EMMA (*without looking up*). What's that to do wi' thee?

SAM (*apologetically*). A were only askin'. Tha needn't be short wi' a chap.

EMMA. She's in scullery washin' 'er if tha wants to knaw.

SAM. Oh!

EMMA (*looking at him over her shoulder after a slight pause*).

Doan't tha tak' thy cap off in 'ouse, Sam Horrocks?

SAM. Naw.

EMMA. Well, tha can tak' it off in this 'ouse or get t' other side o' door.

SAM (*takes off his cap and stuffs it in his left pocket after trying his right and finding the ball of waste in it*). Yes, Emma.

[*Emma resumes work with her back towards him and waits for him to speak. But he is not ready yet.*]

EMMA. Well, what dost want?

SAM. Nought. . . . Eh, but thou art a gradely wench.

EMMA. What's that to do wi' thee?

SAM. Nought.

EMMA. Then just tha mind thy own business, an' doan't pass compliments behind folks' backs.

SAM. A didn't mean no 'arm.

EMMA. Well?

SAM. It's a fine day, isn't it? For th' time o' th' year?

EMMA. Aye.

SAM. A very fine day.

EMMA. Aye.

SAM (*desperate*). It's a damned fine day.

EMMA. Aye.

SAM (*after a moment*). Dost know my 'ouse, Emma?

EMMA. Aye.

SAM. Wert ever in it?

EMMA. Not sin' tha moother died.

SAM. Naw. A suppose not. Not sin' ma moother died.

She were a fine woman, ma moother, for all she were bed-ridden.

EMMA. She were better than 'er son, though that's not saying much neither.

SAM. Naw, but tha does mind ma 'ouse, Emma, as it were when she were alive?

EMMA. Aye.

SAM. A've done a bit at it sin' them days. Got a new quilt on bed from Co-op. Red un it is wi' blue stripes down 'er.

EMMA. Aye.

SAM. Well, Emma?

EMMA (*over her shoulder*). Well, what? What's thy 'ouse an' thy quilt to do wi' me?

SAM. Oh nought. . . . Tha doesn't 'elp a feller much, neither.

EMMA (*rising and facing him. Sam is behind corner table and backs a little before her*). What's tha gettin' at, Sam Horrocks? Tha's got a tongue in thy faice, hasn't tha?

SAM. A suppose so. A doan't use it much though.

EMMA. No. Tha's not much better than a tongue-tied idiot, Sam Horrocks, allays mooning about in th' engine-house in day-time an' sulkin' at 'ome neeght-time.

SAM. Aye, A'm lonely sin' ma moother died. She did 'ave a way wi' 'er, ma moother. Th' 'ould plaice 'as not bin

t' same to me sin' she went. Day-time, tha knaws, A'm all reeght. Tha sees, them engines, them an' me's pals. They talks to me an' A understands their ways. A doan't some'ow seem to understand the ways o' folks like as A does th' ways o' them engines.

EMMA. Tha doesn't try. T'other lads goes rattin' or dog-feeghtin' on a Sunday or to a football match of a Saturday afternoon. Tha stays moonin' about th' 'ouse. Tha's not likely to understand folks. Tha's not sociable.

SAM. Naw. That's reeght enough. A nobbut get laughed at when A tries to be sociable an' stand my corner down at th' pub wi' th' rest o' th' lads. It's no use ma tryin' to soop ale, A can't carry th' drink like t'others. A knaws A've ways o' ma own.

EMMA. Tha has that.

SAM. A'm terrible lonesome, Emma. That theer 'ouse o' mine, it do want a wench about th' plaice. Th' engines is all reeght for days, but th' neeghts is that lonesome-like tha wouldn't believe.

EMMA. Tha's only thasel' to blame. It's nought to do wi' me, choosehow.

SAM. Naw? A'd . . . A'd 'oped as 'ow it might 'ave, Emma.

EMMA (*approaching threateningly*). Sam Horrocks, if tha doan't tell me proper what tha means A'll give tha such a slap in th' mouth.

SAM (*backing before her*). Tha does fluster a feller, Emma. Just like ma moother.

EMMA. A wish A 'ad bin. A'd 'ave knocked some sense into thy silly yead.

SAM (*suddenly and clumsily kneels above chair left of table*). Wilt tha 'ave me, Emma? A mak' good money in th' engine-house.

EMMA. Get oop, tha great fool. If tha didn't keep thasel' so close wi' tha moonin' about in th' engine-'ouse an' never speakin' a word to nobody tha'd knaw A were keepin' company wi' Joe Hindle.

SAM (*scrambling up*). Is that a fact, Emma?

EMMA. Of course it's a fact. Bann's 'ull be oop come Sunday fortneeght. We've not 'idden it neither. It's just like the great blind idiot that tha art not to 'a' seen it long enough sin'.

SAM. A weren't aware. By gum, A 'ad so 'oped as tha'd 'ave me, Emma.

EMMA (*a little more softly*). A'm sorry if A've 'urt thee, Sam.

SAM. Aye. It were ma fault. Eh, well, A think mebbe A'd best be goin'.

EMMA (*lifts box to left*). Aye. Parson's coomin' to see Mrs. Ormerod in a minute.

SAM (*with pride*). A know all about that, anyhow.

EMMA. She'm in a bad way. A dunno mase' as Parson can do much for 'er.

SAM. It's 'ard lines on an ould un. Well, yo'll not want me 'ere. A'll be movin' on. (*Getting his cap out*) No offence, Emma, A 'ope. A'd 'ave asked thee first if A'd knawn as 'e were after thee. A've bin tryin' for long enough.

EMMA. No. Theer's no offence, Sam. Tha's a good lad if tha art a fool, an' mebbe tha's no to blame for that. Good-bye.

SAM. Good-bye, Emma. An' . . . An' A 'ope 'e'll mak' thee 'appy. A'd dearly like to coom to th' weddin' an' shake 'is 'and.

[*Mrs. Ormerod heard off right.*]

EMMA. A'll see tha's asked. Theer's Mrs. Ormerod stirrin'. Tha'd best be gettin'.

SAM. All reeght. Good-bye, Emma.

EMMA. Good-bye, Sam.

[*Exit Sam left center. Mrs. Ormerod comes from the inside door. She has a small blue tea-pot in her hand.*]

SARAH. Was anybody 'ere, Emma? A thowt A yeard someun talkin', only my yearin' isn't what it used to be, an' A warn't sure.

EMMA. It were Sam Horrocks, Mrs. Ormerod.

SARAH. Yon lad of ould Sal Horrocks as died last year? 'Im as isn't reeght in 'is yead?

EMMA. Aye. 'E's bin askin' me to wed 'im.

SARAH (*incensed*). In my 'ouse? Theer's imperence for thee, an' tha promised to another lad, an' all. A'd 'ave set about 'im wi' a stick, Emma.

EMMA. 'E didn't knaw about Joe. It made me feel cruel like to 'ave to tell 'im.

SARAH. 'E'll get ower it. Soom lass'll tak' 'im.

EMMA. A suppose so.

SARAH (*coming down, putting the tea-pot in Emma's hands*). Well, theer's tea-pot.

EMMA (*meets Sarah right center, examining tea-pot*). It's beautiful. Beautiful, it is, Mrs. Ormerod.

SARAH. Aye, it's a bit o' real china is that. Tha'll tak' care on't, lass, won't thee?

EMMA. A will an' all.

SARAH. Aye. A knaw it's safe wi' thee. Mebbe safer than it would be in workus. A can't think well on yon plaice. A goa cold all ower at thowt of it.

[*A knock at the door.*]

EMMA. That'll be Parson.

SARAH (*crosses left. Smoothing her hair*). Goa an' look through window first, an' see who 'tis.

EMMA (*puts tea-pot on table. Looking through window*). It's not th' ould Parson. It's one o' them young curate chaps.

SARAH. Well, coom away from window an' sit thee down. It won't do to seem too eager. Let un knock again if it's not th' ould Parson.

(*Emma leaves the window and goes to right of table. The knock is repeated. Raising her voice*) Coom in so who tha art. Door's on latch.

[*Enter the Rev. Frank Alleyne. He is a young curate, a Londoner and an Oxford man, by association, training, and taste, totally unfitted for a Lancashire curacy, in which he is unfortunately no exception.*]

ALLEYNE. Good afternoon, Mrs. Ormerod.

SARAH. Good day to thee.

ALLEYNE. I'm sorry to say Mr. Blundell has had to go to a missionary meeting, but he asked me to come and see you in his stead.

SARAH. Tha's welcoom, lad. Sit thee down.

[Emma comes below table left. Dusts a chair left of table, which doesn't need it, with her apron. Alleyne raises a deprecatory hand. Sarah's familiarity, as it seems to him, offends him. He looks sourly at Emma and markedly ignores her.]

ALLEYNE. Thank you; no, I won't sit, I cannot stay long.

SARAH. Just as tha likes. It's all same to me.

[Emma stays by right of table.]

ALLEYNE. How is it with you, Mrs. Ormerod?

SARAH. It might be worse. A've lost th' use o' my 'ands, and they're takkin' me to workus, but A'm not dead yet, and that's summat to be thankful for.

ALLEYNE. Oh yes, yes, Mrs. Ormerod. The — er — message I am to deliver is, I fear, not quite what Mr. Blundell led you to hope for. His efforts on your behalf have — er — unfortunately failed. He finds himself obliged to give up all hope of aiding you to a livelihood. In fact — er — I understand that the arrangements made for your removal to the workhouse this afternoon must be carried out. It seems there is no alternative. I am grieved to be the bearer of bad tidings, but I am sure you will find a comfortable home awaiting you, Mrs. — er — Ormerod.

SARAH. 'Appen A shall an' 'appen A shan't. Theer's no tellin' 'ow you'll favour a thing till you've tried it.

ALLEYNE. You must resign yourself to the will of providence. The consolations of religion are always with us. Shall I pray with you?

SARAH. A never were much at prayin' when A were well off, an' A doubt the Lord ud tak' it kind o' selfish o' me if A coom cryin' to 'im now A'm 'urt.

ALLEYNE. He will understand. Can I do nothing for you?

SARAH. A dunno as tha can, thankin' thee all same.

ALLEYNE. I am privileged with Mr. Blundell's permission to bring a little gift to you, Mrs. Ormerod. (*Feeling in his coat-tails and bringing out a Testament*) Allow me to present you with this Testament, and may it help you to bear your Cross with resignation. (*He hands her the Testament. Sarah does not raise her hands, and it drops on her lap. Alleyne takes it again and puts it on the table*) Ah, yes, of course . . . your poor hands . . . I understand.

SARAH. Thankee kindly. Readin' don't coom easy to me, an' my eyes aren't what they were, but A'll mak' most of it.

ALLEYNE. You will never read that in vain. And now, dear sister, I must go. I will pray for strength for you. All will be well. Good day.

SARAH. Good day to thee.

[*Exit Alleyne.*]

EMMA. Tha doesn't look so pleased wi' tha gift, Mrs. Ormerod.

SARAH. It's not square thing of th' ould Parson, Emma. 'E should a coom an' tould me 'isself. Looks like 'e were feart to do it. A never could abide them curate lads. We doan't want no grand Lunnon gentlemen down 'ere. 'E doan't understand us no more than we understand 'im. 'E means all reeght, poor lad. Sithee, Emma, A've bin a Church-goin' woman all my days. A was browt oop to Church, an' many's th' bit o' brass they've 'ad out o' me in my time. An' in th' end they send me a fine curate with a tupenny Testament. That's all th' good yo get out o' they folks.

EMMA. We'm chapel to our 'ouse, an' 'e didn't forget to let me see 'e knaw'd it, but A doan't say as it's only different wi' chapels, neither. They get what they can outer yo, but yo musn't look for nothin' back, when th' pinch cooms. (*Clock outside strikes three*) Sakes alive, their's clock goin' three. My dinner 'ull be nice an' cold.

SARAH. Eh, what's that, lass? Dost mean to tell me tha's bin clemmin' all this time?

EMMA. A coom 'ere straight from factory.

SARAH. Then tha doesn't move till tha's 'ad summat to eat.

EMMA. My dinner's ready for me at whoam, Mrs. Ormerod.

SARAH. Then just look sharp an' get it, tha silly lass. Tha's no reeght to go wi'out thy baggin'.

EMMA (*putting her shawl on*). All reeght. A'm off.

[*Picking up tea-pot.*]

SARAH. Tha's bin a world o' coomfort to me, Emma. It'll be 'arder to bear when tha's gone. Th' thowt's too much for me. Eh, lass, A'm feart o' yon great gaunt building wi' th' drear windows.

EMMA. 'Appen ma moother 'ull coom in. Tha'll do wi' a bit o' coompany. A'll ask her to coom an' fetch thee a coop o' tea by an' bye.

[*A knock at the door.*]

SARAH. Who's theer?

SAM (*without*). It's only me, Mrs. Ormerod.

EMMA. A do declare it's that Sam Horrocks again.

SARAH. Sam Horrocks! What can th' lad be after now?

(*Calling*) Hast tha wiped thy boots on scraper?

SAM. Yes, Mrs. Ormerod.

SARAH. Coom in then. (*Emma in left corner. Enter Sam*)

Tak' thy cap off.

SAM. Yes, Mrs. Ormerod.

SARAH. What dost want?

SAM. A've soom business 'ere. A thowt A'd find thee by thysel'. A'll coom again.

[*Bolting nervously for the door.*]

SARAH. Let that door be. Dost say tha's got business 'ere?

SAM. Aye, wi' thee. A'd like a word wi' thee private.

[*Emma moves to open door.*]

SARAH. All reeght. Emma's just goin' to 'er dinner.

EMMA (*speaking through door*). A'll ask my moother to step in later on, Mrs. Ormerod, and thank thee very much for th' tea-pot.

SARAH. A'll be thankful if she'll coom. (*Exit Emma with tea-pot*) Now, Sam Horrocks, what's the matter wi' thee?

SAM (*dropping the cotton waste he is fumbling with and picking it up*). It's a fine day for th' time o' th' year.

SARAH. Didst want to see me private to tell me that, lad?

SAM. Naw, not exactly.

SARAH. Well, what is it then? Coom, lad, A'm waitin' on thee. Art tongue-tied? Can't tha quit mawlin' yon bit o' waste an' tell me what 'tis tha wants?

SAM (*desperately*). Mebbe it'll not be so fine in th' mornin'.

SARAH. A'll tell thee what A'd do to thee if A 'ad the use o' my 'ands, my lad. A'd coom aside thee and A'd box thy ears. If tha's got business wi' me, tha'd best state it sharp or A'll be showin' thee the shape o' my door.

SAM. Tha do fluster a feller so as A doan't know wheer A am. A've not been nagged like that theer sin' my ould moother died.

SARAH. A've 'eered folk say Sal Horrocks were a slick un wi' 'er tongue.

SAM (*admiringly*). She were that. Rare talker she were. She'd lie theer in 'er bed all day as it might be in yon corner, an' call me all th' names she could put her tongue to, till A couldn't tell ma reeght 'and from ma left. (*Still reminiscent*) Wunnerful sperrit, she 'ad, considerin' she were bed-ridden so long. She were only a little un an' cripple an' all, but by gum she could sling it at a feller if 'er tea weren't brewed to 'er taste. Talk! She'd talk a donkey's yead off, she would.

SARAH (*on her mettle*). An' A'll talk thy silly yead off an' all if tha doan't get sharp to tellin' me what tha wants after in my 'ouse, tha great mazed idiot.

SAM. Eh, but she were a rare un.

SARAH. The lad's daft aboot his moother.

SAM (*detachedly, looking at window. Pause*). Wunnerful breetht the sky is, to-day.

SARAH. Tha great 'ulkin' fool. A'd tak' a broomstick to thee if—if A'd the use o' my 'ands.

SAM. Now, if that isn't just what ma moother used to say.

SARAH. Dang thy moother. An' I doan't mean no disrespect

to 'er neither. She's bin in 'er grave this year an' more, poor woman.

SAM. A canna 'elp thinkin' to 'er all same. Eh, but she were wunnerful.

SARAH. An' A'd be wunnerful too. A'd talk to thee. A'd call thee if A were thy moother an' A'd to live aside o' thee neeght an' day.

SAM (*eagerly*). Eh, by gum, but A wish tha would.

SARAH. Would what?

SAM. Would coom an' live along wi' me.

SARAH. Tha great fool, what dost mean? Art askin' me to wed thee?

SAM. A didn't mean to offend thee, Mrs. Ormerod. A'm sorry A spoke. A allays do wrong thing. But A did so 'ope as tha might coom. Tha sees A got used to moother. A got used to 'earin' 'er cuss me. A got used to doin' for 'er and' A've nought to do in th' evenings now. It's terrible lonesome in th' neeght-time. An' when notion coom to me, A thowt as A'd mention un to thee casual.

SARAH. Dost mean it, Sam Horrocks? Dost tha know what tha's sayin', or is tha foolin' me?

SAM. O' course A mean it. Tha sees A'm not a marryin' sort. Th' lasses won't look at me. A'm silly Sam to them, A knaws it. A've a slate loose, A shan't never get wed. A thowt A'd mebbe a chance wi' yon lass as were 'ere wi' thee, but hoo towld me A were too late. A allays were slow. A left askin' too long an' A've missed 'er. A gets good money, Mrs. Ormerod, but A canna talk to a young wench. They maks me go 'ot and cowld all over. An' when curate towld me as tha was to go to workus, A thowt A'd a chance wi' thee. A know'd it weren't a big chance, because my plaice ain't much cop after what tha's bin used to 'ere. A've got no fine fixin's nor big chairs an' things as tha used to 'ave. Eh, but A would 'ave loved to do for thee as A used to do for ma moother, an' when A yeerd thee talkin' now an' callin' me a fool an' th' rest, by gum, A just yearned to 'ave thee for allays. Tha'd

fill 'er plaice wunnerful well. A'd just a' loved to adopt thee.

SARAH. To adopt me?

SAM. Ay, for a moother. A'm sorry tha can't see thy way to let me. A didn't mean no offence.

[Turning to the door.]

SARAH. 'Ere lad, tha tell me this. If A'd said tha might tak' me for thy moother, what wouldst ha' done?

SAM. Why kissed thee, an' takken thee oop in ma arms whoam to thy bed. It's standin' ready in yonder wi' clean sheets an' all, an' a new quilt from Co-op. A 'opes you'll pardon th' liberty o' mentioning it.

SARAH. A new quilt, Sam? What's colour?

SAM. Red, wi' blue stripes down 'er.

SARAH. A'm not a light weight, tha knows.

SAM. A'd carry thee easy—"Strong in th' arm and weak in th' yead." It's an ould sayin', but it's a good un, an' it fits.

SARAH. Wilt tha try, Sam Horrocks? God bless thee, wilt tha try, lad?

SAM. Dost mean it, Mrs. Ormerod? Dost mean tha'll coom? Tha's not coddin' a feller, art tha?

SARAH. No, A'm not coddin'. Kiss me, Sam, my son.

[He kisses her and lifts her in his arms.]

SAM. By gum, but that were good. A'll coom back fur thy box.

SARAH. Carry me careful, tha great lunny. A'm not a sack o' flour.

SAM. Eh, but A likes to year thee talk. Yon was real mootherly, it were.

[Exit through door, carrying her.]

CURTAIN AT CLINK OF LATCH

MISS TASSEY

ELIZABETH BAKER

ELIZABETH BAKER is one of the younger English dramatists who deals in the everyday aspects of modern life. Her "Naturalism" — to use an overworked term — is of the unemphatic order; it has nothing in common with the Naturalism that is concerned with the "unpleasant" in and for itself. Miss Baker, who began life as a cashier and was for some time a professional stenographer and private secretary, has made use of her sympathetic and acute power of observation, and put into her plays that part of life which she best understands. Her first play, "Beastly Pride", was produced at the Croyden Repertory Theater in 1907. The reception of the work encouraged Miss Baker to attempt a full-length play. "Chains", her best-known work, was first produced by the Play Actors, and later at the Duke of York's Theater during Charles Frohman's Repertory season. It was unnecessarily adapted, and produced in New York City in 1913, where it promptly failed. William Archer said of "Chains", "There is absolutely no 'story' in it, no complication of incidents, not even any emotional tension worth speaking of. . . . A city clerk, oppressed by the deadly monotony and narrowness of his life, thinks of going to Australia—and doesn't go: that is the sum and substance of the action. Also, by way of underplot, a shopgirl, oppressed by the deadly monotony and narrowness of her life, thinks of escaping it by marrying a middle-aged widower — and doesn't do it."

A minute but sympathetic observation of everyday life is the basis of Elizabeth Baker's success as a dramatist. In "Miss Tassey", as in "Chains", the audience is offered the spectacle of human aspiration and human disillusion.

PLAYS

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| *Beastly Pride (1907) | The Price of Thomas Scott |
| Chains (1909) | (1913) |
| *Miss Tasse (1910) | Over a Garden Wall (1915) |
| *Cupid in Clapham (1910) | Miss Robinson (1920) |
| *Edith (1912) | |

“Chains” is published by John W. Luce and Company, Boston; “Miss Tasse”, “The Price of Thomas Scott”, and “Miss Robinson” by Sidgwick and Jackson, London.

References: William Archer, “Playmaking”, Small, Maynard and Company, Boston.

Magazines: *The Bookman*, vol. xxxvi, p. 640, and vol. xxxii, p. 136, New York.

MISS TASSEY

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By ELIZABETH BAKER

“Miss Tasse^y” was first produced at London in 1910.

Characters

MISS TASSEY	}	<i>Of Messrs. Trimmer</i>
MISS LIMERTON		
MISS ROSE CLIFTON		
MISS POSTLEWAITE		
SARAH		<i>Dormitory maid</i>

SCENE: Bedroom No. 65.
Between nine and ten o'clock.

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MISS TASSEY

A dormitory at Messrs. Trimmers'. Three beds only, of the ordinary hospital cot pattern: two side by side behind the door, the third with its foot towards them, the head being almost hidden in a recess. Floor covered with brown oilcloth. Three washhand-stands in a row on left. One dressing-table under window right. Another at corner left. A card of rules hangs on wall. Window is curtainless, with Venetian blinds half-drawn. Photographs are hanging over the two beds facing — photographs of young men. A gas-bracket with a frosted globe in wall left.

Someone is in the bed in the corner, apparently asleep. The Maid enters rather noisily and looks round. A voice speaks from the bed very faintly, but only just makes a sound.

MAID (*familiarly*). Did you speak, miss? (*Listens, but there is no reply. She goes to door. There is a faint sound again*) What is it, miss? Do you want anything? (*No answer. Impatiently she crosses over to the bed*) Did you speak?

MISS TASSEY (*faintly*). Open the window, please.

[Maid opens the window noisily, then goes out, banging the door carelessly. Miss Tassey sinks further into the bed-clothes. There is a long sigh, and the stage is silent for a minute or so. Suddenly the door is flung open, and Rose Clifton and Miss Postlewaite come in. Rose is a pretty girl with a quantity of fair, fluffy hair, and a habit of giggling. Miss Postlewaite is obviously older, showy, and rough-mannered. They are both in black shop dresses, and Rose carries a paper parcel. They are wearing heavily trimmed hats, and Miss Postlewaite unpins hers as she comes in.]

ROSE. Wasn't that man funny? (*Catching sight of the occupied bed and dropping her voice*) Oh, bother, Possie, she's in, after all.

- MISS POSTLEWAITE. So she is; another of her headaches. Got a headache, Tasse? (*No answer*) She's off, my dear. It's my belief she often has a headache purposely.
- ROSE. What do you mean?
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. She takes drugs, my dear. Her headache powders, indeed! (*Goes over to Miss Tasse and listens*) She's fair gone, like a nail.
- ROSE. You don't really think she takes them when she hasn't got a headache, do you? That's wicked.
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. Who says so? Let her sleep, poor old thing! I should take opium if I were her.
- ROSE. It is a nuisance for her to be in now. She said she was going out.
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. Oh, put your dress on and let's see it. She won't hear you. She won't hear anything till to-morrow morning.
- ROSE. You're sure she won't wake up?
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. What if she did? Who's she to say anything?
- ROSE. She's preachy.
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. She doesn't preach to you. I never heard her.
- ROSE. She looks it. She'd look it now if she saw me dressed up.
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. Don't think about her. Think of Percy over there. He's looking at you. You ought to be ashamed dressing up in front of a young man.
- ROSE (*giggling*). Possie, how can you! Wasn't that young man in the shop too awful? Did you see him making eyes?
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. Didn't I see *you*? You've got to take care, my girl, with those eyes of yours. I shall tell Percy about you.
- ROSE (*tossing her head as she opens her parcel and displays a pair of scarlet slippers*). I don't care. I say, Possie, do you think they'll find out to-morrow night?
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. No, why should they? Haven't I done it heaps of times? I'll ruffle your bed, but mind you get

back in good time. Try and come in as if you'd been for a walk in the gardens.

ROSE. I was so awfully frightened last time for fear I'd be caught.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Walk in offhand and say good-morning to Miss Mason if you meet her. (*Laughing noisily*) Talk about the weather. Oh, you don't know half how to manage it!

ROSE. It was the first time I'd slept out. I should get such a wiggling if they found out at home.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Well, if you're found out, serve you right. It's easy enough. It's worth a risk, anyway, ain't it?

ROSE. Rather. Think, Possie, this time to-morrow night. (*Stops suddenly, as there is a sigh from the corner bed*) Did you hear? She'd tell.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. What an infant you are! (*Goes over to bed*) It's nothing, I tell you. She's far away on blue mountains now. Besides, she wouldn't tell if she did know.

ROSE. I believe she would. She thinks I'm too young to go out with Percy like this. She told me so.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. What does she know about it? She never went out with a fellow in her life, I'll swear.

ROSE (*giggling*). Fancy Miss Tassey (*lowering her voice*) at a dance! Can't you see her? Oh my!

[*She goes to a drawer and is about to pick out a dress, when the door opens and the Maid comes in.*]

MISS POSTLEWAITE. I didn't hear you knock, Sarah.

SARAH. Well, miss, I did. Miss Clifton, you've been sleeping out without a permit.

ROSE (*taken completely back, stammering*). I—er—what do you mean?

SARAH. You slept out on Tuesday night without a permit.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Who's been telling tales like that to you?

SARAH. Never mind how I know. You did, Miss Clifton, didn't you?

ROSE. Sarah, don't be cross, and let me off this time.

SARAH. It's against the rules, miss, and that you know; and you'd better not start that sort of thing. I must report you.

ROSE. Miss Tassey told you.

SARAH. Never mind about that. You can't take me in in this house. I shall report to Mr. Frederick to-morrow morning.

[Goes.

MISS POSTLEWAITE (*laughing softly*). Never take her in in this house! Oh, my word!

ROSE. You didn't say anything for me, Possie.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. What could I say, you chicken? You gave it away with your baby face.

ROSE. What could I say, when she asked me out straight?

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Lots. You're only a young bird yet.

ROSE. But I couldn't have told a — a — could I, Possie?

MISS POSTLEWAITE. My dear, you'll never get much fun in life if you go on like that.

ROSE. But — a lie, Possie. Why, you wouldn't tell — one (*looks towards corner bed, whispering*) — you wouldn't yourself, would you? Something would happen to me if I did.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Then you're not going out with Percy to-morrow night?

ROSE. Oh, I must. Why shouldn't I?

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Are you going to ask Mr. Frederick for a permit when you go to him to-morrow?

ROSE. Oh, Possie, I'd forgotten that; and the dance doesn't begin till nearly ten, and I have to be back by eleven. What shall I do?

MISS POSTLEWAITE. You can't do anything except stay here.

ROSE. I won't stay here; I will go. It's all the fault of that (*lowering her voice*) Miss Tassey. She's a preachy old cat. Why doesn't she go into some other room? We don't want her here.

MISS POSTLEWAITE (*looking towards bed*). She's never split on me.

ROSE. No, she wouldn't on you. It's me she's afraid of. She says I'm young. It isn't her business if I am. I can take care of myself. I wish we hadn't got an old thing like her in our room.

MISS POSTLEWAITE (*laughing*). I don't suppose she finds it beer and skittles with us. She'd go pretty quick if she got a chance.

ROSE. How old is she?

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Oh, I don't know—something over forty. She's getting too old for counter-work.

ROSE. So I think. She hobbles about the shop, and she wears mittens. They call her "Mittens" in her shop.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. I know. She'll get the sack soon. Poor old thing!

ROSE. Do you think she will? I wish she'd go.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. They sacked three last week younger than her. (*Affecting jocularly*) I shall have to look out, or I shall go next.

ROSE (*thoughtlessly*). How old are you?

MISS POSTLEWAITE (*sharply*). Never you mind. So you're not going with Percy?

ROSE (*after a moment's sullen pause*). Yes, I shall. (*Defiantly*) I won't care for anybody. It's too bad, because of an old woman like that, to stop my fun. I will go. They couldn't have found out from the bed, could they? Why didn't old Tassey have a headache to-morrow night? That would have been useful then. (*Giggles*) It's just like her to have it at the wrong time. (*Takes out her dress from the drawer and shakes it out. It is a scarlet and white pierette's frock, very short and fluffy*) Isn't it sweet? [*Turning her head to look at the corner bed, and then standing so as to hide the frock from it.*]

MISS POSTLEWAITE. And short. Mind you wear plenty of petticoats.

ROSE. Possie!

MISS POSTLEWAITE. You'll want them in the lancers.

ROSE. Possie! (*taking out scarlet gloves and white hat with scarlet pompoms*) Look! Everything to match. I do love them.

MISS POSTLEWAITE (*picking up shoes*). And the shoes—where are the stockings?

ROSE (*shaking out a pair of scarlet and white stripe stockings with scarlet bows at top*). Here!

MISS POSTLEWAITE. My word! are you going to kick as high as that?

ROSE. How awful you are! Of course not; but it's the thing to wear with it.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. It's regal. What did you want me to do with it?

ROSE. It's rather big here. (*Touching her waist*) Just take it in for me a little, will you?

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Better put it on, then, and let me see.

ROSE. All right. (*Turns back to her bed and glances at corner*) Suppose she should wake!

MISS POSTLEWAITE (*easily*). She won't, silly. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll hang my mask from the bracket and swing it over a chair in front of her. Then, if she wakes, we'll tell her we were afraid for the light on her eyes. [*Laughs.*]

ROSE. Yes, do. A horrid old thing she is, to go and give me away!

[*Miss Postlewaite hangs a dark cloak over the gas-bracket and over a chair, so that it screens the corner bed. Meantime Rose has slipped off her black dress, and is seen in petticoat and bodice. She has been at back of stage near her bed. Miss Postlewaite comes over to her with the dress, which she slips on and walks over to the mirror on left.*]

ROSE. Can't see. (*Crosses to right, then suddenly stops. Gives a little scream*) Possie!

MISS POSTLEWAITE. What's up?

ROSE (*pointing to black-draped corner*). That! It's—it's horrid—so—she is so quiet. I—

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Rubbish. (*Looking curiously*) It's

something like a bed in a hospital, when there's going to be an operation, isn't it?

ROSE. You're sure — she's asleep?

MISS POSTLEWAITE (*impatiently*). Of course. Come, let me do you up.

[*Stands behind her while she fastens her dress. Rose gives little involuntary glances at the corner.*]

ROSE. She sleeps awfully quiet, doesn't she?

MISS POSTLEWAITE (*laughing gently*). What do you want her to do? Snore?

ROSE (*refusing to smile*). It's the — powders, isn't it? (*Wailing*) I do wish she wasn't in our room!

MISS POSTLEWAITE. What a baby you are! Come over here and put on the hat. (*They cross the room, and Rose appears to forget. She puts the hat on at a saucy angle*) Wait till Percy sees you in that! Only don't let him crush it.

ROSE (*embarrassed*). Possie, how you talk!

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Well, he might want to. Turn up your petticoat.

ROSE (*intently regarding herself in looking-glass*). It does suit me, doesn't it? Where are the stockings?

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Here.

[*Rose sits sideways to stage front, but back to the draped corner, while Miss Postlewaite kneels and puts on the stockings.*]

ROSE. Do you think old Tassey ever went to a fancy-dress dance?

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Shouldn't wonder.

ROSE. It doesn't seem as if she could. Do you think she ever had a ——

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Percy? Perhaps — most likely.

ROSE. She doesn't look like it.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Neither will you when you're forty-five.

ROSE. Forty-five — oh, what an age!

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Just you make hay while the sun shines.

ROSE (*coquettishly*). I don't want to be married yet.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. My advice is, take him while you can get him.

ROSE. Percy isn't the only one.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. There are plenty of 'em, but they don't always ask you. Plenty of flirts in the world, and don't you forget it. You be M^r. Percy, Rosey, when you can.

ROSE (*confused*). Oh, I don't know! (*There is a minute of silence while Miss Postlewaite looks at her.*)
Rose tries to look behind her.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. That seems to worry you. Shall we go to the sitting-room?

ROSE. I wonder why old Tassej never married?

MISS POSTLEWAITE. As I've been saying to you, not to do—probably missed her chance.

ROSE (*shivering*). Isn't this dress low?

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Not too low for Percy.

ROSE. Possie! You're too awful for anything. The window open.

MISS POSTLEWAITE (*rising*). I'll shut it.

ROSE (*shouting*). No, don't—don't make a noise. You might wake her.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Nonsense.

[*Climbs up and shuts the window with a bang. Rose stands staring at the draped corner and as Miss Postlewaite steps down there is a distinct pause.*]

ROSE (*in a whisper*). You shouldn't.

MISS POSTLEWAITE (*also in a whisper*). Don't be a little fool. (*Aloud*) What on earth is wrong with you?

ROSE. Look and see—if she's awake.

MISS POSTLEWAITE (*stepping forward, but pausing*). I'm not going to do anything of the kind. Sarah has upset you, Rosey, and no mistake. Come over here. (*She drags Rose over to left, and examines the fastening. Pulling the dress*) Can you bear it as tight as that?

ROSE (*panting*). Oh—no!

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Nothing as tight as Percy will squeeze you. How's that?

ROSE. That's better.

MISS POSTLEWAITE (*meditating*). I must take it in three-

quarters of an inch there, and graduate it down. That will be all right.

ROSE (*hesitating*). What kind of powders does old Tassey use?

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Gain! (*Still at the dress fastenings behind her while she fastens her powders? Oh, I forget. Some involuntary glances at the window like that.*)

ROSE. They must be very strong.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. If you once take those things, you've got to keep on doing it. They lose their power in no time.

ROSE. I should have thought she would have started when you banged the window.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. I didn't bang it. I shut it in the ordinary way. If you're as nervy as this to-morrow, you'll frighten Percy off. Then there's another bit time gone.

ROSE (*suddenly turning and taking Miss Postlewaite by the hand*). You don't think, do you, that Tassey (*whispering to you*) is just listening to us and then —

MISS POSTLEWAITE. What an idea! If you don't stand still, how can I fit the thing properly? Do keep quiet. Why on earth should she listen? What is there to hide?

ROSE. About my sleeping out — I never thought of it before. That's what she's doing. Go and shake her, Possie, and see.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. You stupid, you! (*Rose breaks away from her, and steps forward towards the corner. She stops suddenly, however, and there is silence*) Go and shake her yourself if you don't believe me. I tell you, she's dead asleep with that stuff. I know.

ROSE. She — Possie. I wish —
[*The door opens quietly, and Miss Limerton, a tall girl dressed for walking, comes in. Neither of them hear her.*]

MISS LIMERTON. Is Miss Tassey — (*Rose interrupts with a scream.*)

MISS POSTLEWAITE (*turning quickly*). Oh — you!

MISS LIMERTON. What's the matter with Miss Clifton?

ROSE. You — made me jump. I didn't hear you.

MISS LIMERTON. What on earth are you decked out like that for?

ROSE. It's a dress for a ball I'm going to.

MISS LIMERTON. Gay, isn't it? Not to say snippy. Is Miss Tassey — (*Stops at sight of the bed in shadow*) Is she ill?

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Another headache.

ROSE. She's been taking a powder.

MISS LIMERTON. Headache? I didn't know she had one. I saw her after shop.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Well, she's got it since. She's been in bed hours.

ROSE. I don't believe she had a headache, Possie. Miss Limerton says she hadn't. She's pretending, and she'll tell of me.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Shut up, you little fool! (*To Miss Limerton*) She will have it that Tassey isn't asleep and is listening.

MISS LIMERTON. What have you been doing, Rosey, that you're so uncomfortable?

ROSE. Only — only — trying on this (*looking down at her dress*).

MISS LIMERTON. I should think the sight would make Tassey's head good.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. You can tell the truth to Limerton, Rosey. (*To Miss Limerton*) She has been caught sleeping out, and she thinks Tassey told. And she's going to sleep out again to-morrow.

ROSE. S'sh!

MISS LIMERTON. Well, if you take that conscience to the dance you won't enjoy yourself much. Besides, Tassey wouldn't tell.

ROSE. You don't know her. She wouldn't tell of you and Possie. She would about me.

MISS LIMERTON. See how she loves you and looks after your morals. (*They all keep involuntarily, as it were, farthest from the corner bed*) It's funny I didn't know she had a

headache. When she does have them they usually come on in the afternoon, and she can hardly walk.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. She's too old for the work.

MISS LIMERTON. She went out quickly afterwards, and I met her later as I came back from the hairdresser's.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Did you try Grigano?

MISS LIMERTON. Yes. He did it very well. Look how he's dressed it. (*She takes off her hat and displays an elaborate coiffure*) I wish I could do it like that.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. That's not a difficult style. I'll come and show you sometime, if you like.

MISS LIMERTON. Do. (*Glancing towards corner*) What a difference it makes in a room if there's someone ill in it.

ROSE. She's always ill. The room's always quiet.

MISS LIMERTON. The headache must have come on quickly. It's her news, of course.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. What news?

MISS LIMERTON. Didn't she tell you?

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Got the sack at last?

MISS LIMERTON. Yes. I wanted to see her about it. Poor old thing!

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Poor old thing! What will she do?

ROSE. Is she going to leave? (*To Miss Limerton*) Will you come to this room?

MISS LIMERTON. I might.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Do try. Come and help me with this child. I'm sick of her eternal Percy.

[*Miss Limerton smiles at Rosey, who disregards it.*]

MISS LIMERTON. I wanted to ask Tassej what she will do. She hasn't any friends (*they all look towards the corner and pause*) nor relations.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Where did she go Sundays?

MISS LIMERTON. Stayed here.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Stayed here! Lively! Poor old thing!

MISS LIMERTON. What can she do? She can't have any money.

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Didn't she insure?

- MISS LIMERTON. I expect so, but it wouldn't keep her long.
She'll have to go into one room for a bit, and then ——
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. And then —— (*They glance at the corner bed*) Poor old thing!
- MISS LIMERTON. I wonder she wasn't tempted to take too much.
[*Stops.*]
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. She will one of these days. She'll do it with those drugs of hers.
- ROSE (*irritably*). Why don't you speak louder?
- MISS LIMERTON. Are you sure she takes drugs?
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. Positive. I found her out one day. She's been taking some to-night. I knew it when I looked at her.
- MISS LIMERTON (*hesitating*). You have been and looked?
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. Yes.
- MISS LIMERTON. I didn't know she kept drugs in her box.
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. She knows all about them, too.
- MISS LIMERTON. She — listen.
[*Puts up her hand.*]
- ROSE (*terrified*). What is it?
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. Listen to what?
- MISS LIMERTON. You can't hear her breathing?
- MISS POSTLEWAITE. How should you ——
- ROSE. I said she was putting it on. She always breathes louder than that.
[*They listen. Rose shivers, and Miss Limerton rises.*]
- MISS LIMERTON (*looking at Miss Postlewaite, who rises also*). You don't think ——
[*They both step forward, and Miss Postlewaite goes farther than her companion. They both pause. The room is very still.*]
- ROSE (*clinging close to Miss Limerton*). She is asleep, isn't she? Possie said —— (*Miss Limerton takes no notice of her as the two elder girls go nearer*) Don't — don't — keep away! Oh, what is it?
- MISS POSTLEWAITE (*moving back and speaking in an angry whisper*). Shut up!

ROSE. She's listening. I know she is.

[With an evident effort Miss Postlewaite steps behind the draped chair. She pauses, and Miss Limerton and Rose, the latter clinging to her companion, wait in a dead silence. Miss Postlewaite steps forward and is hidden. Rose buries her face and gasps hysterically. After a moment or two Miss Postlewaite comes into the room rather quickly. Miss Limerton looks at her, but no word passes. Rose looks terrified from one to the other.]

MISS LIMERTON. I'll go for Miss Mason or Sarah.

MISS POSTLEWAITE *(unable to stand without trembling, sits down dizzily)*. She — it all happened —

ROSE *(hysterically)*. What is it? Is she — what is the matter?

MISS POSTLEWAITE *(shaking her arm roughly)*. Can't you be quiet now? *(Rose looks helplessly at her, incongruous in her scarlet finery)* Don't you understand?

ROSE. She wasn't asleep all the time — she wasn't — she was — she was — *(Bursts into gasping sobs)* And all the while — and I was talking like that.

MISS LIMERTON *(gently)*. Rose, come, there is nothing to fear.

ROSE *(seizing her by the arm, unable to control herself, yet afraid to scream too loud)*. I knew she heard me; I knew she did. I said she did. She wasn't asleep. And I was wearing this *(fingering her dress)*, and laughing, and calling her names, and all the while —
[Trails into sobs.]

MISS POSTLEWAITE. Leave her with me — or I'll take her away.

MISS LIMERTON. You go for somebody. I'll stop with her.
(Smoothing Rose's hair) Rose.
[Miss Postlewaite goes.]

ROSE. I said how quiet it was, didn't I? I knew she wasn't asleep, but I thought she was listening, and I said she was going to tell tales, and all the time —

MISS LIMERTON. S'sh! it didn't matter. She doesn't know what you said.

ROSE. Do you think she doesn't? Are you sure? She was so quiet, and Possie and I putting on this (*fingering her dress like one distraught*) and laughing, and saying she was pretending.

MISS LIMERTON (*gently taking the girl's hand*). She is finished with it now. Come and look at her, and then — (*Rose draws back shuddering*) She looks so restful. Come.

ROSE (*refusing to move*). No, no — no! Don't drag me there (*looking with fearful curiosity towards the corner*) Did she take it — herself?

MISS LIMERTON. She must have taken an overdose.

ROSE (*unheeding*). She took it herself; and all the while — and she was unhappy — and I —

[*Sarah, the maid, enters quickly, followed by Miss Postlewaite. She goes over to the bed.*]

MISS POSTLEWAITE (*in low tones to Miss Limerton*). Miss Mason is out. They've gone for the doctor. [*Rose, fascinated, is watching the corner.*]

MISS LIMERTON. Come away.

[*Sarah steps back, and Rose falls on her knees beside her bed, quivering and sobbing and hiding her head. Sarah steps back into the room and sees her.*]

SARAH. Take her out, Miss Limerton.

ROSE (*stretching her arms over to the bed towards Sarah*). I said she — she (*she cannot say the name*) told you about me. I didn't mean it. I thought —

SARAH. We are not thinking about you just now, Miss Clifton.

MISS LIMERTON. Come, Rose, Sarah understands.

ROSE (*brokenly to Miss Limerton, as the latter leads her out*). I didn't mean anything. I said she listened and told tales, and all the time —

[*They go out.*]

SARAH. Draw down the blind, Miss Postlewaite.

[*The blind is drawn.*]

MAKESHIFTS

GERTRUDE ROBINS

GERTRUDE ROBINS, who died in 1917, was better known as an actress than as a dramatist. Her plays, which must have been the products of her leisure time, were written to fill certain definitely felt needs. Miss Robins belongs, at least so far as her earlier plays are concerned, to the "Manchester School."

"As you know," declared Miss Robins (I quote from an interview in *The Era* of February 1, 1913), "I lead a very active life, and my interests range from Small Farming and Aviation — yes, I have had two Biplane Gliders built for me — to the Art of the Marionette. I have written several successful one-act plays. My village comedy 'Pot-Luck' . . . originally played by Buckinghamshire Players (a body of local amateurs which I organized), I afterwards produced at the Palace Theatre. . . . 'Pot-Luck' is still successfully running in the provinces. Speaking of the provinces, there is, I think, more than a grain of truth in the adage: 'What Manchester thinks today London does tomorrow', for it was in Cottonopolis, at Miss Horniman's Theatre, that my early plays were first produced. . . . My one-act play 'Makeshifts' was presented before that clever play 'Hindle Wakes', at the Playhouse; and in book form it has already reached several editions . . . it has now been played over a thousand times in Great Britain, Australia, and Canada, and is to be presented in America by Miss Horniman's company. . . . In the intervals between golf and gardening, acting and my varied literary work, I contribute to a certain London Daily articles chiefly relative to Country Life. . . ."

“A few years ago I took Honors in Modern Languages at Oxford. My mother is German and my father Irish; and perhaps this blend tended to induce me, at an early age, to take life seriously. At the outset I thought I would take up one of the learned professions, but I discovered that for a woman to follow such a career the drawbacks of sex are strongly defined. I ultimately decided that the theatrical profession offered a wider and fairer scope for a woman’s activities. Hence it came about that, through the kind offices of my good friend, Miss Lillah McCarthy, I was introduced to the late Wilson Barrett, who engaged me to play in his Repertoire Company on tour. After useful ‘schooling’ in the provinces and playing lead in Wilson Barrett’s last play, ‘Lucky Durham’, I joined Mr. James Welch, and played in ‘When Knights Were Bold’ at Wyndham’s. Subsequently I played lead with Mr. Granville Barker in his daring Anglo-Austrian ‘Anatol’ sketches at the Palace and the Little Theatre. I lately played Miss Irene Vanbrugh’s part in ‘Rosalind’ upon the occasion of the latter’s Command performance at Sandringham; and, now, as the heroine of that merry and clever farce, ‘Officer 666’, at the Globe, I have my first experience of acting in an American production. And, after all, ‘Variety is the spice of life’, and the pursuit of experience is the playwright’s prerogative.”

PLAYS

- | | |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| *Makeshifts (1908) | *The Home Coming (1912) |
| *Realities (1911) | Old Jan (1912) |
| *Pot-Luck (1911) | *Loving as We Do (1914) |
| *Cupid and the Mouse (1911) | The Plaything (1914) |
| *Van Dam of Volendam
(1911) | *The Return (1914) |
| *The Point of View (1910) | *After the Case (1914) |
| *Lancelot and the Leading
Lady (1911) | *Ilda’s Honourable (1914) |

“Makeshifts” and “Realities” are published together by T. Werner Laurie, London; “Loving as We Do”, “The Return”, “After the Case”, and “’Ilda’s Honourable” together, as “Loving as We Do”, by the same; and “Pot-Luck” by Samuel French, New York.



MAKESHIFTS

A LOWER MIDDLE-CLASS COMEDY

By GERTRUDE ROBINS

“Makeshifts” was first produced at Manchester in 1908.

Characters

CAROLINE PARKER, a Suburban young woman of about 30.

Nervous mannerisms. Brown hair much frizzed. Dressed in a mauve silk tight-fitting blouse and dark-green skirt
DOLLY PARKER, her younger sister, aged 28. Wearing a dark blue dress with cheap lace collar. Inclined to brusquerie and superficial sharpness

MR. THOMPSON, the Parkers' lodger. Chemists' Assistant. Tall, thin, and rather shy

MR. ALBERT SMYTHE, Stockjobber's Clerk. Short, sandy-haired. Moustache with waxed ends, shiny face. General blatant appearance

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The fee for each and every amateur representation of either play is one guinea. If both plays are performed on the same occasion the inclusive fee is one guinea and a half.

Fees payable in advance to Miss Gertrude Robins, % T. Werner Laurie, Ltd., Clifford's Inn, London, E.C.

MAKESHIFTS

The Parkers' sitting-room. Large table right centre. Window left with small table and ferns. Lace curtains, and canary in cage. Sideboard up right with cruet-stand, biscuit-box, silver teapot, etc. Chairs round centre table. Fireplace back left centre with overmantel, mirror, clock and ornaments. Easy chairs on either side of fireplace.

Caroline sewing at back of table right. Dolly reading novellette by fire left.

CAROLINE. You didn't forget to order the soap from Brown's, did you, Dolly?

DOLLY. No — I mean yes — I did order it.

[*Pause.*]

CAROLINE (*turning lamp up*). Did you tell them we must have it by nine?

DOLLY (*impatient*). Oh — yes. Don't worry.

CAROLINE. It's very well to say "Don't worry", but you forget Mrs. Hunt's coming at eight, and there's an awful lot of washing this time. (*Pause*) I shall have to get up at half-past six to get the boiler going properly. (*Pause*) Mrs. Cox called this afternoon.

DOLLY. Oh, what did she want?

CAROLINE. Nothing. Only wasted my time. (*Pause*) All her pipes burst last week — quite spoilt one of her drawing-room chairs, she says.

DOLLY. How exciting.

CAROLINE. You are grumpy to-night, Dolly.

DOLLY. Well, I'm tired.

CAROLINE. So am I, but I don't see that's any reason for being disagreeable. (*Pause*) Oh, Dolly, isn't it a nuisance, we've got to have some coal in, and the last lot aren't paid for yet, and they're 28s. now.

DOLLY. Well I suppose we shall have to use the fifteen shillings I'd saved towards a new jacket.

CAROLINE. I wish we needn't do that. You haven't had a new one for three years.

DOLLY. What's it matter? There's no one to notice what I wear.

CAROLINE. Well, perhaps you might lend it, and then I'll give you some of Mr. Thompson's money at the end of the week, and when Ma gets her dividend she must make up the rest. (*Pause*) Well, then, will you order half a ton to-morrow?

DOLLY. All right.

CAROLINE. Ma's been so difficult to-day, she quite tired me out.

DOLLY. Anything fresh?

CAROLINE. Oh, I don't know. She's got some new idea that she's being neglected, or that we don't confide in her or something.

DOLLY. Well, that's better than when she gets mopey and retrospective, and talks about her unhappy past.

CAROLINE. Still, Dolly, she has had a hard time of it.

DOLLY. Well, haven't we all, and isn't it going to be so world without end, amen?

CAROLINE. I don't know, I'm sure. (*Pause*) Oh, Mrs. Cox says those new people two doors off are an awfully funny lot. (*Dolly puts book in her lap and listens*) They haven't any carpets, and they don't touch butcher's meat, and their servant actually has her meals with the family. (*Dolly laughs*) Mrs. Cox thinks they must be Socialists or Christian Scientists. There are some funny people in the world.

DOLLY. Yes, aren't there? Why, I was talking to that new teacher we've got to-day, and, my dear, if you please, she's a Suffragette.

CAROLINE. Oh!

DOLLY. Of course, I didn't say what I thought of them, but she's evidently deadly serious. It beats me how people

can make such idiots of themselves. A lot of good a vote would be to me.

CAROLINE. But I think there may be something in it, you know. (*Pause*) By-the-bye, did you wash up the tea-things, Dolly?

DOLLY. Oh, bother! No. I'll do it when I get Ma's supper. (*Putting her book down and looking up*) Gracious, why, you've changed your blouse. (*Meaningly*) I didn't know anyone was coming this evening.

CAROLINE. Don't be so — so — I suppose I can put something fresh on if I like, after spending the whole day in that stuffy, pokey kitchen, stewing over the hot fire, and washing up greasy saucepans! I'd just like *you* to try it for a bit and see how you like it.

DOLLY. I shouldn't like it at all, my dear. But then, I don't suppose you'd enjoy seven hours a day with a lot of horrid, noisy, fidgety children driving you mad. Why, you'd chuck it up the first row you got into with the Inspector.

CAROLINE. No. I expect it must be pretty sickening.

DOLLY. I wouldn't mind so much if there were any chance of things ever being different. But there's nothing to look forward to. It will always be the same. (*Looking into fire*) I shall go on hammering D O G dog, C A T cat, and twice eleven are twenty-two, and twice twelve are twenty-four, into wooden-headed brats, and you'll be skivvy and housekeeper combined, and look after Ma, and wait on the lodger, and scrape and contrive to make both ends meet, till we're both too old for anything.

CAROLINE. Oh, don't be so depressing, Doll. It gets on my nerves. Besides, you never know, something nice might happen. Why, one of us might — might — might even get married!

DOLLY. *You* might, you mean. Fat lot of men wanting to marry a school-teacher! Bless'm — they'd be afraid they'd get Euclid instead of eggs and bacon for breakfast, and that their buttons would never be sewn on. Oh, no.

Men fight shy of girls like me. They think we're too clever; they like nice, domesticated, homely girls. (*Pause*) Besides, what chance do we have of ever getting to know fellows? We've no father and no brothers. How should I get to know men at a girls' school, or you sticking at home all day? Why, we don't see a man to speak to from one week's end to another, except Mr. Thompson. And there's precious little romance about our lodger as far as I am concerned, even though he is a chemist's assistant.

CAROLINE (*rising and putting on half-finished blouse which she has been making*). Oh, but he's a godsend to us. I don't know how we should have managed the rent without his thirteen shillings every week. (*Crossing over towards fireplace*) Besides, he's nice and quiet in the house, and very considerate, and he doesn't come home late or tipsy, like anyone else we might have got. (*After trying to see back of blouse in glass*) Dolly, you might just tell me how this fits on the shoulder. (*Dolly rises*) It's such a bother. (*Looking into mirror over fire*) I'm afraid I've cut the neck out too far; I shall have to join a bit on, or put some lace over it.

DOLLY (*standing and adjusting back of blouse*). No, it only wants taking up a little. Give me a pin.
[*Noise of door banging slightly heard off right.*]

CAROLINE (*starting*). Who's that? (*Turning round to face Dolly*) It isn't eight, is it?

DOLLY (*meaningly*). It's only Mr. Thompson — who else do you think it is? (*Gentle tap at door*) There he is. Bother. (*Loudly*) Come in!

CAROLINE. But I can't be seen like this! For goodness sake —

DOLLY. Thompson doesn't count. You needn't worry about him. (*Loudly*) Come in!

THOMPSON (*entering nervously right. Pauses just inside door*). Good-evening, Miss Caroline; (*pause*) good-evening, Miss Dolly. (*Pause*) Busy as usual.
[*With a nervous smile.*]

CAROLINE (*very politely*). Oh, yes, Mr. Thompson, there is always something to do. Won't you sit down?

THOMPSON (*hastily*). Oh, no, I'm afraid — I — I don't think I can, thank you. I'm — er — just going out again to the post, and — er — I've — er — promised to help Mr. Standing at the dispensary this evening. (*Pause*) It's left off raining. I've just taken the liberty of bringing you ladies a few sweets. I hope you won't mind.

[*Edges bag of sweets on to table.*]

CAROLINE. Oh, but, Mr. Thompson, you shouldn't; really, you're too good. (*Dolly sits again with her book*) But thank you very much, all the same. It is kind of you — isn't it, Dolly?

DOLLY. Yes, very. Thanks awfully.

[*Still reading.*]

THOMPSON (*nervously, gazing at Caroline*). Oh, not at all.

I hope they're the sort you like. (*Backing to door right*) Good night — good night.

[*Exits awkwardly right.*]

DOLLY. Oh, that man is a trial — he does worry me.

CAROLINE (*crossing to Dolly with sweets*). Well, I don't suppose you'll be above eating his sweets. There aren't so many men who take the trouble to give us things, anyhow.

[*Crossing back to table right centre, she sits down to work on blouse again.*]

DOLLY. Give *you* things, you mean.

CAROLINE. Don't be so snappy, for goodness sake. Look at that lovely pencil-case Mr. Phillips gave you at Easter. You know you were awfully pleased about it.

DOLLY. Yes, and I've never heard the last about it from you and Ma since. There's a fat lot of excitement about a present from a Sunday-School superintendent, isn't there?

CAROLINE. Oh, Dolly, you are always so discontented. We *do* know some nice people after all.

DOLLY. I like your idea of some nice people. A tame chemist's assistant who's our lodger, and a bald-headed Sunday-School superintendent.

CAROLINE. But, Dolly, you haven't — you didn't — you're not reckoning — why, you've forgotten — there's Mr. Smythe.

DOLLY. Oh, yes, to be sure. Anyway, *you're* not likely to forget him.

CAROLINE. Well, he's something, isn't he? And I expect we shall get to know some of his friends.

DOLLY. *Well* [Sniffs.

CAROLINE. Oh, by the way, shall we have some coffee to-night if he — I mean Mr. Smythe — should happen to drop in? It would be rather nice.

DOLLY. Oh, then you *are* expecting someone.

CAROLINE. Oh, I'm not certain — something was said about it. (*She leaves off sewing and turns round to her sister to talk to her*) But, Dolly, I do wish you wouldn't be so sharp with him if he does come; it isn't nice of you. You always go on reading when he's in the room: it's uncomfortable for him, and besides, it isn't polite.

DOLLY. Why shouldn't I? You know jolly well that he doesn't come to see me. (*Pause*) I should have thought you two would like to have all the talking to yourselves. If that isn't being polite, what is?

CAROLINE (*resuming her work*). Well, don't let's have a row about it. (*Pause*) What's upset you to-day, Dolly?

DOLLY. Nothing. (*Throwing book on floor and gazing into fire*) Only it's pretty sickening to be twenty-eight and feel that you're growing old and dull, with never any real fun or amusement like other girls — girls who are taken to theatres and dances, and wear pretty things, and get married and have nice houses, and gardens, and servants, and don't have to worry about every halfpenny they spend. It's all so hopeless, because neither of us can do anything different. With the skimpy, rotten education we got when we were kids, and no training to do anything in

particular, we are expected to earn our own living — you as genteel general servant, and I as an assistant teacher of infants. And so here we are, hopeless and helpless, and we might as well be on a desert island.

CAROLINE. Ah, well, it's no good talking. (*Rising and puts her work on sideboard at back*) I may as well go and put Ma's supper on the tray. (*About to exit right. Stops as she hears loud knock at front door. Turning to Dolly*) That must be him — Mr. Smythe — I'm sure it is; he's got such a firm knock, hasn't he? (*Knock*) You go, Dolly, there's a dear.

DOLLY. You go yourself. You know you are dying to. (*Violent rat-tat*) Look sharp, or he'll have the place down. [*Knock. Caroline exits hurriedly right. Dolly rises and quickly arranges herself at glass. She sits down again, listens, but appears absorbed in her book as door opens. Caroline enters radiant, followed by Smythe.*]

CAROLINE (*right center*). Dolly, here's Mr. Smythe. Isn't he naughty; he says he's been knocking for ten minutes. I'm sure you can't have, really!

DOLLY (*left*). Well, he's had time to collect his thoughts then. (*Rising*) How do you do? [*Extends hand awkwardly.*]

SMYTHE. Well, you girls, how are you going along? Thought you'd be by yourselves to-night as per usual (*standing back to fire*) and I might as well drop in and have a bit of a warm-up. (*Turning round and warming hands at fire*) Crumbs, it's jolly cold out to-night. (*As he turns he sees chocolates on mantelshelf*) What ho! Chocolates! [*Takes some and continues munching throughout scene.*]

CAROLINE. Oh, you poor, dear man. Come and sit in the easy chair. We were just going to have some coffee, weren't we, Dolly? I'll run and fetch it. You'd like a cup, wouldn't you, it will warm you up. [*Kneels down and puts coals on fire.*]

SMYTHE. Oh, I don't mind if I do. You are very cosy here, you girls. What I mean to say — you know how to look after yourselves all right. Trust you for that! What!

DOLLY. Well, there's no one else to if we don't.

[*Sitting right by table.*]

SMYTHE. Quite right. Always keep your optic on number one, that's what I say, eh? (*Lighting a cigarette*) Now, what about that cup of coffee you was making such a song about?

CAROLINE. It won't be a minute. Dolly, mind you entertain Mr. Smythe whilst I'm gone.

SMYTHE. Oh, we'll look after ourselves all right. But mind don't you leave us alone too long. (*Exit Caroline laughing. Watching her out*) Nice girl, your sister. A bit of all right, she is. Something kind of homely about her that I like. She'd make any chap that married her jolly comfortable. Now, you know, you're different, I reckon.

DOLLY. Yes, it would be easier for me to make *some* people I know uncomfortable.

[*At table right.*]

SMYTHE. Oh, I say, you know if you are so sharp you'll cut your face one of these days. And it don't always pay to be so clever. What I mean to say is, it isn't every chap likes it. Of course, I don't mind myself. I don't take any notice of what you say. No, what I meant was, you're not like your sister because you're more brainy — always got a book in your hand; but you are just a bit too smart, it would put some chaps quite off, I tell you.

DOLLY. That would worry me!

SMYTHE. There you go again! But you can't afford to be so stuck-up about it as all that. What I mean to say is, you'll want some chap to marry you some day, won't you? — and that isn't the way to set about it.

DOLLY. I'm not so anxious.

SMYTHE (*chuckling*). Oh, I say! Well, I think it's time that you ought to be. This independence, earning your own living, and all that, is all very fine when you're young; but what I say is — what's it going to lead to — what about when you're old? That's where it comes in. It's then you want a man to look after you and buy you new hats

and frocks, and a nice little home with a servant to do the work, and nothing to do but enjoy yourself, ain't it?

DOLLY (*a little softer*). Yes, I know, but there's nobody likely to want to marry me, and besides —

SMYTHE. Oh, but it isn't so bad as all that, you take my word. You're good-looking, you know, and you've a decent figure and all that, and so long as you don't bite a chap's head off every time he opens his mouth you needn't be left on the shelf. Not but what you ought to be keeping your eyes open, and watching out for a probable starter. Of course, it's none of my business, and I don't want to interfere, but I take a sort of interest in you girls. Especially you, you know. You're clever, and can understand a fellow's ideas, and that's what a man likes.

DOLLY (*slowly*). But if you think so much of marriage why don't you — er — *practise* what you — er —

SMYTHE (*with elephantine coyness*). Oh, well, we'll have to see how things turn out. Anyway, I've got a rise this year, and going along very nicely now, and my wife what may be won't have to go out to work, you can bet on that. You can furnish so cheap, too, nowadays. What I mean to say is, a couple of quid down and you get the whole outfit, piano and all. What do you think of that, eh? (*Winking*) You wouldn't think twice about it if a chap like me come along with a proposition like that, would you?

DOLLY (*breathlessly*). It all depends.

SMYTHE. Quite so! Quite so! But when there's a chance of a windfall of that sort it's as well to be prepared, ain't it. (*Crosses to Dolly left. Mouth full of chocolates, hands in pockets, and portentous air*) Now, Dolly, no larks, strictly on the Q.T., and between ourselves — I came in this evening to ask you — to tell you — something very particular —

DOLLY. Well, Mr. Smythe?

SMYTHE. Oh, well, there now. Never mind — another time, p'r'aps. Your sister will be coming in in a minute.

[*Turning to go up stage.*]

DOLLY (*rises excitedly*). Oh, no, she won't. What is it?
 SMYTHE (*awkwardly*). Well—I mean to say—you see, it's
 like this. I don't want you to think I'm making too bold,
 but what I want to ask you is this —

DOLLY. Yes?

SMYTHE. Is there anything up between you and old Phillips
 —you know, the bald-headed chap what sometimes takes
 your Sunday-School class? Not my business, of course,
 but —

DOLLY. Good gracious—the idea! I should think not,
 indeed. (*Disappointedly*.) Had that got anything to do
 with what you were going to ask me?

SMYTHE. Oh, well, I say, I don't want you to be offended.
 He's not a bad chap, and I take a sort of interest in you.
 I know a bit about Phillips, and he's not half a bad catch,
 and not nearly so old as he looks. And his people are all
 right, too, and there's a tidy bit of money in that family.
 (*Self-consciously*) I know his sister rather well, you
 know. Well, what I meant to say was—I was thinking—
 Anyway, you might —

DOLLY. Yes?

[*Enter Caroline with coffee, sugar, milk, etc., on tray right door.*

SMYTHE (*going up stage to fire*). Oh, here's the coffee, and
 it ought ter be all right, too!

[*Dolly crosses left centre.*

CAROLINE. Wait till you've tried it.

[*She lifts up one lump of sugar for Smythe's approval.*

SMYTHE. Go on. (*Caroline puts lump in cup and extends
 second piece in tongs*) Same again. (*Caroline repeats
 business with third lump*) Ditto repeato.

[*Caroline holds up fourth lump.*

CAROLINE. My word, you have got a sweet tooth!

SMYTHE. Sweet tooth, sweet nature!

CAROLINE (*giggling*). Oh, Mr. Smythe!

[*Handing him cup. Voice heard calling: "Dolly! Dolly!"*

DOLLY. Oh, bother, there's Ma! Didn't you take her sup-
 per up, Carrie? I suppose I must go!

SMYTHE. Remember me to the old lady, won't you?

DOLLY. Oh, there's not much chance of forgetting you.

[Exits, laughing.]

SMYTHE. Your Dolly is a fair knock out, she is. Mind you, I like to see a girl with a bit of go in her. But *she's* a little bit too ikey, she is. Now, you're more up to my ideas. I mean to say you're more the sort of girl to make a man comfortable. You see, a chap don't want a girl to jump down his throat every time he opens his mouth. You're much more what I call affectionate and womanly.

CAROLINE (*coily*). Oh, what nonsense!

[Crosses to fire left and sits down.]

SMYTHE. You know what it is. I can't make it out why you didn't get married. Nice homely girl like you.

CAROLINE. Well, nobody's ever asked me. I've only known such a few men.

SMYTHE. Well, you do surprise me. Now, with me, you know, it's just the opposite. It's taken me all my time to keep the girls off. (*With smug satisfaction — and sweeping gesture*) Why, they are all over me. If I was to tell you the names of some of the girls what have thrown themselves at me and fairly asked me to marry them — well, it would stagger humanity, it would. You take my word.

CAROLINE. Oh, Mr. Smythe, you don't say so. How could they?

SMYTHE (*patronizingly*). Oh, well, of course, you see, they are a different sort to what you are. I don't mind a bit of cuddlin' and squeezin' and all that, just to pass the time. That's all right in its way, but as for marrying that sort — no thanks, says your humble servant. I'm not taking any. But you, now, you're all right, or I shouldn't be in quite so often. A fellow that goes about among Society at all has got to look after himself these days.

CAROLINE. But we're always very pleased to see you, Mr. Smythe.

SMYTHE. Oh, that's all right. I like to cheer you up a bit. Must be doosid slow for you girls, here by yourselves.

And as a matter of fact I dropped in to-night on purpose to see you about something very special.

CAROLINE (*nervously*). Not really?

SMYTHE. Well, now, it's like this, you see. I'm pretty tired of knockin' about alone, livin' in digs by myself, and no one to look after me or to talk to, and I've been turning it over in my mind —

CAROLINE. Yes?

SMYTHE. You see, there's so many ways in which a fellow gets done in. Now, there's the washing. I reckon they charge me a shilling or one-and-sixpence a week more than they would if there was someone to look after things for me — and the scuttles of coals they say I use! All at sixpence a time, too! And they charge a shocking lot for mending which I shouldn't have to pay for at all. Mind you, they always say that it doesn't cost a bit more for two to live than one. Now, what's your idea?

CAROLINE (*eagerly*). Oh, I'm sure it can't cost more — with a little management. It's wicked for them to charge you for mending. I've often thought how lonely it must be for you.

SMYTHE. Lonely! Why, that isn't the word. It's rotten, all by myself, it's enough to give anyone the pip; and you know I'm fond of society, too.

CAROLINE. And just fancy if you were ill, with no one to look after you properly!

SMYTHE. Yes, that's what I've been thinking lately, when I'm a bit off colour. Now, what sort of a husband do you reckon I'd make?

CAROLINE. I'm sure I don't know — you see — well, I've never thought about it before, but do you really mean —
[*Gentle knock at door. Enter Thompson.*]

THOMPSON (*nervously*). Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Caroline. I didn't know you were engaged. I thought you were alone. I've only come to bring you this evening's paper. I thought you might like to see it.

SMYTHE. Oh, I say, that's just what I wanted to see.

(*Crossing over to him. Takes paper and opens it. Takes out chocolate from bag in pocket and throws it across table towards Thompson*) Have a chocolate, old boy?

THOMPSON (*stiffly*). No, thanks. I don't care for sweets.

SMYTHE. All the more for us, then.

[*Taking chocolate back and eating it.*]

CAROLINE (*to Thompson*). Won't you sit down?

SMYTHE. Yes, go on, make yourself at home, old chap.

[*Crossing back to fire.*]

THOMPSON. No, thanks very much, I must be going, really.

I didn't mean to intrude. It's come on to rain again.

Good night.

SMYTHE. Well, so long, old boy. (*Exit Thompson. Smythe whistles meaningly*) So that's it, is it?

CAROLINE. What is, Mr. Smythe? I don't know what you mean.

SMYTHE. Oh, yes, you do. You know right enough. You quiet girls, you're a hot lot, you are. (*Pointing at her*) I saw him making googoo eyes at you. When's the weddin'?

CAROLINE. Oh, don't be such a tease! Mr. Thompson, indeed, the idea!

SMYTHE. He does look a bit of a mug. But you never know with some of these dark horses. Still, a bird in the 'and is worth two in the bush. And after all, you never knows your luck, do you — eh, what?

CAROLINE. How absurd you are!

SMYTHE. Oh, but I'm not jokin'. I'm not really. Now, I'm not a man to talk about myself. You know that, don't you?

CAROLINE. Yes. Well?

SMYTHE. But this evening — I tell you straight — I've got a bit of news that will make you sit up.

CAROLINE. Well, tell me.

SMYTHE. Well, I've been talkin' to you about gettin' married, haven't I?

CAROLINE (*nervously*). Yes, yes.

SMYTHE. And you think it's a sound proposition, now don't you?

CAROLINE (*rather faintly*). Ye-es, Mr. Smythe.

SMYTHE. Well, I think so too, so we're agreed, ain't we?

CAROLINE. Yes, certainly, but ——

SMYTHE. Well, what I wanted to say was — I mean ter say — you see it's like this — I ——

[*Enter Dolly, noisily.*]

DOLLY. I've settled Ma all right for the night. She's got her supper, and she's had her medicine. So I hope I can have a little peace now. (*Sitting down at left of table*) If I shan't be in the way.

SMYTHE. There she goes again! Well, you are a girl! Bring your chair up to the fire. Make yourself at home, there's plenty of room. (*She comes up to fire and sits in armchair*) That's right. Well, now, look here. I might as well tell the pair of you what I came to see you for this evening.

DOLLY and CAROLINE (*together*). Oh, but really!

SMYTHE. Well, I say you are a funny lot. Why not now? It's what I came for. (*Caroline and Dolly look apprehensive*) Well, then, without any more beatin' about the bush, it's like this. Yours truly — Albert J. Smythe, Esq. — is going — is going to be married. There!

BOTH. Oh!

SMYTHE. Is goin' to be married! Well, what d'you think of that now — eh? (*Pause*) How's that for a bit of news? I bet you won't guess who it is, but she's a winner, she is. You take my word. (*Pause*) Well, ain't either of you going to wish me luck?

CAROLINE. But — but ——

DOLLY. But who?

SMYTHE. Well, I don't mind telling you — but not a word — not a word to a soul now. We want to keep it quiet for a bit. The happy bride-to-be is Miss Rose Phillips, Sidney Villa, Saint George's Square — the sister of the gent what you and I was mentioning a little time back. (*Ex-*

pressive wink at Dolly. Pause) Ah—I thought that would surprise you.

DOLLY (*slowly*). Well, I'm sure I congratulate you, Mr. Smythe.

CAROLINE (*slowly*). I hope you'll be very, very happy, Mr. Smythe.

SMYTHE. Oh, I'll watch that. Rose isn't half a bad sort. Not fussy or clever, but understands a fellow, and what's more, she's got a useful little bit in the bank, too, that her grandmother left her, and that's always handy. Oh, yes, what I mean to say is, I think I'm doing the right thing for myself this time. Every man ought to get married, and we've all got to come to it sooner or later. I'll bring my girl round to see you one Saturday afternoon, but don't you tell her too much about me. She's a bit jealous, you know. I'm rather a popular chap with the ladies, somehow. And I'll have to be careful, what with a Sunday-School superintendent for a brother-in-law. (*Looks at watch*) Lord love a duck! Half-past ten, and I promised to fetch Rose from her Choral Society. Of course, she'll have to give up all that sort of gadding about once she's married and settled down; but still, as she says, it's a pity to waste the subscription now. Well, so long, girls. (*Shakes hands with the two girls*) Thought I'd cheer you up a bit to-night. I'll pop in again when—when I haven't much to do. Ta-ta. (*Caroline rises*) You needn't see me out. I don't mind shutting the door myself.

[*Exit Smythe. Caroline stands by fire, gazing into it. Dolly picks up her book. They remain silent. Front door bangs. Dolly puts down book and crosses to sideboard, where she gets another smaller one and note-book, with which she sits at table centre facing the audience. Head resting on her hands, elbows on table. Caroline wipes away a tear.*]

CAROLINE. What are you doing, Dolly?

DOLLY. I'm preparing for Sunday-School class. I've got to take it to-morrow, and I want the lesson to be specially good——

CAROLINE. Why specially good?

DOLLY. Oh, because — because — well, for one thing, Mr.

Phillips will be back from his holidays, and — er —

CAROLINE. Oh, I see. (*Caroline crosses to Dolly, puts hands on her shoulders and kisses her*) Good night, dear.

DOLLY (*looking up, surprised*). Why — you've been crying.

CAROLINE. Oh, I've got a bit of a headache, I think.

[*Crosses left centre.*]

DOLLY. But what's the matter?

CAROLINE. Only something I was thinking of. It's nothing.

(*Brushes tears away, looks at clock*) I've got an idea.

There's just time (*she crosses the room towards door, speaking as she goes*) before the shops shut to run round and get a haddock for Mr. Thompson's breakfast — he's very fond of fish. I remember he said he liked haddock better than anything.

[*Exit hurriedly. Dolly remains watching Caroline go off. Turns to book again. Looks up. Suddenly closes book, pushes it from her, and collapses, her head buried on her arms.*]

SLOW CURTAIN

THE MAKER OF DREAMS

OLIPHANT DOWN

OLIPHANT DOWN was one of the younger English dramatists whose promising career was ended by the war. Born in 1885 at Bridgewater, Somersetshire, he was educated at Warminster School in Wiltshire. He came to London in 1902, and was articled to a firm of accountants. After a few years he gave up business and became a journalist and writer.

“On the outbreak of the war,” writes Mr. Harold Veasey, Mr. Down’s cousin, to whom I am indebted for most of my facts, “he enlisted in the 10th Hussars, but later obtained a commission in the 4th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment. In the first battle of the Somme he was wounded at Poizzières and for very gallant work was awarded the Military Cross; he was also mentioned five times in despatches. He returned to France and was present at much severe fighting in 1916 and 1917. On May 23, 1917, he was killed near Havrincourt Wood. His was a most lovable nature, that abhorred war and its attendant horrors. He loved everything that was beautiful in life. The realm of fantasy and charm was his delight, and the keynote of his writings. . . . It is remarkable that such a man should have become such a brilliant and gallant soldier.”

“The Maker of Dreams” is precisely the sort of fantasy that a man of Oliphant Down’s nature must have delighted in writing. This little Pierrot play met with immediate success on its initial performance. During the past nine years it has been performed by professionals and amateurs wherever English is spoken.

Mr. Down's other plays, with the exception of a farce ("The Quod Wrangle"), are artistically akin to "The Maker of Dreams."

PLAYS

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| *The Maker of Dreams
(1911) | *The Quod Wrangle (1914)
Tommy-by-the-way (1918) |
| *The Dream Child (1913) | Bal Masque (1921) |

"The Maker of Dreams" is published by Gowans and Gray, London and Glasgow; "The Quod Wrangle" by Samuel French, New York.

THE MAKER OF DREAMS

A FANTASY IN ONE ACT

By OLIPHANT DOWN

“The Maker of Dreams” was first produced at Glasgow in 1911.

Characters

PIERROT

PIERRETTE

THE MANUFACTURER

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The fee for each and every representation of the play by amateurs in the British Empire (except Canada) is thirty shillings; in America and Canada, eight dollars. These sums are payable in advance and no performance may take place unless a written permission has first been obtained.

The terms for performance by professionals can be ascertained on application.

The music for “The Maker of Dreams” is obtainable from Messrs. French at 5s. net in London and 1 dollar 50 cents in New York. Band parts can be hired by arrangement.

THE MAKER OF DREAMS

Evening. A room in an old cottage, with walls of dark oak, lit only by the moonlight that peers through the long, low casement window at the back, and the glow from the fire that is burning merrily on the spectator's left. A cobbled street can be seen outside, and a door to the right of the window opens directly on it. Opposite the fire is a kitchen dresser with cups and plates twinkling in the firelight. A high-backed oak settle, as though afraid of the cold moonlight, has turned its back on the window and warms its old timbers at the fire. In the middle of the room stands a table with a red cover; there are chairs on either side of it. On the hob, a kettle is keeping itself warm; whilst overhead, on the hood of the chimney-piece, a small lamp is turned very low.

A figure flits past the window and, with a click of the latch, Pierrette enters. She hangs up her cloak by the door, gives a little shiver and runs to warm herself for a moment. Then, having turned up the lamp, she places the kettle on the fire. Crossing the room, she takes a table-cloth from the dresser and proceeds to lay tea, setting out crockery for two. Once she goes to the window and, drawing aside the common red casement-curtains, looks out, but returns to her work, disappointed. She puts a spoonful of tea into the teapot, and another, and a third. Something outside attracts her attention; she listens, her face brightening. A voice is heard singing:

“Baby, don't wait for the moon,
She is caught in a tangle of boughs;
And mellow and musical June
Is saying ‘Good night’ to the cows.”

[The voice draws nearer and a conical white hat goes past the window. Pierrot enters.]

PIERROT (*throwing his hat to Pierrette*). Ugh! How cold it is.
My feet are like ice.

PIERRETTE. Here are your slippers. I put them down to warm.

[*She kneels beside him, as he sits before the fire and commences to slip off his shoes.*]

PIERROT (*singing*).

“Baby, don’t wait for the moon,
She will put out her tongue and grimace;
And mellow and musical June
Is pinning the stars in their place.”

Isn’t tea ready yet?

PIERRETTE. Nearly. Only waiting for the kettle to boil.

PIERROT. How cold it was in the market-place to-day! I don’t believe I sang at all well. I can’t sing in the cold.

PIERRETTE. Ah, you’re like the kettle. He can’t sing when he’s cold either. Hurry up, Mr. Kettle, if you please.

PIERROT. I wish it were in love with the sound of its own voice.

PIERRETTE. I believe it is. Now it’s singing like a bird.

We’ll make the tea with the nightingale’s tongue. (*She pours the boiling water into the teapot*) Come along.

PIERROT (*looking into the fire*). I wonder. She had beauty, she had form, but had she soul?

PIERRETTE (*cutting bread and butter at the table*). Come and be cheerful, instead of grumbling there to the fire.

PIERROT. I was thinking.

PIERRETTE. Come and have tea. When you sit by the fire, thoughts only fly up the chimney.

PIERROT. The whole world’s a chimney-piece. Give people a thing as worthless as paper, and it catches fire in them and makes a stir; but real thought, they let it go up with the smoke.

PIERRETTE. Cheer up, Pierrot. See how thick I’ve spread the butter.

PIERROT. You’re always cheerful.

PIERRETTE. I try to be happy.

PIERROT. Ugh!

[*He has moved to the table. There is a short silence, during which Pierrot sips his tea moodily.*]

PIERRETTE. Tea all right?

PIERROT. Middling.

PIERRETTE. Only middling! I'll pour you out some fresh.

PIERROT. Oh, it's all right! How you do worry a fellow!

PIERRETTE. Heigh-ho! Shall I chain up that big black dog?

PIERROT. I say, did you see that girl to-day?

PIERRETTE. Whereabouts?

PIERROT. Standing by the horse-trough. With a fine air, and a string of great beads.

PIERRETTE. I didn't see her.

PIERROT. I did, though. And she saw me. Watched me all the time I was singing, and clapped her hands like anything each time. I wonder if it is possible for a woman to have a soul as well as such beautiful colouring.

PIERRETTE. She was made up!

PIERROT. I'm sure she was not! And how do you know? You didn't see her.

PIERRETTE. Perhaps I *did* see her.

PIERROT. Now, look here, Pierrette, it's no good your being jealous. When you and I took on this show business, we arranged to be just partners and nothing more. If I see any one I want to marry, I shall marry 'em. And if you see any one who wants to marry you, *you* can marry 'em.

PIERRETTE. I'm not jealous! It's absurd!

PIERROT (*singing abstractedly*).

“Baby, don't wait for the moon,
She has scratched her white chin on the gorse;
And mellow and musical June
Is bringing the cuckoo remorse.”

PIERRETTE. Did you see that girl after the show?

PIERROT. No. She had slipped away in the crowd. Here, I've had enough tea. I shall go out and try to find her.

PIERRETTE. Why don't you stay in by the fire? You could help me to darn the socks.

PIERROT. Don't try to chaff me. Darning, indeed! I hope life has got something better in it than darning.

PIERRETTE. I doubt it. It's pretty much the same all the world over. First we wear holes in our socks, and then we mend them. The wise ones are those who make the best of it, and darn as well as they can.

PIERROT. I say, that gives me an idea for a song.

PIERRETTE. Out with it, then.

PIERROT. Well, I haven't exactly formed it yet. This is what flashed through my mind as you spoke:
(*He runs up on the table, using it as a stage*)

“Life's a ball of worsted,
Unwind it if you can,
You who oft have boasted

(*He pauses for a moment, then hurriedly, in order to gloss over the false accenting*)

That you are a man.”

Of course that's only a rough idea.

PIERRETTE. Are you going to sing it at the show?

PIERROT (*jumping down from the table*). You're always so lukewarm. A man of artistic ideas is as sensitively skinned as a baby.

PIERRETTE. Do stay in, Pierrot. It's so cold outside.

PIERROT. You want me to listen to you grumbling, I suppose.

PIERRETTE. Just now you said I was always cheerful.

PIERROT. There you are; girding at me again.

PIERRETTE. I'm sorry, Pierrot. But the market-place is dreadfully wet, and your shoes are awfully thin.

PIERROT. I tell you I will not stop in. I'm going out to find that girl. How do I know she isn't the very woman of my dreams?

PIERRETTE. Why are you always trying to picture an ideal woman?

PIERROT. Don't *you ever* picture an ideal man?

PIERRETTE. No, I try to be practical.

PIERROT. Women are so unimaginative! They are such pathetic, motherly things, and when they feel extra motherly they say, "I'm in love." All that is so sordid and petty. I want a woman I can set on a pedestal, and just look up at her and love her.

PIERRETTE (*speaking very fervently*).

"Pierrot, don't wait for the moon,
There's a heart chilling cold in her rays;
And mellow and musical June
Will only last thirty short days."

PIERROT. Oh, I should never make you understand! Well, I'm off.

[*As he goes out, he sings, sidelong, over his shoulder in a mocking tone, "Baby, don't wait for the moon." Pierrette listens for a moment to his voice dying away in the distance. Then she moves to the fireplace, and begins to stir the fire. As she kneels there, the words of an old recitation form on her lips. Half unconsciously she recites it again to an audience of laughing flames and glowing, thoughtful coals.*

PIERRETTE.

"There lives a maid in the big, wide world,
By the crowded town and mart,
And people sigh as they pass her by;
They call her Hungry Heart.

For there trembles that on her red rose lip
That never her tongue can say,
And her eyes are sad, and she is not glad
In the beautiful calm of day.

Deep down in the waters of pure, clear thought,
The mate of her fancy lies;
Sleeping, the night is made fair by his light
Sweet kiss on her dreaming eyes.

Though a man was made in the wells of time
 Who could set her soul on fire,
 Her life unwinds, and she never finds
 This love of her heart's desire.

If you meet this maid of a hopeless love,
 Play not a meddler's part.
 Silence were best; let her keep in her breast
 The dream of her hungry heart."

(Overcome by tears, she hides her face in her hands. A slow, treble knock comes on the door; Pierrette looks up wonderingly. Again the knock sounds.)

Come in.

(The door swings slowly open, as though of its own accord, and without, on the threshold, is seen The Manufacturer, standing full in the moonlight. He is a curious, though kindly-looking, old man, and yet, with all his years, he does not appear to be the least infirm. He is the sort of person that children take to instinctively. He wears a quaintly cut, bottle-green coat, with silver buttons and large side pockets, which almost hides his knee breeches. His shoes have large buckles and red heels. He is exceedingly unlike a prosperous manufacturer, and, but for the absence of a violin, would be mistaken for a village fiddler. Without a word he advances into the room, and, again of its own accord, the door closes noiselessly behind him. Pierrette jumping up and moving towards him) Oh, I'm so sorry. I ought to have opened the door when you knocked.

MANUFACTURER. That's all right. I'm used to opening doors. And yours opens much more easily than some I come across. Would you believe it, some people positively nail their doors up, and it's no good knocking. But there, you're wondering who I am.

PIERRETTE. I was wondering if you were hungry.

MANUFACTURER. Ah, a woman's instinct. But, thank you, no. I am a small eater; I might say a very small eater. A smile or a squeeze of the hand keeps me going admirably.

PIERRETTE. At least you'll sit down and make yourself at home.

MANUFACTURER (*moving to the settle*). Well, I have a habit of making myself at home everywhere. In fact, most people think you can't make a *home* without *me*. May I put my feet on the fender? It's an old habit of mine. I always do it.

PIERRETTE. They say round here:

“Without feet on the fender
Love is but slender.”

MANUFACTURER. Quite right. It is the whole secret of the domestic fireside. Pierrette, you have been crying.

PIERRETTE. I believe I have.

MANUFACTURER. Bless you, I know all about it. It's Pierrot. And so you're in love with him, and he doesn't care a little bit about you, eh? What a strange old world it is! And you cry your eyes out over him.

PIERRETTE. Oh, no, I don't often cry. But to-night he seemed more grumpy than usual, and I tried so hard to cheer him up.

MANUFACTURER. Grumpy, is he?

PIERRETTE. He doesn't mean it, though. It's the cold weather, and the show hasn't been playing so well lately. Pierrot wants to write an article about us for the local paper by way of an advertisement. He thinks the editor may print it if he gives him free passes for his family.

MANUFACTURER. Do you think Pierrot is worth your tears?

PIERRETTE. Oh, yes!

MANUFACTURER. You know, tears are not to be wasted. We only have a certain amount of them given to us just for keeping the heart moist. And when we've used them all up and haven't any more, the heart dries up, too.

PIERRETTE. Pierrot is a splendid fellow. You don't know him as well as I do. It's true he's always discontented, but it's only because he's not in love with any one. You know, love does make a tremendous difference in a man.

MANUFACTURER. That's true enough. And has it made a difference in you?

PIERRETTE. Oh, yes! I put Pierrot's slippers down to warm, and I make tea for him, and all the time I'm happy because I'm doing something for him. If I weren't in love, I should find it a drudgery.

MANUFACTURER. Are you sure it's real love?

PIERRETTE. Why, yes!

MANUFACTURER. Every time you think of Pierrot, do you hear the patter of little bare feet? And every time he speaks, do you feel little chubby hands on your breast and face?

PIERRETTE (*fervently*). Yes! Oh, yes! That's just it!

MANUFACTURER. You've got it right enough. But why is it that Pierrot can wake up all this poetry in you?

PIERRETTE. Because—oh, because he's just Pierrot.

MANUFACTURER. "Because he's just Pierrot." The same old reason.

PIERRETTE. Of course, he is a bit dreamy. But that's his soul. I am sure he could do great things if he tried. And have you noticed his smile? Isn't it lovely! Sometimes, when he's not looking, I want ever so much to try it on, just to see how I should look in it. (*Pensively*) But I wish he'd smile at me a little more often, instead of at others.

MANUFACTURER. Ho! So he smiles at others, does he?

PIERRETTE. Hardly a day goes by but there's some fine lady at the show. There was one there to-day, a tall girl with red cheeks. He is gone to look for her now. And it is not their faults. The poor things can't help being in love with him. (*Proudly*) I believe every one is in love with Pierrot.

MANUFACTURER. But supposing one of these fine ladies were to marry him?

PIERRETTE. Oh, they'd never do that. A fine lady would never marry a poor singer. If Pierrot were to get married, I think I should just . . . fade away . . . Oh, but I

don't know why I talk to you like this. I feel as if I had known you for a long, long time.

[The Manufacturer rises from the settle and moves across to Pierrette, who is now folding up the white table-cloth.]

MANUFACTURER (*very slowly*). Perhaps you have known me for a long, long time.

[His tone is so kindly and impressive that Pierrette forgets the table-cloth and looks up at him. For a moment or two he smiles back at her as she gazes, spellbound; then he turns away to the fire again, with the little chuckle that is never far from his lips.]

PIERRETTE (*taking a small bow from his side-pocket*). Oh, look at this.

MANUFACTURER (*in mock alarm*). Oh, oh, I didn't mean you to see that. I'd forgotten it was sticking out of my pocket. I used to do a lot of archery at one time. I don't get much chance now.

[He takes it and puts it back in his pocket.]

PIERROT (*singing in the distance*).

“Baby, don't wait for the moon,
She is drawing the sea in her net;
And mellow and musical June
Is teaching the rose to forget.”

MANUFACTURER (*in a whisper as the voice draws nearer*). Who is that?

PIERRETTE. Pierrot.

[Again the conical white hat flashes past the window and Pierrot enters.]

PIERROT. I can't find her anywhere. (*Seeing the Manufacturer*) Hullo! Who are you?

MANUFACTURER. I am a stranger to you, but Pierrette knew me in a moment.

PIERROT. An old flame perhaps?

MANUFACTURER. True, I am an old flame. I've lighted up the world for a considerable time. Yet when you say “old”, there are many people who think I'm wonderfully

well preserved for my age. How long do you think I've been trotting about?

PIERROT (*testily, measuring a length with his hands*). Oh, about that long.

MANUFACTURER. I suppose being funny all day *does* get on your nerves.

PIERRETTE. Pierrot, you needn't be rude.

MANUFACTURER (*anxious to be alone with Pierrot*). Pierrette, have you got supper in?

PIERRETTE. Oh, I must fly! The shops will all be shut. Will you be here when I come back?

MANUFACTURER (*bustling her out*). I can't promise, but I'll try, I'll try.

[*Pierrette goes out. There is a silence, during which the Manufacturer regards Pierrot with amusement.*]

MANUFACTURER. Well, friend Pierrot, so business is not very brisk.

PIERROT. Brisk! If laughter meant business, it would be brisk enough, but there's no money. However, I've done one good piece of work to-day. I've arranged with the editor to put an article in the paper. That will fetch 'em. (*Singing*)

"Please come one day and see our house that's down
among the trees,

But do not come at four o'clock for then we count the bees,
And bathe the tadpoles, and the frogs, who splash the
clouds with gold,

And watch the new-cut cucumbers perspiring with the
cold."

That's a song I'm writing.

MANUFACTURER. Pierrot, if you had all the money in the world you wouldn't be happy.

PIERROT. Wouldn't I? Give me all the money in the world and I'll risk it. To start with, I'd build schools to educate the people up to high-class things.

MANUFACTURER. You dream of fame and wealth and empty ideals, and you miss all the best things there are. You are discontented. Why? Because you don't know how to be happy.

PIERROT (*reciting*).

“Life's a running brooklet,
Catch the fishes there,
You who wrote a booklet
On a woman's hair.”

(*Explaining*) That's another song I'm writing. It's the second verse. Things come to me all of a sudden like that. I must run out a third verse, just to wind it up.

MANUFACTURER. Why don't you write a song without any end, one that goes on forever?

PIERROT. I say, that's rather silly, isn't it?

MANUFACTURER. It all depends. For a song of that sort the singer must be always happy.

PIERROT. That wants a bit of doing in my line.

MANUFACTURER. Shall you and I transact a little business?

PIERROT. By all means. What seats would you like? There are the front rows covered in velvet, one shilling; wooden benches behind, sixpence; and, right at the back, the two-penny part. But, of course, you'll have shilling ones. How many shall we say?

MANUFACTURER. You don't know who I am.

PIERROT. That makes no difference. All are welcome, and we thank you for your courteous attention.

MANUFACTURER. Pierrot, I am a maker of dreams.

PIERROT. A what?

MANUFACTURER. I make all the dreams that float about this musty world.

PIERROT. I say, you'd better have a rest for a bit. I expect you're a trifle done up.

MANUFACTURER. Pierrot, Pierrot, your superior mind can't tumble to my calling. A child or one of the “people” would in a moment. I am a maker of dreams, little

things that glide about into people's hearts and make them glad. Haven't you often wondered where the swallows go to in the autumn? They come to my workshop, and tell me who wants a dream, and what happened to the dreams they took with them in the spring.

PIERRET. Oh, I say, you can't expect me to believe that.

MANUFACTURER. When flowers fade, have you never wondered where their colours go to, or what becomes of all the butterflies in the winter? There isn't much winter about my workshop.

PIERROT. I had never thought of it before.

MANUFACTURER. It's a kind of lost property office, where every beautiful thing that the world has neglected finds its way. And there I make my celebrated dream, the dream that is called "love."

PIERROT. Ho! ho! Now we're talking.

MANUFACTURER. You don't believe in it?

PIERROT. Yes, in a way. But it doesn't last. It doesn't last. If there is form, there isn't soul, and, if there is soul, there isn't form. Oh, I've tried hard enough to believe it, but, after the first wash, the colours run.

MANUFACTURER. You only got hold of a substitute. Wait until you see the genuine article.

PIERROT. But how is one to tell it?

MANUFACTURER. There are heaps of signs. As soon as you get the real thing, your shoulder-blades begin to tingle. That's love's wings sprouting. And, next, you want to soar up among the stars and sit on the roof of heaven and sing to the moon. Of course, that's because I put such a lot of the moon into my dreams. I break bits off until it's nearly all gone, and then I let it grow big again. It grows very quickly, as I dare say you've noticed. After a fortnight it is ready for use once more.

PIERROT. This is most awfully fascinating. And do the swallows bring all the dreams?

MANUFACTURER. Not always; I have other messengers. Every night when the big clock strikes twelve, a day slips

down from the calendar, and runs away to my workshop in the Land of Long Ago. I give him a touch of scarlet and a gleam of gold, and say, "Go back, little Yesterday, and be a memory in the world." But my best dreams I keep for to-day. I buy babies, and fit them up with a dream, and then send them complete and carriage paid . . . in the usual manner.

PIERROT. I've been dreaming all my life, but they've always been dreams I made myself. I suppose I don't mix 'em properly.

MANUFACTURER. You leave out the very essence of them. You must put in a little sorrow, just to take away the over-sweetness. I found that out very soon, so I took a little of the fresh dew that made pearls in the early morning, and I sprinkled my dreams with the gift of tears.

PIERROT (*ecstatically*). The gift of tears! How beautiful! You know, I should rather like to try a real one. Not one of my own making.

MANUFACTURER. Well, there are plenty about, if you only look for them.

PIERROT. That is all very well, but who's going to look about for stray dreams?

MANUFACTURER. I once made a dream that would just suit you. I slipped it inside a baby. That was twenty years ago, and the baby is now a full-grown woman, with great blue eyes and fair hair.

PIERROT. It's a lot of use merely telling me about her.

MANUFACTURER. I'll do more. When I shipped her to the world, I kept the bill of lading. Here it is. You shall have it.

PIERROT. Thanks, but what's the good of it?

MANUFACTURER. Why, the holder of that is able to claim the goods; you will notice it contains a complete description, too. I promise you, you're in luck.

PIERROT. Has she red cheeks and a string of great beads?

MANUFACTURER. No.

PIERROT. Ah, then it is not she. Where shall I find her?

MANUFACTURER. That's for you to discover. All you have to do is to search.

PIERROT. I'll start at once.

[He moves as if to go.]

MANUFACTURER. I shouldn't start out to-night.

PIERROT. But I want to find her soon. Somebody else may find her before me.

MANUFACTURER. Pierrot, there was once a man who wanted to gather mushrooms.

PIERROT (*annoyed at the commonplace*). Mushrooms!

MANUFACTURER. Fearing people would be up before him, he started out overnight. Morning came, and he found none, so he returned disconsolate to his house. As he came through the garden, he found a great mushroom had grown up in the night by his very door-step. Take the advice of one who knows, and wait a bit.

PIERROT. If that's your advice . . . But tell me this, do you think I shall find her?

MANUFACTURER. I can't say for certain. Would you consider yourself a fool?

PIERROT. Ah . . . of course . . . when you ask me a direct thing like that, you make it . . . er . . . rather awkward for me. But, if I may say so, as man to man . . . I mean as man to . . . *[He hesitates.]*

MANUFACTURER (*waiving the point*). Yes, yes.

PIERROT. Well, I flatter myself that . . .

MANUFACTURER. Exactly. And that's your principal danger. Whilst you are striding along gazing at the stars, you may be treading on a little glow-worm. Shall I give you a third verse for your song?

"Life's a woman calling,
Do not stop your ears,
Lest, when night is falling,
Darkness brings you tears."

[The Manufacturer's kindly and impressive tone holds Pierrot as it had held Pierrette some moments before. Whilst the two

are looking at each other, a little red cloak dances past the window, and Pierrette enters with her marketing.

PIERRETTE. Oh, I'm so glad you're still here.

MANUFACTURER. But I must be going now. I am a great traveller.

PIERRETTE (*standing against the door, so that he cannot pass*).

Oh, you mustn't go yet.

MANUFACTURER. Don't make me fly out of the window. I only do that under very unpleasant circumstances.

PIERROT (*gaily, with mock eloquence*). Pierrette, regard our visitor. You little knew whom you were entertaining. You see before you the maker of the dreams that slip about the world like little fish among the rushes of a stream. He has given me the bill of lading of his great masterpiece, and it only remains for me to find her. (*Dropping to the commonplace*) I wish I knew where to look.

MANUFACTURER. Before I go, I will give you this little rhyme:

"Let every woman keep a school,
For every man is born a fool."

[He bows, and goes out quickly and silently.]

PIERRETTE (*running to the door, and looking out*). Why, how quickly he has gone! He's out of sight.

PIERROT. At last I am about to attain my great ideal. There will be a grand wedding, and I shall wear my white coat with the silver braid, and carry a tall gold-topped stick. (*Singing*)

"If we play any longer, I fear you will get
Such a cold in the head, for the grass is so wet.
But during the night, Margareta divine,
I will hang the wet grass up to dry on the line."

Pierrette, I feel that I am about to enter into a man's inheritance, a woman's love.

PIERRETTE. I wish you every happiness.

PIERROT (*singing teasingly*).

“We shall meet in our dreams, that’s a thing understood;
You dream of the river, I’ll dream of the wood.
I am visiting you, if the river it be;
If we meet in the wood, you are visiting me.”

PIERRETTE. We must make lots of money, so that you can give her all she wants. I’ll dance and dance until I fall, and the people will exclaim, “Why, she has danced herself to death.”

PIERROT. You’re right. We must pull the show together. I’ll do that article for the paper at once.

(*He takes paper, ink, etc., from the dresser, and, seating himself at the table, commences to write.*)

“There has lately come to this town a company of strolling players, who give a show that is at once musical and droll. The audience is enthralled by Pierrot’s magnificent singing and dancing, and . . . er . . . very much entertained by Pierrette’s homely dancing. Pierrette is a charming comedienne of twenty, with . . .” what colour hair?

PIERRETTE. Fair, quite fair.

PIERROT. Funny how one can see a person every day and not know the colour of their hair. “Fair hair and . . .” eyes?

PIERRETTE. Blue, Pierrot.

PIERROT. “Fair hair and blue eyes.” Fair! Blue! Oh, of course it’s nonsense, though.

PIERRETTE. What’s nonsense?

PIERROT. Something I was thinking. Most girls have fair hair and blue eyes.

PIERRETTE. Yes, Pierrot, we can’t all be ideals.

PIERROT. How musical your voice sounds! I can’t make it out. Oh, but, of course, it *is* all nonsense!

[*He takes the bill of lading from his pocket and reads it.*]

PIERRETTE. What's nonsense? . . . Pierrot, won't you tell me?

PIERROT. Pierrette, stand in the light.

PIERRETTE. Is anything the matter?

PIERROT. I almost believe that nothing matters. (*Reading and glancing at her*) "Eyes that say 'I love you'; arms that say 'I want you'; lips that say 'Why don't you?'" Pierrette, is it possible! I've never noticed before how beautiful you are. You don't seem a bit the same. I believe you have lost your real face, and have carved another out of a rose.

PIERRETTE. Oh, Pierrot, what is it?

PIERROT. Love! I've found it at last. Don't you understand it all?

"I am a fool

Who has learned wisdom in your school."

To think that I've seen you every day, and never dreamed . . . dreamed! Yes, ah yes, it's one of his beautiful dreams. That is why my heart seems full of the early morning.

PIERRETTE. Ah, Pierrot!

PIERROT. Oh, how my shoulders tingle! I want to soar up, up. Don't you want to fly up to the roof of heaven and sing among the stars?

PIERRETTE. I have been sitting on the moon ever so long, waiting for my lover. Pierrot, let me try on your smile. Give it to me in a kiss.

(*With their hands outstretched behind them, they lean towards each other, till their lips meet in a long kiss. Throwing back her head with a deep sigh of happiness*) Oh, I am so happy. This might be the end of all things.

PIERROT. Pierrette, let us sit by the fire and put our feet on the fender, and live happily ever after.

(*They have moved slowly to the settle. As they sit there, Pierrot sings softly:*

“Baby, don’t wait for the moon,
The stairs of the sky are so steep;
And mellow and musical June
Is waiting to kiss you to sleep.”

*[The lamp on the hood of the chimney-piece has burned down,
leaving only the red glow from the fire upon their faces, as the
curtain whispers down to hide them.]*

THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS was born in Dublin in 1865. Educated in his native city and later in London, at a comparatively early age he became identified with the Irish Literary Revival. In this connection, his chief activity was the foundation—in company with Lady Gregory, George Moore, and Edward Martyn—of the Irish Literary Theater. This venture later developed into the Abbey Theater, toward the success of which Yeats and Lady Gregory have largely contributed.

Most of Yeats' own plays were written for production at the Abbey, but his work has been by no means confined to writing plays; for besides his poems, which constitute his most important work, he has managed the theater, encouraged and taught other dramatists to write for it, and finally "discovered" John M. Synge. "The future," declares Horatio Sheafe Krans in his book, "William Butler Yeats and The Irish Literary Revival", "will look back to Mr. Yeats as to a landmark in the literary history of Ireland, both because of his artistic achievement and because he has been a leader in a remarkable movement. Through his poetry the Celtic spirit moves like a fresh wind."

Yeats brought to the theater great poetic and considerable dramatic gifts; he aroused widespread interest in the legends of the Irish past; as propagandist, too, as manager, lecturer, teacher, he has done more than any other—excepting possibly Lady Gregory—to create a living art for Ireland.

PLAYS

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| *The Land of Heart's Desire
(1894) | *The Shadowy Waters (1904) |
| The Countess Cathleen
(1899) | *On Baile's Strand (1904) |
| Diarmuid and Grania (1901)
(In collaboration with
George Moore) | *Deirdre (1906)
The Unicorn from the Stars
(1907)
(In collaboration with
Lady Gregory) |
| *Kathleen ni Houlihan (1902) | *The Golden Helmet (1908) |
| *A Pot of Broth (1902) | *The Green Helmet (1911) |
| *The Hour Glass (1903) | The Hawk (1916) |
| *The King's Threshold (1903)
Where There is Nothing
(1903) | The Player Queen (1916) |

"The Land of Heart's Desire" is published separately by Thomas B. Mosher, Portland, Maine, by Samuel French, New York, and by Walter H. Baker, Boston, as well as in various volumes of plays published by Macmillan Company, New York; "The Countess Cathleen" in Vol. 2 of "The Poetical Works of William B. Yeats", Macmillan; "Kathleen ni Houlihan" in volume of that title, Macmillan, and in Montrose J. Moses' "Representative British Dramas", Little, Brown and Company, Boston; "A Pot of Broth" and "The Hour Glass" in the same volume, in later Yeats volume "Responsibilities", Macmillan, and in T. H. Dickinson's "Chief Contemporary Dramatists", Houghton, Mifflin Company, Boston; "The King's Threshold", "The Shadowy Waters", "On Baile's Strand", and "Deirdre" in "The Poetical Works" above cited; "The Unicorn from the Stars", separately, by Macmillan; "The Golden Helmet" in "Plays for an Irish Theatre", A. H. Bullen, Stratford-on-Avon, England; "The Green Helmet" in volume of that title, Macmillan.

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pany, New York; Forrest Reid, "W. B. Yeats", Dodd, Mead and Company, New York; J. M. Hone, "William Butler Yeats", Maunsel and Company, Dublin; B. Russell Herts, "Depreciations", Boni and Liveright, New York; James Huneker, "The Pathos of Distance", Charles Scribner's Sons, New York; Alan Wade, "Bibliography of Yeats" (in "Collected Works", A. H. Bullen, Stratford-on-Avon).

Magazines: *Poet Lore*, vol. xv, p. 83, Boston; *Critic*, vol. xlv, p. 26; *Collier's Weekly*, vol. xlvi, p. 15, New York; *Living Age*, vol. cclxix, Boston; *Fortnightly*, vol. xci, p. 342, London; *Harper's Weekly*, vol. xlvi, p. 291, New York; *Westminster Review*, vol. clxxvi, p. 1, London; *North American Review*, vol. clxxv, p. 473, New York; *Quarterly Review*, vol. ccxv, p. 219, London.



THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

“The Land of Heart’s Desire” was first produced at
Dublin in 1894.

Characters

MAURTEEN BRUIN, *a peasant*

SHAWN BRUIN, *his son*

FATHER HART, *a priest*

BRIDGET BRUIN, *Maurteen’s wife*

MAIRE BRUIN, *their daughter-in-law*

A CHILD

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THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

SCENE. *The kitchen of Maurteen Bruin's house. An open grate with a turf fire is at the left side of the room, with a table in front of it. There is a door leading to the open air at the back, and another door a little to its left, leading to an inner room. There is a window, a settle and a large dresser on the right side of the room, and a great bowl of primroses on the sill of the window. Maurteen Bruin, Father Hart, and Bridget Bruin are sitting at the table. Shawn Bruin is setting the table for supper. Maire Bruin sits on the settle reading a yellow manuscript.*

BRIDGET.

Because I bade her go and feed the calves,
She took that old book down out of the thatch
And has been doubled over it all day.
We would be deafened by her groans and moans
Had she to work as some do, Father Hart,
Get up at dawn like me, and mend and scour;
Or ride abroad in the boisterous night like you,
The pyx and blessed bread under your arm.

SHAWN.

You are too cross.

BRIDGET.

The young side with the young.

MAURTEEN.

She quarrels with my wife a bit at times,
And is too deep just now in the old book!
But do not blame her greatly; she will grow
As quiet as a puff-ball in a tree
When but the moons of marriage dawn and die
For half a score of times.

FATHER.

Their hearts are wild
As be the hearts of birds, till children come.

BRIDGET.

She would not mind the griddle, milk the cow,
Or even lay the knives and spread the cloth.

FATHER.

I never saw her read a book before;
What may it be?

MAURTEEN.

I do not rightly know;
It has been in the thatch for fifty years.
My father told me my grandfather wrote it,
Killed a red heifer and bound it with the hide.
But draw your chair this way — supper is spread;
And little good he got out of the book,
Because it filled his house with roaming bards,
And roaming ballad-makers and the like,
And wasted all his goods. — Here is the wine:
The griddle bread's beside you, Father Hart.
Colleen, what have you got there in the book
That you must leave the bread to cool? Had I,
Or had my father, read or written books
There were no stocking full of silver and gold
To come, when I am dead, to Shawn and you.

FATHER.

You should not fill your head with foolish dreams.
What are you reading?

MAIRE.

How a Princess Adene,
A daughter of a King of Ireland, heard
A voice singing on a May Eve like this,
And followed, half awake and half asleep,
Until she came into the land of faery,
Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue;

And she is still there, busied with a dance,
Deep in the dewy shadow of a wood,
Or where stars walk upon a mountain-top.

MAURTEEN.

Persuade the colleen to put by the book:
My grandfather would mutter just such things,
And he was no judge of a dog or horse,
And any idle boy could blarney him:
Just speak your mind.

FATHER.

Put it away, my colleen.

God spreads the heavens above us like great wings,
And gives a little round of deeds and days,
And then come the wrecked angels and set snares,
And bait them with light hopes and heavy dreams,
Until the heart is puffed with pride and goes,
Half shuddering and half joyous, from God's peace:
And it was some wrecked angel, blind from tears,
Who flattered Adene's heart with merry words.
My colleen, I have seen some other girls
Restless and ill at ease, but years went by
And they grew like their neighbors and were glad
In minding children, working at the churn,
And gossiping of weddings and of wakes;
For life moves out of a red flare of dreams
Into a common light of common hours,
Until old age brings the red flare again.

SHAWN.

Yet do not blame her greatly, Father Hart,
For she is dull while I am in the fields,
And mother's tongue were harder still to bear,
But for her fancies: this is May Eve too,
When the good people post about the world,
And surely one may think of them to-night.
Maire, have you the primroses to fling
Before the door to make a golden path
For them to bring good luck into the house?

Remember, they may steal new-married brides
After the fall of twilight on May Eve.

[Maire goes over to the window and takes flowers from the bowl and strews them outside the door.]

FATHER.

You do well, daughter, because God permits
Great power to the good people on May Eve.

SHAWN.

They can work all their will with primroses;
Change them to golden money, or little flames
To burn up those who do them any wrong.

MAIRE *(in a dreamy voice)*.

I had no sooner flung them by the door
Than the wind cried and hurried them away;
And then a child came running in the wind
And caught them in her hands and fondled them:
Her dress was green: her hair was of red gold;
Her face was pale as water before dawn.

FATHER.

Whose child can this be?

MAURTEEN.

No one's child at all.

She often dreams that some one has gone by
When there was nothing but a puff of wind.

MAIRE.

They will not bring good luck into the house,
For they will have blown the primroses away;
Yet I am glad that I was courteous to them,
For are not they, likewise, children of God?

FATHER.

Colleen, they are the children of the field,
And they have power until the end of Time,
When God shall fight with them a great pitched battle
And hack them into pieces.

MAIRE.

He will smile,
Father, perhaps, and open his great door,
And call the pretty and kind into his house.

FATHER.

Did but the lawless angels see that door,
They would fall, slain by everlasting peace;
And when such angels knock upon our doors
Who goes with them must drive through the same storm.
*[A knock at the door. Maire opens it and then goes to the
dresser and fills a porringer with milk and hands it through
the door and takes it back empty and closes the door.]*

MAIRE.

A little queer old woman cloaked in green,
Who came to beg a porringer of milk.

BRIDGET.

The good people go asking milk and fire
Upon May Eve — Woe on the house that gives,
For they have power upon it for a year.
I knew you would bring evil on the house.

MAURTEEN.

Who was she?

MAIRE.

Both the tongue and face were strange.

MAURTEEN.

Some strangers came last week to Clover Hill;
She must be one of them.

BRIDGET.

I am afraid.

MAURTEEN.

The priest will keep all harm out of the house.

FATHER.

The cross will keep all harm out of the house
While it hangs there.

MAURTEEN.

Come, sit beside me, colleen,
And put away your dreams of discontent,
For I would have you light up my last days
Like a bright torch of pine, and when I die
I will make you the wealthiest hereabout:
For hid away where nobody can find
I have a stocking full of silver and gold.

BRIDGET.

You are the fool of every pretty face,
 And I must pinch and pare that my son's wife
 May have all kinds of ribbons for her head.

MAURTEEN.

Do not be cross; she is a right good girl!
 The butter is by your elbow, Father Hart.
 My colleen, have not Fate and Time and Change
 Done well for me and for old Bridget there?
 We have a hundred acres of good land,
 And sit beside each other at the fire,
 The wise priest of our parish to our right,
 And you and our dear son to left of us.
 To sit beside the board and drink good wine
 And watch the turf smoke coiling from the fire
 And feel content and wisdom in your heart,
 This is the best of life; when we are young
 We long to tread a way none trod before,
 But find the excellent old way through love
 And through the care of children to the hour
 For bidding Fate and Time and Change good-bye.

[A knock at the door. Maire opens it and then takes a sod of turf out of the hearth in the tongs and passes it through the door and closes the door and remains standing by it.]

MAIRE.

A little queer old man in a green coat,
 Who asked a burning sod to light his pipe.

BRIDGET.

You have now given milk and fire, and brought,
 For all you know, evil upon the house.
 Before you married you were idle and fine,
 And went about with ribbons on your head;
 And now you are a good-for-nothing wife.

SHAWN.

Be quiet, mother!

MAURTEEN.

You are much too cross!

MAIRE.

What do I care if I have given this house,
Where I must hear all day a bitter tongue,
Into the power of faeries!

BRIDGET.

You know well

How calling the good people by that name
Or talking of them over much at all
May bring all kinds of evil on the house.

MAIRE.

Come, faeries, take me out of this dull house!
Let me have all the freedom I have lost;
Work when I will and die when I will!
Faeries, come take me out of this dull world,
For I would ride with you upon the wind,
Run on the top of the disheveled tide,
And dance upon the mountains like a flame!

FATHER.

You cannot know the meaning of your words.

MAIRE.

Father, I am right weary of four tongues:
A tongue that is too crafty and too wise,
A tongue that is too godly and too grave,
A tongue that is more bitter than the tide,
And a kind tongue too full of drowsy love,
Of drowsy love and my captivity.
[Shawn comes over to her and leads her to the settle.]

SHAWN.

Do not blame me: I often lie awake
Thinking that all things trouble your bright head —
How beautiful it is — such broad pale brows
Under a cloudy blossoming of hair!
Sit down beside me here — these are too old,
And have forgotten they were ever young.

MAIRE.

O you are the great door-post of this house,
And I, the red nasturtium, climbing up.

[She takes Shawn's hand, but looks shyly at the priest and lets it go.]

FATHER.

Good daughter, take his hand — by love alone
God binds us to himself and to the hearth
And shuts us from the waste beyond his peace,
From maddening freedom and bewildering light.

SHAWN.

Would that the world were mine to give it you
With every quiet hearth and barren waste,
The maddening freedom of its woods and tides,
And the bewildering light upon its hills.

MAIRE.

Then I would take and break it in my hands
To see you smile watching it crumble away.

SHAWN.

Then I would mould a world of fire and dew
With no one bitter, grave, or over wise,
And nothing marred or old to do you wrong.
And crowd the enraptured quiet of the sky
With candles burning to your lonely face.

MAIRE.

Your looks are all the candles that I need.

SHAWN.

Once a fly dancing in a beam of the sun
Or the light wind blowing out of the dawn,
Could fill your heart with dreams none other knew,
But now the indissoluble sacrament
Has mixed your heart that was most proud and cold
With my warm heart forever; and sun and moon
Must fade and heaven be rolled up like a scroll;
But your white spirit still walk by my spirit.
[A Voice sings in the distance.]

MAIRE.

Did you hear something call? O guard me close,
Because I have said wicked things to-night;
And seen a pale-faced child with red-gold hair,

And longed to dance upon the winds with her.

A VOICE (*close to the door*).

The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart
And the lonely of heart is withered away,
While the faeries dance in a place apart,
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;
For they hear the wind laugh, and murmur and sing
Of a land where even the old are fair,
And even the wise are merry of tongue;
But I heard a reed of Coolaney say,
"When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung
The lonely of heart is withered away!"

MAURTEEN.

I am right happy, and would make all else
Be happy too. I hear a child outside,
And will go bring her in out of the cold.
[*He opens the door. A Child dressed in pale green and with
red-gold hair comes into the house.*]

CHILD.

I tire of winds and waters and pale lights!

MAURTEEN.

You are most welcome. It is cold out there;
Who would think to face such cold on a May Eve?

CHILD.

And when I tire of this warm little house
There is one here who must away, away,
To where the woods, the stars, and the white streams
Are holding a continual festival.

MAURTEEN.

O listen to her dreamy and strange talk.
Come to the fire.

CHILD.

I will sit upon your knee,

For I have run from where the winds are born,
And long to rest my feet a little while.

[*She sits upon his knee.*]

BRIDGET.

How pretty you are!

MAURTEEN.

Your hair is wet with dew!

BRIDGET.

I will warm your chilly feet.

[She takes the child's feet in her hands.]

MAURTEEN.

You must have come

A long, long way, for I have never seen

Your pretty face, and must be tired and hungry;

Here is some bread and wine.

CHILD.

The wine is bitter.

Old mother, have you no sweet food for me?

BRIDGET.

I have some honey!

[She goes into the next room.]

MAURTEEN.

You are a dear child;

The mother was quite cross before you came.

[Bridget returns with the honey, and goes to the dresser and fills a porringer with milk.]

BRIDGET.

She is the child of gentle people; look

At her white hands and at her pretty dress.

I have brought you some new milk, but wait a while,

And I will put it by the fire to warm,

For things well fitted for poor folk like us

Would never please a high-born child like you.

CHILD.

Old mother, my old mother, the green dawn

Brightens above while you blow up the fire;

And evening finds you spreading the white cloth.

The young may lie in bed and dream and hope,

But you work on because your heart is old.

BRIDGET.

The young are idle.

CHILD.

Old father, you are wise
And all the years have gathered in your heart
To whisper of the wonders that are gone.
The young must sigh through many a dream and hope,
But you are wise because your heart is old.

MAURTEEN.

O who would think to find so young a child
Loving old age and wisdom?
[Bridget gives her more bread and honey.]

CHILD.

No more, mother.

MAURTEEN.

What a small bite! The milk is ready now;
What a small sip!

CHILD.

Put on my shoes, old mother,
For I would like to dance now I have eaten.
The reeds are dancing by Coolaney lake,
And I would like to dance until the reeds
And the white waves have danced themselves to sleep.
*[Bridget having put on her shoes, she gets off the old man's
knees and is about to dance, but suddenly sees the crucifix and
shrieks and covers her eyes.]*

What is that ugly thing on the black cross?

FATHER.

You cannot know how naughty your words are!
That is our Blessed Lord!

CHILD.

Hide it away!

BRIDGET.

I have begun to be afraid, again!

CHILD.

Hide it away!

MAURTEEN.

That would be wickedness!

BRIDGET.

That would be sacrilege!

CHILD.

The tortured thing!

Hide it away!

MAURTEEN.

Her parents are to blame.

FATHER.

That is the image of the Son of God.

[The Child puts her arm round his neck and kisses him.]

CHILD.

Hide it away! Hide it away!

MAURTEEN.

No! No!

FATHER.

Because you are so young and little a child

I will go take it down.

CHILD.

Hide it away,

And cover it out of sight and out of mind.

[Father takes it down and carries it toward the inner room.]

FATHER.

Since you have come into this barony

I will instruct you in our blessed faith:

Being a clever child you will soon learn.

(To the others)

We must be tender with all budding things.

Our Maker let no thought of Calvary

Trouble the morning stars in their first song.

(Puts the crucifix in the inner room)

CHILD.

Here is level ground for dancing. I will dance.

The wind is blowing on the waving reeds,

The wind is blowing on the heart of man.

*[She dances, swaying about like the reeds.]*MAIRE *(to Shawn)*.

Just now when she came near I thought I heard

Other small steps beating upon the floor,

And a faint music blowing in the wind,
Invisible pipes giving her feet the time.

SHAWN.

I heard no step but hers.

MAIRE.

Look to the bolt!

Because the unholy powers are abroad.

MAURTEEN (*to the Child*).

Come over here, and if you promise me

Not to talk wickedly of holy things

I will give you something.

CHILD.

Bring it me, old father!

[*Maurteen goes into the next room.*]

FATHER.

I will have queen cakes when you come to me!

[*Maurteen returns and lays a piece of money on the table. The Child makes a gesture of refusal.*]

MAURTEEN.

It will buy lots of toys; see how it glitters!

CHILD.

Come, tell me, do you love me?

MAURTEEN.

I love you!

CHILD.

Ah! but you love this fireside!

FATHER.

I love you.

CHILD.

But you love him above.

BRIDGET.

She is blaspheming.

CHILD (*to Maire*).

And do you love me?

MAIRE.

I — I do not know.

CHILD.

You love that great tall fellow over there:

Yet I could make you ride upon the winds,
Run on the top of the disheveled tide,
And dance upon the mountains like a flame!

MAIRE.

Queen of the Angels and kind Saints, defend us!
Some dreadful fate has fallen: a while ago
The wind cried out and took the primroses,
And she ran by me laughing in the wind,
And I gave milk and fire, and she came in
And made you hide the blessed crucifix.

FATHER.

You fear because of her wild, pretty prattle;
She knows no better.

(*To the Child*)

Child, how old are you?

CHILD.

When winter sleep is abroad my hair grows thin,
My feet unsteady. When the leaves awaken
My mother carries me in her golden arms.
I will soon put on my womanhood and marry
The spirits of wood and water, but who can tell
When I was born for the first time? I think
I am much older than the eagle cock
That blinks and blinks on Ballygawly Hill,
And he is the oldest thing under the moon.

FATHER.

She is of the fairy people.

CHILD.

I am Brig's daughter.

I sent my messengers for milk and fire.

And then I heard one call to me and came.

[*They all, except Maire, gather about the priest for protection. Maire stays on the settle in a stupor of terror. The Child takes primroses from the great bowl and begins to strew them between herself and the priest and about Maire. During the following dialogue Shawn goes more than once to the brink of the primroses, but shrinks back to the others timidly.*]

FATHER.

I will confront this mighty spirit alone.

[They cling to him and hold him back.]

CHILD *(while she strews the primroses)*.

No one whose heart is heavy with human tears

Can cross these little cressets of the wood.

FATHER.

Be not afraid, the Father is with us,

And all the nine angelic hierarchies,

The Holy Martyrs and the Innocents,

The adoring Magi in their coats of mail,

And he who died and rose on the third day,

And Mary with her seven times wounded heart.

(The Child ceases strewing the primroses, and kneels upon the settle beside Maire and puts her arms about her neck)

Cry, daughter to the Angels and the Saints.

CHILD.

You shall go with me, newly-married bride,

And gaze upon a merrier multitude;

White-armed Nuala and Aengus of the birds,

And Feacra of the hurtling foam, and him

Who is the ruler of the western host,

Finvarra, and their Land of Heart's Desire,

Where beauty has no ebb, decay no flood,

But joy is wisdom, Time an endless song.

I kiss you and the world begins to fade.

FATHER.

Daughter, I call you unto home and love!

CHILD.

Stay, and come with me, newly-married bride,

For, if you hear him, you grow like the rest:

Bear children, cook, be mindful of the churn,

And wrangle over butter, fowl, and eggs,

And sit at last there, old and bitter tongue,

Watching the white stars war upon your hopes.

FATHER.

Daughter, I point you out the way to heaven.

CHILD.

But I can lead you, newly-married bride,
 Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
 Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
 Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue,
 And where kind tongues bring no captivity,
 For we are only true to the far lights
 We follow singing, over valley and hill.

FATHER.

By the dear name of the one crucified,
 I bid you, Maire Bruin, come to me.

CHILD.

I keep you in the name of your own heart!
*(She leaves the settle, and stooping takes up a mass of prim-
 roses and kisses them)*
 We have great power to-night, dear golden folk,
 For he took down and hid the crucifix.
 And my invisible brethren fill the house;
 I hear their footsteps going up and down.
 O they shall soon rule all the hearts of men
 And own all lands; last night they merrily danced
 About his chapel belfry! *(To Maire)* Come away,
 I hear my brethren bidding us away!

FATHER.

I will go fetch the crucifix again.
[They hang about him in terror and prevent him from moving.]

BRIDGET.

The enchanted flowers will kill us if you go.

MAURTEEN.

They turn the flowers to little twisted flames.

SHAWN.

The little twisted flames burn up the heart.

CHILD.

I hear them crying, "Newly married bride,
 Come to the woods and waters and pale lights."

MAIRE.

I will go with you.

FATHER.

She is lost, alas!

CHILD (*standing by the door*).

But clinging mortal hope must fall from you
For we who ride the winds, run on the waves,
And dance upon the mountains, are more light
Than dewdrops on the banners of the dawn.

MAIRE.

O take me with you.
[*Shawn goes over to her.*]

SHAWN.

Beloved, do not leave me!
Remember when I met you by the well
And took your hand in mine and spoke of love.

MAIRE.

Dear face! Dear voice!

CHILD.

Come, newly-married bride!

MAIRE.

I always loved her world — and yet — and yet ——
[*Sinks into his arms.*]

CHILD (*from the door*).

White bird, white bird, come with me, little bird.

MAIRE.

She calls to me!

CHILD.

Come with me, little bird!

MAIRE.

I can hear songs and dancing!

SHAWN.

Stay with me.

MAIRE.

I think that I would stay — and yet — and yet ——

CHILD.

Come, little bird with crest of gold!

MAIRE (*very softly*).

And yet ——

CHILD.

Come, little bird with silver feet!

[*Maire dies, and the child goes.*

SHAWN.

She is dead!

BRIDGET.

Come from that image: body and soul are gone,
You have thrown your arms about a drift of leaves
Or bole of an ash-tree changed into her image.

FATHER.

Thus do the spirits of evil snatch their prey
Almost out of the very hand of God;
And day by day their power is more and more,
And men and women leave old paths, for pride
Comes knocking with thin knuckles on the heart.

A VOICE (*singing outside*).

The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart
And the lonely of heart is withered away,
While the faeries dance in a place apart,
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;
For they hear the wind laugh, and murmur and sing
Of a land where even the old are fair,
And even the wise are merry of tongue;
But I heard a reed of Coolaney say,
"When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung
The lonely of heart is withered away!"

[*The song is taken up by many voices, who sing loudly, as if in triumph. Some of the voices seem to come from within the house.*

CURTAIN

RIDERS TO THE SEA

J. M. SYNGE

EDMUND JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE was born near Dublin, at Newtown Little, in 1871. Little is recorded of his early life, except that he remained at home until he was almost twenty, and that he graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1892. Endowed with a natural taste for music and travel, he wandered through Europe—with his violin—for some years. He went first to Germany, intending to study music seriously, but decided to return to Paris, where he devoted himself to literary hack-work of various kinds. There he wrote a few poems and contributed occasional articles to English reviews. It was not, however, until he was “discovered” by Yeats, who in 1898 persuaded him to return to Ireland and study the primitive folk in unfrequented districts, that he began to do significant work. Yeats induced Synge to write for the then recently founded Irish Theater. In the Aran Islands, in Kerry and Wicklow and Connemara, he wandered, finding among the people with whom he lived the characters which he incorporated in his plays of Irish life. He died of cancer in 1909, in Dublin.

“He loves,” says Yeats, “all that has edge, all that is salt in the mouth, all that is rough to the hand, all that heightens the emotions by contest, all that stings into life the sense of tragedy. . . . The food of the spiritual-minded is sweet, an Indian scripture says, but passionate minds love bitter food.”

“Riders to the Sea” is the most direct and compact of all Synge’s plays. Less highly colored in language than “Deirdre of the Sorrows” and lacking the purely imaginative

force of "The Playboy of the Western World", it is without doubt the dramatist's best sustained effort. Synge's own words on the drama should be pondered in connection with the reading of this play: "The drama is made serious — in the French sense of the word — not by the degree in which it is taken up with problems that are serious in themselves, but by the degree in which it gives the nourishment, not very easy to define, on which our imaginations live. . . . The drama, like the symphony, does not teach or prove anything."

PLAYS

*The Shadow of the Glen (1902)	The Tinker's Wedding (1909)
*Riders to the Sea (1904)	Deirdre of the Sorrows
The Well of the Saints (1905)	(1910)
The Playboy of the Western World (1907)	

All Synge's plays are published separately by John W. Luce and Company, Boston.

References: Francis Bickley, "J. M. Synge and the Irish Dramatic Movement", Houghton, Mifflin Company, Boston; Maurice Bourgeois, "John Millington Synge and the Irish Theater", Macmillan Company, New York; John Masefield, "John M. Synge", Macmillan; P. P. Howe, "J. M. Synge", Dodd, Mead and Company, New York; and "Dramatic Portraits", Mitchell Kennerley, New York; C. E. Montague, "Dramatic Values", Macmillan; W. B. Yeats, "The Cutting of an Agate", Macmillan; Darrell Figgis, "Studies and Appreciations", E. P. Dutton and Company, New York; James Huneker, "The Pathos of Distance", Charles Scribner's Sons, New York; J. M. Synge, "The Aran Islands", and "In Kerry and Wicklow", John W. Luce and Company, Boston.

Magazines: *Contemporary Review*, vol. xciv, p. 470, London; *The Dial*, vol. 1, p. 37, vol. liv, p. 233, New York; *The Living Age*, vol. cclxix, p. 163, and vol. cclxxx, p. 777, Boston; *The Nation*, vol. xciii, p. 376, and vol. xcv, p. 608, New York; *Yale Review*, vol. i, p. 192, and vol. ii, p. 767, New Haven; *The Forum*, vol. xlvii, p. 55, New York; *Current Literature*, vol. liii, p. 695, New York.



RIDERS TO THE SEA

By J. M. SYNGE

“Riders to the Sea” was first produced at Dublin in 1904.

Characters

MAURYA, *an old woman*

BARTLEY, *her son*

CATHLEEN, *her daughter*

NORA, *a younger daughter*

MEN AND WOMEN

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RIDERS TO THE SEA

SCENE. *An Island off the West of Ireland. Cottage kitchen, with nets, oil-skins, spinning wheel, some new boards standing by the wall, etc. Cathleen, a girl of about twenty, finishes kneading cake, and puts it down in the pot-oven by the fire; then wipes her hands, and begins to spin at the wheel. Nora, a young girl, puts her head in at the door.*

NORA (*in a low voice*). Where is she?

CATHLEEN. She's lying down, God help her, and may be sleeping, if she's able.

[*Nora comes in softly, and takes a bundle from under her shawl.*

CATHLEEN (*spinning the wheel rapidly*). What is it you have?

NORA. The young priest is after bringing them. It's a shirt and a plain stocking were got off a drowned man in Donegal.

[*Cathleen stops her wheel with a sudden movement, and leans out to listen.*

NORA. We're to find out if it's Michael's they are, some time herself will be down looking by the sea.

CATHLEEN. How would they be Michael's, Nora? How would he go the length of that way to the far north?

NORA. The young priest says he's known the like of it. "If it's Michael's they are", says he, "you can tell herself he's got a clean burial by the grace of God, and if they're not his, let no one say a word about them, for she'll be getting her death", says he, "with crying and lamenting."

[*The door which Nora half closed is blown open by a gust of wind.*

CATHLEEN (*looking out anxiously*). Did you ask him would he stop Bartley going this day with the horses to the Galway fair?

NORA. "I won't stop him", says he, "but let you not be afraid. Herself does be saying prayers half through the night, and the Almighty God won't leave her destitute", says he, "with no son living."

CATHLEEN. Is the sea bad by the white rocks, Nora?

NORA. Middling bad, God help us. There's a great roaring in the west, and it's worse it'll be getting when the tide's turned to the wind. (*She goes over to the table with the bundle*) Shall I open it now?

CATHLEEN. Maybe she'd wake up on us, and come in before we'd done. (*Coming to the table*) It's a long time we'll be, and the two of us crying.

NORA (*goes to the inner door and listens*). She's moving about on the bed. She'll be coming in a minute.

CATHLEEN. Give me the ladder, and I'll put them up in the turf-loft, the way she won't know of them at all, and maybe when the tide turns she'll be going down to see would he be floating from the east.

[*They put the ladder against the gable of the chimney; Cathleen goes up a few steps and hides the bundle in the turf-loft. Maurya comes from the inner room.*]

MAURYA (*looking up at Cathleen and speaking querulously*). Isn't it turf enough you have for this day and evening?

CATHLEEN. There's a cake baking at the fire for a short space (*throwing down the turf*) and Bartley will want it when the tide turns if he goes to Connemara.

[*Nora picks up the turf and puts it round the pot-oven.*]

MAURYA (*sitting down on a stool at the fire*). He won't go this day with the wind rising from the south and west. He won't go this day, for the young priest will stop him surely.

NORA. He'll not stop him, mother, and I heard Eamon Simon and Stephen Pheety and Colum Shawn saying he would go.

MAURYA. Where is he itself?

NORA. He went down to see would there be another boat sailing in the week, and I'm thinking it won't be long till

he's here now, for the tide's turning at the green head, and the hooker's tacking from the east.

CATHLEEN. I hear some one passing the big stones.

NORA (*looking out*). He's coming now, and he in a hurry.

BARTLEY (*comes in and looks round the room. Speaking sadly and quietly*). Where is the bit of new rope, Cathleen, was bought in Connemara?

CATHLEEN (*coming down*). Give it to him, Nora; it's on a nail by the white boards. I hung it up this morning, for the pig with the black feet was eating it.

NORA (*giving him a rope*). Is that it, Bartley?

MAURYA. You'd do right to leave that rope, Bartley, hanging by the boards. (*Bartley takes the rope*) It will be wanting in this place, I'm telling you, if Michael is washed up to-morrow morning, or the next morning, or any morning in the week, for it's a deep grave we'll make him by the grace of God.

BARTLEY (*beginning to work with the rope*). I've no halter the way I can ride down on the mare, and I must go now quickly. This is the one boat going for two weeks or beyond it, and the fair will be a good fair for horses I heard them saying below.

MAURYA. It's a hard thing they'll be saying below if the body is washed up and there's no man in it to make the coffin, and I after giving a big price for the finest white boards you'd find in Connemara.

[*She looks round at the boards.*]

BARTLEY. How would it be washed up, and we after looking each day for nine days, and a strong wind blowing a while back from the west and south?

MAURYA. If it wasn't found itself, that wind is raising the sea, and there was a star up against the moon, and it rising in the night. If it was a hundred horses, or a thousand horses you had itself, what is the price of a thousand horses against a son where there is one son only?

BARTLEY (*working at the halter, to Cathleen*). Let you go down each day, and see the sheep aren't jumping in on the

rye, and if the jobber comes you can sell the pig with the black feet if there is a good price going.

MAURYA. How would the like of her get a good price for a pig?

BARTLEY (*to Cathleen*). If the west wind holds with the last bit of the moon let you and Nora get up weed enough for another cock for the kelp. It's hard set we'll be from this day with no one in it but one man to work.

MAURYA. It's hard set we'll be surely the day you're drown'd with the rest. What way will I live and the girls with me, and I an old woman looking for the grave? [*Bartley lays down the halter, takes off his old coat, and puts on a newer one of the same flannel.*]

BARTLEY (*to Nora*). Is she coming to the pier?

NORA (*looking out*). She's passing the green head and letting fall her sails.

BARTLEY (*getting his purse and tobacco*). I'll have half an hour to go down, and you'll see me coming again in two days, or in three days, or maybe in four days if the wind is bad.

MAURYA (*turning round to the fire, and putting her shawl over her head*). Isn't it a hard and cruel man won't hear a word from an old woman, and she holding him from the sea?

CATHLEEN. It's the life of a young man to be going on the sea, and who would listen to an old woman with one thing and she saying it over?

BARTLEY (*taking the halter*). I must go now quickly. I'll ride down on the red mare, and the gray pony'll run behind me. . . . The blessing of God on you.

[*He goes out.*]

MAURYA (*crying out as he is in the door*). He's gone now, God spare us, and we'll not see him again. He's gone now, and when the black night is falling I'll have no son left me in the world.

CATHLEEN. Why wouldn't you give him your blessing and he looking round in the door? Isn't it sorrow enough is

on every one in this house without your sending him out with an unlucky word behind him, and a hard word in his ear?

[Maurya takes up the tongs and begins raking the fire aimlessly without looking round.]

NORA *(turning towards her)*. You're taking away the turf from the cake.

CATHLEEN *(crying out)*. The Son of God forgive us, Nora, we're after forgetting his bit of bread.

[She comes over to the fire.]

NORA. And it's destroyed he'll be going till dark night, and he after eating nothing since the sun went up.

CATHLEEN *(turning the cake out of the oven)*. It's destroyed he'll be, surely. There's no sense left on any person in a house where an old woman will be talking for ever.

[Maurya sways herself on her stool.]

CATHLEEN *(cutting off some of the bread and rolling it in a cloth; to Maurya)*. Let you go down now to the spring well and give him this and he passing. You'll see him then and the dark word will be broken, and you can say "God speed you," the way he'll be easy in his mind.

MAURYA *(taking the bread)*. Will I be in it as soon as himself?

CATHLEEN. If you go now quickly.

MAURYA *(standing up unsteadily)*. It's hard set I am to walk.

CATHLEEN *(looking at her anxiously)*. Give her the stick, Nora, or maybe she'll slip on the big stones.

NORA. What stick?

CATHLEEN. The stick Michael brought from Connemara.

MAURYA *(taking a stick Nora gives her)*. In the big world the old people do be leaving things after them for their sons and children, but in this place it is the young men do be leaving things behind for them that do be old.

[She goes out slowly. Nora goes over to the ladder.]

CATHLEEN. Wait, Nora, maybe she'd turn back quickly. She's that sorry, God help her, you wouldn't know the thing she'd do.

NORA. Is she gone round by the bush?

CATHLEEN (*looking out*). She's gone now. Throw it down quickly, for the Lord knows when she'll be out of it again.

NORA (*getting the bundle from the loft*). The young priest said he'd be passing to-morrow, and we might go down and speak to him below if it's Michael's they are surely.

CATHLEEN (*taking the bundle*). Did he say what way they were found?

NORA (*coming down*). "There were two men," says he, "and they rowing round with poteen before the cocks crowed, and the oar of one of them caught the body, and they passing the black cliffs of the north."

CATHLEEN (*trying to open the bundle*). Give me a knife, Nora, the string's perished with the salt water, and there's a black knot on it you wouldn't loosen in a week.

NORA (*giving her a knife*). I've heard tell it was a long way to Donegal.

CATHLEEN (*cutting the string*). It is surely. There was a man in here a while ago—the man sold us that knife—and he said if you set off walking from the rocks beyond, it would be seven days you'd be in Donegal.

NORA. And what time would a man take, and he floating? [*Cathleen opens the bundle and takes out a bit of a stocking. They look at them eagerly.*]

CATHLEEN (*in a low voice*). The Lord spare us, Nora! isn't it a queer hard thing to say if it's his they are surely?

NORA. I'll get his shirt off the hook the way we can put the one flannel on the other. (*She looks through some clothes hanging in the corner*) It's not with them, Cathleen, and where will it be?

CATHLEEN. I'm thinking Bartley put it on him in the morning, for his own shirt was heavy with the salt in it. (*Pointing to the corner*) There's a bit of a sleeve was of the same stuff. Give me that and it will do.

[*Nora brings it to her and they compare the flannel.*]

CATHLEEN. It's the same stuff, Nora; but if it is itself aren't there great rolls of it in the shops of Galway, and isn't

it many another man may have a shirt of it as well as Michael himself?

NORA (*who has taken up the stocking and counted the stitches, crying out*). It's Michael, Cathleen, it's Michael; God spare his soul, and what will herself say when she hears this story, and Bartley on the sea?

CATHLEEN (*taking the stocking*). It's a plain stocking.

NORA. It's the second one of the third pair I knitted, and I put up three score stitches, and I dropped four of them.

CATHLEEN (*counts the stitches*). It's that number is in it (*crying out*). Ah, Nora, isn't it a bitter thing to think of him floating that way to the far north, and no one to keen him but the black hags that do be flying on the sea?

NORA (*swinging herself round, and throwing out her arms on the clothes*). And isn't it a pitiful thing when there is nothing left of a man who was a great rower and fisher, but a bit of an old shirt and a plain stocking?

CATHLEEN (*after an instant*). Tell me is herself coming, Nora? I hear a little sound on the path.

NORA (*looking out*). She is, Cathleen. She's coming up to the door.

CATHLEEN. Put these things away before she'll come in. Maybe it's easier she'll be after giving her blessing to Bartley, and we won't let on we've heard anything the time he's on the sea.

NORA (*helping Cathleen to close the bundle*). We'll put them here in the corner.

[*They put them into a hole in the chimney corner. Cathleen goes back to the spinning wheel.*]

NORA. Will she see it was crying I was?

CATHLEEN. Keep your back to the door the way the light'll not be on you. (*Nora sits down at the chimney corner, with her back to the door. Maurya comes in very slowly, without looking at the girls, and goes over to her stool at the other side of the fire. The cloth with the bread is still in her hand. The girls look at each other, and Nora points to the*

bundle of bread. Cathleen, after spinning for a moment)
You didn't give him his bit of bread?

[Maurya begins to keen softly, without turning round.

CATHLEEN. Did you see him riding down? *(Maurya goes on keening. A little impatiently)* God forgive you; isn't it a better thing to raise your voice and tell what you seen, than to be making lamentation for a thing that's done? Did you see Bartley? I'm saying to you.

MAURYA *(with a weak voice)*. My heart's broken from this day.

CATHLEEN *(as before)*. Did you see Bartley?

MAURYA. I seen the fearfulest thing.

CATHLEEN *(leaves her wheel and looks out)*. God forgive you; he's riding the mare now over the green head, and the gray pony behind him.

MAURYA *(starts, so that her shawl falls back from her head and shows her white tossed hair. With a frightened voice)*. The gray pony behind him.

CATHLEEN *(coming to the fire)*. What is it ails you, at all?

MAURYA *(speaking very slowly)*. I've seen the fearfulest thing any person has seen, since the day Bride Dara seen the dead man with the child in his arms.

CATHLEEN AND NORA. Uah.

[They crouch down in front of the old woman at the fire.

NORA. Tell us what it is you seen.

MAURYA. I went down to the spring well, and I stood there saying a prayer to myself. Then Bartley came along, and he riding on the red mare with the gray pony behind him. *(She puts up her hands, as if to hide something from her eyes)*
The Son of God spare us, Nora!

CATHLEEN. What is it you seen?

MAURYA. I seen Michael himself.

CATHLEEN *(speaking softly)*. You did not, mother. It wasn't Michael you seen, for his body is after being found in the far north, and he's got a clean burial by the grace of God.

MAURYA *(a little defiantly)*. I'm after seeing him this day,

and he riding and galloping. Bartley came first on the red mare; and I tried to say "God speed you," but something choked the words in my throat. He went by quickly; and "the blessing of God on you," says he, and I could say nothing. I looked up then, and I crying, at the gray pony, and there was Michael upon it—with fine clothes on him, and new shoes on his feet.

CATHLEEN (*begins to keen*). It's destroyed we are from this day. It's destroyed, surely.

NORA. Didn't the young priest say the Almighty God wouldn't leave her destitute with no son living?

MAURYA (*in a low voice, but clearly*). It's little the like of him knows of the sea. . . . Bartley will be lost now, and let you call in Eamon and make me a good coffin out of the white boards, for I won't live after them. I've had a husband, and a husband's father, and six sons in this house—six fine men, though it was a hard birth I had with every one of them and they coming to the world—and some of them were found and some of them were not found, but they're gone now the lot of them. . . . There were Stephen, and Shawn, were lost in the great wind, and found after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of them on the one plank, and in by that door.

[*She pauses for a moment, the girls start as if they heard something through the door that is half open behind them.*]

NORA (*in a whisper*). Did you hear that, Cathleen? Did you hear a noise in the north-east?

CATHLEEN (*in a whisper*). There's some one after crying out by the seashore.

MAURYA (*continues without hearing anything*). There was Sheamus and his father, and his own father again, were lost in a dark night, and not a stick or sign was seen of them when the sun went up. There was Patch after was drowned out of a curagh that turned over. I was sitting here with Bartley, and he a baby, lying on my two knees, and I seen two women, and three women, and four women

coming in, and they crossing themselves, and not saying a word. I looked out then, and there were men coming after them, and they holding a thing in the half of a red sail, and water dripping out of it—it was a dry day, Nora—and leaving a track to the door. (*She pauses again with her hand stretched out towards the door. It opens softly and old women begin to come in, crossing themselves on the threshold, and kneeling down in front of the stage with red petticoats over their heads. Half in a dream, to Cathleen*) Is it Patch, or Michael, or what is it at all?

CATHLEEN. Michael is after being found in the far north, and when he is found there how could he be here in this place?

MAURYA. There does be a power of young men floating round in the sea, and what way would they know if it was Michael they had, or another man like him, for when a man is nine days in the sea, and the wind blowing, it's hard set his own mother would be to say what man was it.

CATHLEEN. It's Michael, God spare him, for they're after sending us a bit of his clothes from the far north.

[*She reaches out and hands Maurya the clothes that belonged to Michael. Maurya stands up slowly, and takes them in her hands. Nora looks out.*]

NORA. They're carrying a thing among them and there's water dripping out of it and leaving a track by the big stones.

CATHLEEN (*in a whisper to the women who have come in*). Is it Bartley it is?

ONE OF THE WOMEN. It is surely, God rest his soul.

[*Two younger women come in and pull out the table. Then men carry in the body of Bartley, laid on a plank, with a bit of a sail over it, and lay it on the table.*]

CATHLEEN (*to the women, as they are doing so*). What way was he drowned?

ONE OF THE WOMEN. The gray pony knocked him into the sea, and he was washed out where there is a great surf on the white rocks.

[*Maurya has gone over and knelt down at the head of the table.*]

The women are keening softly and swaying themselves with a slow movement. Cathleen and Nora kneel at the other end of the table. The men kneel at the door.

MAURYA (*raising her head and speaking as if she did not see the people around her*). They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me. . . . I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening. (*To Nora*) Give me the Holy Water, Nora, there's a small sup still on the dresser. (*Nora gives it to her. Maurya drops Michael's clothes across Bartley's feet, and sprinkles the Holy Water over him*) It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God. It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'd be saying; but it's a great rest I'll have now, and it's time surely. It's a great rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking.

[She kneels down again, crossing herself, and saying prayers under her breath.]

CATHLEEN (*to an old man*). Maybe yourself and Eamon would make a coffin when the sun rises. We have fine white boards herself bought, God help her, thinking Michael would be found, and I have a new cake you can eat while you'll be working.

THE OLD MAN (*looking at the boards*). Are there nails with them?

CATHLEEN. There are not, Colum; we didn't think of the nails.

ANOTHER MAN. It's a great wonder she wouldn't think of the nails, and all the coffins she's seen made already.

CATHLEEN. It's getting old she is, and broken.

[*Maurya stands up again very slowly and spreads out the pieces of Michael's clothes beside the body, sprinkling them with the last of the Holy Water.*

NORA (*in a whisper to Cathleen*). She's quiet now and easy; but the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well. It's fonder she was of Michael, and would any one have thought that?

CATHLEEN (*slowly and clearly*). An old woman will be soon tired with anything she will do, and isn't it nine days herself is after crying and keening, and making great sorrow in the house?

MAURYA (*puts the empty cup mouth downwards on the table, and lays her hands together on Bartley's feet*). They're all together this time, and the end is come. May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley's soul, and on Michael's soul, and on the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn (*bending her head*); and may He have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of every one is left living in the world. (*She pauses, and the keen rises a little more loudly from the women, then sinks away. Continuing*) Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied.

[*She kneels down again and the curtain falls slowly.*

SPREADING THE NEWS

LADY GREGORY

LADY AUGUSTA GREGORY was born at Roxborough, County Galway, Ireland, in 1859. Unlike most successful dramatists, she began writing plays late in life. Her literary work before 1904, when her first play appeared, was largely the translation and rewriting of early Irish legends and tales.

Together with Yeats, Edward Martyn, and George Moore she founded The Irish Literary Theater late in the nineties, which subsequently became the Abbey Theater. Lady Gregory is one of the outstanding figures in the modern Irish dramatic and literary renaissance. In her collections of folklore—"Cuchulain of Muirthemne", "Gods and Fighting Men", "The Book of Saints and Wonders", etc.,—in her many plays, in her lectures and articles, she has contributed more than any one else, except Yeats, to the success of the "movement."

Her best plays (that is, her comedies) were written in order to furnish relief to the more somber pieces which at one time threatened to overbalance the repertory of the Abbey Theater. There were few light plays available, and in spite of the fact that Lady Gregory's first dramatic idea came to her not as a comedy, but as a serious play, she wrote "Spreading the News." Of this she says: "The idea of this play first came to me as a tragedy. . . . But comedy and not tragedy was wanted at our theater to put beside the high poetic work, 'The King's Threshold', 'The Shadowy Waters', 'On Baile's Strand', 'The Well of the Saints', and I let laughter have its way with the little play."

In "Spreading the News" Lady Gregory found the type of play she could best do. This was followed by "Hyacinth Halvey", "The Jackdaw", "The Rising of the Moon", and

“The Workhouse Ward”, which are among the few genuine comedies of modern times.

PLAYS

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| *Spreading the News (1904) | *The Workhouse Ward (1908) |
| Kincora (1905) | The Image (1909) |
| The White Cockade (1905) | *The Traveling Man (1909) |
| *Hyacinth Halvey (1906) | *The Full Moon (1910) |
| *The Gaol Gate (1906) | *Coats (1910) |
| The Canavans (1906) | The Deliverer (1911) |
| *The Jackdaw (1907) | *McDonough's Wife (1912) |
| *The Rising of the Moon (1907) | Grania (1912) |
| Devorgilla (1907) | *The Bogie Men (1912) |
| The Unicorn from the Stars (1907) | *Damer's Gold (1912) |
| (In collaboration with W. B. Yeats) | The Golden Apple (1916) |
| | The Dragon (1920) |

“Spreading the News”, “Hyacinth Halvey”, “The Gaol Gate”, “The Jackdaw”, “The Rising of the Moon”, “The Workhouse Ward”, and “The Traveling Man” are published in “Seven Short Plays”, by G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York; “Grania”, “Kincora”, “Devorgilla”, “The Canavans”, “The White Cockade”, and “The Deliverer” in two volumes of “Folk-History Plays”, by Putnam; “The Full Moon”, “Coats”, “McDonough's Wife”, “The Bogie Men”, and “Damer's Gold” in “New Comedies”, by Putnam; “The Golden Apple” and “The Dragon” separately, by Putnam; and “The Image”, separately, by Maunsel and Company, Dublin.

References: Lady Gregory, “Our Irish Theater”, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York.

Magazines: *Quarterly Review*, vol. ccxv, p. 234, London; *Collier's Weekly*, vol. xlvi, p. 465, New York; *Contemporary Review*, vol. cii, p. 602, London; *The Independent*, vol. lxxiv, p. 857, New York; *The Living Age*, vol. cclxxxi, p. 332, Boston.

SPREADING THE NEWS

By LADY GREGORY

“Spreading the News” was first produced at Dublin in 1904.

Characters

BARTLEY FALLON

MRS. FALLON

JACK SMITH

SHAWN EARLY

TIM CASEY

JAMES RYAN

MRS. TARPEY

MRS. TULLY

A Policeman (JO MULDOON)

A Removable Magistrate

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SPREADING THE NEWS

SCENE: *The Outskirts of a Fair. An Apple Stall. Mrs. Tarpey sitting at it. Magistrate and Policeman enter.*

MAGISTRATE. So that is the Fair Green. Cattle and sheep and mud. No system. What a repulsive sight!

POLICEMAN. That is so, indeed.

MAGISTRATE. I suppose there is a good deal of disorder in this place?

POLICEMAN. There is.

MAGISTRATE. Common assault?

POLICEMAN. It's common enough.

MAGISTRATE. Agrarian crime, no doubt?

POLICEMAN. That is so.

MAGISTRATE. Boycotting? Maiming of cattle? Firing into houses?

POLICEMAN. There was one time, and there might be again.

MAGISTRATE. That is bad. Does it go any farther than that?

POLICEMAN. Far enough, indeed.

MAGISTRATE. Homicide, then! This district has been shamefully neglected! I will change all that. When I was in the Andaman Islands, my system never failed. Yes, yes, I will change all that. What has that woman on her stall?

POLICEMAN. Apples mostly — and sweets.

MAGISTRATE. Just see if there are any unlicensed goods underneath — spirits or the like. We had evasions of the salt tax in the Andaman Islands.

POLICEMAN (*sniffing cautiously and upsetting a heap of apples*). I see no spirits here — or salt.

MAGISTRATE (*to Mrs. Tarpey*). Do you know this town well, my good woman?

MRS. TARPEY (*holding out some apples*). A penny the half-dozen, your honour?

POLICEMAN (*shouting*). The gentleman is asking do you know the town! He's the new magistrate!

MRS. TARPEY (*rising and ducking*). Do I know the town? I do, to be sure.

MAGISTRATE (*shouting*). What is its chief business?

MRS. TARPEY. Business, is it? What business would the people here have but to be minding one another's business?

MAGISTRATE. I mean what trade have they?

MRS. TARPEY. Not a trade. No trade at all but to be talking.

MAGISTRATE. I shall learn nothing here.

[*James Ryan comes in, pipe in mouth. Seeing Magistrate he retreats quickly, taking pipe from mouth.*]

MAGISTRATE. The smoke from that man's pipe had a greenish look; he may be growing unlicensed tobacco at home. I wish I had brought my telescope to this district. Come to the post-office, I will telegraph for it. I found it very useful in the Andaman Islands.

[*Magistrate and Policeman go out left.*]

MRS. TARPEY. Bad luck to Jo Muldoon, knocking my apples this way and that way. (*Begins arranging them*) Showing off he was to the new magistrate.

[*Enter Bartley Fallon and Mrs. Fallon.*]

BARTLEY. Indeed it's a poor country and a scarce country to be living in. But I'm thinking if I went to America it's long ago the day I'd be dead!

MRS. FALLON. So you might, indeed.

[*She puts her basket on a barrel and begins putting parcels in it, taking them from under her cloak.*]

BARTLEY. And it's a great expense for a poor man to be buried in America.

MRS. FALLON. Never fear, Bartley Fallon, but I'll give you a good burying the day you'll die.

BARTLEY. Maybe it's yourself will be buried in the graveyard of Cloonmara before me, Mary Fallon, and I myself

that will be dying unbeknownst some night, and no one a-near me. And the cat itself may be gone straying through the country, and the mice squealing over the quilt.

MRS. FALLON. Leave off talking of dying. It might be twenty years you'll be living yet.

BARTLEY (*with a deep sigh*). I'm thinking if I'll be living at the end o' twenty years, it's a very old man I'll be then!

MRS. TARPEY (*turns and sees them*). Good morrow, Bartley Fallon; good morrow, Mrs. Fallon. Well, Bartley, you'll find no cause for complaining to-day; they are all saying it was a good fair.

BARTLEY (*raising his voice*). It was not a good fair, Mrs. Tarpey. It was a scattered sort of a fair. If we didn't expect more, we got less. That's the way with me always; whatever I have to sell goes down and whatever I have to buy goes up. If there's ever any misfortune coming to this world, it's on myself it pitches, like a flock of crows on seed potatoes.

MRS. FALLON. Leave off talking of misfortunes and listen to Jack Smith that is coming the way, and he singing.

[*Voice of Jack Smith heard singing:*

I thought, my first love,

There'd be but one house between you and me,

And I thought I would find

Yourself coaxing my child on your knee.

Over the tide

I would leap with the leap of a swan,

Till I came to the side

Of the wife of the Red-haired man!

[*Jack Smith comes in; he is a red-haired man, and is carrying a hayfork.*

MRS. TARPEY. That should be a good song if I had my hearing.

MRS. FALLON (*shouting*). It's "The Red-haired Man's Wife."

MRS. TARPEY. I know it well. That's the song that has a skin on it!

She turns her back to them and goes on arranging her apples.

MRS. FALLON. Where's herself, Jack Smith?

JACK SMITH. She was delayed with her washing; bleaching the clothes on the hedge she is, and she daren't leave them, with all the tinkers that do be passing to the fair. It isn't to the fair I came myself, but up to the Five Acre Meadow I'm going, where I have a contract for the hay. We'll get a share of it into tramps to-day.

[He lays down hayfork and lights his pipe.]

BARTLEY. You will not get it into tramps to-day. The rain will be down on it by evening, and on myself too. It's seldom I ever started on a journey but the rain would come down on me before I'd find any place of shelter.

JACK SMITH. If it didn't itself, Bartley, it is my belief you would carry a leaky pail on your head in place of a hat, the way you'd not be without some cause of complaining.

[A voice heard "Go on, now, go on out o' that. Go on, I say."]

JACK SMITH. Look at that young mare of Pat Ryan's that is backing into Shaughnessy's bullocks with the dint of the crowd! Don't be daunted, Pat, I'll give you a hand with her.

[He goes out, leaving his hayfork.]

MRS. FALLON. It's time for ourselves to be going home. I have all I bought put in the basket. Look at there, Jack Smith's hayfork he left after him! He'll be wanting it. *(Calls)* Jack Smith! Jack Smith!—He's gone through the crowd—hurry after him, Bartley, he'll be wanting it.

BARTLEY. I'll do that. This is no safe place to be leaving it. *(He takes up fork awkwardly and upsets the baskets)* Look at that now! If there is any basket in the fair upset, it must be our own basket!

[He goes out to right.]

MRS. FALLON. Get out of that! It is your own fault, it is. Talk of misfortunes and misfortunes will come. Glory be! Look at my new egg-cups rolling in every part—and my two pound of sugar with the paper broke——

MRS. TARPEY *(turning from stall)*. God help us, Mrs. Fallon, what happened your basket?

MRS. FALLON. It's himself that knocked it down, bad manners to him. (*Putting things up*) My grand sugar that's destroyed, and he'll not drink his tea without it. I had best go back to the shop for more, much good may it do him!

[*Enter Tim Casey.*]

TIM CASEY. Where is Bartley Fallon, Mrs. Fallon? I want a word with him before he'll leave the fair. I was afraid he might have gone home by this, for he's a temperate man.

MRS. FALLON. I wish he did go home! It'd be best for me if he went home straight from the fair green, or if he never came with me at all! Where is he, is it? He's gone up the road (*jerks elbow*) following Jack Smith with a hayfork. [*She goes out to left.*]

TIM CASEY. Following Jack Smith with a hayfork! Did ever any one hear the like of that. (*Shouts*) Did you hear that news, Mrs. Tarpey?

MRS. TARPEY. I heard no news at all.

TIM CASEY. Some dispute I suppose it was that rose between Jack Smith and Bartley Fallon, and it seems Jack made off, and Bartley is following him with a hayfork!

MRS. TARPEY. Is he now? Well, that was quick work! It's not ten minutes since the two of them were here. Bartley going home and Jack going to the Five Acre Meadow; and I had my apples to settle up, that Jo Muldoon of the police had scattered, and when I looked round again Jack Smith was gone, and Bartley Fallon was gone, and Mrs. Fallon's basket upset, and all in it strewed upon the ground—the tea here—the two pound of sugar there—the egg-cups there—Look, now, what a great hardship the deafness puts upon me, that I didn't hear the commencement of the fight! Wait till I tell James Ryan that I see below, he is a neighbour of Bartley's, it would be a pity if he wouldn't hear the news!

[*She goes out. Enter Shawn Early and Mrs. Tully.*]

TIM CASEY. Listen, Shawn Early! Listen, Mrs. Tully, to the news! Jack Smith and Bartley Fallon had a falling

out, and Jack knocked Mrs. Fallon's basket into the road, and Bartley made an attack on him with a hayfork, and away with Jack, and Bartley after him. Look at the sugar here yet on the road!

SHAWN EARLY. Do you tell me so? Well, that's a queer thing, and Bartley Fallon so quiet a man!

MRS. TULLY. I wouldn't wonder at all. I would never think well of a man that would have that sort of a mouldering look. It's likely he has overtaken Jack by this.

[Enter James Ryan and Mrs. Tarpey.]

JAMES RYAN. That is great news Mrs. Tarpey was telling me! I suppose that's what brought the police and the magistrate up this way. I was wondering to see them in it a while ago.

SHAWN EARLY. The police after them? Bartley Fallon must have injured Jack so. They wouldn't meddle in a fight that was only for show!

MRS. TULLY. Why wouldn't he injure him? There was many a man killed with no more of a weapon than a hayfork.

JAMES RYAN. Wait till I run north as far as Kelly's bar to spread the news!

[He goes out.]

TIM CASEY. I'll go tell Jack Smith's first cousin that is standing there south of the church after selling his lambs.

[Goes out.]

MRS. TULLY. I'll go telling a few of the neighbours I see beyond to the west.

[Goes out.]

SHAWN EARLY. I'll give word of it beyond at the east of the green.

[Is going out when Mrs. Tarpey seizes hold of him.]

MRS. TARPEY. Stop a minute, Shawn Early, and tell me did you see red Jack Smith's wife, Kitty Keary, in any place?

SHAWN EARLY. I did. At her own house she was, drying clothes on the hedge as I passed.

MRS. TARPEY. What did you say she was doing?

SHAWN EARLY (*breaking away*). Laying out a sheet on the hedge.

[*He goes.*]

MRS. TARPEY. Laying out a sheet for the dead! The Lord have mercy on us! Jack Smith dead, and his wife laying out a sheet for his burying! (*Calls out*) Why didn't you tell me that before, Shawn Early? Isn't the deafness the great hardship? Half the world might be dead without me knowing of it or getting word of it at all! (*She sits down and rocks herself*) O my poor Jack Smith! To be going to his work so nice and so hearty, and to be left stretched on the ground in the full light of the day!

[*Enter Tim Casey.*]

TIM CASEY. What is it, Mrs. Tarpey? What happened since?

MRS. TARPEY. O my poor Jack Smith!

TIM CASEY. Did Bartley overtake him?

MRS. TARPEY. O the poor man!

TIM CASEY. Is it killed he is?

MRS. TARPEY. Stretched in the Five Acre Meadow!

TIM CASEY. The Lord have mercy on us! Is that a fact?

MRS. TARPEY. Without the rites of the Church or a ha'porth!

TIM CASEY. Who was telling you?

MRS. TARPEY. And the wife laying out a sheet for his corpse. (*Sits up and wipes her eyes*) I suppose they'll wake him the same as another?

[*Enter Mrs. Tully, Shawn Early, and James Ryan.*]

MRS. TULLY. There is great talk about this work in every quarter of the fair.

MRS. TARPEY. O chone! cold and dead. And myself maybe the last he was speaking to!

JAMES RYAN. The Lord save us! Is it dead he is?

TIM CASEY. Dead surely, and the wife getting provision for the wake.

SHAWN EARLY. Well, now, hadn't Bartley Fallon great venom in him?

MRS. TULLY. You may be sure he had some cause. Why would he have made an end of him if he had not? (*To*

Mrs. Tarpey, raising her voice) What was it rose the dispute at all, Mrs. Tarpey?

MRS. TARPEY. Not a one of me knows. The last I saw of them, Jack Smith was standing there, and Bartley Fallon was standing there, quiet and easy, and he listening to "The Red-haired Man's Wife."

MRS. TULLY. Do you hear that, Tim Casey? Do you hear that, Shawn Early and James Ryan? Bartley Fallon was here this morning listening to red Jack Smith's wife, Kitty Keary that was! Listening to her and whispering with her! It was she started the fight so!

SHAWN EARLY. She must have followed him from her own house. It is likely some person roused him.

TIM CASEY. I never knew, before, Bartley Fallon was great with Jack Smith's wife.

MRS. TULLY. How would you know it? Sure it's not in the streets they would be calling it. If Mrs. Fallon didn't know of it, and if I that have the next house to them didn't know of it, and if Jack Smith himself didn't know of it, it is not likely you would know of it, Tim Casey.

SHAWN EARLY. Let Bartley Fallon take charge of her from this out so, and let him provide for her. It is little pity she will get from any person in this parish.

TIM CASEY. How can he take charge of her? Sure he has a wife of his own. Sure you don't think he'd turn souper and marry her in a Protestant church?

JAMES RYAN. It would be easy for him to marry her if he brought her to America.

SHAWN EARLY. With or without Kitty Keary, believe me it is for America he's making at this minute. I saw the new magistrate and Jo Muldoon of the police going into the post-office as I came up — there was hurry on them — you may be sure it was to telegraph they went, the way he'll be stopped in the docks at Queenstown!

MRS. TULLY. It's likely Kitty Keary is gone with him, and not minding a sheet or a wake at all. The poor man, to

be deserted by his own wife, and the breath hardly gone out yet from his body that is lying bloody in the field!

[*Enter Mrs. Fallon.*]

MRS. FALLON. What is it the whole of the town is talking about? And what is it you yourselves are talking about? Is it about my man Bartley Fallon you are talking? Is it lies about him you are telling, saying that he went killing Jack Smith? My grief that ever he came into this place at all!

JAMES RYAN. Be easy now, Mrs. Fallon. Sure there is no one at all in the whole fair but is sorry for you!

MRS. FALLON. Sorry for me, is it? Why would anyone be sorry for me? Let you be sorry for yourselves, and that there may be shame on you for ever and at the day of judgment, for the words you are saying and the lies you are telling to take away the character of my poor man, and to take the good name off of him, and to drive him to destruction! That is what you are doing!

SHAWN EARLY. Take comfort now, Mrs. Fallon. The police are not so smart as they think. Sure he might give them the slip yet, the same as Lynchehaun.

MRS. TULLY. If they do get him, and if they do put a rope around his neck, there is no one can say he does not deserve it!

MRS. FALLON. Is that what you are saying, Bridget Tully, and is that what you think? I tell you it's too much talk you have, making yourself out to be such a great one, and to be running down every respectable person! A rope, is it? It isn't much of a rope was needed to tie up your own furniture the day you came into Martin Tully's house, and you never bringing as much as a blanket, or a penny, or a suit of clothes with you, and I myself bringing seventy pounds and two feather beds. And now you are stiffer than a woman would have a hundred pounds! It is too much talk the whole of you have. A rope, is it? I tell you the whole of this town is full of liars and schemers that would hang you up for half a glass of whiskey.

(*Turning to go*) People they are you wouldn't believe as much as daylight from without you'd get up to have a look at it yourself. Killing Jack Smith indeed! Where are you at all, Bartley, till I bring you out of this? My nice, quiet little man! My decent comrade! He that is as kind and as harmless as an innocent beast of the field! He'll be doing no harm at all if he'll shed the blood of some of you after this day's work! That much would be no harm at all. (*Calls out*) Bartley! Bartley Fallon! Where are you? (*Going out*) Did anyone see Bartley Fallon?

[*All turn to look after her.*]

JAMES RYAN. It is hard for her to believe any such a thing, God help her!

[*Enter Bartley Fallon from right, carrying hayfork.*]

BARTLEY. It is what I often said to myself, if there is ever any misfortune coming to this world, it is on myself it is sure to come! (*All turn round and face him*) To be going about with this fork, and to find no one to take it, and no place to leave it down, and I wanting to be gone out of this. — Is that you, Shawn Early? (*Holds out fork*) It's well I met you. You have no call to be leaving the fair for a while the way I have, and how can I go till I'm rid of this fork? Will you take it and keep it until such time as Jack Smith —

SHAWN EARLY (*backing*). I will not take it, Bartley Fallon, I'm very thankful to you!

BARTLEY (*turning to apple stall*). Look at it now, Mrs. Tarpey, it was here I got it; let me thrust it in under the stall. It will lie there safe enough, and no one will take notice of it until such time as Jack Smith —

MRS. TARPEY. Take your fork out of that! Is it to put trouble on me and to destroy me you want? putting it there for the police to be rooting it out maybe.

[*Thrusts him back.*]

BARTLEY. That is a very unneighbourly thing for you to do, Mrs. Tarpey. Hadn't I enough care on me with that fork

before this, running up and down with it like the swinging of a clock, and afear'd to lay it down in any place I wish I never touched it or meddled with it at all!

JAMES RYAN. It is a pity, indeed, you ever did.

BARTLEY. Will you yourself take it, James Ryan? You were always a neighbourly man.

JAMES RYAN (*backing*). There is many a thing I would do for you, Bartley Fallon, but I won't do that!

SHAWN EARLY. I tell you there is no man will give you any help or any encouragement for this day's work. If it was something agrarian now——

BARTLEY. If no one at all will take it, maybe it's best to give it up to the police.

TIM CASEY. There'd be a welcome for it with them, surely!
[*Laughter.*]

MRS. TULLY. And it is to the police Kitty Keary herself will be brought.

MRS. TARPEY (*rocking to and fro*). I wonder now who will take the expense of the wake for poor Jack Smith?

BARTLEY. The wake for Jack Smith!

TIM CASEY. Why wouldn't he get a wake as well as another? Would you begrudge him that much?

BARTLEY. Red Jack Smith dead! Who was telling you?

SHAWN EARLY. The whole town knows of it by this.

BARTLEY. Do they say what way did he die?

JAMES RYAN. You don't know that yourself, I suppose, Bartley Fallon? You don't know he was followed and that he was laid dead with the stab of a hayfork?

BARTLEY. The stab of a hayfork!

SHAWN EARLY. You don't know, I suppose, that the body was found in the Five Acre Meadow?

BARTLEY. The Five Acre Meadow!

TIM CASEY. It is likely you don't know that the police are after the man that did it?

BARTLEY. The man that did it!

MRS. TULLY. You don't know, maybe, that he was made away with for the sake of Kitty Keary, his wife?

BARTLEY. Kitty Keary, his wife!

[Sits down bewildered.]

MRS. TULLY. And what have you to say now, Bartley Fallon?

BARTLEY (*crossing himself*). I to bring that fork here, and to find that news before me! It is much if I can ever stir from this place at all, or reach as far as the road!

TIM CASEY. Look, boys, at the new magistrate, and Jo Muldoon along with him! It's best for us to quit this.

SHAWN EARLY. That is so. It is best not to be mixed in this business at all.

JAMES RYAN. Bad as he is, I wouldn't like to be an informer against any man.

[All hurry away except Mrs. Tarpey, who remains behind her stall. Enter magistrate and policeman.]

MAGISTRATE. I knew the district was in a bad state, but I did not expect to be confronted with a murder at the first fair I came to.

POLICEMAN. I am sure you did not, indeed.

MAGISTRATE. It was well I had not gone home. I caught a few words here and there that roused my suspicions.

POLICEMAN. So they would, too.

MAGISTRATE. You heard the same story from everyone you asked?

POLICEMAN. The same story — or if it was not altogether the same, anyway it was no less than the first story.

MAGISTRATE. What is that man doing? He is sitting alone with a hayfork. He has a guilty look. The murder was done with a hayfork!

POLICEMAN (*in a whisper*). That's the very man they say did the act; Bartley Fallon himself!

MAGISTRATE. He must have found escape difficult — he is trying to brazen it out. A convict in the Andaman Islands tried the same game, but he could not escape my system! Stand aside — Don't go far — have the handcuffs ready. (*He walks up to Bartley, folds his arms, and stands before him*) Here, my man, do you know anything of John Smith?

BARTLEY. Of John Smith! Who is he, now?

POLICEMAN. Jack Smith, sir — Red Jack Smith!

MAGISTRATE (*coming a step nearer and tapping him on the shoulder*). Where is Jack Smith?

BARTLEY (*with a deep sigh, and shaking his head slowly*). Where is he, indeed?

MAGISTRATE. What have you to tell?

BARTLEY. It is where he was this morning, standing in this spot, singing his share of songs — no, but lighting his pipe — scraping a match on the sole of his shoe —

MAGISTRATE. I ask you, for the third time, where is he?

BARTLEY. I would like to say that it is a great mystery, and it is hard to say of any man, did he earn hatred or love.

MAGISTRATE. Tell me all you know.

BARTLEY. All that I know — Well, there are the three estates; there is Limbo, and there is Purgatory, and there is —

MAGISTRATE. Nonsense! This is trifling! Get to the point.

BARTLEY. Maybe you don't hold with the clergy so? That is the teaching of the clergy. Maybe you hold with the old people. It is what they do be saying, that the shadow goes wandering, and the soul is tired, and the body is taking a rest — The shadow! (*Starts up*) I was nearly sure I saw Jack Smith not ten minutes ago at the corner of the forge, and I lost him again — Was it his ghost I saw, do you think?

MAGISTRATE (*to policeman*). Conscience-struck! He will confess all now!

BARTLEY. His ghost to come before me! It is likely it was on account of the fork! I to have it and he to have no way to defend himself the time he met with his death!

MAGISTRATE (*to policeman*). I must note down his words. (*Takes out notebook. To Bartley*) I warn you that your words are being noted.

BARTLEY. If I had ha' run faster in the beginning, this terror would not be on me at the latter end! Maybe he

will cast it up against me at the day of judgment — I wouldn't wonder at all at that.

MAGISTRATE (*writing*). At the day of judgment —

BARTLEY. It was soon for his ghost to appear to me — is it coming after me always by day it will be, and stripping the clothes off in the night time? — I wouldn't wonder at all at that, being as I am an unfortunate man!

MAGISTRATE (*sternly*). Tell me this truly. What was the motive of this crime?

BARTLEY. The motive, is it?

MAGISTRATE. Yes; the motive; the cause.

BARTLEY. I'd sooner not say that.

MAGISTRATE. You had better tell me truly. Was it money?

BARTLEY. Not at all! What did poor Jack Smith ever have in his pockets unless it might be his hands that would be in them?

MAGISTRATE. Any dispute about land?

BARTLEY (*indignantly*). Not at all! He never was a grabber or grabbed from anyone!

MAGISTRATE. You will find it better for you if you tell me at once.

BARTLEY. I tell you I wouldn't for the whole world wish to say what it was — it is a thing I would not like to be talking about.

MAGISTRATE. There is no use in hiding it. It will be discovered in the end.

BARTLEY. Well, I suppose it will, seeing that mostly everybody knows it before. Whisper here now. I will tell no lie; where would be the use? (*Puts his hand to his mouth, and Magistrate stoops*) Don't be putting the blame on the parish, for such a thing was never done in the parish before — it was done for the sake of Kitty Keary, Jack Smith's wife.

MAGISTRATE (*to policeman*). Put on the handcuffs. We have been saved some trouble. I knew he would confess if taken in the right way.

[*Policeman puts on handcuffs.*]

BARTLEY. Handcuffs now! Glory be. I always said, if there was ever any misfortune coming to this place it was on myself it would fall. I to be in handcuffs! There's no wonder at all in that.

[*Enter Mrs. Fallon, followed by the rest. She is looking back at them as she speaks.*]

MRS. FALLON. Telling lies the whole of the people of this town are; telling lies, telling lies as fast as a dog will trot! Speaking against my poor respectable man! Saying he made an end of Jack Smith! My decent comrade! There is no better man and no kinder man in the whole of the five parishes! It's little annoyance he ever gave to anyone! (*Turns and sees him*) What in the earthly world do I see before me? Bartley Fallon in charge of the police! Handcuffs on him! O Bartley, what did you do at all at all?

BARTLEY. O Mary, there has a great misfortune come upon me! It is what I always said, that if there is ever any misfortune —

MRS. FALLON. What did he do at all, or is it bewitched I am?

MAGISTRATE. This man has been arrested on a charge of murder.

MRS. FALLON. Whose charge is that? Don't believe them! They are all liars in this place! Give me back my man!

MAGISTRATE. It is natural you should take his part, but you have no cause of complaint against your neighbours. He has been arrested for the murder of John Smith, on his own confession.

MRS. FALLON. The saints of heaven protect us! And what did he want killing Jack Smith?

MAGISTRATE. It is best you should know all. He did it on account of a love affair with the murdered man's wife.

MRS. FALLON (*sitting down*). With Jack Smith's wife! With Kitty Keary! — O chone, the traitor!

THE CROWD. A great shame, indeed. He is a traitor, indeed.

MRS. TULLY. To America he was bringing her, Mrs. Fallon.

BARTLEY. What are you saying, Mary? I tell you —

MRS. FALLON. Don't say a word! I won't listen to any word you'll say! (*Stops her ears*) O, isn't he the treacherous villain? Ohone go deo!

BARTLEY. Be quiet till I speak! Listen to what I say!

MRS. FALLON. Sitting beside me on the ass car coming to the town, so quiet and so respectable, and treachery like that in his heart!

BARTLEY. Is it your wits you have lost or is it I myself that have lost my wits?

MRS. FALLON. And it's hard I earned you slaving, slaving — and you grumbling, and sighing, and coughing, and discontented, and the priest wore out anointing you, with all the times you threatened to die!

BARTLEY. Let you be quiet till I tell you!

MRS. FALLON. You to bring such a disgrace into the parish! A thing that was never heard of before!

BARTLEY. Will you shut your mouth and hear me speaking?

MRS. FALLON. And if it was for any sort of a fine handsome woman, but for a little fistful of a woman like Kitty Keary, that's not four feet high hardly, and not three teeth in her head unless she got new ones! May God reward you, Bartley Fallon, for the black treachery in your heart and the wickedness in your mind, and the red blood of poor Jack Smith that is wet upon your hand!

[Voice of Jack Smith heard singing

The Sea shall be dry,
The earth under mourning and ban!
Then loud shall he cry
For the wife of the red-haired man!

BARTLEY. It's Jack Smith's voice — I never knew a ghost to sing before —. It is after myself and the fork he is coming! (*Goes back. Enter Jack Smith*) Let one of you give him the fork and I will be clear of him now and for eternity!

MRS. TARPEY. The Lord have mercy on us, Red Jack Smith! The man that was going to be waked!

JAMES RYAN. Is it back from the grave you are come?

SHAWN EARLY. Is it alive you are, or is it dead you are?

TIM CASEY. Is it yourself at all that's in it?

MRS. TULLY. Is it letting on you were to be dead?

MRS. FALLON. Dead or alive, let you stop Kitty Keary, your wife, from bringing my man away with her to America!

JACK SMITH. It is what I think, the wits are gone astray on the whole of you. What would my wife want bringing Bartley Fallon to America?

MRS. FALLON. To leave yourself, and to get quit of you she wants, Jack Smith, and to bring him away from myself. That's what the two of them had settled together.

JACK SMITH. I'll break the head of any man that says that! Who is it says it? (*To Tim Casey*) Was it you said it? (*To Shawn Early*) Was it you?

ALL TOGETHER (*backing and shaking their heads*). It wasn't I said it!

JACK SMITH. Tell me the name of any man that said it!

ALL TOGETHER (*pointing to Bartley*). It was *him* that said it!

JACK SMITH. Let me at him till I break his head!

[*Bartley backs in terror. Neighbours hold Jack Smith back.*]

JACK SMITH (*trying to free himself*). Let me at him! Isn't he the pleasant sort of a scarecrow for any woman to be crossing the ocean with! It's back from the docks of New York he'd be turned (*trying to rush at him again*), with a lie in his mouth and treachery in his heart, and another man's wife by his side, and he passing her off as his own! Let me at him, can't you.

[*Makes another rush, but is held back.*]

MAGISTRATE (*pointing to Jack Smith*). Policeman, put the handcuffs on this man. I see it all now. A case of false impersonation, a conspiracy to defeat the ends of justice. There was a case in the Andaman Islands, a murderer of the Mopsa tribe, a religious enthusiast —

POLICEMAN. So he might be, too.

MAGISTRATE. We must take both these men to the scene of the murder. We must confront them with the body of the real Jack Smith.

JACK SMITH. I'll break the head of any man that will find my dead body!

MAGISTRATE. I'll call more help from the barracks.

[Blows Policeman's whistle.]

BARTLEY. It is what I am thinking, if myself and Jack Smith are put together in the one cell for the night, the handcuffs will be taken off him, and his hands will be free, and murder will be done that time surely!

MAGISTRATE. Come on!

[They turn to the right.]

THE MAGNANIMOUS LOVER

ST. JOHN G. ERVINE

ST. JOHN G. ERVINE was born at Belfast, Ireland, in 1883. After completing his scholastic education, he entered the insurance business, which he soon left for literary work. Early in his career he became dramatic critic on the *Daily Citizen*. During a long residence in London Mr. Ervine wrote plays, novels, stories, and did miscellaneous newspaper work. During the past year he has been dramatic critic on *The London Observer*. During the war, he managed the Abbey Theater for a short period, and served in the army.

Mr. Ervine's earlier plays were produced at the Abbey Theater, where he was one of the "younger group" of "Realistic" dramatists, who depicted the everyday existence of the middle classes in the cities and small towns.

"The Magnanimous Lover" is an early play, but it reveals the dramatist's power, — which was later to develop to maturity in "Jane Clegg" and "John Ferguson." Ervine excels in the depiction of human character under extraordinary emotional pressure: the situation in "The Magnanimous Lover" reveals character at white heat.

PLAYS

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|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mixed Marriage (1911) | *The Critics (1913) |
| Jane Clegg (1912) | John Ferguson (1916) |
| *The Magnanimous Lover
(1913) | The Wonderful Visit (1921)
(In collaboration with
H. G. Wells) |
| *The Orangeman (1913) | |

“Mixed Marriage”, “The Magnanimous Lover”, “The Orangeman”, and “The Critics” are published in a volume as “Four Irish Plays”, Macmillan Company, New York; “Jane Clegg” separately by Henry Holt and Company, New York; and “John Ferguson” separately by Macmillan Company.

References. Periodicals: *Everybody's*, vol. xxviii, p. 678, New York; *New York Sun*, August 11, 1918; *New York Evening Post*, February 7, 1920, and May 22, 1920; *New York Times*, March 21, 1920; *New Republic*, March 10, 1920, New York.

THE MAGNANIMOUS LOVER

By ST. JOHN G. ERVINE

"The Magnanimous Lover" was first performed at Dublin in 1912.

Characters

WILLIAM CATHER, *A Shoemaker*

JANE CATHER, *His Wife*

MAGGIE CATHER, *His Daughter*

SAMUEL HINDE, *A Grocer*

HENRY HINDE, *His Son*

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THE MAGNANIMOUS LOVER

The scene is laid in the kitchen and living room of William Cather's cottage in the North-Irish village of Donaghreagh. The room is large, and well lighted by the two windows, through which the Irish Sea can be seen. The windows are tightly shut, and probably have never once been open since they were inserted in their frames; but this does not affect the ventilation of the room to any great extent, for the cottage door, which is in two sections, is always open either to its full extent or, as now, half open.

Immediately facing the street door, on the other side of the house, is a door leading to the best bedroom. The wall in which this bedroom door is placed terminates in another door which leads to the scullery and the garden at the back of the house. The space in this wall between the two doors is occupied by a large dresser, piled with crockery of many hues and shapes.

A large, round pot is suspended over the open fire which burns in the wall stretching between the front and the rear of the house, furthest from the street door. Over the mantel-shelf, on which are articles of cheap china, a clock and a tea-caddy, hangs a large oleograph showing King William the Third in the act of crossing the Boyne. On either side of this picture are two oblong mottoes printed in floral letters on a black background, the legends reading: "Thou God Seest Me", and, "What is Home Without A Mother."

Between the two windows is a large, unstained deal table above which hangs another oleograph, revealing the Secret of England's Greatness, and a further motto, "There's No Place like Home."

There are other mottoes scattered over the walls; some shield-shaped, some oblong, some circular, of smaller size than those already mentioned; all bearing texts from the Bible:—"What Shall It Profit a Man if He Gain the Whole World, and Lose

His Own Soul. "Jesus Wept." "Blessed are the Humble and Meek." "God Is Here."

It is the afternoon of a late summer day.

Samuel Hinde puts his head over the lower half-door, which is barred. There is no one in the kitchen.

SAMUEL HINDE. Are you in, Mrs. Cather?

MRS. CATHER (*speaking from the scullery*). Aye, indeed I am.

(*She comes into the kitchen*) Och, is that yourself, Sam! Sure, come on in.

SAMUEL HINDE (*unbarring the door, and entering*). I've something very important to say to you, Mrs. Cather. Very important.

MRS. CATHER. Have you, Sam?

SAMUEL HINDE. Aye. Where's William?

MRS. CATHER. Aw, he's down the garden. Will I call him?

SAMUEL HINDE. Aye, I wish you would.

MRS. CATHER (*calling at the scullery door*). Hi, William, come on in a minute.

WILLIAM CATHER (*answering from the garden*). What do you want?

MRS. CATHER. Come on in a minute. I want you.

WILLIAM CATHER. All right, I'm coming.

SAMUEL HINDE. Where's Maggie the day?

MRS. CATHER. Aw, she's over to Killisle; but sure she'll be back soon. Were you wanting her?

SAMUEL HINDE. Not just yet a wee while. It'll do later.

[*Enter William Cather, a lean, kindly man with a leathern apron bound round his loins.*]

WILLIAM CATHER. What do you want? (*Seeing Samuel Hinde*) How are you, Sam?

SAMUEL HINDE. Sure, I'm rightly. I want to talk to you a minute. It's about Maggie.

MRS. CATHER. About Maggie?

SAMUEL HINDE. Aye, Henry's come back. By the two o'clock train.

MRS. CATHER. Come back! (*Her voice hardens*) Has he come back to make Maggie a respectable woman?

SAMUEL HINDE. Aye, he has.

MRS. CATHER. Oh, thank God!

WILLIAM CATHER. Sit down, will you, Sam?

SAMUEL HINDE. I will in a minute, but I'd better call Henry in first. He's just waiting round the corner.

WILLIAM CATHER. Aye, bring him in, will you.

[Samuel Hinde goes to the door, and beckons to his son, Henry Hinde, who enters.]

SAMUEL HINDE. Here's Henry, Mrs. Cather.

MRS. CATHER. How are you, Henry?

HENRY HINDE. I'm bravely, thank you. How is yourself?

MRS. CATHER. I'm brave and well, thank you. Sit down, will you.

WILLIAM CATHER. I'm glad to see you again, Henry.

HENRY HINDE. Thank you, Mr. Cather.

WILLIAM CATHER. Your father was saying something about you and Maggie, Henry!

SAMUEL HINDE. Aye, I was saying!

WILLIAM CATHER. Maybe, it would be better if Henry was to speak for himself, Sam.

SAMUEL HINDE. Aye, maybe it would.

HENRY HINDE. Mr. Cather, I did you a great wrong ten years ago.

WILLIAM CATHER. You did, Henry.

HENRY HINDE. And sorry I am for it.

WILLIAM CATHER. You could have been sorry sooner with advantage.

HENRY HINDE. I was headstrong and wayward, Mr. Cather. I was in the devil's grip; but a change has come over me. The old life has dropped away from me, and I've been washed in the Blood of the Lamb.

MRS. CATHER. Are you saved, Henry?

HENRY HINDE. Yes, thank God, I've been saved, Mrs. Cather. I was a wilful, hell-deserving sinner when I lived here. I wanted my own way in everything, and I didn't care about nobody else. The devil was in me. When I went to Liverpool, after the child was born, I led

a wayward life; but God was watching over me, and He saved me at last. I've got on, too, beyond my deserts. The Almighty's been very gracious to me. I've got a great deal to be thankful for.

WILLIAM CATHER. I'm glad to hear it, Henry. Maggie!

HENRY HINDE. It's about Maggie I've come back. Yesterday morning as I was contemplating God's goodness to me, I was wondering what I could do to show my gratitude to Him. I owe Him a great debt, and I want to pay Him back something. And I heard a voice within me, saying, Henry Hinde, you once did a woman a wrong. You left her with a bastard child!

MRS. CATHER. Aw, don't say the word, Henry!

HENRY HINDE. Isn't it true, Mrs. Cather? Didn't I leave Maggie with a child that I was the father of? I was headstrong in my sin, and I wouldn't marry her. My sin was deep, Mrs. Cather, and you can't make little of it. And when I heard the voice of God telling me to go back to the woman I had ruined and make her respectable, I just took the next boat from Liverpool, and I got to Belfast this morning, and I came here without a word of warning to anyone.

SAMUEL HINDE. Aye, you could have knocked me down with a feather when I saw him standing in the door. Sure, I thought it was a ghost.

HENRY HINDE. I felt it to be my duty to come back. Mind, it's not because I couldn't get anyone else. It's because it's the will of God. Not my will, O Lord, but Thine be done. I could marry a minister's daughter if I wanted to.

SAMUEL HINDE. Aye, a minister's daughter, mind you. Over in Liverpool. An Englishwoman.

HENRY HINDE. But I put all desires away from me, and came back to do the will of God.

MRS. CATHER (*weeping softly*). I thank God for this day.

WILLIAM CATHER (*sullenly*). We've waited ten years for the voice of God to speak. Ten years is a long time, Henry.

HENRY HINDE. What is ten years to eternity?

SAMUEL HINDE. Aye, indeed, what is it?

HENRY HINDE. If I had not come back at the bidding of God, He might have damned my soul for ever. How was I to know that He wasn't testing me as with fire?

SAMUEL HINDE. Aw, that's true—that's true! Lord bless me, it would be a terrible thing to go to hell.

HENRY HINDE. Is the child all right?

WILLIAM CATHER. Aye. He's running about the street somewhere.

SAMUEL HINDE. I was thinking myself the other day, he was a wee bit wild. Running about the street too much maybe. It's not good for a child to be running about the street much.

MRS. CATHER. Indeed, Sam Hinde, he's not running wild about the street. There's no child in Donaghreagh that's better looked after nor he is, for all he is—for all his mother's not married.

HENRY HINDE. I feel it's my duty to bring that child up in the fear of God. He came from the devil, and he must be given to God. Does Maggie go to church regular?

MRS. CATHER. Not since her trouble, Henry.

HENRY HINDE. She has a soul to be saved, Mrs. Cather, and by the help of God I mean to save it. Aw, I'm glad I listened to His voice. I feel I shall be the instrument for much good in His hands.

WILLIAM CATHER. Do you mean to marry her?

HENRY HINDE. I do. It's the will of God that I should.

SAMUEL HINDE. You know, he could marry a minister's daughter if he liked. Over in Liverpool there. And mind you, they're queer and particular in England.

WILLIAM CATHER. I daresay you're right, Sam, but that's not the question. The question is, what will Maggie say? You see Henry talks about his duty to God; but he doesn't say anything about his duty to Maggie. And after all, it was her that was wronged, not God. Not that I would make little of our duty to God. There's no man knows more about that duty nor I do. But we're men,

Sam, you and Henry and me. Maggie's a woman, and women don't think so much of their duty to God as men do. It would be a bit awkward for some of us, if they did. You don't love Maggie, Henry?

SAMUEL HINDE. Och, man alive, didn't I tell you about the minister's daughter over in Liverpool? It's her he loves.

WILLIAM CATHER. Do you love her, Henry?

HENRY HINDE. As a fallen sister!

WILLIAM CATHER. Do you love her as a man should love the woman he wants to marry?

HENRY HINDE. I'll do my duty by her. It's a debt I owe to God. I'll be a good husband to her, and I'll try to bring her to the paths of peace. Will she be long before she comes back?

MRS. CATHER. I don't know. She said she wouldn't be long. Maybe, she'll be back soon.

WILLIAM CATHER. I wonder if she'll have you, Henry. Women think more of loving a man nor they do of loving God. But you never know. I wish she was here.

HENRY HINDE. I hope she won't be long, for I must get back to Belfast to catch the boat for Liverpool the night. I can't leave the shop more nor a day.

SAMUEL HINDE. He's doing queer and well in the shop. Aren't you, Henry?

HENRY HINDE. Aye, the Lord has prospered me. I have two assistants and a vanman. The minister thinks a terrible lot of me. He took a fancy to me the minute he saw me in the chapel.

MRS. CATHER. Chapel! You've not turned a Catholic, are you?

HENRY HINDE. No, Mrs. Cather, I'm a Protestant, thank God. They call churches chapels in England unless they're Episcopalian places of worship. They call us Dissenters and Nonconformists, and they think far more of Catholics than they do of us.

MRS. CATHER. Heth, it must be the queer funny place.

HENRY HINDE. But Catholics have souls to be saved, the same as Protestants. We should never make little of them that has not been born so enlightened as ourselves.

MRS. CATHER. Aw, indeed, many's the time I've said that. Sure, there's good and bad alike in all religions.

HENRY HINDE. There's no bad in my religion, Mrs. Cather. There's no room for bad where God is.

MRS. CATHER. Aw, well, maybe you're right.

HENRY HINDE. I am.

MRS. CATHER. But sure, it's not worth fighting about. Maybe, we're all wrong. You never know.

WILLIAM CATHER. I wish Maggie was here till we tell her.

MRS. CATHER. I hope she'll have you all right, Henry.

SAMUEL HINDE. Have him! Of course, she'll have him! She's not daft, is she?

HENRY HINDE. She's not in a position to choose, Mrs. Cather. A woman that's had a bastard!

MRS. CATHER. Aw, don't say it, Henry!

WILLIAM CATHER. You were its father anyway. If there's no choosing for her, there's no choosing for you.

HENRY HINDE. There's no choosing for either of us. It's the will of God.

SAMUEL HINDE. But all the same she gets the best of it. Look at him—look at the way he's dressed. Like any gentleman! And him got a shop, and two assistants, and a vanman, and could marry a minister's daughter if he liked. I don't think there's much doubt about who's being favoured by the Almighty.

WILLIAM CATHER. Maybe, Sam, maybe.

[He goes to the door and looks out anxiously.]

MRS. CATHER. Will you be married soon, Henry?

HENRY HINDE. As soon as possible. I'll tell Mr. Macmillan the night before I go, and I'll come over again in a month's time, and marry her.

WILLIAM CATHER. Here's Maggie now.

HENRY HINDE. I'm glad to hear it.

[Maggie Cather enters, wearing a plaid shawl over her head.]

She enters hurriedly, throwing the shawl aside as she does so. She does not see Henry Hinde at first.

MAGGIE CATHER (to Samuel Hinde). Is that you, Mr. Hinde? (She sees Henry.) Henry! (There is a short, painful pause, but she recovers herself) I hope you're well.

HENRY HINDE. I'm well enough, thank you.

MRS. CATHER. What kept you, Maggie? You're queer and long getting back.

MAGGIE CATHER. I was kept longer nor I thought. I hurried home as quick as I could. (To Henry) I suppose you're over for your holidays.

WILLIAM CATHER. Maggie, dear, Henry's come back.

MAGGIE CATHER. So I see, father.

WILLIAM CATHER. He's come back to make you an offer.

MAGGIE CATHER. A what?

WILLIAM CATHER. He wants to marry you.

[She looks from one to the other like one who does not quite understand what is being said. Then she turns away, laughing.]

MRS. CATHER. What are you laughing for anyway? Sure, it's in earnest he is.

MAGGIE CATHER. Henry, is it true you've come back to marry me?

HENRY HINDE. Aye, it is. And now you know, I'll just go and tell the minister to arrange for the wedding. I've got to catch the boat back to Liverpool the night, and I haven't much time to lose.

MAGGIE CATHER. It's ten years since you went away, Henry.

HENRY HINDE. It is.

MAGGIE CATHER. And now you've come back to marry me.

HENRY HINDE. Aye. I'll be back in a month's time for the wedding.

MAGGIE CATHER (pointing, with sudden fury, to her mother). Henry Hinde, do you see that old woman?

HENRY HINDE. Aye, I do.

MAGGIE CATHER. Do you remember nothing about her? Do you not mind her and me meeting you one night in the Cregagh Loaning before the child was born?

HENRY HINDE. Aye, I think I do.

MAGGIE CATHER. Do you mind her begging you to marry me?

HENRY HINDE. Aye.

MAGGIE CATHER (*the fury still in her voice*). Do you mind her going down on her knees to you, and begging you for the love of God to marry me? Do you mind me pleading with you, too?

HENRY HINDE. Aye, I do, but what does that matter?

MAGGIE CATHER. Do you mind what you said to us, Henry?

HENRY HINDE. No, I forget.

MAGGIE CATHER. You said I was a bad woman, and you weren't going to marry a whore!

MRS. CATHER (*whimpering*). Maggie, for God's sake don't bring it all up again.

HENRY HINDE. Aye, I do mind that.

MAGGIE CATHER. If I was one then, Henry, I'm one now. I'm just as you left me.

HENRY HINDE. I'm not asking what you are. I know what you are, and I know what I am too. I know what we all are before God—hell-deserving sinners. I've not come back for what you are. I've come back to marry you because it's the will of God.

MAGGIE CATHER. Well, it's not my will, then.

SAMUEL HINDE. Not your will. Woman, you mustn't set yourself up against God.

MAGGIE CATHER. I'm not setting myself up against God. I'm setting myself up against Henry.

MRS. CATHER. Maggie, dear, hold your tongue, and talk sense. Sure, it's all for the best.

WILLIAM CATHER. Leave her alone.

MAGGIE CATHER. Me and my mother did to you, Henry, what no woman should ever do to any man—we went down on our knees to you. Do you hear that? I pleaded with you to save me from shame, and you wouldn't. You ran away, and left me to face it myself. It wasn't easy to face either. My God, when I think of it! I couldn't

go to the Sabbath-school nor the meeting. Everybody knew I was going to have a child, and I wasn't married. I used to pretend there was nothing the matter with me. . . . Once the minister preached an awful sermon about the woman taken in sin. Aw, I felt that every eye in the place was on me. There was no pity, no mercy.

HENRY HINDE. Think of the mercy of God, Maggie.

MAGGIE CATHER. I couldn't see it. I could only see the disgrace and the shame.

MRS. CATHER. Aw, but don't think of it, Maggie. Sure, it's all over, now. Henry'll marry you, and you'll be all right again.

MAGGIE CATHER. I won't, I tell you, I won't. I'm not going to marry him.

SAMUEL HINDE. Maggie Cather, you must be out of your mind. Do you know he's got a shop, and two assistants, and a vanman?

MAGGIE CATHER. I don't care if he's got fifty shops, and fifty thousand vanmen, I won't marry him.

WILLIAM CATHER (*soothingly*). Maggie!

SAMUEL HINDE. Aye, and he could marry a minister's daughter if he liked.

HENRY HINDE. Aw, hold your wheesht, father. Maggie, there's no one knows better nor I do what I've done. You've good reason to be angry and bitter, but I've not come back to make excuses. I'm a guilty sinner the same as you are, but I've been saved. Thank God for that! I've had a call from the Father, and I must answer the call at my soul's peril.

MAGGIE CATHER. You've not come back because you love me, then?

HENRY HINDE. The lusts of the flesh!

MAGGIE CATHER. Aw, stop, stop, man, stop. I want none of your religion.

MRS. CATHER. Maggie, dear!

WILLIAM CATHER. Leave her alone.

SAMUEL HINDE. I must say I don't think your manners is very genteel, Maggie Cather.

MAGGIE CATHER. Listen, Henry Hinde. All the time you were away in Liverpool where nobody knew you, I was here where everybody knew me. Do you know what that means? People staring at me, and turning up their noses at me? There was nothing but contempt for me at first. I was a bad woman, and I wasn't asked nowhere. Fellows in the street treated me like dirt beneath their feet. They spoke to me as if I was a bad woman. And all the time you were in Liverpool, and were thought a lot of. It wasn't fair. And it wasn't me only. I mind once I was coming down an entry, and I saw a lot of children tormenting the child. He was standing in the middle of them, and they were making him say things after them. I heard them saying, "What are you, Willie?" And then they made him say, "I'm a wee bastard!" Aw, if I could have laid hands on you then, Henry, I would have throttled you.

MRS. CATHER. But sure it's all over now.

MAGGIE CATHER. Aye, they don't treat me with contempt now. I've lived that down. They just pity me now. Sometimes when I go past their doors, an old woman'll hear me passing, and ask who it is, and they always say, "It's only poor Maggie Cather." I could thole their contempt better nor their pity, but I didn't run away from either of them. I faced it all, and I've brought up the child as good as any of them. And now when I've bore the hardest of it, you come back to marry me. Maybe, you'll be ordering me about, and bossing the child. I'm to do what you tell me. I've to love, honour and obey you. What for, Henry, that's what I'd like to know?

HENRY HINDE. I've come back at the command of God.

WILLIAM CATHER. Maggie, dear, maybe you don't understand it all. You'd better think it over a bit.

MAGGIE CATHER. I understand perfectly, father.

WILLIAM CATHER. Aye, but wait a bit, Maggie. There's more in it nor you think. The lad's getting big, you know, and the time'll soon be here when you'll lose your hold on him. You know, Maggie, every woman loses her grip on her man or her child some time or other, and it just depends on wee things whether they ever get it back again. The child needs a man to look after him.

MAGGIE CATHER. Aren't you good enough for him?

WILLIAM CATHER. I'm too old. Old men are worse nor old women for controlling young people. You are never controlled so well as you are by someone near your own age. He'll be leaving school in a year or two, and neither you nor me'll be any younger then. You want a man to look after him.

MRS. CATHER. Aye, dear, indeed you do.

MAGGIE CATHER. I can look after him myself.

WILLIAM CATHER. No, you can't. Not when he finds things out. It's the between age, Maggie, when men is neither boys nor men—the only time when men never cling to women. It's the time they go quickest to the devil.

HENRY HINDE. I was thinking myself of giving the lad a good schooling over in Liverpool. I had a feeling as I was coming over in the boat that maybe if I was to have the child trained for a minister, he could wipe out some of the debt I owe to God.

MRS. CATHER. Do you hear that, Maggie! Henry's going to make a minister of Willie. Sure, the child'll be a credit to you yet.

MAGGIE CATHER. He's a credit to me now.

WILLIAM CATHER. Aye, Maggie, he is.

SAMUEL HINDE. I'm sure it's queer and considerate of Henry considering what he might do.

MAGGIE CATHER. If I was to marry you, Henry, would you treat the child the same as you would one that was not a—not a

HENRY HINDE. I'll treat him just the same as if he was a child of God instead of a child of sin.

MAGGIE CATHER (*bitterness returning to her voice*). It wasn't his fault.

HENRY HINDE. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

MAGGIE CATHER. Aye, and you'll take damned good care my child doesn't escape. You'll hurt him, and say it's the will of God! . . .

SAMUEL HINDE. Maggie Cather, your language is most unbecoming!

HENRY HINDE. She is possessed of a devil, father. Leave her to me. I'll save her soul by the help of God.

MRS. CATHER. Maggie, dear, say you'll have him.

WILLIAM CATHER. It'll be all right for the child, Maggie.

MAGGIE CATHER. I'll think about it.

HENRY HINDE. I must know now. It's not me you're answering, it's God Himself. You can't put God off.

WILLIAM CATHER. Maybe, if we were to leave Maggie to talk it over with you alone, Henry, you could both come to a decision. Jane and me'll just show your father a shed I'm putting up in the garden for the leather. Come on, Sam.

SAMUEL HINDE (*jovially*). Aye, indeed, William, that's the queer good notion of yours. I was just going to make it myself. Aw, you know, when a man and a woman get together, sure, they like to be alone. It's a queer thing when you come to think it over; but there it is. Och, aye! human beings is a funny lot, William, they are that. Well, well, let's go and have a look at your shed.

[*Exit Samuel by the scullery.*]

MRS. CATHER. Maggie, dear, you'll take him, won't you? Don't be proud with him. Men can't stand pride, Maggie. Just take him, dear, and he'll make you a respectable woman again.

WILLIAM CATHER. Come on, woman, come on. All right, Maggie, all right.

[*They go out together.*]

HENRY HINDE. Maggie, I haven't much time.

MAGGIE CATHER. Did you ever love me, Henry?

HENRY HINDE. I suppose I liked you, Maggie.

MAGGIE CATHER. But you don't love me now?

HENRY HINDE. It's ten years since I saw you last.

MAGGIE CATHER. Do you love this minister's daughter, your father was talking about?

HENRY HINDE. That's neither here nor there, Maggie.

When God tells us to put our desires aside, we've got to bow our heads and say, Thy Will, O Lord, not ours, be done.

MAGGIE CATHER. Is she a good woman?

HENRY HINDE. Aye, she is.

MAGGIE CATHER. She never had a child.

HENRY HINDE. No, she's a good woman.

MAGGIE CATHER. She's worthy of you, maybe.

HENRY HINDE. Aye, she is. She's worthy of any good man.

MAGGIE CATHER. And I suppose I'm not worthy of you.

HENRY HINDE. You have fallen short of the glory of God.

MAGGIE CATHER. We both fell at the same time, Henry.

HENRY HINDE. I'm saved and you're not. I'm in a state of grace, and you're in a state of sin.

MAGGIE CATHER. Then I'm not as good as you are?

HENRY HINDE. No, you're not.

MAGGIE CATHER. If I was saved, too, would I be as good as you are?

HENRY HINDE. That's for God to say, Maggie, not me.

MAGGIE CATHER. Do you think I'd be as good as you? Leave God out of it for a minute. If I committed a sin, you committed one, too.

HENRY HINDE. I'm not denying it.

MAGGIE CATHER. Aye, but you think I'm a bigger sinner nor you were; and if I was saved, too, you'd still think I was worse nor you, wouldn't you?

HENRY HINDE. I would.

MAGGIE CATHER. Why would you?

HENRY HINDE. Because you're a woman. Because it was through women that sin first came into the world to damn the souls of men. Because it's women that keeps sin in

the world with their shameful, lustful bodies. God Himself came down from Heaven to save men from their sins, and suffered the pangs of hell that they might be saved, and sin be swept out of the world. But man turns from the high God to the low woman to his own damnation, and God may weep in His Heaven for the souls of men for ever, and no man will heed Him. Aw, the sin and the shame that women have brought into the world! Every soul that writhes in hell was sent there by a woman.

MAGGIE CATHER. You want to marry me, Henry?

HENRY HINDE. Because its a debt I owe to God. If I could save your soul I'd be paying Him back.

MAGGIE CATHER. And if I don't marry you?

HENRY HINDE. I shall have tried all the same. I can do no more.

MAGGIE CATHER. Henry, you're worse nor I thought you. You're not thinking of me, nor the wrong you did. It's yourself you're thinking of. You're afraid of God, and you want to use me to buy Him off. You can well call yourself a God-fearing man, Henry. I'm nothing to you. The child you're the father of is nothing to you. You're just frightened out of your wits for fear you should go to hell for all you're saved. I won't marry you. I'm as good as you are for all I'm not saved. I'm better nor you are, for I'm not afraid of God. (*She goes to the door leading to the scullery*) Come on in, will you.

[*Samuel, Jane and William enter in the order named.*]

MRS. CATHER. Have you took him, yet?

MAGGIE CATHER. No. Father, I've decided not to marry Henry.

WILLIAM CATHER. You're sure, Maggie?

MAGGIE CATHER. I am, father.

WILLIAM CATHER. Maybe, you know best, Maggie.

MRS. CATHER. William Cather, will you stand there and let your daughter make a fool of herself?

SAMUEL HINDE. I must say I think you're right, Mrs. Cather.

WILLIAM CATHER. We don't want to know what you think, Sam. Jane, you needn't say any more.

MRS. CATHER. I will say more. I've been patient all these years, and said nothing, but I'll be patient no more. We're a shamed family. Yes, we are. A bastard in the house! There never was no shame in my family, no, nor yours either, William Cather, before Maggie.

WILLIAM CATHER. Well, well, it can't be helped.

MRS. CATHER. And when she has a chance of putting herself right, and making a respectable woman of herself, she hangs back, and won't take it. And you stand by, and let her do it.

MAGGIE CATHER. I am a respectable woman.

MRS. CATHER. You're not, you know you're not. You're a bad woman, you know you are. Maybe, if the truth was known, you led this good man into the trouble!

WILLIAM CATHER. Hold your tongue, woman! My God, if you speak like that, I'll strike you down.

MRS. CATHER. I'm your wife, William Cather, and I've been a good wife to you, too. I've submitted to you in everything since we were married. I've stood by, and bore cuts from people that was lower-born nor me because of Maggie. I've stood them without saying anything because you told me to. But I hoped and prayed to God that some day Henry'd come back, and make her a respectable woman again. I was that glad when he came in with Sam, and said he'd marry her! — and now, — aw, William, William, make her marry him. Henry, you'll take her still, won't you?

HENRY HINDE. Aye, I'll take her still.

SAMUEL HINDE. I'm sure it's very magnanimous of you, Henry, after the way you've been treated.

WILLIAM CATHER. It's for Maggie to say, not for me.

MRS. CATHER. Ask her again, Henry.

HENRY HINDE. Maggie Cather, I solemnly ask you before God your Maker, to marry me.

MAGGIE CATHER. No.

HENRY HINDE. I'll give you another chance, Maggie. Will you marry me?

MAGGIE CATHER. No.

SAMUEL HINDE. Well, I suppose there's nothing for it, but to go home. It's a pity you wasted your money coming over, Henry.

MRS. CATHER. No, don't go yet, Henry. Give her time to think it over. When she sees the child she'll change her mind. I'll go and get him.

WILLIAM CATHER. Stay where you are.

HENRY HINDE. Maggie, for the last time, will you marry me?

MAGGIE CATHER. Am I as good as you?

HENRY HINDE. You know what I said before. Will you marry me?

MAGGIE CATHER. No, no, no.

HENRY HINDE. Very well, then, Maggie, I'll just say good-bye.

SAMUEL HINDE. That's your last chance, my lady. You'll get no more. Heth, you're a fine one to be putting on airs. Anyone would think you were a decent woman by the way you talk.

WILLIAM CATHER. Samuel Hinde, if you don't want to be hurried before your Maker before your time, you'll get out of this house without another word.

SAMUEL HINDE. Aw, indeed. I like the conceit of you. That man could buy and sell you and your daughter twice over, and not notice it. He's a gentleman, and could marry the daughter of a minister, but he's good enough to come and offer to marry the daughter of a cobbler that's disgraced herself; and he's treated like dirt. A man that has a shop and two assistants! . . .

WILLIAM CATHER. Aye, we heard all that before, Sam. You needn't wait any longer.

SAMUEL HINDE. Come on, Henry. Sure, you're only de-meaning yourself here.

HENRY HINDE. I came here to do the will of God. I've done my best. (*He shuts his eyes and prays*) Lord, Thou

knowest the weakness of Thy servant. If I have failed to move this sinful woman's heart through lustful desires after another, forgive me, O Lord, for Thy Name's Sake. Amen. I'll say good-bye, to you, William. If we should never meet on this side of eternity, I would bid you consider this. What Shall It Profit a Man if He Gain the Whole World and Lose His Own Soul? Good-bye to you all.

[*Samuel and Henry Hinde go out together.*]

MAGGIE CATHER. Was I wrong, father?

WILLIAM CATHER. God only knows, Maggie.

MRS. CATHER. It's a sin, it's a sin. To throw away the chance of being respectable.

MAGGIE CATHER. There isn't much difference between you and me, mother. You've had a child, and so have I.

MRS. CATHER. I'm a married woman.

MAGGIE CATHER. You've only been to the minister, and I haven't. There's not much difference between us. Maybe, I'm a better woman nor you. I had a son, and you only had a girl.

MRS. CATHER (*in dreadful fury as though she would strike her daughter*). How dare you? How dare you make a mock of me?

WILLIAM CATHER. Jane, woman, you forget yourself. You're an old woman. You shouldn't be so bitter, Maggie.

MRS. CATHER. Why wouldn't you marry him? Wasn't he good enough?

MAGGIE CATHER. He was too good. If you heard what he said to me. He said I was a sinful, lustful woman, and could never be as good as he is. It wasn't me he was thinking of; it was himself. I'm not needing to marry, but if I do, I'll marry to save my own soul, and not Henry Hinde's.

WILLIAM CATHER. Aw, well, dear, it doesn't matter about Henry. Maybe, you were right not to have him.

[*He pats her affectionately on the shoulder.*]

MAGGIE CATHER. I hope I was, father.

WILLIAM CATHER. I hope so, dear. You never know.

[He goes out through the scullery door to the garden. Maggie takes up her shawl, and goes into the bedroom, leaving Mrs. Cather weeping by the fire.]



THE GOLDEN DOOM

LORD DUNSANY

The chief biographical source-book on Lord Dunsany is Edward Hale Bierstadt's "Dunsany the Dramatist." As Mr. Bierstadt's book, in its latest revised form, has the official sanction of the dramatist, it will be sufficient to select a few passages for quotation.

Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett is the "eighteenth Baron of his line, and his name and ancestry are said to be the third oldest in Irish history. In 1899 he succeeded to the title, and to the family estates in Meath. . . . Born in 1878, Lord Dunsany was educated at Eaton and Sandhurst, and then entered the army. He saw active service . . . during the South African war . . ." Dunsany was first heard of in connection with the Irish literary movement in 1902 or 1903, while his first book was published in 1905. But "his first play did not appear until 1909, when 'The Glittering Gate' was put on at the Abbey Theater, Dublin. 'King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior' followed in February of 1911 at the Abbey, and the next June 'The Gods of the Mountain' went on at the Haymarket Theater, London."

While certain Dunsany plays were produced in America before 1916, it was not until Stuart Walker (Season 1916-1917) offered a series of Dunsany productions that the dramatist became popular. For three seasons Dunsany plays were to be seen on the stages of dozens of little theaters throughout the country.

"Something must be wrong," says Dunsany in an article on "Romance and the Modern Stage", "with an age whose

drama deserts romance." This statement includes one half of Dunsany's theory of art. The other half he phrases as follows: "Romance is so inseparable from life that all we need to obtain romantic drama is for the dramatist to find any age and any country where life is not too thickly veiled and cloaked with puzzles and conventions, in fact to find a people that is not in the agonies of self-consciousness. For myself, I think that it is simpler to imagine such a people, as it saves the trouble of reading to find a romantic age, or the trouble of making a journey to lands where there is no press."

Of "The Golden Doom" Mr. Bierstadt says: "It is the poet rather than the dramatist who speaks in 'The Golden Doom.' It may be observed though that it is no personal problem with which we are confronted, it rarely is with Dunsany. . . . It is Boyhood in the mass, nay, even in the abstract with which we are called upon to sympathize; it is the idea of Majesty which we are asked to pity. It is man in the conglomerate whole with which we are dealing, not an individual man."

PLAYS

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| *The Glittering Gate (1909) | *Fame and the Poet (1918) |
| King Argimenes and the
Unknown Warrior (1911) | *The Prince of Stamboul
(1918) |
| The Gods of the Mountain
(1911) | The Laughter of the Gods
(1919) |
| *The Golden Doom (1912) | *The Murderers (1919) |
| *The Lost Silk Hat (1913) | *A Good Bargain (1920) |
| The Tents of the Arabs
(1914) | *The Compromise of the
King of the Golden Isles
(1920) |
| *A Night at an Inn (1916) | |
| *The Queen's Enemies (1916) | |

"The Gods of the Mountain", "The Golden Doom",
"King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior", "The Glit-

tering Gate", and "The Lost Silk Hat" are published as "Five Plays", by Little, Brown and Company, Boston; "The Tents of the Arabs", "The Laughter of the Gods", "The Queen's Enemies", and "A Night at an Inn" as "Plays of Gods and Men", by John W. Luce and Company, Boston.

References: Edward Hale Bierstadt, "Dunsany the Dramatist" (new and revised edition, 1919), Little, Brown and Company, Boston; Clayton Hamilton, "Seen on the Stage," Henry Holt and Company, New York; Dunsany's "Nowadays", Four Seas Company, Boston.

Magazines: *The Forum*, May, 1914, New York; February, 1915; *Current Opinion*, June, 1916, New York; *The Bellman*, Minneapolis, 1917.



THE GOLDEN DOOM

By LORD DUNSANY

“The Golden Doom” was first produced at London in 1912.

Characters

THE KING
CHAMBERLAIN
CHIEF PROPHET
GIRL
BOY
SPIES
FIRST PROPHET
SECOND PROPHET
FIRST SENTRY
SECOND SENTRY
STRANGER
ATTENDANTS

SCENE: Outside the King's great door in Zericon.

TIME: Some while before the fall of Babylon.

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THE GOLDEN DOOM

Two Sentries pace to and fro, then halt, one on each side of the great door.

FIRST SENTRY. The day is deadly sultry.

SECOND SENTRY. I would that I were swimming down the Gyshon, on the cool side, under the fruit trees.

FIRST SENTRY. It is like to thunder or the fall of a dynasty.

SECOND SENTRY. It will grow cool by night-fall. Where is the King?

FIRST SENTRY. He rows in his golden barge with ambassadors or whispers with captains concerning future wars. The stars spare him!

SECOND SENTRY. Why do you say "the stars spare him"?

FIRST SENTRY. Because if a doom from the stars fall suddenly on a king it swallows up his people and all things round about him, and his palace falls and the walls of his city and citadel, and the apes come in from the woods and the large beasts from the desert, so that you would not say that a king had been there at all.

SECOND SENTRY. But why should a doom from the stars fall on the King?

FIRST SENTRY. Because he seldom placates them.

SECOND SENTRY. Ah! I have heard that said of him.

FIRST SENTRY. Who are the stars that a man should scorn them? Should they that rule the thunder, the plague and the earthquake withhold these things save for much prayer? Always ambassadors are with the King, and his commanders, come in from distant lands, prefects of cities and makers of the laws, but never the priests of the stars.

SECOND SENTRY. Hark! Was that thunder?

FIRST SENTRY. Believe me, the stars are angry.

[Enter a Stranger. He wanders toward the King's door, gazing about him.]

SENTRIES (*lifting their spears at him*). Go back! Go back!

STRANGER. Why?

FIRST SENTRY. It is death to touch the King's door.

STRANGER. I am a stranger from Thessaly.

FIRST SENTRY. It is death even for a stranger.

STRANGER. Your door is strangely sacred.

FIRST SENTRY. It is death to touch it.

[*The Stranger wanders off. Enter two children hand in hand.*

BOY (*to the Sentry*). I want to see the King to pray for a hoop.

[*The Sentry smiles.*

BOY (*pushes the door; to girl*). I cannot open it. (*To the Sentry*) Will it do as well if I pray to the King's door?

SENTRY. Yes, quite as well. (*Turns to talk to the other Sentry*) Is there anyone in sight?

SECOND SENTRY (*shading his eyes*). Nothing but a dog, and he far out on the plain.

FIRST SENTRY. Then we can talk awhile and eat bash.

BOY. King's door, I want a little hoop.

[*The Sentries take a little bash between finger and thumb from pouches and put that wholly forgotten drug to their lips.*

GIRL (*pointing*). My father is a taller soldier than that.

BOY. My father can write. He taught me.

GIRL. Ho! Writing frightens nobody. My father is a soldier.

BOY. I have a lump of gold. I found it in the stream that runs down to Gyshon.

GIRL. I have a poem. I found it in my own head.

BOY. Is it a long poem?

GIRL. No. But it would have been only there were no more rhymes for sky.

BOY. What is your poem?

GIRL.

I saw a purple bird
 Go up against the sky
 And it went up and up
 And round about did fly.

BOY. I saw it die.

GIRL. That doesn't scan.

BOY. Oh, that doesn't matter.

GIRL. Do you like my poem?

BOY. Birds aren't purple.

GIRL. My bird was.

BOY. Oh!

GIRL. Oh, you don't like my poem!

BOY. Yes, I do.

GIRL. No, you don't; you think it horrid.

BOY. No. I don't.

GIRL. Yes, you do. Why didn't you say you liked it? It is the only poem I ever made.

BOY. I do like it. I do like it.

GIRL. You don't, you don't!

BOY. Don't be angry. I'll write it on the door for you.

GIRL. You'll write it?

BOY. Yes, I can write it. My father taught me. I'll write it with my lump of gold. It makes a yellow mark on the iron door.

GIRL. Oh, do write it! I would like to see it written like real poetry.

[The Boy begins to write. The Girl watches.]

FIRST SENTRY. You see, we'll be fighting again soon.

SECOND SENTRY. Only a little war. We never have more than a little war with the hill-folk.

FIRST SENTRY. When a man goes to fight, the curtains of the gods wax thicker than ever before between his eyes and the future; he may go to a great or to a little war.

SECOND SENTRY. There can only be a little war with the hill-folk.

FIRST SENTRY. Yet sometimes the gods laugh.

SECOND SENTRY. At whom?

FIRST SENTRY. At kings.

SECOND SENTRY. Why have you grown uneasy about this war in the hills?

FIRST SENTRY. Because the King is powerful beyond any of his fathers, and has more fighting men, more horses, and wealth than could have ransomed his father and his grandfather and dowered their queens and daughters; and every year his miners bring him more from the opal-mines and from the turquoise-quarries. He has grown very mighty.

SECOND SENTRY. Then he will the more easily crush the hill-folk in a little war.

FIRST SENTRY. When kings grow very mighty the stars grow very jealous.

BOY. I've written your poem.

GIRL. Oh, have you really?

BOY. Yes, I'll read it to you. (*He reads*)

I saw a purple bird
Go up against the sky
And it went up and up
And round about did fly.
I saw it die.

GIRL. It doesn't scan.

BOY. That doesn't matter.

[Enter furtively a Spy, who crosses stage and goes out. The Sentries cease to talk.]

GIRL. That man frightens me.

BOY. He is only one of the King's spies.

GIRL. But I don't like the King's spies. They frighten me.

BOY. Come on, then, we'll run away.

SENTRY (*noticing the children again*). Go away, go away! The King is coming, he will eat you.

[The Boy throws a stone at the Sentry and runs out. Enter another Spy, who crosses the stage. Enter third Spy, who notices the door. He examines it and utters an owl-like whistle. No. 2 comes back. They do not speak. Both whistle. No. 3 comes. All examine the door. Enter the King and his Chamberlain. The King wears a purple robe. The Sentries smartly transfer their spears to their left hands and return their right arms to their right sides. They then

lower their spears until their points are within an inch of the ground, at the same time raising their right hands above their heads. They stand for some moments thus. Then they lower their right arms to their right sides, at the same time raising their spears. In the next motion they take their spears into their right hands and lower the butts to the floor, where they were before, the spears slanting forward a little. Both Sentries must move together precisely.

FIRST SPY (*runs forward to the King and kneels, abasing his forehead to the floor*). Something has written on the iron door.

CHAMBERLAIN. On the iron door!

KING. Some fool has done it. Who has been here since yesterday?

FIRST SENTRY (*shifts his hand a little higher on his spear, brings the spear to his side and closes his heels all in one motion; he then takes one pace backward with his right foot; then he kneels on his right knee; when he has done this he speaks, but not before*). Nobody, Majesty, but a stranger from Thessaly.

KING. Did he touch the iron door?

FIRST SENTRY. No, Majesty; he tried to, but we drove him away.

KING. How near did he come?

FIRST SENTRY. Nearly to our spears, Majesty.

KING. What was his motive in seeking to touch the iron door?

FIRST SENTRY. I do not know, Majesty.

KING. Which way did he go?

FIRST SENTRY (*pointing left*). That way, Majesty, an hour ago.

[The King whispers with one of his Spies, who stoops and examines the ground and steals away. The Sentry rises.]

KING (*to his two remaining Spies*). What does this writing say?

A SPY. We cannot read, Majesty.

KING. A good spy should know everything.

SECOND SPY. We watch, Majesty, and we search out, Majesty. We read shadows, and we read footprints, and whispers in secret places. But we do not read writing.

KING (*to the Chamberlain*). See what it is.

CHAMBERLAIN (*goes up and reads*). It is treason, Majesty.

KING. Read it.

CHAMBERLAIN.

I saw a purple bird
Go up against the sky,
And it went up and up
And round about did fly.
I saw it die.

FIRST SENTRY (*aside*). The stars have spoken.

KING (*to the Sentry*). Has anyone been here but the stranger from Thessaly?

SENTRY (*kneeling as before*). Nobody, Majesty.

KING. You saw nothing?

FIRST SENTRY. Nothing but a dog far out upon the plain and the children of the guard at play.

KING (*to the Second Sentry*). And you?

SECOND SENTRY (*kneeling*). Nothing, Majesty.

CHAMBERLAIN. That is strange.

KING. It is some secret warning.

CHAMBERLAIN. It is treason.

KING. It is from the stars.

CHAMBERLAIN. No, no, Majesty. Not from the stars, not from the stars. Some man has done it. Yet the thing should be interpreted. Shall I send for the prophets of the stars?

[The King beckons to his Spies. They run up to him.]

KING. Find me some prophet of the stars. (*Exeunt Spies*)

I fear that we may go no more, my chamberlain, along the winding ways of unequalled Zericon, nor play dahoori with the golden balls. I have thought more of my people than of the stars and more of Zericon than of windy Heaven.

CHAMBERLAIN. Believe me, Majesty, some idle man has

written it and passed by. Your spies shall find him, and then his name will be soon forgotten.

KING. Yes, yes. Perhaps you are right, though the sentries saw no one. No doubt some beggar did it.

CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, Majesty, some beggar has surely done it. But look, here come two prophets of the stars. They shall tell us that this is idle.

[Enter two Prophets and a Boy attending them. All bow deeply to the King. The two Spies steal in again and stand at back.]

KING. Some beggar has written a rhyme on the iron gate, and as the ways of rhyme are known to you I desired you, rather as poets than as prophets, to say whether there was any meaning in it.

CHAMBERLAIN. 'Tis but an idle rhyme.

FIRST PROPHET (*bows again and goes up to door. He glances at the writing*). Come hither, servant of those that serve the stars.

[Attendant approaches.]

FIRST PROPHET. Bring hither our golden cloaks, for this may be a matter for rejoicing; and bring our green cloaks also, for this may tell of young new beautiful things with which the stars will one day gladden the King; and bring our black cloaks also, for it may be a doom. (*Exit the Boy; the Prophet goes up to the door and reads solemnly*) The stars have spoken.

[Reënter Attendant with cloaks.]

KING. I tell you that some beggar has written this.

FIRST PROPHET. It is written in pure gold.

[He dons the black cloak over body and head.]

KING. What do the stars mean? What warning is it?

FIRST PROPHET. I cannot say.

KING (*to Second Prophet*). Come you then and tell us what the warning is.

SECOND PROPHET (*goes up to the door and reads*). The stars have spoken.

[He cloaks himself in black.]

KING. What is it? What does it mean?

SECOND PROPHET. We do not know, but it is from the stars.

CHAMBERLAIN. It is a harmless thing; there is no harm in it, Majesty. Why should not birds die?

KING. Why have the prophets covered themselves in black?

CHAMBERLAIN. They are a secret people and look for inner meanings. There is no harm in it.

KING. They have covered themselves in black.

CHAMBERLAIN. They have not spoken of any evil thing. They have not spoken of it.

KING. If the people see the prophets covered in black they will say that the stars are against me and believe that my luck has turned.

CHAMBERLAIN. The people must not know.

KING. Some prophet must interpret to us the doom. Let the chief prophet of the stars be sent for.

CHAMBERLAIN (*going toward left exit*). Summon the chief prophet of the stars that look on Zericon.

VOICES OFF. The chief prophet of the stars. The chief prophet of the stars.

CHAMBERLAIN. I have summoned the chief prophet, Majesty.

KING. If he interpret this aright I will put a necklace of turquoises round his neck with opals from the mines.

CHAMBERLAIN. He will not fail. He is a very cunning interpreter.

KING. What if he covers himself with a huge black cloak and does not speak and goes muttering away, slowly with bended head, till our fear spreads to the sentries and they cry aloud?

CHAMBERLAIN. This is no doom from the stars, but some idle scribe hath written it in his insolence upon the iron door, wasting his hoard of gold.

KING. Not for myself I have a fear of doom, not for myself; but I inherited a rocky land, windy and ill-nurtured, and nursed it to prosperity by years of peace and spread its boundaries by years of war. I have brought up har-

vests out of barren acres and given good laws unto naughty towns, and my people are happy, and lo, the stars are angry!

CHAMBERLAIN. It is not the stars, it is not the stars, Majesty, for the prophets of the stars have not interpreted it. Indeed, it was only some reveller wasting his gold.

[Meanwhile enter Chief Prophet of the stars that look on Zericon.]

KING. Chief Prophet of the Stars that look on Zericon, I would have you interpret the rhyme upon yonder door.

CHIEF PROPHET *(goes up to the door and reads)*. It is from the stars.

KING. Interpret it and you shall have great turquoises round your neck, with opals from the mines in the frozen mountains.

CHIEF PROPHET *(cloaks himself like the others in a great black cloak)*. Who should wear purple in the land but a King, or who go up against the sky but he who has troubled the stars by neglecting their ancient worship? Such a one has gone up and up increasing power and wealth, such a one has soared above the crowns of those that went before him, such a one the stars have doomed, the undying ones, the illustrious.

[A pause.]

KING. Who wrote it?

CHIEF PROPHET. It is pure gold. Some god has written it.

CHAMBERLAIN. Some god?

CHIEF PROPHET. Some god whose home is among the undying stars.

FIRST SENTRY *(aside to the Second Sentry)*. Last night I saw a star go flaming earthward.

KING. Is this a warning or is it a doom?

CHIEF PROPHET. The stars have spoken.

KING. It is, then, a doom?

CHIEF PROPHET. They speak not in jest.

KING. I have been a great King—Let it be said of me
“The stars overthrew him, and they sent a god for his

doom." For I have not met my equal among kings that man should overthrow me; and I have not oppressed my people that men should rise up against me.

CHIEF PROPHET. It is better to give worship to the stars than to do good to man. It is better to be humble before the gods than proud in the face of your enemy though he do evil.

KING. Let the stars hearken yet and I will sacrifice a child to them — I will sacrifice a girl child to the twinkling stars and a male child to the stars that blink not, the stars of the steadfast eyes. (*To his Spies*) Let a boy and girl be brought for sacrifice. (*Exit a Spy to the right looking at footprints*) Will you accept this sacrifice to the god that the stars have sent? They say that the gods love children.

CHIEF PROPHET. I may refuse no sacrifice to the stars nor to the gods whom they send. (*To the other Prophets*) Make ready the sacrificial knives.

[*The Prophets draw knives and sharpen them.*]

KING. Is it fitting that the sacrifice take place by the iron door where the god from the stars has trod, or must it be in the temple?

CHIEF PROPHET. Let it be offered by the iron door. (*To the other Prophets*) Fetch hither the altar stone.

[*The owl-like whistle is heard off right. The Third Spy runs crouching toward it. Exit.*]

KING. Will this sacrifice avail to avert the doom?

CHIEF PROPHET. Who knows?

KING. I fear that even yet the doom will fall.

CHIEF PROPHET. It were wise to sacrifice some greater thing.

KING. What more can a man offer?

CHIEF PROPHET. His pride.

KING. What pride?

CHIEF PROPHET. Your pride that went up against the sky and troubled the stars.

KING. How shall I sacrifice my pride to the stars?

CHIEF PROPHET. It is upon your pride that the doom will

fall, and will take away your crown and will take away your kingdom.

KING. I will sacrifice my crown and reign uncrowned amongst you, so only I save my kingdom.

CHIEF PROPHET. If you sacrifice your crown which is your pride, and if the stars accept it, perhaps the god that they sent may avert the doom and you may still reign in your kingdom though humbled and uncrowned.

KING. Shall I burn my crown with spices and with incense or cast it into the sea?

CHIEF PROPHET. Let it be laid here by the iron door where the god came who wrote the golden doom. When he comes again by night to shrivel up the city or to pour an enemy in through the iron door, he will see your cast-off pride and perhaps accept it and take it away to the neglected stars.

KING (*to the Chamberlain*). Go after my spies and say that I make no sacrifice. (*Exit the Chamberlain to the right; the King takes off his crown*) Good-bye, my brittle glory; kings have sought you; the stars have envied you.

[*The stage grows darker.*]

CHIEF PROPHET. Even now the sun has set who denies the stars, and the day is departed wherein no gods walk abroad. It is near the hour when spirits roam the earth and all things that go unseen, and the faces of the abiding stars will be soon revealed to the fields. Lay your crown there and let us come away.

KING (*lays his crown before the iron door; then to the Sentries*).

Go! And let no man come near the door all night.

THE SENTRIES (*kneeling*). Yes, Majesty.

[*They remain kneeling until after the King has gone. King and the Chief Prophet walk away.*]

CHIEF PROPHET. It was your pride. Let it be forgotten.

May the stars accept it.

[*Exeunt left. The Sentries rise.*]

FIRST SENTRY. The stars have envied him!

SECOND SENTRY. It is an ancient crown. He wore it well.

FIRST SENTRY. May the stars accept it.

SECOND SENTRY. If they do not accept it what doom will overtake him?

FIRST SENTRY. It will suddenly be as though there were never any city of Zericon nor two sentries like you and me standing before the door.

SECOND SENTRY. Why! How do you know?

FIRST SENTRY. That is ever the way of the gods.

SECOND SENTRY. But it is unjust.

FIRST SENTRY. How should the gods know that?

SECOND SENTRY. Will it happen to-night?

FIRST SENTRY. Come! we must march away.

[Exeunt right. The stage grows increasingly darker. Re-enter the Chamberlain from the right. He walks across the Stage and goes out to the left. Reënter Spies from the right. They cross the stage, which is now nearly dark.]

BOY *(enters from the right, dressed in white, his hands out a little, crying)*. King's door, King's door, I want my little hoop. *(He goes up to the King's door. When he sees the King's crown there, he utters a satisfied)* O-oh!

[He takes it up, puts it on the ground, and, beating it before him with the sceptre, goes out by the way that he entered. The great door opens; there is light within; a furtive Spy slips out and sees that the crown is gone. Another Spy slips out. Their crouching heads come close together.]

FIRST SPY *(hoarse whisper)*. The gods have come!

[They run back through the door and the door is closed. It opens again and the King and the Chamberlain come through.]

KING. The stars are satisfied.

CURTAIN

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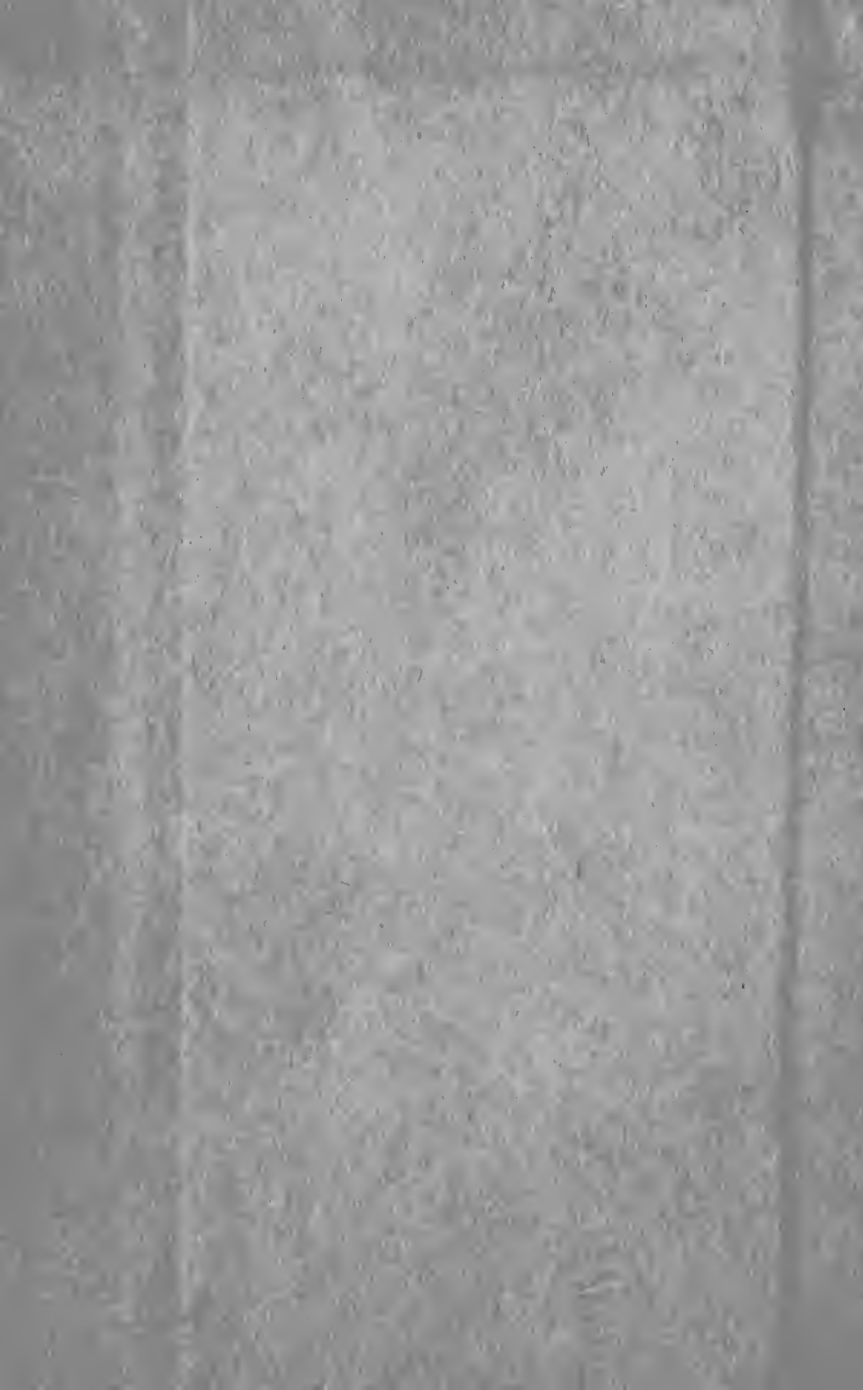


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