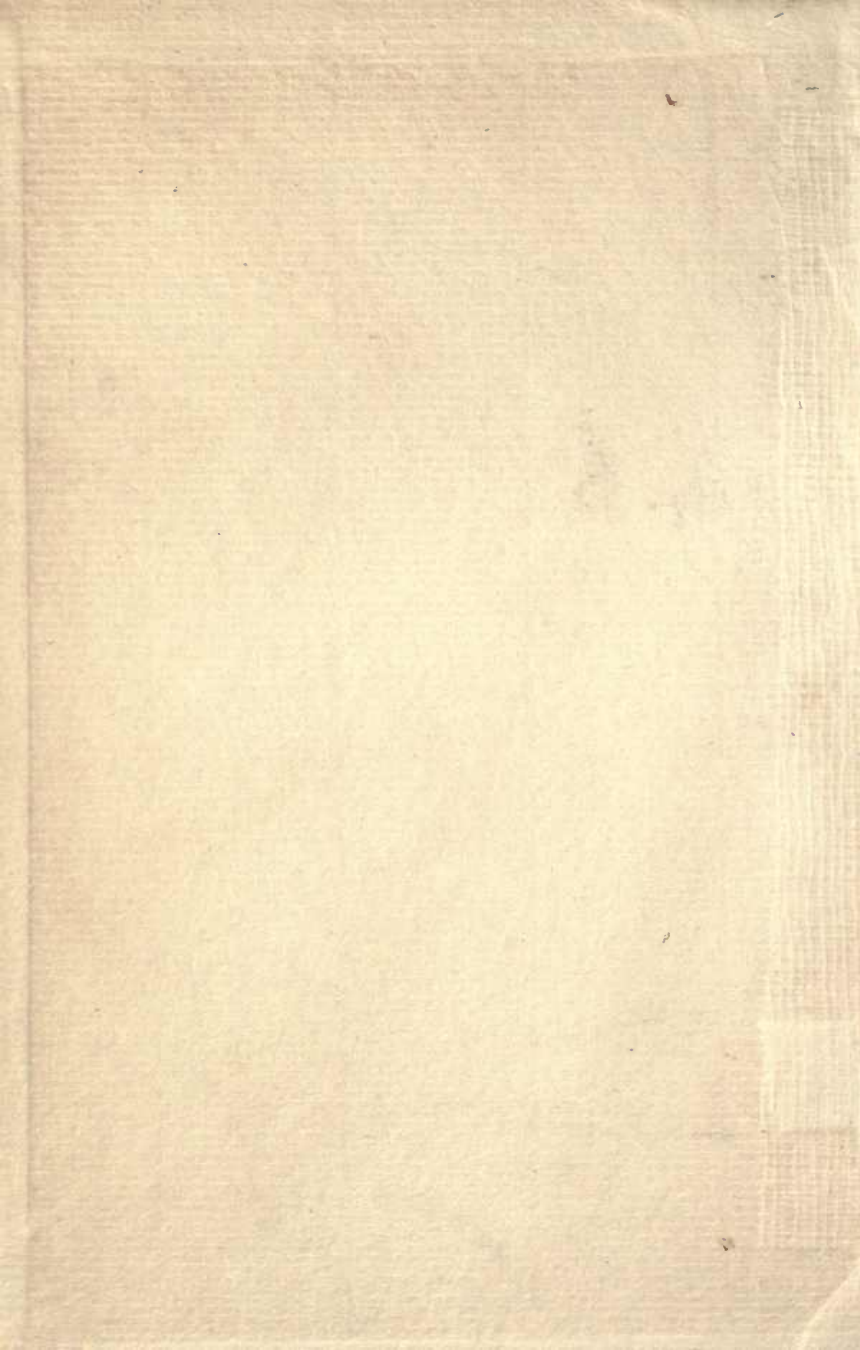


PROSE DRAMAS.

Henrik Ibsen.

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Fraternman

3746 Lake Ave

B. 50

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IBSEN'S PROSE DRAMAS.

EDITED BY WILLIAM ARCHER.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

"A DOLL'S HOUSE," "THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH,"
and "THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY."

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THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH.

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GHOSTS.

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE.



HENRIK IBSEN.

(As he appeared in 1858.)

THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH:
THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY:
A DOLL'S HOUSE: BY HENRIK
IBSEN.

AUTHORISED TRANSLATION.

EDITED BY
WILLIAM ARCHER.

THIRD EDITION.

THE WALTER SCOTT PUBLISHING CO., LTD.,
PATERNOSTER SQUARE, LONDON, E.C.
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS,
153-157 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK.

1904.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION.

HENRIK IBSEN was born at Skien, Southern Norway, on March 20, 1828. His great-great-grandfather was a Dane, who settled in Bergen; his great-grandmother was the daughter of a Scotchman naturalised in Norway; both his grandmother and his mother were of German descent. At the time of his birth his father was well-to-do; but when the boy was eight years old, pecuniary misfortune overtook the family. In his sixteenth year he was apprenticed to an apothecary at Grimstad, a small seaport on the south coast of Norway. Here he remained for more than five years. His first writings were poems (unpublished) inspired by the war in Schleswig and the Magyar revolt, and a drama named *Catilina*, written in the winter of 1848-49, published in Christiania early in 1850, and re-issued, in a revised form, Copenhagen, 1875. Of the first edition only thirty copies were sold. In March 1850 Ibsen came to Christiania, intending to study medicine at the University. He lived, in dire poverty, with the friend who had paid for the printing of *Catilina*. The "remainder" was sold as waste-paper, and "for a few days," says the poet, "we lacked none of the necessaries of life." In the summer of 1850 he wrote a one-act romantic play (unpublished) named *Kiæmpehöien* (*The Warrior's Grave* or *Barrow*), which was produced at the Christiania Theatre on September 26th. In company

with P. Botten-Hansen and A. O. Vinje he started a weekly paper named *Manden* (*The Man*) at the beginning of 1851, and to it he contributed a political satire named *Norma; or, A Politician's Love*, and described as a "music-tragedy in three acts." It has not been republished. *Manden* did not number one hundred subscribers, and existed only nine months. On November 6, 1851, Ibsen was appointed "Theatre-poet" to the "Norwegian National Theatre," established in Bergen by Ole Bull. His salary was less than £70 a year; but the experience acquired in mounting plays by Shakespeare, Holberg, Oehlen-schläger, and Heiberg, to say nothing of French pieces of the school of Scribe, was invaluable to him. Moreover, he was enabled to make a three months' tour to Copenhagen and Dresden in the summer of 1852, for the purpose of studying the theatre in these cities. The acting of Höedt in Copenhagen, and Bogumil Dawison in Dresden, deeply impressed him. He saw both of them play Hamlet.

Ibsen was five years in Bergen. During this period he produced *Sancthansnatten* (*St. John's Night*), a sort of fairy comedy (unpublished), performed January 2, 1853; *Fru Inger til Östraat* (*Lady Inger of Östraat*), a historical tragedy in prose, produced January 2, 1855, and published in 1857, the earliest play to be included in this collection; *Gildet paa Solhaug* (*The Feast at Solhaug*), a romantic play in prose and verse, performed January 2, 1856; and *Olaf Liliekrans*, a romantic play in prose and verse (unpublished), performed January 2, 1857. Of these plays *The Feast at Solhaug* was the most successful. It was received with enthusiasm in Bergen, and afterwards performed with applause in Christiania, Stockholm, and Copenhagen. In the summer of 1857 Ibsen left Bergen for Christiania, where he was appointed "instructor" at the Norwegian

Theatre. In 1858 he married Susannah Daae Thoresen, a step-daughter of the well-known novelist, Magdalene Thoresen.

The Norwegian Theatre in Christiania was founded for the encouragement of Norwegian authorship and acting, in opposition to the Christiania Theatre, where the manager and most of the company were Danes. The public and the press took sides in the contest, which ran very high. In the autumn of 1857 Ibsen offered to the Christiania Theatre his legendary tragedy in prose, *Hærmændene paa Helgeland* (*The Warriors at Helgeland*), his own theatre not being in a position to represent it adequately. It was rejected, and its rejection led to bitter controversy. In 1858 the poet published it, and produced it on his own little stage. Not until 1861, when the Danish faction was rapidly losing its influence in the Christiania Theatre, was it transferred to the repertory of that institution. *Hærmændene paa Helgeland* and Björnson's peasant novel, *Synnöve Solbakken*, which appeared almost at the same time, may be regarded as the first mature products of contemporary Norwegian literature. In the winter of 1862 Ibsen published *Kierlighedens Komedie* (*Love's Comedy*), a three-act satire in verse, which brought down upon him a storm of indignation. It was not performed until 1873. His next production was *Kongsemnerne* (*The Pretenders to the Throne*), a five-act historical drama in prose, written in the summer of 1863, and acted and published in the following year. In 1862 the Norwegian Theatre had to close its doors, and although, at the beginning of 1863, Ibsen secured the post of "æsthetic adviser" to the Christiania Theatre, with a salary of about £65 a year, his pecuniary position was so precarious as to be almost desperate. His plays brought him in next to nothing, for the Norwegian literary public was very small, and he was as

yet almost unknown outside Norway. Moreover, his life in Christiania was beset with annoyances, literary and social; while the attitude of Norway and Sweden towards Denmark in the war of 1863-64 excited his sternest indignation. Accordingly he regarded it as a blessed deliverance when he obtained from the Government a small allowance, or stipend, which enabled him to leave the country. He shook the dust of Christiania off his feet on April 2, 1864.

Ibsen's "exile" has often been misrepresented. He left Norway not only of his own free will, but with every intention of returning after a year or so. This design he abandoned, because he found the solitude-in-society of a great foreign city more suited to his temperament than the eternal publicity of life in a comparatively small Norwegian town such as Christiania. He pitched his tent first in Rome; then (1868) in Dresden; then in Munich; then again in Rome; then once more in Munich, where he now resides.

His first impressions of Rome led to the conception of the "world-historic drama," *Emperor and Galilean*; but he soon put the theme aside, in order to produce what some regard as his two greatest achievements, *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*. *Brand*, a satiric tragedy (if the expression is permissible) in rhymed verse, was written at Ariccia, near Rome, in 1865, and published in the following year. It immediately brought him fame and pecuniary independence, being accepted in some quarters as a work of distinctly religious tendency. The difficult experiment of placing it on the stage was attempted in Stockholm in 1885. *Peer Gynt*, written in Ischia and Sorrento, and published in 1867, may perhaps be best described as a satiric phantasmagoria. Though composed in lyric measures of great variety, and not primarily designed for representation, it was successfully acted in Christiania

during the season of 1876. These were the poet's last plays in verse. The first of his modern plays in prose, all of which will be included in the present series, was *De Unges Forbund* (*The League of Youth*), written in Dresden during the winter of 1868-69, and produced at the Christiania Theatre, October 18, 1869, amid an almost riotous scene of protest against what was supposed to be its political tendency. The second and third representations were equally stormy; but before long the play was recognised as one of the classics of the Scandinavian stage. When Ibsen, in 1874, paid his first visit to Norway since his Hegira, ten years earlier, he was present at a representation of *The League of Youth*, and was received with wild enthusiasm. *Keiser og Galilæer* (*Emperor and Galilean*), a vast drama in two parts of five acts each, dealing with the history of Julian the Apostate, was written in Dresden during the winter of 1872-73, and published in the latter year. Thenceforward the poet gave himself up entirely to studies of modern life. His visit to Norway in 1874 was undertaken partly with a view to placing himself more thoroughly in touch with the Norwegian life of the day; and he has since paid two other visits to his native land. The modern series which opened with *The League of Youth* now numbers eight plays: *Samfundets Støtter* (*The Pillars of Society*), written in Munich, 1877; *Et Dukkehiem* (*A Doll's House*), written at Amalfi, 1879; *Gengangere* (*Ghosts*), written at Sorrento, 1881; *En Folkefiende* (*An Enemy of the People*), written in Rome and in the Tyrol, 1882; *Vildanden* (*The Wild Duck*), written in Rome and in the Tyrol, 1884; *Rosmersholm*, 1886, and *Fruen fra Havet* (*The Lady from the Sea*), 1888, both written in Munich.

In Scandinavia and Germany a whole literature of books and pamphlets has grown up around Ibsen's works.

The most important critical studies are Valfrid Vasenius's *Henrik Ibsen: ett Skaldeporträtt* (Stockholm, 1882, 343 pp.); L. Passarge's *Henrik Ibsen: ein Beitrag zur neuesten Geschichte der norwegischen Nationalliteratur* (Leipzig, 1883, 310 pp.); and Henrik Jæger's *Henrik Ibsen, 1828-1888; et literært Livsbillede* (Copenhagen, 1888, 296 pp.). To Herr Jæger's very interesting book I am indebted for many of the biographical details given above. Others I owe to the courtesy of the poet himself.

Henrik Ibsen's prose plays are in one sense very easy to translate, in another very difficult. His meaning is almost always as clear as daylight; the difficulty lies in reproducing the nervous conciseness, the vernacular simplicity, and, at the same time, something of the subtle rhythm of his phrases. How is one to escape stiff literalness on the one hand, lax paraphrase on the other? I cannot hope that I have always steered clear of the former danger; the latter I have done my best to avoid. Had I been preparing the plays for the stage, I should have felt justified in omitting any inessential phrases that could not be rendered into easy and natural English. As it is, I have allowed myself no such liberty, preferring to reproduce the poet's intention with all possible accuracy, even at the cost of a certain uncouthness or angularity of expression. In *The League of Youth*, for example, there are two catchwords which have given me much trouble: Daniel Heire's "Noksagt!" (literally "Enough said!" here rendered "I say no more!") and Aslaksen's "De lokale forhold" (rendered "The local situation"). It was extremely difficult to find phrases which should come in aptly in all the different contexts in which these catchwords occur. I have

frequently been tempted to suppress them at points where they sound awkwardly in English; but I have resisted the temptation. The reader may perhaps wish that I had yielded to it. Again, I have found it exceedingly hard to draw the line between admissible colloquialisms and inadmissible vulgarisms or slang. Even when vulgarisms and slang occur in the original, I have been very chary of reproducing them in terms of similar status, so to speak. The Queen's English, it seems to me, is free of all countries. An immemorial convention enables us to hear Hamlet and Julius Cæsar speaking Elizabethan English without the slightest sense of incongruity; and it is this which renders translation possible. But in any dialect, cant, or jargon, there is, I think, something essentially local which forbids us to transplant it. Shakespeare made his Roman and Sicilian, his Navarrese and Danish populace talk the raciest English vernacular of his own day; but our age is far more acutely conscious than his of those tyrannous categories, Time and Place. It would be manifestly absurd, for example, to make Björnson's peasants express themselves in broad Scotch; and to make Ibsen's lower-class townfolk talk Cockney, or use metaphors which have crept into our language from the race-course or the cricket-field, would be only a shade less ridiculous. One of my great difficulties, then, has been to suggest commonness of accent without having recourse to incongruous localisms. Where the speakers are educated people, I have sometimes rejected phrases which, though not exactly slangy, seemed to me *too* vernacular; and sometimes, no doubt, I have admitted phrases which, on this principle, ought to have been excluded. Strict consistency in such matters is well-nigh impossible.

It has been decided to retain the Norwegian "å" (pronounced sometimes like the "o" of *gore*, sometimes like

the "o" of *got*) in those proper names in which it occurs. The equivalent "aa" might have been adopted; but the English reader could not fairly be expected to bear in mind that "aa" should be pronounced like "o"; whereas he may possibly be able to associate that sound with the peculiar symbol "Å" or "ä."

The following translation of *The League of Youth* is the first which has appeared in English; I have thoroughly revised my rendering of *The Pillars of Society*, originally published in the "Camelot Series"; and the translation of *A Doll's House* has hitherto seen the light only in an illustrated edition, limited to 115 copies.

WILLIAM ARCHER.

IBSEN'S
PROSE DRAMAS.

THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH.

(1869.)

Characters.

- CHAMBERLAIN BRATSBERG¹ (*owner of iron-works*).
ERIK BRATSBERG (*his son, a merchant*).
THORA (*his daughter*).
SELMA (*Erik's wife*).
DOCTOR FIELDBO (*physician at the Chamberlain's works*).
STENSGÅRD² (*a lawyer*).
MONSEN (*a landowner, of Stonelee*).³
BASTIAN MONSEN (*his son*).
RAGNA (*his daughter*).
HELLE (*student of theology, tutor at Stonelee*).
RINGDAL (*manager of the iron-works*).
ANDERS LUNDESTAD (*a wealthy farmer*).
DANIEL HEIRE.⁴
MADAM⁵ RUNDHOLMEN (*widow of a storekeeper and publican*).
ASLAKSEN (*a printer*).
A MAID-SERVANT AT THE CHAMBERLAIN'S.
A WAITER.
A WAITRESS AT MADAM RUNDHOLMEN'S.
Townspople, Guests at the Chamberlain's, etc., etc.

[The action takes place in the neighbourhood of the iron-works, not far from a commercial town in Southern Norway.]

¹ "Chamberlain" (Kammerherre) is a title conferred by the King of Norway upon men of wealth and position. Hereditary nobility was abolished in 1821.

² Pronounce *Stayns-gore*.

³ In the original "Storli."

⁴ Heire (pronounce *Heirë*)=Heron.

⁵ Married women and widows of the lower middle-class are addressed as Madam in Norway.

THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH.

Act First.

(The Seventeenth of May.¹ A popular fête in the Chamberlain's grounds. Music and dancing in the background. Coloured lights among the trees. In the middle, somewhat towards the back, a rostrum; to the right, the entrance to a large refreshment tent; before it a table with benches. In the foreground, on the left, another table, decorated with flowers and surrounded with lounging chairs.)

(A Crowd of People. LUNDESTAD, with a committee-badge at his button-hole, stands on the rostrum. RINGDAL, also with a committee-badge, at the table on the left.)

LUNDESTAD.— —Therefore, friends and fellow-citizens, I drink to our freedom! As we received it from our fathers, so will we preserve it for ourselves and for our children! Three cheers for the day! Three cheers for the Seventeenth of May!

THE CROWD. Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!

RINGDAL (*as LUNDESTAD descends from the rostrum*). And one in for old Lundestad!

SOME VOICES. Hiss! hiss!

MANY VOICES (*drowning the others*). Hurrah for Lundestad! Long live old Lundestad! Hurrah!

¹ The Norwegian "Independence Day."

(*The CROWD gradually disperses. MONSEN, his son BASTIAN, STENSGÅRD, and ASLAKSEN push their way forward.*)

MONSEN. 'Pon my soul, it's time he was laid on the shelf!

ASLAKSEN. It was the local situation he was talking about! Ho-ho!

MONSEN. He's made the same speech year after year as long as I can remember. Come over here.

STENSGÅRD. No, no, not that way, Mr. Monsen. We're quite deserting your daughter.

MONSEN. Oh, Ragna 'll find us again.

BASTIAN. She doesn't need to, young Helle's looking after her.

MONSEN. Yes, Helle (*nudging STENSGÅRD familiarly*). But you have me here, you see, and the rest of us. Come on! We'll be out of the crowd here, so that we can discuss more fully what— (*has meanwhile taken a seat beside the table on the left*).

RINGDAL (*approaching*). Excuse me, Mr. Monsen, that table's reserved.

STENSGÅRD. Reserved? for whom?

RINGDAL. For the Chamberlain's party.

STENSGÅRD. Oh, bother the Chamberlain's party! There's none of them here.

RINGDAL. No, but they're expected every minute.

STENSGÅRD. Then let them sit somewhere else. (*Takes a chair.*)

LUNDESTAD (*laying his hand on the chair*). No, the table is reserved, and there's an end of it.

MONSEN (*rising*). Come, Mr. Stensgård; there are just as good seats over there. (*Crosses to the right.*)

Waiter! Hm, no waiters either. The Committee should have seen to all that. Oh, Aslaksen, just go in and get us four bottles of champagne. Get the dearest; tell them to put it down to Monsen. (ASLAKSEN goes into the tent; the three others seat themselves.)

LUNDESTAD (*goes quietly over to them and addresses STENSGÅRD*). I hope you won't take it ill——

MONSEN. Take it ill! Good gracious no! Not in the least!

LUNDESTAD (*still to STENSGÅRD*). It's not my doing; it's the Committee that decided——

MONSEN. Of course. The Committee orders, and we must obey.

LUNDESTAD (*as before*). You see, we're on the Chamberlain's own ground here. He has kindly thrown open his park and garden for this evening; so we thought——

STENSGÅRD. We're very comfortable here, Mr. Lundestad—if only we could have peace—I mean for the crowd.

LUNDESTAD (*unruffled*). Very well, then it's all right. (*Goes towards the back.*)

ASLAKSEN (*coming from the tent*). The waiter's just coming with the wine. (*Sits.*)

MONSEN. A table apart, under special care of the Committee! And on our Independence Day of all others! There you have a specimen of the way things go.

STENSGÅRD. But why on earth do you put up with such things, you good people?

MONSEN. Hereditary habit, you see.

ASLAKSEN. You're new to the district, Mr. Stensgård. If only you knew a little of the local situation——!

A WAITER (*brings champagne*). Was it you that ordered——?

ASLAKSEN. Yes, certainly; open the bottle.

THE WAITER (*pouring out the wine*). It goes to your account Mr. Monsen?

MONSEN. The whole thing; don't be afraid. (*The WAITER goes. MONSEN clinks glasses with STENSGÅRD.*) Here's welcome among us, Mr. Stensgård. I'm heartily glad to have made your acquaintance; I reckon it an honour to the district that such a man should settle here. The newspapers have made us familiar with your name, on all sorts of public occasions. You have great gifts of oratory, Mr. Stensgård, and a warm heart for the public weal. I trust you will enter with life and vigour into the——hm, into the——

ASLAKSEN. The local situation.

MONSEN. Oh yes, the local situation. I drink to that! (*They drink.*)

STENSGÅRD. Whatever I do, I'll certainly put life and vigour into it.

MONSEN. Bravo! Hear, hear! Another glass on the top of that promise.

STENSGÅRD. No, stop; I've already——

MONSEN. Oh, nonsense! Another glass, I say—a cup of promise! (*They clink glasses and drink. During what follows BASTIAN keeps filling the glasses as soon as they are empty.*)

MONSEN. However, since we've got upon the

subject, I must tell you that it isn't the Chamberlain himself that keeps everything under the yoke. No, old Lundestad's the man that stands behind and drives the sledge.

STENSGÅRD. I've heard that in many quarters. I can't understand how a Liberal like him——

MONSEN. Lundestad? Do you call Anders Lundestad a Liberal? Of course he professed Liberalism in his young days, when he was still at the foot of the ladder. And then he inherited his seat in Parliament from his father. Good Lord! everything here is hereditary.

STENSGÅRD. But all these abuses must be put a stop to.

ASLAKSEN. Yes, damn it all, Mr. Stensgård, just put a stop to them.

STENSGÅRD. I don't say that I——

ASLAKSEN. Yes, you! You're just the man. You've the gift of the gab, as the saying goes; and you have what's better: you've the pen of a ready writer. My paper's at your disposal, you know.

MONSEN. If anything's to be done, it must be done quickly. The preliminary election¹ comes on in three days now.

STENSGÅRD. And if you were elected, your private business wouldn't stand in the way?

MONSEN. My private business would suffer, of course; but if it appeared that the good of the

¹ The system of indirect election obtains in Norway. The constituencies choose a College of Electors, who, in turn, choose the Members of the Storting or Parliament. It is the preliminary "Election of Electors" to which Monsen refers.

community demanded the sacrifice, I'd have to put aside all personal considerations.

STENSGÅRD. Good ; that's good. And you've got a party already : that I can see clearly.

MONSEN. I flatter myself the majority of the younger, go-ahead generation——

ASLAKSEN. Hm, hm ! 'ware spies.

(DANIEL HEIRE enters from the tent ; he peers about shortsightedly, and approaches.)

HEIRE. May I beg for the loan of a spare seat ; I want to sit over there.

MONSEN. The benches are fastened here, you see ; but won't you take a place at this table ?

HEIRE. Here ? At this table ? Oh, yes, with pleasure. (*Sits.*) Dear, dear ! champagne, I believe.

MONSEN. Yes ; won't you take a glass ?

HEIRE. No, thanks. Madam Rundholmen's champagne—— Well, well, just half a glass to keep you company. If only one had a glass, now ?

MONSEN. Bastian, go and get one.

BASTIAN. Oh, Aslaksen, just go and fetch a glass. (ASLAKSEN goes into the tent. *A pause.*)

HEIRE. Don't let me interrupt you, gentlemen. I wouldn't for the world ! Thanks, Aslaksen. (*Bows to STENSGÅRD.*) A strange face—a new arrival ! Have I the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Stensgård, the celebrated lawyer ?

MONSEN. Quite right. (*Introducing them.*) Mr. Stensgård, Mr. Daniel Heire——

BASTIAN. Capitalist.

HEIRE. Ex-capitalist, you should rather say. It's all gone now ; slipped through my fingers, so to speak.

Not that I was bankrupt—for goodness sake don't think that.

MONSEN. Drink, drink, while the froth is on it.

HEIRE. But rascality, you understand—chicanery and sharp practice—— I say no more. Well, well, I hope it's only temporary. When I get clear of my outstanding law-suits and some other little matters, I'll soon be on the track of our aristocratic old Reynard the Fox. Let's drink to that! You won't, eh?

STENSGÅRD. I should like to know first who your aristocratic old Reynard the Fox may be.

HEIRE. Hee-hee; you needn't look so uncomfortable, man. You don't suppose I'm alluding to Mr. Monsen. You can't accuse Mr. Monsen of being aristocratic—— No; it's Chamberlain Bratsberg, my dear young friend.

STENSGÅRD. What! In money matters the Chamberlain's surely unimpeachable.

HEIRE. You think so, young man? Hm; I say no more. (*Draws nearer.*) Twenty years ago I was worth no end of money. My father left me a pile. You've heard of my father, I daresay? No? Old Hans Heire? They called him Gold Hans. He was a shipowner; made heaps of money in the blockade time; had his window-frames and door-posts gilded; he could afford it—— I say no more; so they called him Gold Hans.

ASLAKSEN. Didn't he gild his chimney-pots too?

HEIRE. No; that was only a penny-a-liner's lie; invented long before your time, however. But he made the money fly; and so did I in my time. My visit to

London—haven't you heard of my visit to London? I took a prince's retinue with me. Have you really not heard of it, eh? And the sums I've lavished on art and science! And on bringing rising talent to the front!

ASLAKSEN (*rises*). Well, good-bye, gentlemen.

MONSEN. What? Are you leaving us?

ASLAKSEN. Yes; I want to stretch my legs a bit. (*Goes.*)

HEIRE (*speaking low*). He was one of them—just as grateful as the rest, hee-hee! Do you know, I kept him a whole year at college?

STENSGÅRD. Indeed? Has Aslaksen been to college?

HEIRE. Like young Monsen—nothing came of it; and like—— I say no more. Had to give him up, you see; he'd already developed his unhappy taste for spirits.

MONSEN. But you've forgotten what you were going to tell Mr. Stensgård about the Chamberlain.

HEIRE. Oh, it's a long yarn. When my father was in his glory, things were going down-hill with the old Chamberlain—this one's father, you understand; he was a Chamberlain too.

BASTIAN. Of course; everything here is hereditary.

HEIRE. Including the social graces—— I say no more. The conversion of the currency, rash speculations, extravagances he launched out into in 1816 or thereabouts, forced him to sell some of his land.

STENSGÅRD. And your father bought it?

HEIRE. Bought and paid for it. Well, what then?

I come into my property ; I make improvements by the thousand——

BASTIAN. Of course.

HEIRE. Your health, my young friend ! Improvements by the thousand, I say—thinning the woods, and so forth. Years pass ; and then comes Master Reynard—the present one, I mean—and repudiates the bargain.

STENSGÅRD. But, my dear Mr. Heire, you could surely have snapped your fingers at him.

HEIRE. Not so easily ! Some small formalities had been overlooked, he declared. Besides, I happened then to be in temporary difficulties, which afterwards became permanent. And what can a man do now-adays without capital ?

MONSEN. You're right there, by God ! And in many ways you can't do very much with capital either. That I know to my cost. Why, even my innocent children——

BASTIAN (*thumps the table*). Ugh, father ! if I only had certain people here !

STENSGÅRD. Your children, you say ?

MONSEN. Yes ; take Bastian, for example. Perhaps I haven't given him a good education ?

HEIRE. A threefold education ! First for the University ; then for painting ; and then for—what is it ?—it's a civil engineer he is now, isn't it ?

BASTIAN. Yes ! that I am, by the Lord !

MONSEN. Yes, that he is ; I can produce his bills and his certificates to prove it ! But who gets the town business ? Who has got the road-making these last two years ? Foreigners, or at any rate

strangers—in fact, people no one knows anything about.

HEIRE. Yes; it's shameful the way things go on. Only last New Year, when the managership of the Savings Bank fell vacant, what must they do but give Monsen the go-by, and choose an individual that knew—(*coughs*)—that knew how to keep his purse-strings drawn, which our princely host obviously does not. Whenever there's a post of confidence going, it's always the same! Never Monsen—always some one that enjoys the confidence—of the people in power. Well, well; *commune suffragium*, as the Roman Law puts it; that means shipwreck in their Common Council, sir.¹ It's a shame! Your health!

MONSEN. Thanks! But, to change the subject. how are all your lawsuits getting on?

HEIRE. They're still pending; I can't tell you anything more for the present. What a lot of worry they do give me! Next week I'll have to summon the whole Town Council before the Arbitration Commission.²

BASTIAN. Is it true that you once summoned yourself before the Arbitration Commission?

HEIRE. Myself? Yes; but I didn't put in an appearance.

¹ In this untranslatable passage Daniel Heire seems to be making a sort of pun on *suffragium* and *naufragium*.

² In Norway, before an action comes into Court, the parties are bound to appear in person before a Commission of Arbitration or Conciliation. If the Commission can suggest an arrangement acceptable to both sides, this arrangement has the validity of a judgment, and the case goes no further. Counsel are not allowed to appear before the Commission.

MONSEN Ha ha! You didn't, eh?

HEIRE. I'd a sufficient excuse: had to cross the river, and it was unfortunately the very year of Bastian's bridge—plump! down it went, you know.

BASTIAN. Why, confound it all——

HEIRE. Take it coolly, young man! You're not the first that has bent the bow till it breaks. Everything's hereditary, you know—— I say no more.

MONSEN. Ho ho ho! You say no more, eh? Well drink, then, to say no more! (*To STENSGÅRD.*) You see, Mr. Heire is licensed to say what he pleases.

HEIRE. Yes, freedom of speech is the only civic right I really value.

STENSGÅRD. What a pity the law should restrict it!

HEIRE. Hee-hee! Our legal friend's mouth is watering for a nice action for slander, eh? Don't you trouble, my dear sir! I'm an old hand, let me tell you!

STENSGÅRD. Especially at slander.

HEIRE. Your pardon, young man! That outburst of indignation does honour to your heart. I beg you to forget an old man's untimely frankness about your absent friends.

STENSGÅRD. Absent friends?

HEIRE. The son I have all respect for—— I say no more! The daughter too. And if I have cast a passing slur upon the Chamberlain's character——

STENSGÅRD. The Chamberlain's? Is it the Chamberlain's family you call my friends?

HEIRE. Well, you don't pay visits to your enemies, I presume?

BASTIAN. Visits?

MONSEN. What?

HEIRE. Ow, ow, ow! Here am I letting cats out of bags——

MONSEN. Have you paid visits at the Chamberlain's?

STENSGÅRD. Nonsense! All a mistake——

HEIRE. I'm so sorry! How was I to know it was a secret? (*To MONSEN.*) Besides, you mustn't take my expressions too literally. When I say a visit, I mean only a sort of formal call; in a frock coat and yellow gloves, it's true; but what——

STENSGÅRD. I tell you I haven't exchanged a single word with any of that family!

HEIRE. Is it possible? Were you not received the second time either? For I know they were "not at home" the first time.

STENSGÅRD (*to MONSEN*). I had a letter to deliver from a friend in Christiania—that was all.

HEIRE (*rising*). Curse me if it isn't positively revolting! Here is a young man at the outset of his career; full of simple-minded confidence, he seeks out the experienced man of the world and knocks at his door; approaches him, as one who has brought his ship to port, to beg for—— I say no more! The man of the world shuts the door in his face; is not at home; never is at home when he ought to be—— I say no more! (*With indignation.*) Was there ever such shameful insolence?

STENSGÅRD. Oh, never mind the stupid business.

HEIRE. Not at home! He who boasts that he's always at home to reputable people!

STENSGÅRD. Does he say that?

HEIRE. A mere empty phrase. He's not at home to Mr. Monsen either. But I can't think why he should hate you so much. Yes, hate you, I say; for what do you think I heard yesterday?

STENSGÅRD. I don't want to know what you heard yesterday.

HEIRE. Then I say no more! Besides the expressions didn't surprise me—coming from the Chamberlain, I mean. Only I can't think why he should have added "demagogue."

STENSGÅRD. Demagogue!

HEIRE. Well, since you insist upon it, I must confess that the Chamberlain called you a demagogue and adventurer.

STENSGÅRD (*jumps up*). What!

HEIRE. Demagogue and adventurer, or adventurer and demagogue; I won't answer for the order.

STENSGÅRD. And you heard that?

HEIRE. I? If I had been present, Mr. Stensgård, you may be sure I should have taken up the cudgels for you, as you deserve.

MONSEN. There, you see what comes of——

STENSGÅRD. How dare the old scoundrel——?

HEIRE. Come, come, come! Keep your temper. Very likely it was a mere figure of speech—a harmless little joke, I've no doubt. You can demand an explanation to-morrow; for I suppose you're going to the great dinner-party, eh?

STENSGÅRD. I'm not going to any dinner-party.

HEIRE. Two calls and no invitation!

STENSGÅRD. Demagogue and adventurer! What can he be thinking of?

MONSEN. Look there! Talk of the devil——! Come, Bastian. (*Goes off with BASTIAN.*)

STENSGÅRD. What did he mean by it, Mr. Heire?

HEIRE. Haven't the ghost of an idea. It pains you? Your hand, young man! Pardon me if my frankness has wounded you. Believe me, you have yet many bitter lessons to learn in this life. You are young; you are ardent and trustful. It is beautiful; it is even touching; but—but—trustfulness is silver, experience is gold; that's a proverb of my own invention, sir! God bless you! (*Goes.*)

(CHAMBERLAIN BRATSBERG, *his* DAUGHTER THORA, and DOCTOR FIELDBO *enter from the left.*)

LUNDESTAD (*strikes the bell on the rostrum*). Silence for Mr. Ringdal's speech!

STENSGÅRD (*shouts*). Mr. Lundestad, I demand to be heard!

LUNDESTAD. Afterwards.

STENSGÅRD. No, now! at once!

LUNDESTAD. You can't speak just now. Silence for Mr. Ringdal!

RINGDAL (*on the rostrum*). Ladies and gentlemen! We have at this moment the honour of seeing in our midst the man with the warm heart and the open hand—the man we have all looked up to for many a year, as to a father—the man who is always ready to help us, both in word and deed—the man whose door stands always open to every reputable citizen—the man who—who—ladies and gentlemen, our honoured guest is no friend to long speeches, so without more words, I call for three cheers for Chamberlain

Bratsberg and his family! Long may they live!
Hurrah!

THE CROWD. Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!

(*Great enthusiasm; people press around the CHAMBERLAIN, who thanks them and shakes hands with those nearest him.*)

STENSGÅRD. May I speak now?

LUNDESTAD. By all means. The platform is at your service.

STENSGÅRD (*jumps upon the table*). I shall choose my own platform!

THE YOUNG MEN (*crowding around him*). Hurrah!

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*to the DOCTOR*). Who's this obstreperous personage?

FIELDBO. Mr. Stensgård.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, it's he, is it?

STENSGÅRD. Listen to me, my joyous brothers and sisters! Hear me, you whose hearts are singing, even though it be voicelessly, the triumphant song of the day, the day of our freedom! I am a stranger among you——

ASLAKSEN. No!

STENSGÅRD. Thanks for that "No!" I take it as the utterance of a longing, an aspiration. A stranger I am, however; but this I swear, that I come among you with a great and open-hearted sympathy for your sorrows and your joys, your victories and defeats. If it lay in my power——

ASLAKSEN. It does, it does!

LUNDESTAD. No interruptions! You have no right to speak.

STENSGÅRD. You still less! I abolish the

Committee! Freedom on the day of freedom, boys!

THE YOUNG MEN. Hurrah for Freedom!

STENSGÅRD. They deny you the right of speech! You hear it—they want to gag you. Away with this tyranny! I won't stand here talking to a flock of dumb animals. I will talk; but you shall talk too. We will talk to each other, from the heart!

THE CROWD (*with growing enthusiasm*). Hurrah!

STENSGÅRD. We'll have no more of these barren, white-chokered festivities! A golden crop of deeds shall hereafter shoot up from each Seventeenth of May. May! Is it not the season of bud and blossom, the blushing maiden-month of the year? On the first of June I shall have been two months among you; and in that time what greatness and littleness, what beauty and deformity, have I not seen?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What on earth is he talking about, Doctor?

FIELDBO. Aslaksen says it's the local situation.

STENSGÅRD. I have seen great and brilliant possibilities among the masses; but I have seen, too, a spirit of corruption brooding over the germs of promise and bringing them to nought. I have seen ardent and trustful youth rush yearning forth—and I have seen the door shut in its face.

THORA. Oh, Heaven!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What does he mean by that?

STENSGÅRD. Yes, my glad brothers and sisters! There hovers in the air an Influence, a Spectre from bygone days of rottenness, which spreads darkness and oppression where there should be nothing but

buoyancy and light. We must lay that Spectre ; down with it !

THE CROWD. Hurrah ! hurrah for the Seventeenth of May !

THORA. Come away, father—— !

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What the deuce does he mean by a spectre ? What's he talking about, Doctor ?

FIELDBO (*quickly*). Oh, it's about—— (*whispers a word or two*).

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Aha ! So that's it !

THORA (*softly*). Thanks !

STENSGÅRD. If no one else will strike at the dragon, I will. But we must hold together, boys !

MANY VOICES. Yes ! yes !

STENSGÅRD. We are young ! The time belongs to us ; but we also belong to the time. Our right is our duty ! Elbow-room for faculty, for will, for power ! Listen to me ! We must form a League. The money-bag has ceased to rule among us !

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Bravo ! (*To the DOCTOR.*) He said the money-bag ; so it's really Monsen !

STENSGÅRD. Yes, boys ; we, we are the wealth of the land, if only there's metal in us. Our will is the ringing gold that shall pass from man to man. War to the knife against whoever shall deny its currency !

THE CROWD. Hurrah !

STENSGÅRD. A scornful "bravo" has been flung in my teeth——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. No, no !

STENSGÅRD. What care I ! Thanks and threats alike are powerless over the perfect will. And now, God be with us ! For we are going about his work,

with youth and faith to help us. Come, then, into the refreshment tent—our League shall be baptised this very hour!

THE CROWD. Hurrah! Carry him! Shoulder high with him!

(He is lifted shoulder high.)

VOICES. Speak on! More! More!

STENSGÅRD. Let us hold together, I say! Providence is on the side of the League of Youth. It lies with us to rule the world—here in the district!

(He is carried into the tent amid wild enthusiasm.)

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN *(wiping her eyes)*. Oh, Lord, how beautifully he does speak! Don't you feel as if you could kiss him, Mr. Heire?

HEIRE. Thank you, I'd rather not.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Oh, you! I daresay not.

✓ HEIRE. Perhaps you would like to kiss him, Madam Rundholmen.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Ugh, how horrid you are!
(She goes into the tent; HEIRE follows her.)

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Spectre—and dragon—and money-bag! It was horribly rude—but well deserved!

LUNDESTAD *(approaching)*. I'm heartily sorry, Chamberlain—

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, where was your knowledge of character, Lundestad? Well, well; we're all fallible. Good-night, and thanks for a pleasant evening. *(Turns to THORA and the DOCTOR.)* But bless me, I've been positively rude to that fine young fellow!

FIELDBO. How so?

THORA. His call, you mean?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. He called twice. It's Lundestad's fault. He told me he was an adventurer and—and I forget what else. Fortunately I can make up for it.

THORA. How?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Come, Thora; this very evening we'll—

FIELDBO. Oh, do you think it's worth while, Chamberlain?

THORA (*softly*). Hush!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. When you've done an injustice you should lose no time in undoing it; that's a plain matter of duty. Good-night, Doctor. After all, I've spent a pleasant hour; and that's more than I have to thank *you* for to-day.

FIELDBO. Me, Chamberlain?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, yes, yes—you and others.

FIELDBO. May I ask what I—?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Don't be curious, Doctor. I'm never curious. Come, come—no offence—good-night!

(THE CHAMBERLAIN and THORA go out to the left; FIELDBO gazes thoughtfully after them.)

ASLAKSEN (*from the tent*). Hei, waiter! Pen and ink! Things are getting lively, Doctor!

FIELDBO. What things?

ASLAKSEN. He's founding the League. It's nearly founded.

LUNDESTAD (*who has quietly drawn near*). Are many putting down their names?

ASLAKSEN. We've about seven and thirty, not counting widows and so forth. Pen and ink, I say! No waiters to be found!—that comes of the local situation.

(Goes off behind the tent.)

LUNDESTAD. Puh! It's been hot to-day.

FIELDBO. I'm afraid we've hotter days to come.

LUNDESTAD. Do you think the Chamberlain was very angry?

FIELDBO. Oh, not in the least; you could see that, couldn't you? But what do you say to the new League?

LUNDESTAD. Hm; I say nothing. What is there to be said?

FIELDBO. It's the beginning of a struggle for power here in the district.

LUNDESTAD. Well, well, no harm in a fight. He has great gifts, that Stensgård.

FIELDBO. He's determined to make his way.

LUNDESTAD. Youth is always determined to make its way. I was, when I was young; there's no harm in that. But mightn't we look in and see?

HEIRE *(from the tent)*. Well, Mr. Lundestad, are you going to move the previous question, eh? To head the opposition? Hee-hee! You must make haste.

LUNDESTAD. Oh, I daresay I shall be in time.

HEIRE. Too late, sir; unless you want to stand godfather. *(Cheering from the tent.)* There, they're chanting Amen; the baptism is over.

LUNDESTAD. I suppose I may go and listen; I'll keep quiet. *(Goes into the tent.)*

HEIRE. There goes one of the falling trees; there's

going to be a rare uprooting, that I can tell you! The place will soon look like a wood after a storm. Won't I chuckle over it!

FIELDBO. Tell me, Mr. Heire, what interest have you in the matter?

HEIRE. Interest? I'm entirely disinterested, Doctor! If I chuckle, it's on behalf of my fellow-citizens. There will be life, spirit, go, in things. For my own part—good Lord, it's all the same to me; I say, as the Grand Turk said of the Emperor of Austria and the King of France—I don't care whether the pig eats the dog or the dog the pig. (*Goes out towards the back on the right.*)

THE CROWD (*in the tent*). Long live Stensgård! Hurrah! Hurrah for the League of Youth! Wine! Punch! Hei, hei! Beer! Hurrah!

BASTIAN (*comes from the tent*). God bless you and every one! (*With tears in his voice.*) Oh, Doctor, I feel so strong this evening; I must *do* something!

FIELDBO. Don't mind me. What would you like to do?

BASTIAN. I think I'll go down to the dancing-room and fight one or two fellows. (*Goes out behind the tent.*)

STENSGÅRD (*comes from the tent without his hat, and greatly agitated*). My dear Fieldbo, is that you?

FIELDBO. At your service, Tribune of the People; for I suppose you've been elected?

STENSGÅRD. Of course; but——

FIELDBO. And what's to come of it all? What nice little post are you to have? The management of the Bank? Or perhaps——

STENSGÅRD. Oh, don't talk to me like that! I know you don't mean it. You're not so empty and wooden as you like to appear.

FIELDBO. Empty and wooden, eh?

STENSGÅRD. Fieldbo! Be my friend as you used to be. We've not understood each other of late. You have wounded and repelled me with your ridicule and irony. Believe me, it was wrong of you. (*Embraces him.*) Oh, my God! How happy I am!

FIELDBO. You too? So am I, so am I!

STENSGÅRD. Yes, I should be the meanest hound on earth if all heaven's bounty didn't make me good and true. How have I deserved it, Fieldbo? What have I, poor sinner, done to be so richly blessed?

FIELDBO. There's my hand. This evening I'm your friend indeed.

STENSGÅRD. Thanks. Be faithful and true, as I shall be!—Oh, isn't it an unspeakable joy to carry all that multitude away and along with you? Must it not make you good from mere thankfulness? And how it makes you love your fellows! I feel as if I could clasp them all in one embrace, and weep, and beg their forgiveness because God has been so partial as to give me more than them.

FIELDBO (*quietly*). Yes, treasures without price may fall to one man's lot. This evening I wouldn't crush an insect, not a green leaf upon my path.

STENSGÅRD. You?

FIELDBO. Never mind. That's not what we're talking about. I only mean that I understand you.

STENSGÅRD. What a lovely night! Listen to the music and merriment floating out over the meadows.

And how still it is in the valley! I tell you the man whose life is not re-consecrated in such an hour, does not deserve to live on God's earth!

FIELDBO. Yes; but tell me now: what do you mean to build up out of it—to-morrow, and through the working-days to come?

STENSGÅRD. To build up? We have to tear down first. Fieldbo, I had once a dream—or did I see it? No; it was a dream, but such a living one! I thought the Day of Judgment was come upon the world. I could see the whole curve of the hemisphere. There was no sun, only a livid storm-light. A tempest arose; it swept from the west and drove everything before it: first withered leaves, then men; but they kept on their feet all the time, and their robes clung fast to them, so that they seemed to be hurried along sitting. At first they looked like townspeople running after their hats in a wind; but when they came nearer they were emperors and kings; and it was their crowns and globes they were chasing and catching at, and seemed always on the point of grasping, but never grasped. Oh, there were hundreds and hundreds of them, and none of them understood in the least what was going on; but many bewailed themselves, and asked: "Whence can it come, this terrible storm?" Then there came the answer: "One Voice spoke, and the storm is the echo of that one Voice."

FIELDBO. When did you dream that?

STENSGÅRD. Oh, I don't remember when; several years ago.

FIELDBO. I expect there were disturbances some-

where in Europe, and you had been reading the newspapers after a heavy supper.

✓ STENSGÅRD. The same shiver, the same thrill, that then ran down my back, I felt again to-night. Yes, I *will* give my whole soul utterance. I will be the Voice.

FIELDBO. Come, my dear Stensgård, pause and think. You will be the Voice, you say. Good! But where will you be the Voice? Here in the parish? Or at most here in the country? And who will be the echo and the storm? Why, people like Monsen and Aslaksen, and that thick-headed genius, Mr. Bastian. And instead of the flying emperors and kings, we shall see old Lundestad rushing about after his lost seat in Parliament. Then what comes of it all? Just what you at first saw in your dream—townsfolk in a wind.

STENSGÅRD. At first, yes. But who knows how far the storm may sweep?

FIELDBO. Fiddlesticks with you and your storm! And then you go, blind and bamboozled and bewitched, and turn your weapons precisely against all that is worthy and capable among us.

STENSGÅRD. That's not true.

FIELDBO. It is true! Monsen and the Stonelee crew got hold of you the moment you came here; and if you don't shake him off it'll be the worse for you. Chamberlain Bratsberg is a man of honour, that you may rely on. Do you know why Monsen hates him? Why, because——

STENSGÅRD. Not a word more! I won't hear a word against my friends.

FIELDBO. Look into yourself, Stensgård! Is Mr. Monsen really your friend?

STENSGÅRD. Mr. Monsen has most kindly opened his doors to me——

FIELDBO. To people of the better sort he opens his doors in vain.

STENSGÅRD. Oh, whom do you call the better sort? A few stuck-up officials! I know all about it. As for me, I've been received at Monsen's with real friendliness and appreciation——

FIELDBO. Appreciation? Yes, worse luck; there we're at the root of the matter.

STENSGÅRD. Not at all. I can see with unprejudiced eyes. Mr. Monsen has abilities, he has reading, he has a keen sense for public affairs.

FIELDBO. Abilities? Oh, yes, in a way. Reading too; he takes in the papers, and has read your speeches and articles. And his sense for public affairs he has of course proved by coinciding with the said articles and speeches.

STENSGÅRD. Now, Fieldbo, up come the dregs of your nature again. Can you never shake off that besmirching habit of thought? Why must you always see mean or ridiculous motives for everything? Oh, you're not serious! Now you look kind and true again. I'll tell you the real root of the matter. Do you know Ragna?

FIELDBO. Ragna Monsen? Oh, in a way—at second hand.

STENSGÅRD. Yes, she's sometimes at the Chamberlain's, isn't she?

FIELDBO. Yes, secretly as it were. She and Miss Bratsberg are old schoolfellows.

STENSGÅRD. And what do you think of her?

FIELDBO. Why, from all I've heard she seems to be a very good girl.

STENSGÅRD. Oh, you should see her in her home! She thinks of nothing but her two little sisters. And how devotedly she must have nursed her mother! You know the mother was out of her mind for some years before she died.

FIELDBO. Yes; I was their doctor at one time. But tell me, my dear friend, surely you're not——

STENSGÅRD. Yes, Fieldbo, I love her truly; to you I can confess it. Oh, I know what you're surprised at. You think it strange that so soon after—— of course you know that I was engaged at Christiania?

FIELDBO. Yes, I've heard so.

STENSGÅRD. The whole thing was a disappointment. I had to break it off; it was best for all parties. Oh, how I suffered under it! I felt tortured and oppressed. Now, thank heaven, I'm out of it all. That was my reason for leaving town.

FIELDBO. And with regard to Ragna Monsen, are you quite sure of yourself?

STENSGÅRD. Yes, I am indeed. There's no mistake possible in this case.

FIELDBO. Well, then, in heaven's name, go in and win! It means your life's happiness! Oh, I could tell you so much——

STENSGÅRD. Really? Has she said anything? Has she confided in Miss Bratsberg?

FIELDBO. No; that's not what I mean. But how

can you, in the midst of your happiness, go and fuddle yourself in these political orgies? How can town tattle have any interest for a mind that's—

STENSGÅRD. Why not? Man is a complex machine—I am, at any rate. Besides, my way to her lies through these very struggles and turmoils.

FIELDBO. A terribly commonplace way.

STENSGÅRD. Fieldbo, I'm ambitious; you know I am. I must make my way in the world. When I remember that I'm thirty, and am still on the first round of the ladder, I feel my conscience gnawing at me.

FIELDBO. Not with its wisdom-teeth.

STENSGÅRD. It's no use talking to you. You've never felt the spur of ambition. You've dosed and drifted all your days—first at college, then abroad, now here.

FIELDBO. Perhaps; but at least it's been delightful. And no reaction follows, like what you feel when you get down from the table after—

STENSGÅRD. Stop that! I can bear anything but that. You're doing a positive evil—you're damping my ardour.

FIELDBO. Oh, come! If your ardour's so easily damped—

STENSGÅRD. Stop, I say. What right have you to break in upon my happiness? Do you think I'm not sincere?

FIELDBO. Yes, I'm sure you are.

STENSGÅRD. Well, then, why go and make me feel empty, and disgusted, and suspicious of myself? (*Shouts and cheers from the tent.*) There! They're

drinking my health. An idea that can seize people so—by God, it *must* have truth in it!

(THORA BRATSBERG, RAGNA MONSEN, and MR. HELLE enter from the left and cross half-way back.)

HELLE. Look, Miss Bratsberg; there is Mr. Stensgård.

THORA. Then I won't go any further. Good-night, Ragna—good-night, dear!

HELLE AND MISS MONSEN. Good-night, good night. (*They go out to the right.*)

THORA (*advancing*). I am Mr. Bratsberg's daughter. I have a letter for you, from my father.

STENSGÅRD. For me?

THORA. Yes; here it is. (*Going.*)

FIELDBO. May I not see you home?

THORA. No, thank you. I can go alone. Good-night. (*Goes out to the left.*)

STENSGÅRD. (*Reads the letter by a Chinese lantern.*) What is this?

FIELDBO. Well, what has the Chamberlain to say to you?

STENSGÅRD. (*Bursts into loud laughter.*) I didn't expect this!

FIELDBO. Tell me——?

STENSGÅRD. Chamberlain Bratsberg is a pitiful creature.

FIELDBO. You dare to——

STENSGÅRD. Pitiful! Pitiful! Tell any one you please that I said so. Or rather, say nothing about it—— (*Puts the letter in his pocket.*) Don't mention this to any one.

(*The COMPANY come out from the tent.*)

MONSEN. Mr. President! Where is Mr. Stensgård?

THE CROWD. There he is! Hurrah!

LUNDESTAD. Mr. President has forgotten his hat.
(*Hands it to him.*)

ASLAKSEN. Here; have some punch! Have a good swig!

STENSGÅRD. Thanks, no more.

MONSEN. And the members of the League will recollect that we meet to-morrow at Stonelee.

STENSGÅRD. To-morrow? It wasn't to-morrow, was it?

MONSEN. Yes, certainly; to draw up the circular.

STENSGÅRD. No, I'm engaged to-morrow. I'll see about it the day after to-morrow, or the day after that. Well, good-night, gentlemen; hearty thanks all round, and hurrah for the future!

THE CROWD. Hurrah! Let's take him home in triumph!

STENSGÅRD. Thanks, thanks! But you really mustn't—

ASLAKSEN. We'll all go with you.

STENSGÅRD. Very well, come on. Good-night, Fieldbo; you're not coming with us?

FIELDBO. No; but let me tell you, what you said about Chamberlain Bratsberg—

STENSGÅRD. Hush, hush! It was an exaggeration—think no more about it! Well, my friends, if you're coming, come; I'll take the lead.

MONSEN. Your arm, Stensgård!

BASTIAN. A song! Strike up! Something thoroughly patriotic!

THE CROWD. A song! A song! Music!

(A popular air is played and sung. The procession marches out by the back to the right.)

FIELDBO *(to LUNDESTAD, who remains behind)*.
A gallant procession.

LUNDESTAD. Yes—and with a gallant leader.

FIELDBO. And where are you going, Mr. Lundestad?

LUNDESTAD. I? I'm going home to bed.

(He nods and goes off. DOCTOR FIELDBO remains behind alone.)

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

Act Second.

(*A garden-room at the Chamberlain's, elegantly furnished, with a piano, flowers, and rare plants. Entrance door in the background. On the left, a door leading to the dining-room; on the right several glass doors lead out to the garden.*)

(*ASLAKSEN stands at the entrance door. A MAID-SERVANT is carrying some dishes of fruit into the dining-room.*)

THE SERVANT. Yes, but I tell you they're still at table; you must call again.

ASLAKSEN. I'd rather wait, if I may.

THE SERVANT. Yes, if you like. You can sit there for the present.

(*She goes into the dining-room. ASLAKSEN takes a seat near the door. Pause. DR. FIELDBO enters from the back.*)

FIELDBO. Oh, good-day, Aslaksen: are you here?

THE SERVANT (*returning*). You're late this evening, sir.

FIELDBO. I was called to see a patient.

THE SERVANT. The Chamberlain and Miss Bratsberg have both been inquiring about you.

FIELDBO. Indeed!

THE SERVANT. Yes; won't you go in at once, sir; or shall I say that——?

FIELDBO. No, no; never mind. I can have a snack afterwards; I'll wait here in the meantime.

THE SERVANT. They'll soon have done.

(*She goes out by the back.*)

ASLAKSEN (*after a pause*). How can you resist such a dinner, Doctor—with dessert, and fine wines, and all sorts of good things?

FIELDBO. Why, man, it seems to me we get too many good things hereabouts, rather than too few.

ASLAKSEN. There I can't agree with you.

FIELDBO. Hm! I suppose you're waiting for some one?

ASLAKSEN. Yes, I am.

FIELDBO. And are things going tolerably at home? Your wife——?

ASLAKSEN. In bed, as usual; coughing and wasting away.

FIELDBO. And your second child?

ASLAKSEN. Oh, he's a cripple for the rest of his days; you know that. That's our luck, you see; what the devil's the use of talking about it?

FIELDBO. Let me look at you, Aslaksen.

ASLAKSEN. Well, what do you want to see?

FIELDBO. You've been drinking to-day.

ASLAKSEN. Yes, and yesterday too.

FIELDBO. Well, yesterday there was some excuse for it; but to-day——

ASLAKSEN. What of the people in there, then? Aren't they drinking too?

FIELDBO. Yes, my dear Aslaksen; that's a fair retort; but circumstances differ so in this world.

ASLAKSEN. I didn't choose my circumstances.

FIELDBO. No; God chose them for you.

ASLAKSEN. No, he didn't—men chose them.

Daniel Heire chose when he took me from the printing-house and sent me to college. And Chamberlain Bratsberg chose when he ruined Daniel Heire and sent me back to the printing-house.

FIELDBO. Now you know that's not true. The Chamberlain didn't ruin Daniel Heire; Daniel Heire ruined himself.

ASLAKSEN. Perhaps! But how dared Daniel Heire ruin himself in the face of his responsibilities towards me? God's partly to blame too, of course. Why should he give me talent and faculty? Well, of course I could have turned them to account as a respectable handicraftsman; but then comes that tattling old fool——

FIELDBO. It's base of you to say that. Daniel Heire acted with the best intentions.

ASLAKSEN. What good do his "best intentions" do me? Once upon a time I too sat there, where you hear them now clinking glasses and drinking healths; I was one of them, was well dressed, and—— That suited me, that did; me, who had read so much and had thirsted so long to have my share in all the good things of life. Well, well, how long was Jeppe in Paradise?¹ Smash, crash! down you go—and my fine fortunes fell to pie, as we printers say.

FIELDBO. But, after all, you hadn't so much to complain of; you had your trade to fall back upon.

ASLAKSEN. That's easily said. After getting out of your class you can't get into it again. They took

¹ An allusion to Holberg's comedy, *Jeppe paa Bierget*, which deals with the theme of Abou Hassan, treated by Shakespeare in the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*.

the ground from under my feet, and shoved me out on the slippery ice—and then they abuse me because I stumble.

FIELDBO. Well, far be it from me to judge you hardly——

ASLAKSEN. No; you've no right to. What a queer muddle it is! Daniel Heire, and Providence, and the Chamberlain, and Fate, and Circumstances—and I myself in the middle of it! I've often thought of unravelling it all and writing a book about it; but it's so cursedly entangled that—— (*glances towards the door on the left*). Ah! They're rising from table.

(*The party, ladies and gentlemen, pass from the dining-room into the garden, in lively conversation. Among the guests is STENSGÅRD, with THORA on his left arm and SELMA on his right. FIELDBO and ASLAKSEN stand beside the door in the back.*)

STENSGÅRD. I don't know my way here yet; you must tell me where I'm to take you, ladies.

SELMA. Out into the air; you must see the garden.

STENSGÅRD. Oh, that'll be delightful. (*They go out by the foremost glass door on the right.*)

FIELDBO. Why, by all that's wonderful, there's Stensgård!

ASLAKSEN. It's him I want to speak to. I've had a fine chase after him; fortunately I met Daniel Heire——

(*DANIEL HEIRE and ERIK BRATSBERG enter from the dining-room.*)

HEIRE. Hee-hee! Excellent sherry, upon my

word. I've tasted nothing like it since I was in London.

ERIK. Yes, it's good, isn't it? It puts life into you.

HEIRE. Well, well—it's a real pleasure to see one's money so well spent.

ERIK. How so? (*Laughing.*) Oh, yes; I see, I see. (*They go into the garden.*)

FIELDBO. You want to speak to Stensgård, you say?

ASLAKSEN. Yes.

FIELDBO. On business?

ASLAKSEN. Of course; the report of the fête——

FIELDBO. Well, then, you must wait out there in the meantime.

ASLAKSEN. In the passage?

FIELDBO. In the anteroom. You've chosen an awkward time and place; but I'll send Stensgård to you when I see an opportunity.

ASLAKSEN. Very well; I'll bide my time. (*Goes out by the back.*)

(CHAMBERLAIN BRATSBERG, LUNDESTAD, RINGDAL, and one or two other gentlemen come out of the dining-room.)

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*conversing with LUNDESTAD*). Violent, you say? Well, perhaps the form wasn't all that could be desired; but there were real gems in the speech, I can assure you.

LUNDESTAD. Well, if you're satisfied, Chamberlain, I've no right to complain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Why should you? Ah, here's the Doctor! Starving, I'll be bound.

FIELDBO. It doesn't matter, Chamberlain. The servants will attend to me. I feel myself almost at home here, you know.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh you do, do you? I wouldn't be in such a hurry.

FIELDBO. What? Am I taking too great a liberty? You yourself permitted me to——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What I permitted, I permitted. Well, make yourself at home, and see and find something to eat. (*Slaps him lightly on the shoulder and turns to LUNDESTAD.*) Now, *here's* one you may call an adventurer and—and the other thing I can't remember.

FIELDBO. Why, Chamberlain——!

LUNDESTAD. No, I assure you——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. No disputes after dinner; it's bad for the digestion. They'll soon serve the coffee outside.

(*Goes with the guests into the garden.*)

LUNDESTAD (*to* FIELDBO). Did you ever see the Chamberlain so strange as he is to-day?

FIELDBO. I noticed it yesterday evening.

LUNDESTAD. He will have it that I called Mr. Stensgård an adventurer and something else of that sort.

FIELDBO. Oh, well, Mr. Lundestad, what if you did? Excuse me; I must go and talk to the ladies. (*Goes out to the right.*)

LUNDESTAD (*to* RINGDAL, *who is arranging a card table*). How do you account for Mr. Stensgård's appearance here to-day?

RINGDAL. Yes, how? He wasn't on the original list.

LUNDESTAD. An afterthought, then? After his attack on the Chamberlain yesterday——

RINGDAL. Yes, can you understand it?

LUNDESTAD. Understand it? Oh yes, I suppose I can!

RINGDAL (*more softly*). You think the Chamberlain's afraid of him?

LUNDESTAD. I think he's prudent—that's what I think.

(They go up to the back conversing, and so out into the garden. At the same time SELMA and STENSGÅRD enter by the foremost door on the right.)

SELMA. Yes, just look! over the tops of the trees you can see the church tower and all the upper part of the town.

STENSGÅRD. So you can; I shouldn't have thought so.

SELMA. Don't you think it's a beautiful view?

STENSGÅRD. Everything is beautiful here: the garden, and the sunshine, and the people! Great heaven, how beautiful it all is! And you live here all the summer?

SELMA. No, not my husband and I; we come and go. We have a big, showy house in town, much finer than this; you'll see it soon.

STENSGÅRD. Perhaps your family live in town?

SELMA. My family? Who are my family?

STENSGÅRD. Oh, I didn't know——

SELMA. We fairy princesses have no family.

STENSGÅRD. Fairy princesses?

SELMA. At most we have a wicked stepmother.

STENSGÅRD. A witch, yes! So you are a princess?

SELMA. Princess of all the buried palaces, whence you hear the soft music on midsummer nights.¹ Doctor Fieldbo thinks it must be pleasant to be a princess; but I must tell you——

ERIK BRATSBERG (*coming from the garden*). Ah, at last I find the little lady.

SELMA. Yes, the little lady is telling Mr. Stensgård the story of her life.

ERIK. Oh, indeed; and what part does the husband play in the little lady's story?

SELMA. The Prince, of course. (*To STENSGÅRD.*) You know the prince always comes and breaks the spell, and then all ends happily, and every one calls and congratulates, and the fairy tale is over.

STENSGÅRD. Oh, it's too short.

SELMA. Perhaps, in a way.

ERIK (*putting his arm round her waist*). But a new fairy tale grows out of the old one, and in it the Princess becomes a Queen!

SELMA. On the same condition as real Princesses?

ERIK. What condition?

SELMA. They must go into exile—to a foreign kingdom.

ERIK. A cigar, Mr. Stensgård?

STENSGÅRD. Thank you; not just now.

(DOCTOR FIELDBO and THORA enter from the garden.)

¹ Literally, "on Thursday nights," that being the heyday of the Norwegian fairies.

SELMA (*going towards them*). Is that you, Thora dear? I hope you're not ill?

THORA. I? No.

SELMA. Oh, you must be; you seem to be always consulting the doctor of late.

THORA. No, I assure you——

SELMA. Nonsense; let me feel your pulse! You're burning. My dear Doctor, don't you think the fever will pass over?

FIELDBO. Everything has its time.

THORA. Frost is not better than——

SELMA. No, a medium temperature is the best—ask my husband.

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*enters from the garden*). The whole family gathered in a confidential circle? That's not very polite to the guests.

THORA. I'm just going, father dear——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Aha, it's you the ladies are paying court to, Mr. Stensgård! I must look to this.

THORA (*softly to FIELDBO*). Remain here! (*She goes into the garden.*)

ERIK (*offers SELMA his arm*). Has Madame any objection——?

SELMA. Come! (*They go out to the right.*)

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*looking after them*). It's impossible to get these two separated.

FIELDBO. It would be sinful to try.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Fools that we are! How Providence blesses us in spite of ourselves. (*Calls out.*) Thora, Thora, look after Selma! Get a shawl for her, and don't let her run about so: she'll catch cold. How short-sighted we

mortals are, Doctor! Do you know any cure for that disease?

FIELDBO. The spectacles of experience; through them you'll see more clearly a second time.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Just so. Thanks for the advice. But since you feel yourself at home here, you must really look after your guests.

FIELDBO. Certainly; come, Stensgård, shall we——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh no, no—there's my old friend Heire out there——

FIELDBO. He thinks himself at home here too.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Ha ha ha, so he does.

FIELDBO. Well, we two will join forces, and do our best. (*Goes into garden.*)

STENSGÅRD. You were speaking of Daniel Heire, Chamberlain. I must say I was rather surprised to see him here.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Were you? Mr. Heire and I are old school and college friends. Besides, we've had a good many dealings with each other in many ways since——

STENSGÅRD. Yes, Mr. Heire was good enough to give his own account of some of these dealings, yesterday evening.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Hm!

STENSGÅRD. If it hadn't been for him, I certainly shouldn't have boiled over as I did. But he has a way of speaking of people and things, that—in short, he has a vile tongue in his head.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. My dear young friend—Mr. Heire is my guest; you mustn't forget that. My

house is liberty hall, with only one reservation : my guests must not be discussed to their disadvantage.

STENSGÅRD. I beg your pardon, I'm sure——!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, never mind ; you belong to the younger generation, that's not so punctilious. As for Mr. Heire, I don't think you really know him. I, at any rate, owe Mr. Heire a great deal.

STENSGÅRD. Yes, that's just what he declared ; but I didn't think——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I owe him the best part of our domestic happiness, Mr. Stensgård ! I owe him my daughter-in-law. Yes, that's really so. Daniel Heire was kind to her in her childhood. She was a little prodigy ; she gave concerts when she was ten years old. I daresay you've heard her spoken of—Selma Sjöblom.¹

STENSGÅRD. Sjöblom ? Yes, of course ; her father was Swedish ?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, a music-teacher. He came here many years ago. Musicians, you know, are seldom millionaires ; and their habits are not always calculated to—— ; in short, Mr. Heire has always had an eye for talent ; he was struck with the child and had her sent to Berlin ; and then, when her father was dead and Heire's fortunes were on the wane she returned to Christiania, where she was of course taken up by the best people. That's how my son happened to fall in with her.

STENSGÅRD. So in that way old Daniel Heire has been an instrument of——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. That's how one thing leads

¹ Pronounce " Shöblom "—the modified " ö " much as in German.

to another, you see. We're all instruments, Mr. Stensgård ; you, like the rest of us ; an instrument of wrath, I suppose——

STENSGÅRD. Oh, don't speak of it, Chamberlain. I'm utterly ashamed——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Ashamed ?

STENSGÅRD. It was most unbecoming——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. The form was perhaps open to criticism, but the matter was excellent. And now I want to ask you, in future, when you're contemplating any move of the sort, just to come to me and tell me of it, openly and without reserve. You know we all want to act for the best ; it is my duty——

STENSGÅRD. And you allow me to speak frankly to you ?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Of course I do. Do you think I haven't long seen that things here have in some ways taken a most undesirable turn ? But what was I to do ? In the late King's time I lived for the most part in Stockholm. I'm old now ; and besides, it isn't in my nature to take the lead in reforms, or to plunge personally into the turmoil of public affairs. You, on the other hand, Mr. Stensgård, have every qualification for them ; so let us hold together.

STENSGÅRD. Thanks, Chamberlain ; many, many thanks !

(RINGDAL and DANIEL HEIRE enter from the garden.)

RINGDAL. And I tell you it must be a misunderstanding.

HEIRE. Indeed ? I like that ! How should I misunderstand my own ears ?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Anything new, Heire?

HEIRE. Only that Anders Lundestad is going over to the Stonelee party.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh! you're joking.

HEIRE. I beg your pardon, my dear sir; I have it from his own lips. Mr. Lundestad intends, on account of failing health, to retire from political life; you can draw your own conclusions from that.

STENSGÅRD. He told you so himself?

HEIRE. Of course he did. He made the important announcement to an awe-struck circle down in the garden; hee-nee!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Why, my dear Ringdal, what can be the meaning of this?

HEIRE. Oh, it's not difficult to guess.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Indeed it is though. This is a most important affair for the district. Come along, Ringdal; we must find the man himself.

(He and RINGDAL go down the garden.)

FIELDBO *(entering by the furthest back garden-door)*. Has the Chamberlain gone out?

HEIRE. Hush! the wise men are holding council. Great news, Doctor; Lundestad's going to resign.

FIELDBO. Oh, impossible!

STENSGÅRD. Can you understand it?

HEIRE. Ah, now we'll have real fun here. It's the League of Youth that's beginning to work, Mr. Stensgård. Do you know what you should call your League? I'll tell you some other time.

STENSGÅRD. Do you think it's really our League——?

HEIRE. Not the least doubt about it. So we're to

have the pleasure of sending our respected friend Mr. Monsen to Parliament!—I wish he were off already;—I'd be glad to drive him——; I say no more; hee-hee! (*Goes into the garden.*)

STENSGÅRD. Tell me, Fieldbo—how do you explain all this?

FIELDBO. There are other things still more difficult to explain. How come you to be here?

STENSGÅRD. I? Like the rest, of course—by invitation.

FIELDBO. I hear you were invited yesterday evening—after your speech——

STENSGÅRD. What then?

FIELDBO. How could you accept the invitation?

STENSGÅRD. What the deuce was I to do? I couldn't insult these good people.

FIELDBO. Indeed? You couldn't? What about your speech then?

STENSGÅRD. Nonsense! It was principles I attacked in my speech, not persons.

FIELDBO. And how do you account for the Chamberlain's invitation?

STENSGÅRD. Why, my dear friend, there's only one way of accounting for it.

FIELDBO. Namely, that the Chamberlain's afraid of you?

STENSGÅRD. By heaven, he shall have no reason to be! He's a gentleman.

FIELDBO. Isn't he?

STENSGÅRD. Isn't it touching the way the old man has taken this affair? And how lovely Miss Bratsberg looked when she brought me the letter!

FIELDBO. But look here—they haven't mentioned the scene of yesterday, have they?

STENSGÅRD. Not a word; they have far too much tact for that. But I'm utterly remorseful; I must find an opportunity of apologising—

FIELDBO. I strongly advise you not to! You don't know the Chamberlain.

STENSGÅRD. All right; then my acts shall speak for me.

FIELDBO. You won't break with the Stonelee party?

STENSGÅRD. I'll bring about a reconciliation. I've got the League; it's a power already, you see.

FIELDBO. By-the-bye, while I remember—we were speaking of Miss Monsen—I advised you to go in and win—

STENSGÅRD. Oh, there's no hurry—

FIELDBO. But listen; I've been thinking over it; you'd better put all that out of your head.

STENSGÅRD. I believe you're right. If you marry into an underbred family, you marry the whole lot.

FIELDBO. Yes, and there are other reasons—

STENSGÅRD. Monsen's an underbred fellow; I see that now.

FIELDBO. Well, polish isn't his strong point.

STENSGÅRD. No, indeed it isn't! He goes and speaks ill of his guests; that's ungentlemanly. His rooms all reek of stale tobacco—

FIELDBO. My dear fellow, how is it you haven't noticed the stale tobacco before?

STENSGÅRD. It's the contrast that does it. I made a false start when I came here. I fell into the

clutches of a clique, and they bewildered me with their clamour. But I'll put an end to that! I won't go and wear my life out as a tool in the hands of self-interest or coarse stupidity.

FIELDBO. But what will you do with your League?

STENSGÅRD. The League shall remain as it is; it's founded on a pretty broad basis. Its purpose is to resist evil influences; and I'm just beginning to realise what side the evil influences come from.

FIELDBO. But do you think the "Youth" will see it in the same light?

STENSGÅRD. They *shall*! I have surely a right to expect fellows like that to bow before my superior insight.

FIELDBO. But if they won't?

STENSGÅRD. Then they can go their own way. I've done with them. You don't suppose I'm going to let my life get into a wrong groove and never reach the goal for the sake of mere obstinate consistency!

FIELDBO. What do you call the goal?

STENSGÅRD. A career that gives scope for my talents, and fulfils my aspirations.

FIELDBO. No vague phrases! What do you mean by your goal?

STENSGÅRD. Well, to you I can make a clean breast of it. My goal is this: in the course of time to get into Parliament, perhaps into the Ministry, and to marry happily into a rich and honourable family.

FIELDBO. Oh, indeed! And by help of the Chamberlain's social connections you intend to——?

STENSGÅRD. I intend to reach the goal by my

own exertions. I must and shall reach it ; and without help from any one. It'll take time, I daresay ; but never mind ! Meanwhile I shall enjoy life here, drinking in beauty and sunshine——

FIELDBO. Here ?

STENSGÅRD. Yes, here ! Here there are fine manners ; life moves gracefully here ; the very floors seem laid to be trodden only by lacquered shoes. Here the arm-chairs are deep and the ladies sink exquisitely into them. Here the conversation goes lightly and elegantly, like a game at battledore ; here no blunders come plumping in to make an awkward silence. Oh, Fieldbo—here I feel for the first time what distinction means ! Yes, we have indeed an aristocracy ; a little circle ; an aristocracy of culture ; and to it I will belong. Don't you feel yourself the refining influence of this place ? Don't you feel that wealth here loses its grossness ? When I think of Monsen's money, I seem to see piles of fetid bank-notes and greasy mortgages—but here ! here it is shimmering silver ! And the people are the same. Look at the Chamberlain—what a fine high-bred old fellow !

FIELDBO. So he is.

STENSGÅRD. And the son—alert, straightforward, able !

FIELDBO. Certainly.

STENSGÅRD. And then the daughter-in-law ! Isn't she a pearl ? Good God, what a rich and exquisite nature !

FIELDBO. Thora—Miss Bratsberg has that too.

STENSGÅRD. Oh yes ; but she's not so striking.

FIELDBO. Oh, you don't know her. You don't know how deep, and calm, and true her nature is.

STENSGÅRD. But oh, the daughter-in-law! So frank, almost reckless; and yet so appreciative, so irresistible——

FIELDBO. Why, I believe you're in love with her.

STENSGÅRD. With a married woman? Are you crazy? What good would that do me? No, but I am falling in love—I can feel that clearly. Yes, she is indeed deep, and calm, and true.

FIELDBO. Who?

STENSGÅRD. Miss Bratsberg, of course.

FIELDBO. What? You're never thinking of——?

STENSGÅRD. Yes, by heaven I am!

FIELDBO. I assure you it's quite out of the question.

STENSGÅRD. Ho-ho! Will rules the world. We'll see if it doesn't.

FIELDBO. Why, this is the merest extravagance! Yesterday it was Miss Monsen——

STENSGÅRD. Oh, I was too hasty about that; besides, you yourself advised me not to——

FIELDBO. I advise you most emphatically to dismiss all thought of either of them.

STENSGÅRD. Indeed! Perhaps you yourself think of throwing the handkerchief to one of them?

FIELDBO. I? No, I assure you——

STENSGÅRD. Well, it wouldn't have mattered if you had. If people stand in my way and want to balk me of my future, why, I stick at nothing.

FIELDBO. Take care I don't say the same.

STENSGÅRD. You? What right have you to pose

as guardian and protector to Chamberlain Bratsberg's family?

FIELDBO. I have at least the right of a friend.

STENSGÅRD. Pooh! that sort of talk won't do with me. Your motive is mere self-interest. It gratifies your petty vanity to imagine yourself cock-of-the-walk in this house; and so I'm to be held aloof.

FIELDBO. That's the best thing that could happen to you. Here you're standing on hollow ground.

STENSGÅRD. Am I indeed? Many thanks! I'll manage to prop it up.

FIELDBO. Try; but I warn you, it'll fall through with you first.

STENSGÅRD. Ho-ho! So you're intriguing against me, are you? I'm glad I've found it out. I know you now; you're my enemy, the only one I have here.

FIELDBO. Indeed I'm not.

STENSGÅRD. Indeed you are! You've always been so, ever since our school-days. Just look around here and see how all appreciate me, stranger as I am. You, on the other hand, you who know me, have never appreciated me. That's the radical weakness of your character—you can never appreciate any one. What did you do in Christiania but go about from tea-party to tea-party, spreading yourself out in little witticisms? That sort of thing brings its own punishment! You dull your sense for all that makes life worth living, for all that's ennobling and inspiring; and presently you get left behind, fit for nothing.

FIELDBO. Am I fit for nothing?

STENSGÅRD. Have you ever been fit to appreciate me?

FIELDBO. What was I to appreciate in you?

STENSGÅRD. My will, if nothing else. Every one else appreciates it—the crowd at the fête yesterday—Chamberlain Bratsberg and his family——

FIELDBO. Mr. Mons Monsen and his ditto—and by-the-bye, that reminds me—there's some one out here waiting for you.

STENSGÅRD. 'Who?

FIELDBO (*going towards the back*). One who appreciates you. (*Opens the door and calls*) Aslaksen, come in!

STENSGÅRD. Aslaksen?

ASLAKSEN (*entering*). Ah, at last!

FIELDBO. Good-bye for the present; I won't disturb friends.

(*Goes into the garden.*)

STENSGÅRD. What in the devil's name do you want here?

ASLAKSEN. I must speak to you. You promised me yesterday an account of the founding of the League, and——

✓ STENSGÅRD. I can't give it you; it must wait till another time.

ASLAKSEN. Impossible, Mr. Stensgård; the paper appears to-morrow morning.

STENSGÅRD. Nonsense! It's all got to be altered. The matter has entered on a new phase; new forces have come into play. What I said about Chamberlain Bratsberg must be entirely remodelled before it can appear.

ASLAKSEN. Oh, that about the Chamberlain, that's in type already.

STENSGÅRD. Then it must come out of type again.

ASLAKSEN. Not go in?

STENSGÅRD. I won't have it published on any consideration. Why do you stare at me? Do you think I don't know how to manage the affairs of the League?

ASLAKSEN. Oh, certainly; but you must let me tell you——

STENSGÅRD. No arguing, Aslaksen; I won't stand that.

ASLAKSEN. Do you know, Mr. Stensgård, that you're doing your best to take the bread out of my mouth? Do you know that?

STENSGÅRD. No; I know nothing of the sort.

ASLAKSEN. But you are. Last winter, before you came here, my paper was looking up. I edited it myself, I must tell you, and I edited it on a principle.

STENSGÅRD. You?

ASLAKSEN. Yes, I! I said to myself: it's the great public that supports a paper; now the great public is the bad public—that's due to the local situation; and the bad public will have a bad paper. So you see I edited it——

STENSGÅRD. Badly! Yes, that's undeniable!

ASLAKSEN. Well, and I prospered by it. But then you came and brought ideas into the district. The paper took a colour, and then Lundestad's supporters fell away. The subscribers that are left won't pay——

STENSGÅRD. Ah, but the paper has become a good one.

ASLAKSEN. I can't live on a good paper. You were to make things lively; you were to attack abuses, as you promised yesterday. The big-wigs were to be pilloried; the paper was to be filled with things people were bound to read—and now, you play me false——

STENSGÅRD. Ho-ho! Did you think I was going to provide you with libels! No, thank you, my good sir!

ASLAKSEN. Mr. Stensgård, you mustn't drive me to desperation, or you'll repent it.

STENSGÅRD. What do you mean?

ASLAKSEN. I mean that I must make the paper pay in another way. Heaven knows I'd be sorry to do it. Before you came I made an honest living upon catastrophes and suicides and other harmless things, that often hadn't even happened. But you've put an end to all that; people now want very different fare.

STENSGÅRD. Just let me tell you this: if you break loose in any way, if you go a single step beyond my orders, and try to exploit the movement in your own dirty interests, I'll go to the opposition printer and start a new paper. We have money, you must know! We can bring your rag to ruin in a fortnight.

ASLAKSEN (*pale*). You would do that?

STENSGÅRD. Yes, I would; and I know how to edit a paper so as to appeal to the great public.

ASLAKSEN. Then I'll go this instant to Chamberlain Bratsberg.

STENSGÅRD. You? What have you to do with him?

ASLAKSEN. What have *you* to do with him? Do

you think I don't know why you're invited here? It's because he's afraid of you, and of what you may do; and you're making capital of that. But if he's afraid of what you may do, he'll be no less afraid of what I may print; and I'll make capital of that!

STENSGÅRD. Would you dare to? A wretched creature like you——!

ASLAKSEN. I'll soon show you. If your speech is to be kept out of the paper, the Chamberlain shall pay me for keeping it out.

STENSGÅRD. Try it; just try it! You're drunk, fellow——!

ASLAKSEN. Only in moderation. But I'll fight like a lion if you try to take my poor crust out of my mouth. Little you know what sort of a home mine is: a bedridden wife, a crippled child——

STENSGÅRD. Off with you! Do you think I want to be soiled with your sordidness? What are your bedridden wives and deformed brats to me? If you stand in my way, if you dare so much as to obstruct a single one of my prospects, you shall be on the parish before the year's out!

ASLAKSEN. I'll wait *one* day.

STENSGÅRD. Ah, you're coming to your senses.

ASLAKSEN. I shall announce to the subscribers in a hand-bill that in consequence of an indisposition contracted at the fête, the editor——

STENSGÅRD. Yes, do so; I daresay, later on, we'll come to an understanding.

ASLAKSEN. I trust we may.—Remember this, Mr. Stensgård: that paper is my one ewe lamb.

(*Goes by the back.*)

LUNDESTAD (*at the foremost garden-door*). Ah, Mr. Stensgård!

STENSGÅRD. Ah, Mr. Lundestad!

LUNDESTAD. You here alone? If you've no objection, I'd like to have a little talk with you.

STENSGÅRD. With pleasure.

LUNDESTAD. In the first place, let me say that if any one has told you that I have said anything to your disadvantage, you mustn't believe it.

STENSGÅRD. To my disadvantage? What do you mean?

LUNDESTAD. Oh, nothing; nothing, I assure you. You see, there are so many busybodies here, that go about doing nothing but setting people by the ears.

STENSGÅRD. Well, perhaps, on the whole, our relations *are* a little strained.

LUNDESTAD. They're quite natural relations, Mr. Stensgård: the relation of the old to the new; it's always so.

STENSGÅRD. Oh, come, Mr. Lundestad, you're not so old as all that.

LUNDESTAD. Yes indeed, I'm getting old. I've held my seat since 1839. It's time I should be relieved.

STENSGÅRD. Relieved?

LUNDESTAD. Times change, you see. New problems arise, and for their solution we want new forces.

STENSGÅRD. Now, frankly, Mr. Lundestad—are you really going to give up your seat to Monsen?

LUNDESTAD. To Monsen? No, certainly not to Monsen.

STENSGÅRD. Then I don't understand——

LUNDESTAD. Suppose, now, I did retire in Monsen's favour: do you think he would be elected?

STENSGÅRD. It's hard to say. You see, the preliminary election is fixed for the day after to-morrow, and I daresay the public mind is scarcely prepared; but——

LUNDESTAD. I don't believe he'd manage it. The Chamberlain's party, my party, wouldn't vote for him. Of course "my party" is a figure of speech; I mean the men of property, the old families, who are settled on their own land and belong to it. They won't have anything to do with Monsen. Monsen's a new-comer; no one really knows anything about Monsen and his affairs. And then he's had to cut down so much to clear a place for himself—to cut down both trees and men, you may say.

STENSGÅRD. Well then, if you think he hasn't a reasonable chance——

LUNDESTAD. Hm! You are a man of rare abilities, Mr. Stensgård. Providence has armed you at all points. But it has made one little oversight; it should have given you one thing more.

STENSGÅRD. And what may that be?

LUNDESTAD. Tell me—why do you never think of yourself? Why have you no ambition?

STENSGÅRD. Ambition? I?

LUNDESTAD. Why do you devote all your strength to other people? In one word—why not go into Parliament yourself?

STENSGÅRD. I? You're not serious?

LUNDESTAD. Why not? You've qualified, I hear. And if you don't seize this opportunity, then some one else will come in; and when once he's fast in the saddle, it mayn't be so easy to unseat him.

STENSGÅRD. Great heavens, Mr. Lundestad! do you really mean what you say?

LUNDESTAD. Oh, I don't want to commit you; if you don't care about it——

STENSGÅRD. Not care about it! Well, I must confess I'm not so utterly devoid of ambition as you suppose. But do you really think it's possible?

LUNDESTAD. Oh, it's quite possible. I should do my best, and so, no doubt, would the Chamberlain; he knows your oratorical gifts. You have the young men on your side——

STENSGÅRD. Mr. Lundestad, by heaven, you're my true friend!

LUNDESTAD. Oh, you don't mean much by that. If you really looked upon me as a friend, you would relieve me of this burden; you have young shoulders; you could bear it so easily.

STENSGÅRD. I place myself entirely at your service; I won't fail you.

LUNDESTAD. Then you're really not disinclined to——

STENSGÅRD. Here's my hand on it!

LUNDESTAD. Thanks! Believe me, Mr. Stensgård, you won't regret it. But now we must go warily to work. We must take care both to be on the electoral college—I to propose you as my successor, and put you through your facings before the rest; and you to give an account of your views.

STENSGÅRD. If we once get so far, we're all right. In the electoral college you're omnipotent.

LUNDESTAD. There's a limit to omnipotence. You must of course bring your oratory into play; you must take care to explain away anything that might seem really awkward or objectionable.

STENSGÅRD. You don't mean that I'm to break with my party?

LUNDESTAD. Now just look at the thing reasonably. What do we mean when we talk of two parties? We have, on the one hand, certain men or families who are in possession of the common civic advantages—I mean property, independence, and power. That's the party I belong to. On the other hand, we have the mass of our younger fellow-citizens who want to seize upon these advantages. That's your party. But that party you will quite naturally and properly pass out of when you get into power—to say nothing of taking up a solid position as a man of property; for of course that's essential, Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD. Yes, I believe it is. But the time is short; and such a position isn't to be attained in a day.

LUNDESTAD. That's true; but perhaps the prospect of such a position would suffice——

STENSGÅRD. The prospect——?

LUNDESTAD. Have you any rooted objection to a good marriage, Mr. Stensgård? There are heiresses in the country-side. A man like you, with a future before him—a man who can reckon on reaching the highest offices—believe me, you needn't fear a repulse if you play your cards neatly.

STENSGÅRD. Then, for heaven's sake, help me in the game! You open wide vistas to me—great visions! All that I've hoped and longed for, and that seemed so dreamlike and far away, stands suddenly before me in living reality—to lead the people forward towards emancipation, to——

LUNDESTAD. Yes, we must keep our eyes open, Mr. Stensgård. I see your ambition is already on the alert. That's well. The rest will come of itself. In the meantime, thanks! I shall never forget your readiness to take the burden of office from my old shoulders.

(The whole party gradually enters from the garden. Two maid-servants bring in candles and hand round refreshments during the following scene.)

SELMA *(goes towards the piano at the back, left)*. Mr. Stensgård, you must join us; we're going to have a game of forfeits.

STENSGÅRD. With pleasure; I'm just in the mood. *(Follows her towards the back, makes arrangements with her, places chairs, etc., etc.)*

ERIK BRATSBERG *(in an undertone)*. What the deuce is this my father's saying, Mr. Heire? What speech has Mr. Stensgård been making yesterday?

HEIRE. Hee-hee! Don't you know about it?

ERIK. No; we townspeople had our dinner and ball at the Club. My father declares Mr. Stensgård has entirely broken with the Stonelee gang—that he was frightfully rude to Monsen——

HEIRE. To Monsen! No, you must have misunderstood him, my dear sir.

ERIK. Well, there were a whole lot of people

about, so that I couldn't quite grasp the connection ; but I certainly heard——

HEIRE. Wait till to-morrow—— I say no more. You'll have the whole story with your coffee in Aslaksen's paper. (*They separate.*)

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Well, my dear Lundestad, are you sticking to those crotchets of yours ?

LUNDESTAD. They're no crotchets, Chamberlain ; rather than be ousted, one should give way gracefully.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Nonsense ; who's dreaming of ousting you ?

LUNDESTAD. Hm ; I'm an old weather-prophet. There's been a change in the wind. Besides, I have my successor ready. Mr. Stensgård is willing——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Mr. Stensgård ?

LUNDESTAD. Wasn't that the idea ? I took it for a hint when you said he was a man we must make friends with and support.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I meant in his onslaught upon all the swindling and corruption that goes on at Stonelee.

LUNDESTAD. But how could you count so confidently upon his breaking with that lot ?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. He did it openly enough last evening, my dear fellow.

LUNDESTAD. Last evening ?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, when he spoke of Monsen's deplorable influence in the district.

LUNDESTAD (*open-mouthed*). Of Monsen's—— ?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Of course ; that time on the table——

LUNDESTAD. On the table ? Yes ?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. He was frightfully rude; called him a money-bag, and a griffin or a basilisk, or something. Ha ha! it was great sport to hear him.

LUNDESTAD. Great sport, was it?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes; I must confess I'm not sorry to see these people come in for a little of that sort of thing. But now we must back him up; for after such a savage attack——

LUNDESTAD. As that of yesterday, you mean?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Of course.

LUNDESTAD. Upon the table?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, upon the table.

LUNDESTAD. Against Monsen?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, against Monsen and his set. Of course they'll try to have their revenge; you can't blame them.

LUNDESTAD (*decidedly*). Mr. Stensgård must be supported—that's clear!

THORA. Father dear, you must join in the game.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, nonsense, child.

THORA. Yes, indeed you must; Selma insists upon it.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Very well, I suppose I must give in. (*In an undertone as they go towards the back.*) I'm quite distressed about Lundestad; he's really failing; fancy, he didn't in the least understand what Stensgård——

THORA. Oh, come, come; they've begun the game. (*She drags him into the circle of young people where the game is in full swing.*)

ERIK (*calls from his place*). Mr. Heire, you're appointed forfeit-judge.

HEIRE. Hee-hee! It's the first appointment I ever had.

STENSGÅRD (*also in the circle*). On account of your legal experience, Mr. Heire.

HEIRE. Oh, my amiable young friends, I should be delighted to sentence you all—— I say no more!

STENSGÅRD (*slips up to LUNDESTAD, who stands in front on the left*). You were speaking to the Chamberlain. What about? Was it about me?

LUNDESTAD. Unfortunately it was about that affair of yesterday evening.

STENSGÅRD (*writhing*). Oh, confound it all!

LUNDESTAD. He said you'd been frightfully rude.

STENSGÅRD. Do you think it isn't a torture to me?

LUNDESTAD. Now's your chance to atone for it.

ERIK (*calls*). Mr. Stensgård, it's your turn.

STENSGÅRD. Coming! (*Quickly to LUNDESTAD.*)

What do you mean?

LUNDESTAD. Find an opportunity and apologise to the Chamberlain.

STENSGÅRD. By heaven, I will!

SELMA. Make haste, make haste!

STENSGÅRD. I'm coming! Here I am!

(*The game goes on with noise and laughter. Some elderly gentlemen play cards on the right. LUNDESTAD takes a seat on the left; DANIEL HEIRE near him.*)

HEIRE. That whelp twits me about my legal experience, does he?

LUNDESTAD. He's rather free with his tongue, that's certain.

HEIRE. And so the whole family goes and fawns upon him, hee-hee! They're pitifully afraid of him.

LUNDESTAD. No, you're wrong there, Mr. Heire; the Chamberlain is not afraid of him.

HEIRE. Not afraid? Do you think I'm blind, my good sir?

LUNDESTAD. No, but—of course you'll keep the secret? Well, I'll tell you all about it. The Chamberlain thinks it was Monsen he was attacking.

HEIRE. Monsen? Oh, absurd!

LUNDESTAD. Fact, Mr. Heire! Ringdal or Miss Thora must have got him persuaded that——

HEIRE. And so he goes and asks him to a state dinner-party! Deuce take me, if that isn't the best thing I've heard for long! No, really now, I can't hold my tongue about that.

LUNDESTAD. Hush, hush! Remember your promise. The Chamberlain's your old school-fellow; and even if he has been a little hard upon you——

HEIRE. Hee-hee! I'll pay him back with interest!

LUNDESTAD. Take care! The Chamberlain's powerful. Don't play tricks in the lion's den!

HEIRE. The Chamberlain a lion? Pooh, he's a blockhead, sir, and I'm not. Oh, what lovely jibes and innuendoes I'll get out of this, when once our great suit comes on!

SELMA (*calls from the circle*). Learned judge, what shall the owner of this forfeit do?

ERIK (*unnoticed, to HEIRE*). It's Stensgård's! Think of something amusing.

HEIRE. That forfeit? Hee-hee, let me see; he

might, for example—— I say no more. He shall make a speech!

SELMA. It's Mr. Stensgård's forfeit.

ERIK. Mr. Stensgård is to make a speech.

STENSGÅRD. Oh no, spare me that; I came off badly enough last night.

CHAMBERLAIN. Excellently, Mr. Stensgård; I know something of public speaking.

LUNDESTAD (*to HEIRE*). If only he doesn't put his foot in it now.

HEIRE. Put his foot in it? Hee-hee! You're a sharp one! That's an inspiration! (*In an undertone to STENSGÅRD.*) If you came off badly last night, why not put yourself right again to-night?

STENSGÅRD (*seized with a sudden idea*). Lundestad, here's the opportunity!

LUNDESTAD (*evasively*). Play your cards neatly (*Looks for his hat and slips quietly towards the door.*)

STENSGÅRD. Yes, I shall make a speech!

THE YOUNG LADIES. Bravo! Bravo!

STENSGÅRD. Fill your glasses, ladies and gentlemen! I am going to make a speech which shall begin with a fable; for here I seem to breathe the finer air of fable-land.

ERIK (*to the LADIES*). Hush! Listen!

(*The CHAMBERLAIN takes his glass from the card table on the right, beside which he remains standing. RINGDAL, FIELDBO, and one or two other gentlemen come in from the garden.*)

STENSGÅRD. It was in the spring time. There came a young cuckoo flying over the uplands. Now the cuckoo is an adventurer. There was a great

Bird-Parliament on the meadow beneath him, and both wild and tame fowl flocked to it. They came tripping out of the hen-yards; they waddled up from the goose-pond; down from Stonelee hulked a fat capercailzie, flying low and noisily; he settled down, and ruffled his feathers and flapped his wings, and made himself even broader than he was; and every now and then he crowed: *krak, krak, krak!* as much as to say: I'm the game-cock from Stonelee, I am!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Capital! Hear, hear!

STENSGÅRD. And then there was an old wood-pecker. He bustled up and down the tree-trunks, pecking with his pointed beak, and gorging himself with grubs and everything that turns to gall. To right and left you heard him going: *prik, prik, prik!* And that was the wood-pecker.

ERIK. Excuse me, wasn't it a stork, or a——?¹

HEIRE. Say no more!

STENSGÅRD. That was the old wood-pecker. But now there came life into the crew; for they found something to cackle evil about. And they flustered together, and cackled in chorus, until at last the young cuckoo began to join in the cackling.

FIELDBO (*unnoticed*). For God's sake, man, be quiet!

STENSGÅRD. Now it was an eagle they cackled about—an eagle who dwelt in lonely dignity upon a beetling cliff.² They were all agreed about him. "He's a bugbear to the neighbourhood," croaked a hoarse raven. But the eagle swooped down into their

¹ As before stated, "Heire" means a heron.

² "Et brat fjeld"—an allusion to the name Bratsberg.

midst, seized the cuckoo, and bore him, touched to the heart, aloft to his eyrie. And thence the adventurer bird looked far and wide over the lowlands; up there he found sunshine and peace; up there he learned to judge aright the swarm from the henyard and the coverts.

FIELDBO (*loudly*). Bravo, bravo! And now some music!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Hush! Don't interrupt him.

STENSGÅRD. Chamberlain Bratsberg—here my fable ends; and here I stand before you, in the presence of every one, to beg your forgiveness for last night.

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*falls a step backwards*). Mine?

STENSGÅRD. I thank you for the noble vengeance you have taken for my senseless words. In me you have henceforth a faithful champion. And now, ladies and gentlemen, I drink the health of the eagle on the mountain-top—the health of Chamberlain Bratsberg.

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*clutching at the table*). Thanks, Mr.—Mr. Stensgård.

THE GUESTS (*for the most part in painful embarrassment*). The Chamberlain! Chamberlain Bratsberg!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Ladies! Gentlemen! (*softly*) Thora!

THORA. Father!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, Doctor, Doctor, what nave you done?

STENSGÅRD (*with his glass in his hand, and beaming with self-satisfaction*). Now to our places again!

Hullo, Fieldbo! Come, join in—join in the League of Youth! The game's going merrily!

HEIRE (*in front, on the left*). Yes, on my soul, the game's going merrily!

(LUNDESTAD *slips out by the door in the back.*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

Act Third.

(An elegant morning-room, with entrance-door in the back. On the left, the door of the CHAMBERLAIN'S study; further back, a door leading to the drawing-room. On the right, a door leading to RINGDAL'S offices; further forward, a window.)

(THORA is seated on the sofa, left, weeping. The CHAMBERLAIN paces angrily up and down.)

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, now we have the epilogue—tears and lamentations——

THORA. Oh, that we had never seen that man!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What man?

THORA. That wretched Mr. Stensgård, of course.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. You should rather say: Oh, that we'd never seen that wretched Doctor.

THORA. Fieldbo?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, Fieldbo, Fieldbo. Wasn't it he that told me a parcel of lies?

THORA. No, my dear father, it was I.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. You? Well, then, both of you. You were his accomplice behind my back. A nice state of affairs!

THORA. Oh, father, if you only knew——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, I know enough; more than enough; much more!

FIELDBO (*enters from the back*). Good-morning, Chamberlain! Good-morning, Miss Bratsberg!

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*still pacing the room*). You're there, are you—bird of evil omen!

FIELDBO. Yes, it was an unpleasant affair.

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*looking out at the window*). So, you think so?

FIELDBO. You must have noticed how I kept my eye upon Stensgård all the evening. Unfortunately, when I heard there was to be a game of forfeits, I thought there was no danger——

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*stamping on the floor*). To be made a laughing-stock by such a windbag! What must my guests have thought of me? That I was mean enough to want to buy this creature, this—— this ——, as Lundestad calls him!

FIELDBO. Yes, but——

THORA (*unnoticed by her father*). Don't speak.

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*after a short pause, turns to FIELDBO*). Tell me frankly, Doctor—Am I really stupider than the general run of people?

FIELDBO. How can you ask such a question, Chamberlain?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Then how did it happen that I was probably the only person there who didn't understand that that confounded speech was meant for me?

FIELDBO. Shall I tell you why?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Certainly.

FIELDBO. It's because you yourself regard your position in the district differently from other people.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I regard my position as my father before me regarded his. No one would ever have ventured to treat him so.

FIELDBO. Your father died about the year 1830.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, yes; many a barrier has broken down since that time. But, after all, it's my own fault. I've mixed myself up too much with these good people. So now I must be content to have my name coupled with Mr. Lundestad's.

FIELDBO. Well, frankly, I see no disgrace in that.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, you know quite well what I mean. Of course I don't plume myself on rank, or titles, or anything of that sort. But what I hold in honour, and expect others to hold in honour, is the integrity handed down in our family from generation to generation. I mean that when a man like Lundestad goes into public life, he cannot keep his character and his conduct entirely free from stain. In the general mud-throwing he's sure to find himself bespattered. But they might leave me in peace; I stand outside their parties.

FIELDBO. Not so entirely, Chamberlain; at least you were delighted so long as you thought it was Monsen that was attacked.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Don't mention that fellow! It's he that has relaxed the moral sense of the district. And now he's gone and turned my son's head, worse luck.

THORA. Erik's?

FIELDBO. Your son's?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes; why must he needs go and set up in business? It leads to nothing.

FIELDBO. Why, my dear Chamberlain, he must live and——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, with economy he could quite well live on the money that came to him from his mother.

FIELDBO. He might perhaps live *on* it; but what could he live *for*?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. For? Well, if he absolutely must have something to live for, hasn't he qualified as a lawyer? He might live for his profession.

FIELDBO. No, he couldn't do that; it's against his nature. He couldn't hope for any official appointment at present; you have kept the management of your property in your own hands; and your son has no children to educate. Under these circumstances, when he sees tempting examples around him—people who have started from nothing and are worth their half million——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Their half million! Oh, come now, let's keep to the hundred thousands. But neither the half million nor the hundred thousands can be scraped together with perfectly clean hands;—I don't mean in the eyes of the world; Heaven knows it's easy enough to keep within the law; but in respect to one's own conscience. Of course my son can't descend to anything questionable; so you may be quite sure Mr. Erik Bratsberg's financial operations won't bring in any half millions.

(SELMA, *in walking dress, enters from the back.*)

SELMA. Good morning! Is my husband not here?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Good morning, child! Are you looking for your husband?

SELMA. Yes, he said he was coming here. Mr. Mosen called upon him early this morning, and then——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Mosen? Does Mosen come to your house?

SELMA. Now and then; generally on business. Why, my dear Thora, what's the matter? Have you been crying?

THORA. Oh, it's nothing.

SELMA. No, it's something! At home Erik was out of humour, and here—— I can see it in your looks; there's something wrong. What is it?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Nothing you need trouble about, at any rate. You're too dainty to carry burdens, my little Selma. Go into the drawing-room for the present. If Erik said he was coming, he'll be here soon, no doubt.

SELMA. Come, Thora—and be sure you don't let me sit in a draught. (*Embracing her.*) Oh, I could hug your life out, my sweet Thora.

(*The two ladies go off to the left.*)

THE CHAMBERLAIN. So they're hand in glove, are they, the two speculators! They should go into partnership. Mosen and Bratsberg—how nice it would sound! (*A knock at the door in the background.*) Come in!

(*STENSGÅRD enters.*)

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*shrinks a step backwards*). What's this!

STENSGÅRD. Yes, here I am again, Chamberlain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. So I see.

FIELDBO. Are you mad, Stensgård?

STENSGÅRD. You retired early yesterday evening. When Fieldbo had explained to me how matters stood, you had already——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Excuse me—all explanations are superfluous——

STENSGÅRD. I understand that ; therefore I have not come to make any.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, indeed ?

STENSGÅRD. I know I have insulted you.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I know that too ; and before I have you turned out, perhaps you will be good enough to tell me why you are here.

STENSGÅRD. Because I love your daughter, Chamberlain !

FIELDBO. What—— !

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What does he say, Doctor ?

STENSGÅRD. Ah, you can't grasp the idea, Chamberlain. You are an old man ; you have nothing to fight for——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Do you dare to—— ?

STENSGÅRD. I am here to ask for your daughter's hand, Chamberlain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. You—— you—— ? Won't you sit down ?

STENSGÅRD. Thanks, I prefer to stand.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What do you say to this, Doctor ?

STENSGÅRD. Oh, Fieldbo's on my side ; he's my friend ; the only true friend I have.

FIELDBO. No, no man! Never in this world if you——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Perhaps it was with this view that Doctor Fieldbo introduced his friend into this house?

STENSGÅRD. You know me only by my exploits of yesterday and the day before. That is not enough. Besides, I'm not the same man I was then. My intercourse with you and yours has fallen like spring showers upon my spirit, making it put forth new blossoms in a single night! You must not hurl me back into my sordid past. Till now, I have never been at home with the beautiful in life; it has always been beyond my reach——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. But my daughter——?

STENSGÅRD. Oh, I shall win her.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Indeed? Hm!

STENSGÅRD. Yes, for I have will on my side. Remember what you were saying yesterday. You were opposed to your son's marriage—and see how it has turned out. You must put on the glasses of experience, as Fieldbo said——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Ah, that was what you meant.

FIELDBO. Not in the least! My dear Chamberlain, let me speak to him alone——

STENSGÅRD. Nonsense; I have nothing to speak to you about. Now, just be reasonable, Chamberlain! A family like yours needs new alliances, or its blood stagnates——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, this is too much!

STENSGÅRD. Now, now, don't get angry! These

high-and-mighty airs are unworthy of you—of course you know they're all nonsense at bottom. You'll see how fond you'll be of me when you come to know me. Yes, yes; you *shall* be fond of me—both you and your daughter. I'll make her——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What do you think, Doctor?

FIELDBO. I think it's madness.

STENSGÅRD. Yes, it would be for you; but I, you see, have a mission to fulfil on God's beautiful earth; I'm not to be deterred by non-sensical prejudices!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Mr. Stensgård, there's the door.

STENSGÅRD. You show me——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. The door!

STENSGÅRD. Don't do that!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Out with you! You're an adventurer and a—a—confound my memory! You're a——

STENSGÅRD. What am I?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. You're that other thing—it's on the tip of my tongue——

STENSGÅRD. Beware how you block my career!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Why beware?

STENSGÅRD. Because I'll attack you in the papers, persecute you, libel you, undermine your reputation in every way I can. You shall shriek under the lash. You shall seem to see spirits in the air raining blows upon you. You shall huddle together in dread, and crouch with your arms bent over your head to ward off the strokes—you shall try to creep into shelter——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Creep into shelter yourself—in a madhouse; that's where you ought to be!

STENSGÅRD. Ha ha; that's a cheap retort; but you know no better, Mr. Bratsberg! I tell you the wrath of the Lord is in me. It's His will you are opposing. He has destined me for the light—beware how you cast a shadow!—Well, I see I shall make no way with you to-day; but that doesn't matter. I only ask you to speak to your daughter—to prepare her—to give her the opportunity of choosing! Reflect, and look around you. Where can you expect to find a son-in-law among these plodding dunces? Fieldbo says she is deep and calm and true. So now you know the whole story. Good-bye, Chamberlain; I leave you to choose between my friendship and my enmity. Good-bye! (*Goes out by the back.*)

THE CHAMBERLAIN. So it's come to this! This is how they dare to treat me in my own house!

FIELDBO. Stensgård dares; no one else would.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. He to-day; others to-morrow——

FIELDBO. Let them come; I shall keep them off; I would go through fire and water for you——!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, you who have caused all the mischief! Hm; that Stensgård is the most impudent scoundrel I've ever known! And yet, after all—deuce take me if there isn't something I like about him.

FIELDBO. He has possibilities——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. He has openness, Dr. Fieldbo! He doesn't go making mischief behind one's back, like some other people; he—he——!

FIELDBO. It's not worth disputing about. Only be firm, Chamberlain; no, and no again, to Stensgård——!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, keep your advice to yourself! You may rely upon it that neither he nor any one else——

RINGDAL (*enters by the door on the right*). Excuse me, Chamberlain, one word—— (*Whispers.*)

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What? In your room?

RINGDAL. He came in by the back way, and begs you to see him.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Hm—Oh, Doctor, just go into the drawing-room for a moment; there's some one here who—— But don't say a word to Selma of Mr. Stensgård and his visit. She must be kept outside all this business. As for my daughter, I'd prefer that you should say nothing to her either; but—oh, what's the use——? Please go now.

(FIELDBO goes into the drawing-room. RINGDAL has, in the meantime, gone back to his office, whence MONSEN presently enters.)

MONSEN (*at the door*). I beg ten thousand pardons, Sir——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, come in, come in!

MONSEN. I trust your family is in good health?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Thank you. Is there anything you want?

MONSEN. Can't quite say that. Thank heaven, I'm one of those that have got pretty nearly all they can want.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, indeed? That's a good deal to say.

MONSEN. But I've had to work for it, Chamberlain. Oh, I know you regard my work with no very friendly eye.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I don't suppose your work is in any way affected by my way of regarding it.

MONSEN. Who knows? At any rate, I'm thinking of gradually withdrawing from business.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Really?

MONSEN. The luck's been on my side, I may tell you. I've gone ahead as far as I care to; so now I think it's about time to slack off a little.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Well, I congratulate both you—and other people.

MONSEN. And if I could at the same time do you a service, Chamberlain——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Me?

MONSEN. When the Langerud woods were put up to auction five years ago, you made a bid for them——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, but you outbade me, and they were knocked down to you.

MONSEN. You can have them now, with the saw-mills and all appurtenances——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. After all your sinful cutting and hacking——!

MONSEN. Oh, they're worth a good deal still; and with your method of working, in a few years——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Thank you; unfortunately I must decline the proposal.

MONSEN. There's a great deal of money in it, Chamberlain. As for me,—I may tell you I've a great speculation on hand; the stakes are large; I

mean there's a big haul to be made—a hundred thousand or so——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. A hundred thousand? That's certainly no trifle.

MONSEN. Ha ha ha! A nice little sum to add to the pile. But when you're going into a great battle you need reserve forces, as the saying goes. There's not much ready money about; the names that are worth anything are rather used up——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, that's certain people's doing!

MONSEN. It's a case of you scratch me, I scratch you. Well, Chamberlain, is it to be a bargain? You shall have the woods dirt cheap——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I won't have them at any price, Mr. Monsen.

MONSEN. Well, one good offer deserves another. Will you help me, Sir?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What do you mean?

MONSEN. Of course I'll give good security. I have plenty of property. Look here—these papers—just let me explain my position to you.

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*waving the papers aside*). Is it pecuniary aid you want?

MONSEN. Not ready money; oh, no! But your support, Chamberlain. Of course I'll pay for it—and give security, and——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. And you come to me with such a proposal as this?

MONSEN. Yes, precisely to you. I know you've often let bygones be bygones when a man was in real straits.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Well, in a way, I owe you thanks for your good opinion—especially at a time like this ; but nevertheless——

MONSEN. Won't you tell me, Chamberlain, what sets you against me ?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, what would be the use ?

MONSEN. It might clear matters up between us. I've never stood in your way that I know of.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. You think not ? Then I'll tell you one case in which you've stood in my way. I founded the Ironworks Savings Bank for the benefit of my employees and others. But then you must needs set up as a banker ; people take their savings to you——

MONSEN. Naturally, sir, for I give higher interest.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, but you charge higher interest on loans.

MONSEN. But I don't make so many difficulties about security and so forth.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. That's just the mischief of it ; for now we have people making bargains to the tune of ten or twenty thousand dollars,¹ though neither of the parties has so much as a brass farthing. That's what sets me against you, Mr. Monsen. And there's another thing too that touches me still more nearly. Do you think it's pleasant to me to see my son flinging himself into all these wild speculations ?

MONSEN. But how can I help that ?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. It was your example that

¹ The dollar = four crowns = four-and-sixpence, was the unit of coinage at the time this play was written. It has since been replaced by the crown.

infected him, as it did the others. Why couldn't you stick to your last?

MONSEN. Remain a lumberman, like my father?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Was it a disgrace to be in my employment? Your father made his bread honourably, and was respected in his own class.

MONSEN. Yes, until he'd almost worked his life out, and at last went over the waterfall with his raft. Do you know anything of life in that class, Chamberlain? Have you ever realised what the men have to endure who toil for you deep in the forests, and along the river-reaches, while you sit comfortably at home enjoying the proceeds? Can you blame such a man for striving to rise in the world? I had had a little more schooling than my father; perhaps I had rather more brains——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Very likely. But by what means have you risen in the world? You began by selling drink. Then you bought up doubtful debts, and enforced them mercilessly;—and so you got on and on. How many people have you not ruined to push yourself forward!

MONSEN. That's the course of business; one up, another down.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. But it's your method of business I object to. I know of respectable families whom you have brought to the workhouse.

MONSEN. Daniel Heire is not very far from the workhouse.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I understand you; but I can justify my conduct before God and man! When the country was in distress, after the separation from

Denmark, my father made sacrifices beyond his means. Thus part of our property came into the hands of the Heire family. What was the result? The people who lived upon the property suffered under Daniel Heire's incompetent management. He cut down timber to the injury, I may even say to the ruin, of the district. Wasn't it my obvious duty to put a stop to it if I was able? And it happened that I *was* able; I had the law on my side; I was well within my rights when I re-entered upon my family property.

MONSEN. I, too, have always had the law on my side.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. But what about your sense of right, your conscience, if you have such a thing? And how you've broken down all social order! How you've undermined the respect that should attach to wealth! People don't ask nowadays how such and such a fortune was made, or how long it has been in such and such a family; they only ask: how much is so and so worth?—and they esteem him accordingly. Now, I suffer by all this; I am placed in a sort of comradeship with you; people speak of us in one breath, because we are the two largest holders of property in the neighbourhood. This state of things I can't endure! I tell you once for all: that's why I'm set against you.

MONSEN. This state of things shall come to an end, Sir; I shall give up business, make way for you at every point; but I beg you, I implore you, to help me!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I will not.

MONSEN. I'm willing to pay what you like——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. To pay! And you dare to——!

MONSEN. If not for my sake, then for your son's!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. My son's!

MONSEN. Yes, he's in it. I should think he stands to win some twenty thousand dollars.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Stands to win?

MONSEN. Yes.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Then, good God! who stands to lose all this money?

MONSEN. How do you mean?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What my son wins some one or other must lose!

MONSEN. It's a good stroke of business; I'm not in a position to say more. But I need a solid name; only just your endorsement——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Endorsement! On a bill——?

MONSEN. Only for ten or fifteen thousand dollars.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Do you think for a moment that——? My name! In such an affair! My name? As surety, I suppose?

MONSEN. A mere matter of form——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. A matter of swindling! My name! Not upon any consideration. I have never put my name on other men's paper.

MONSEN. Never? That's an exaggeration, Chamberlain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. It's the literal truth.

MONSEN. No, not literal; I've seen it with my own eyes.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What have you seen?

MONSEN. Your name—on *one* bill at least.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. It's false, I tell you! You've never seen it.

MONSEN. I have! On a bill for two thousand dollars. Think again!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Neither for two thousand nor for ten thousand! On my sacred word of honour, never!

MONSEN. Then it's a forgery.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Forgery?

MONSEN. Yes, a forgery—for I *have* seen it.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Forgery? Forgery! Where did you see it? In whose hands?

MONSEN. That I won't tell you.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Ha-ha! We'll soon find that out!

MONSEN. Listen to me——!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Silence! It's come to this then! Forgery! They must mix me up in their abominations! It's no wonder, then, that people bracket me with the rest of you. But it's my turn now!

MONSEN. Chamberlain—for your own sake and the sake of others——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Off with you! Out of my sight! It's you that are at the root of it all!—Yes you are! Woe unto him from whom offences come. Your home-life is scandalous. What sort of society do you get about you? People from Christiania and elsewhere, who care only for eating and drinking, and don't mind in what company they gorge

themselves. Silence! I've seen with my own eyes your distinguished guests tearing along the roads at Christmas-time like a pack of howling wolves. And there's worse behind. You've had scandals with your own maid-servants. You drove your wife out of her mind by your ill-treatment and debauchery.

MONSEN. Come, this is going too far! You shall pay for these words!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, to the deuce with your threats! What harm can you do to me? You asked what I had to say against you. Well, I've said it. Now you know why I've kept you out of decent society.

MONSEN. Yes, and now I'll drag your decent society down——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. That way!

MONSEN. I know the way, Chamberlain!

(Goes out by the back.)

THE CHAMBERLAIN *(opens the door on the right and calls)*. Ringdal, Ringdal—come here!

RINGDAL. What is it, sir?

THE CHAMBERLAIN *(calls into the drawing-room)*. Doctor, please come this way!—Now, Ringdal, now you'll see my prophecy fulfilled.

FIELDBO. What can I do for you, Chamberlain?

RINGDAL. What prophecy, sir?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What do you say to this, Doctor? You've always accused me of exaggerating when I said that Monsen corrupted the neighbourhood.

FIELDBO. Well, what then?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. We're getting on, I can tell

you! What do you think? There are forgeries going about.

RINGDAL. Forgeries?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, forgeries! And whose name do you think they have forged? Why, mine!

FIELDBO. Who in the world can have done it?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. How can I tell? I don't know all the scoundrels in the district. But we'll soon find out.—Doctor, do me a service. The papers must come into the hands either of the Savings Bank or the Ironworks Bank. Drive up to Lundestad; he's the director who knows most about things. Find out whether there's any such paper——

FIELDBO. Certainly; at once.

RINGDAL. Lundestad is here at the works to-day; there's a meeting of the school-board.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. So much the better. Find him; bring him here.

FIELDBO. I'll go at once.

(Goes out at the back.)

THE CHAMBERLAIN. And you, Ringdal, make inquiries at the Ironworks. As soon as we've got to the bottom of the matter, we'll lay an information. No mercy to the scoundrels!

RINGDAL. Very good, sir. Bless me, who'd have thought of such a thing?

(Goes out to the right.)

(The CHAMBERLAIN paces the room once or twice, and is then about to go into his study. At that instant ERIK BRATSBERG enters from the back.)

ERIK. My dear father,——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, are you there?

ERIK. I want so much to speak to you.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Hm; I'm in no humour for speaking to any one. What do you want?

ERIK. You know I've never mixed you up in my affairs, father.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. No; that's an honour I should certainly have declined.

ERIK. But now I'm obliged to——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What are you obliged to do?

ERIK. Father, you must help me!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. With money! I can assure you that——

ERIK. Only this once! I swear I'll never again——; I must tell you, I've made certain engagements with Monsen of Stonelee——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I know that. You've a first-rate speculation on hand.

ERIK. A speculation? We? No! Who told you so?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Monsen himself.

ERIK. Has Monsen been here?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. He's just gone. I showed him the door.

ERIK. If you don't help me, father, I'm ruined.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. You?

ERIK. Yes. Monsen has advanced me money. I had to pay terribly dear for it; and now the bills have fallen due——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. There we have it! What did I tell you——?

ERIK. Yes, yes, it's too late now——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Ruined! In two years!

But how could you expect anything else? What had you to do among these charlatans that go about dazzling people with wealth that never existed! They were no company for you. Among people of that sort you must meet cunning with cunning, or you'll go to the wall; you've learnt that now.

ERIK. Father, will you save me or will you not?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. No; for the last time, no; I will not.

ERIK. My honour's at stake——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, let's have no big phrases! There's no honour involved in commercial success nowadays; quite the opposite, I'd almost said. Go home and make up your accounts; pay every man his due, and have done with it, the sooner the better.

ERIK. Oh, you don't know——

(SELMA and THORA enter from the drawing-room.)

SELMA. Is that Erik's voice?—Good heavens, what's the matter?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Nothing. Go into the drawing-room again.

SELMA. No, I won't go. I will know. Erik, what is it, tell me?

ERIK. It's only that I'm ruined!

THORA. Ruined!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. There, you see!

SELMA. What is ruined?

ERIK. Everything.

SELMA. Do you mean you've lost your money?

ERIK. Money, house, inheritance—everything!

SELMA. Is that what you call everything?

ERIK. Come, let us go, Selma. You are all I have left me. We'll bear the blow together.

SELMA. The blow! Bear it together? (*With a cry.*) Do you think I'm fit for that?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. For heaven's sake——!

ERIK. What do you mean?

THORA. Oh, Selma, take care!

SELMA. No, I won't take care! I can't go on lying and shamming any longer! I must speak the truth. I will bear nothing!

ERIK. Selma!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Child, what are you saying?

SELMA. Oh, how cruel you've been to me! Shamefully—all of you! It was my part always to accept—never to give. I've been like a pauper among you. You never came and demanded a sacrifice of me; I was not fit to bear anything. I hate you! I loathe you!

ERIK. What's all this?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. She's ill; she's out of her mind!

SELMA. How I've thirsted for a single drop of your troubles, your anxieties! But when I begged for it you only laughed me off. You have dressed me up like a doll; you have played with me as you would play with a child. Oh, how I revelled in the thought of taking my share in your burdens! How earnestly I longed for a large, and high, and strenuous part in life! Now you come to me, Erik, now that you have nothing else left. But I won't be treated simply as a last resource. I'll have nothing to do with your troubles now. I won't stay with you! I'll

rather play and sing in the streets——! Let me go!
Let me go!

(She rushes out by the back.)

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Thora, was there any meaning in all that, or——?

THORA. Oh, yes, there was meaning in it; if only I'd seen it sooner.

(Goes out by the back.)

ERIK. No; I can lose everything but her! Selma, Selma!

(Follows THORA and SELMA.)

RINGDAL *(enters from the right)*. Chamberlain!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Well, what is it?

RINGDAL. I've been to the bank——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. The bank? Oh, yes, about the bill——

RINGDAL. It's all right; they've never had any bill endorsed by you——

(FIELDBO and LUNDESTAD enter by the back.)

FIELDBO. False alarm, Chamberlain!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Indeed? Not at the Savings Bank either?

LUNDESTAD. Certainly not. During all the years I've been a director I've never once seen your name; except, of course, on your son's bill.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. My son's bill?

LUNDESTAD. Yes, the bill you accepted for him early this spring.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. My son? My son? Do you dare to tell me——?

LUNDESTAD. Why, bless me, just think a moment; a bill for 2000 dollars drawn by your son——

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*groping for a seat*). Oh, my God——!

FIELDBO. For heaven's sake——!

RINGDAL. It's not possible that——!

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*who has sunk down on a chair*). Quietly, quietly! Drawn by my son, you say? Accepted by me? For 2000 dollars?

FIELDBO (*to LUNDESTAD*). And this bill is in the Savings Bank?

LUNDESTAD. Not now; it was redeemed last week by Monsen——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. By Monsen——?

RINGDAL. Monsen may still be at the works; I'll go——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Stop here!

HEIRE (*enters by the back*). Good morning, gentlemen! Good morning, Chamberlain! Thank you so much for the delightful evening we spent yesterday. What do you think I've just heard——?

RINGDAL. Excuse me; we're busy——

HEIRE. So are other people, I can tell you; our friend from Stonelee, for example——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Monsen?

HEIRE. Hee-hee; it's a nice story. The electioneering intrigues are in full swing. And what do you think is the last idea? They're going to bribe you, Chamberlain!

LUNDESTAD. To bribe——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. They judge the tree by its fruit.

HEIRE. Deuce take me if it isn't the most impudent thing I've ever heard of! I just looked in at

Madam Rundholmen's to have a glass of bitters. There sat Messrs. Monsen and Stensgård drinking port—filthy stuff! I wouldn't touch it; but they might have had the decency to offer me some, all the same. However, Monsen turned to me and said, "What do you bet that Chamberlain Bratsberg won't go with our party at the preliminary election to-morrow?" "Indeed," said I, "how's that?" "Oh," he said, "this bill will persuade him——"

FIELDBO. Bill——?

LUNDESTAD. At the election——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Well? What then?

HEIRE. Oh, I know no more. They said something about 2000 dollars. That's the figure they rate a gentleman's conscience at! Oh, it's abominable, I say!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. A bill for 2000 dollars?

RINGDAL. And Monsen has it?

HEIRE. No, he handed it over to Stensgård.

LUNDESTAD. Indeed!

FIELDBO. To Stensgård?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Are you sure of that?

HEIRE. Quite certain. "You can make what use you please of it," he said. But I don't understand——

LUNDESTAD. I want to speak to you, Mr. Heire—and you too, Ringdal. (*The three converse in a whisper at the back.*)

FIELDBO. Chamberlain!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Well?

FIELDBO. Your son's bill is genuine, of course——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. One would suppose so.

FIELDBO. Of course. But now if the forged bill were to turn up——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I shall lay no information.

FIELDBO. Naturally not;—but you must do more.

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*rising*). I can do no more.

FIELDBO. Yes, for heaven's sake, you can and must. You must save the poor fellow——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. How?

FIELDBO. Quite simply: by acknowledging the signature.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Then you think, Doctor, that we stick at nothing in our family?

FIELDBO. I think the best I can, Chamberlain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. And do you believe for a moment that I can tell a lie?—that I can play into the hands of forgers?

FIELDBO. And do you realise what will be the consequences if you don't?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. The offender must settle that with the law.

(*He goes out to the left.*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

Act Fourth.

(A public room at MADAM RUNDHOLMEN'S. Entrance door in the back; smaller doors on each side. A window on the right; before it, a table with writing materials; further back, in the middle of the room, another table.)

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN (*heard talking loudly, on the left*). Oh, let them go about their business! Tell them they've come here to vote and not to drink. If they won't wait, they can do the other thing.

STENSGÅRD (*enters by the back*). Good morning! Hm, hm! Madam Rundholmen! (*Goes to the door on the left and knocks*.) Good morning, Madam Rundholmen!

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN (*within*). Oh! Who's there?

STENSGÅRD. It's I—Stensgård. May I come in?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. No, indeed you mustn't! No! I'm not dressed.

STENSGÅRD. What? Are you so late to-day?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Oh, I can tell you I've been up since all hours; but one must look a little decent, you know. (*Peeps out, with a kerchief over her head*.) Well, what is it? No, you really mustn't look at me, Mr. Stensgård. Oh, there's some one else! (*Disappears, slamming the door to*.)

ASLAKSEN (*enters from the back with a bundle of papers*). Good morning, Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD. Well, is it in?

ASLAKSEN. Yes, here it is. Look—"The Independence-Day Celebrations—From our Special Correspondent." Here's the founding of the League on the other side, and your speech up here. I've leaded all the abuse.

STENSGÅRD. It seems to me it's all leaded.

ASLAKSEN. Pretty nearly.

STENSGÅRD. And the extra number was of course distributed yesterday?

ASLAKSEN. Of course; all over the district, both to subscribers and others. Would you like to see it?

STENSGÅRD (*running his eye over the paper*). "Our respected member, Mr. Lundestad, proposes to resign . . . long and faithful service . . . in the words of the poet: *Rest, patriot, it is thy due!*" Hm! "The association founded on Independence-Day: the League of Youth. . . Mr. Stensgård, the guiding intelligence of the League . . . timely reforms, credit on easier terms." Ah, that's very good. Has the polling begun?

ASLAKSEN. It's in full swing. The whole League is on the spot—both voters and the rest.

STENSGÅRD. Oh, deuce take the rest—between ourselves, of course. Well, you go down and talk to the waverers.

ASLAKSEN. All right.

STENSGÅRD. You can tell them that my standpoint is much the same as Lundestad's—

ASLAKSEN. Trust to me; I know the local situation.

STENSGÅRD. One thing more : just to oblige me, Aslaksen, don't drink to-day.

ASLAKSEN. Oh, none of that.

STENSGÅRD. We'll have a jolly evening when it's all over ; but remember what you, as well as I, have at stake ; your paper—— Come, now, my good fellow, let me see that you can——

ASLAKSEN. Oh, I won't hear any more ; I'm old enough to look after myself. (*Goes out to the right.*)

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN (*enters from the left, gaily dressed*). Now, Mr. Stensgård, I'm at your service. Is it anything of importance—— ?

STENSGÅRD. No, only that I want you to be good enough to let me know when Mr. Monsen comes.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. He won't be here to-day.

STENSGÅRD. Not to-day ?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. No ; he drove past here at four this morning ; he's always driving about nowadays. What's more, he came in and roused me out of bed—he wanted to borrow money, you must know.

STENSGÅRD. Monsen did ?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Yes. He's a tremendous man for money is Monsen. I hope things may go well with him. And I say the same to you ; for I hear you're going into Parliament.

STENSGÅRD. I ? Nonsense ; who told you so ?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Oh, some of Mr. Lundestad's people.

DANIEL HEIRE (*enters from the back*). Hee-hee ! Good morning ! I'm not in the way, am I ?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Gracious, no !

HEIRE. Good God, how resplendent! Can it be for me that you've got yourself up like this?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Of course. It's for you young men we get ourselves up, isn't it?

HEIRE. For marrying men, Madam Rundholmen; for marrying men! Unfortunately, my law-suits take up all my time.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Oh, nonsense; you've plenty of time to get married.

HEIRE. No; deuce take me if I have! Marriage is a thing you've got to give your whole mind to. Well, well—if you can't have me, you must put up with somebody else. For you ought to marry again.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Now, do you know, I'm sometimes of the same opinion.

HEIRE. Naturally; when once one has tasted the joys of matrimony—— Of course, poor Rundholmen was one in a thousand——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Well, I won't go so far as that; he was a bit rough, and rather too fond of his glass; but a husband's always a husband.

HEIRE. Very true, Madam Rundholmen; a husband's a husband, and a widow's a widow.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. And business is business. Oh, when I think of all I've got to attend to, I don't know whether I'm on my heels or my head. Every one wants to buy; but when it comes to paying, I've got to go in for summonses and executions, and Lord knows what. Upon my word, I'll soon have to engage a lawyer all to myself.

HEIRE. I'll tell you what, Madam Rundholmen, you should secure Mr. Stensgård; he's a bachelor.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Oh, how you do talk! I won't listen to a word more. (*Goes out to the right.*)

HEIRE. A substantial woman, sir! Handsome and well-preserved; no children up to date; money well invested. Education too; she's widely read, sir.

STENSGÅRD. Widely read, eh?

HEIRE. Hee-hee; she ought to be; she was in Alm's circulating library for a couple of years. But your head's full of other things to-day, I daresay.

STENSGÅRD. Not at all; I don't even know that I'll vote. Who are you going to vote for, Mr. Heire?

HEIRE. Haven't got a vote, sir. There was only one kennel that would qualify in the market, and that you bought.

STENSGÅRD. If you're at a loss for a lodging, I'll give it up to you.

HEIRE. Hee-hee, you're joking. Ah, youth, youth! What a pleasant humour it has! But now I must be off and see the menagerie. Your whole League has turned out, I hear. (*Sees FIELDBO, who enters from the back.*) Here's the Doctor too! I suppose you've come on a scientific mission?

FIELDBO. A scientific mission?

HEIRE. Yes, to study the epidemic; you've heard of the virulent *rabies agitatoria* that has broken out? God be with you, my dear young friends! (*Goes out to the right.*)

STENSGÅRD. Tell me quickly—have you seen the Chamberlain to-day?

FIELDBO. Yes.

STENSGÅRD. And what did he say?

FIELDBO. What did he say?

STENSGÅRD. Yes ; you know I've written to him.

FIELDBO. Have you? What did you write?

STENSGÅRD. That I'm still of the same mind about his daughter ; that I want to talk the matter over with him ; and that I'm going to call on him to-morrow.

FIELDBO. If I were you, I'd at least defer my visit. It's the Chamberlain's birthday to-morrow, and there'll be a lot of people——

STENSGÅRD. That's all right ; the more the better. I hold big cards in my hand, let me tell you.

FIELDBO. And perhaps you've bragged a little of your big cards?

STENSGÅRD. How do you mean?

FIELDBO. I mean you've perhaps embellished your declaration of love with a few little threats or so?

STENSGÅRD. Fieldbo, you've seen the letter!

FIELDBO. No, I assure you——

STENSGÅRD. Well then, frankly—I *have* threatened him.

FIELDBO. Ah! Then I have, in a way, an answer to your letter.

STENSGÅRD. An answer! Out with it, man!

FIELDBO (*shows him a sealed paper*). Look here—the Chamberlain's proxy.

STENSGÅRD. And whom does he vote for?

FIELDBO. Not for you, at any rate.

STENSGÅRD. For whom then? For whom?

FIELDBO. For the Sheriff and the Provost.¹

¹ "Amtmanden og provsten." The "Amtmand" is the chief magistrate of an "Amt" or county; the "Provst" is an ecclesiastical functionary, perhaps equivalent to a rural dean.

STENSGÅRD. What! Not even for Lundestad?

FIELDBO. No. And do you know why? Because Lundestad is going to propose you as his successor.

STENSGÅRD. He dares to do this!

FIELDBO. Yes, he does. And he added: "If you see Stensgård, you can tell him how I'm voting; it will show him what footing we stand on."

STENSGÅRD. Good; since he will have it so!

FIELDBO. Take care; it's dangerous to tug at an old tower—it may come down on your head.

STENSGÅRD. Oh, I've learnt wisdom in these two days.

FIELDBO. Indeed? You're not so wise but that you let old Lundestad lead you by the nose.

STENSGÅRD. Do you think I haven't seen through Lundestad? Do you think I don't understand that he took me up because he thought I'd won over the Chamberlain, and because he wanted to break up our League and keep Monsen out?

FIELDBO. But now that he knows you haven't won over the Chamberlain?

STENSGÅRD. He has gone too far to draw back; and I've made good use of the time, and distributed my address. Most of his supporters will abstain from voting; mine are all here.

FIELDBO. It's a big stride from the preliminary election to the final election.

STENSGÅRD. Lundestad knows very well that if he fails me in the College of Electors, I'll soon agitate him out of the Town Council.

FIELDBO. Not a bad calculation. But to succeed in all this, you feel yourself that you must

strike root here more firmly than you have as yet done.

STENSGÅRD. Yes, these people always demand material guarantees, community of interests.

FIELDBO. Just so ; and so Miss Bratsberg is to be sacrificed ?

STENSGÅRD. Sacrificed ? If that were so, I'd be no better than a scoundrel. But it will be for her happiness, that I'm convinced. What now ? Fieldbo, why do you look like that ? You've some underhand scheme of your own——

FIELDBO. I ?

STENSGÅRD. Yes, you have ! You're intriguing against me behind my back. Why do you do so ? Be open with me—will you ?

FIELDBO. Frankly, I won't. You're so dangerous, so unprincipled—well, so reckless at any rate, that one daren't be open with you. Whatever you know, you make use of without scruple. But this I say to you as a friend : put Miss Bratsberg out of your head.

STENSGÅRD. I can't. I must extricate myself from these sordid surroundings. I can't go on living this unlovely life. Here have I got to be hail-fellow-well-met with Dick, Tom, and Harry ; to whisper in corners with them, to hob-nob with them, to laugh at their beery witticisms ; to be hand in glove with hobbledehoys and unlicked cubs. How can I keep my love of the People untarnished in the midst of all this ? I feel as if all the electricity went out of my words. I have no elbow-room, no fresh air to breathe. Oh, a longing comes over me at times for

exquisite women! I want something that brings beauty with it! I lie here in a sort of turbid eddy, while out there the clear blue current sweeps past me—— But what can *you* understand of all this?

LUNDESTAD (*enters from the back*). Ah, here we've good company. Good morning.

STENSGÅRD. I've news for you, Mr. Lundestad! Do you know who the Chamberlain's voting for?

FIELDBO. Silence! It's dishonourable of you.

STENSGÅRD. What do I care? He's voting for the Sheriff and the Provost.

LUNDESTAD. Oh, that was to be expected. You went and spoiled everything with him—though I implored you to play your cards neatly.

STENSGÅRD. I'll play them neatly enough—in future.

FIELDBO. Take care—two can play at that game. (*Goes out to the right.*)

STENSGÅRD. That fellow's got something in his mind. Have you any idea what it can be?

LUNDESTAD. No, I haven't. But, by-the-bye, I see you're flourishing in the paper to-day.

STENSGÅRD. I?

LUNDESTAD. Yes, with a nice little epitaph on me.

STENSGÅRD. Oh, that's that beast Aslaksen, of course——

LUNDESTAD. Your attack on the Chamberlain is in too.

STENSGÅRD. I don't know anything about that. If it's to be war between the Chamberlain and me, I have sharper weapons.

LUNDESTAD. Indeed!

STENSGÅRD. Have you ever seen this bill? Look at it. Is it good?

LUNDESTAD. Good, you say? This bill here?

STENSGÅRD. Yes; look closely at it.

HEIRE (*enters from the right*). Why, what the deuce can be the meaning of— Ah, how interesting! Do just remain as you are, gentlemen, I beg! Do you know what you irresistibly remind me of? Of a summer night in the far north.

LUNDESTAD. That's a curious simile.

HEIRE. A very obvious one—the setting and the rising sun together. Delightful, delightful! But, talking of that, what the deuce is the matter outside there? Your fellow-citizens are scuttling about like frightened fowls, cackling and crowing and not knowing what perch to settle on.

STENSGÅRD. Well, it's an occasion of importance.

HEIRE. Oh, you and your importance! No, it's something quite different, my dear friends. There are whispers of a great failure; a bankruptcy—oh, not political, Mr. Lundestad; I don't mean that!

STENSGÅRD. A bankruptcy?

HEIRE. Hee-hee! That puts life into our legal friend. Yes, a bankruptcy; some one is on his last legs; the axe is laid to the root of the tree—I say no more! Two strange gentlemen have been seen driving past; but where to? Who have they come for? Do you know anything, Mr. Lundestad?

LUNDESTAD. I know how to hold my tongue, Mr. Heire.

HEIRE. Of course; you're a political personage, a diplomatist. But I must be off and find out all I can

about it. It's such sport with these heroes of finance ; they're like beads on a string—when one slips off, all the rest follow. (*Goes out by the back.*)

STENSGÅRD. Is there any truth in all this gossip ?

LUNDESTAD. You showed me a bill ; I thought I saw young Mr. Bratsberg's name upon it ?

STENSGÅRD. The Chamberlain's too.

LUNDESTAD. And you asked me if it was good ?

STENSGÅRD. Yes ; just look at it.

LUNDESTAD. It's perhaps not so good as it might be.

STENSGÅRD. You see it then ?

LUNDESTAD. What ?

STENSGÅRD. That it's forged.

LUNDESTAD. Forged ! Forged bills are often the safest ; people redeem them first.

STENSGÅRD. But what do you think ? Isn't it a forgery ?

LUNDESTAD. I don't much like the look of it.

STENSGÅRD. How so ?

LUNDESTAD. I'm afraid there are too many of these about, Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD. What ! It's not possible that—— ?

LUNDESTAD. If young Mr. Bratsberg slips off the string, those nearest him are only too likely to follow.

STENSGÅRD (*seizes his arm*). What do you mean by those nearest him ?

LUNDESTAD. Who can be nearer than father and son ?

STENSGÅRD. Why, good God—— !

LUNDESTAD. Remember, I say nothing ! It was

Daniel Heire that was talking of failure and bankruptcy and——

STENSGÅRD. This is a thunderbolt to me.

LUNDESTAD. Oh, many a man that seemed solid enough has gone to the wall before now. Perhaps he's too good-natured; goes and backs bills; ready money isn't always to be had; property has to be sold for an old song——

STENSGÅRD. And of course this falls on——falls on the children as well.

LUNDESTAD. Yes, I'm heartily grieved for Miss Bratsberg. She didn't get much from her mother; and heaven knows if even the little she had was secured to her.

STENSGÅRD. Oh, now I understand Fieldbo's advice; he's a true friend, after all.

LUNDESTAD. What did Dr. Fieldbo say?

STENSGÅRD. He was too loyal to say anything, but I understand him all the same—and you too, Mr. Lundestad.

LUNDESTAD. Have you not understood me before?

STENSGÅRD. Not thoroughly. I forgot the proverb about the rats and the sinking ship.

LUNDESTAD. That's not a very nice way to put it. But what's the matter with you? You look quite ill. Good gracious, I haven't gone and blasted your hopes, have I?

STENSGÅRD. How do you mean?

LUNDESTAD. Yes, yes—I see it all. Old fool that I am! My dear Mr. Stensgård, if you really love the girl, what does it matter whether she's rich or poor?

STENSGÅRD. Matter? No, of course——

LUNDESTAD. Good Lord, we all know happiness isn't a matter of money.

STENSGÅRD. Of course not.

LUNDESTAD. And with industry and determination you'll soon be on your feet again. Don't let poverty frighten you. I know what love is; I went into all that in my young days. Domestic happiness; a faithful woman——! My dear young friend, beware how you take any step that may involve you in life-long self-reproach.

STENSGÅRD. But what will become of your plans?

LUNDESTAD. Oh, they must go as best they can. I couldn't think of demanding the sacrifice of your heart!

STENSGÅRD. But I shall make the sacrifice. Yes, I shall show you that I have the strength for it. Think of the longing multitude out there: they claim me with a sort of voiceless pathos. I cannot, I dare not, fail them!

LUNDESTAD. Yes, but the stake in the district——?

STENSGÅRD. I shall take measures to fulfil the demands of my fellow-citizens in that respect, Mr. Lundestad. I see a way, a new way; and I'll follow it up. I renounce the happiness of toiling in obscurity for the woman I love. I say to my fellow-countrymen: "Here I am—take me!"

LUNDESTAD (*looks at him in quiet admiration and presses his hand*). You are indeed a man of rare abilities. (*Goes out to the right.*)

(STENSGÅRD *paces the room several times, now stopping for a moment at the window, now running his fingers through his hair. Presently BASTIAN MONSEN enters from the back.*)

BASTIAN. Here I am, my dear friend.¹

STENSGÅRD. Where have you come from?

BASTIAN. From the Nation.

STENSGÅRD. The Nation? What does that mean?

BASTIAN. Don't you know what the Nation means? It means the People; the common people; those who have nothing, and are nothing; those who lie chained——

STENSGÅRD. What monkey-tricks are these, I'd like to know?

BASTIAN. Monkey-tricks?

STENSGÅRD. I've noticed lately that you go about mimicking me; you imitate even my clothes and my handwriting. Be kind enough to stop that.

BASTIAN. What do you mean? Don't we belong to the same party?

STENSGÅRD. Yes, but I won't put up with this—you make yourself ridiculous——

BASTIAN. By being like you?

STENSGÅRD. By aping me. Be sensible now, Monsen, and give it up. It's quite disgusting. But look here—can you tell me when your father's coming back?

BASTIAN. I've no idea. I believe he's gone to Christiania; perhaps he won't be back for a week or so.

¹ Bastian now says "thou" (du) to Stensgård—*il le tutoie.*

STENSGÅRD. Indeed? I'm sorry for that. He has a big stroke of business on hand, I hear.

BASTIAN. I've a big stroke of business on hand too. Look here, Stensgård, you must do me a service.

STENSGÅRD. Willingly. What is it?

BASTIAN. I feel so full of energy. I have to thank you for that; you have stimulated me. I feel I must *do* something, Stensgård;—I want to get married.

STENSGÅRD. To get married? To whom?

BASTIAN. Hush? Some one in this house.

STENSGÅRD. Madam Rundholmen?

BASTIAN. Hush! Yes, it's she. Put in a good word for me, do! This sort of thing is just the thing for me. She's in the swim, you know; she's on the best terms with the Chamberlain's people, ever since her sister was housekeeper there. If I get her, perhaps I'll get the town-contracts too. So that on the whole—damn it, I love her!

STENSGÅRD. Oh, love her, love her! Don't let's have that sickening hypocrisy.

BASTIAN. Hypocrisy!

STENSGÅRD. Yes; you're lying to yourself, at any rate. You talk in one breath of town-contracts and of love. Why not call a spade a spade? There's something sordid about all this; I'll have nothing to do with it.

BASTIAN. But listen——!

STENSGÅRD. Do your dirty work yourself, I say! (*To FIELDBO, who enters from the right.*) Well, how goes the election?

FIELDBO. Excellently for you, it appears. I saw

Lundestad just now ; he said you were getting almost all the votes.

STENSGÅRD. Am I indeed ?

FIELDBO. But what good will they do you, since you're not a man of property ?

STENSGÅRD (*between his teeth*). Isn't it confounded !

FIELDBO. Well, you can't do two things at once. If you win on the one side, you must be content to lose on the other. Good-bye ! (*Goes out by the back.*)

BASTIAN. What did he mean by winning and losing ?

STENSGÅRD. I'll tell you afterwards. But now, my dear Monsen—to return to what we were talking about—I promised to put in a good word for you—

BASTIAN. You promised ? On the contrary, I thought you said— ?

STENSGÅRD. Oh, nonsense ; you didn't let me explain myself fully. I meant to say that there's something sordid in mixing up your love with town contracts and so forth ; it's a crime against all that's noblest in your nature. So, my dear friend, if you really love the girl—

BASTIAN. The widow—

STENSGÅRD. Yes, yes ; it's all the same. I mean when one really loves a woman, that in itself should be an imperative reason—

BASTIAN. Yes, that's just what I think. So you'll speak for me, will you ?

STENSGÅRD. Yes, with great pleasure—but on one condition.

BASTIAN. What's that ?

STENSGÅRD. Tit for tat, my dear Bastian—you must put in a word for me too.

BASTIAN. I? With whom?

STENSGÅRD. Have you really not noticed anything? Yet it's before your very nose.

BASTIAN. You surely don't mean——?

STENSGÅRD. Your sister Ragna? Yes, it's she. Oh, you don't know how I've been moved by the sight of her quiet, self-sacrificing devotion to her home.

BASTIAN. Do you really mean to say so?

STENSGÅRD. And you, with your penetrating eye, have suspected nothing?

BASTIAN. Yes, at one time I did think—but now people are talking of your hanging about the Chamberlain's——

STENSGÅRD. Oh, the Chamberlain's! Well, Monsen, I'll tell you frankly that for a moment I did hesitate; but, thank goodness, that's over; now I see my way quite clearly before me.

BASTIAN. There's my hand. I'll back you up, you may be sure. And as for Ragna—why, she daren't do anything but what I and father wish.

STENSGÅRD. Yes, but your father—that's just what I wanted to say——

BASTIAN. Hush! There, I hear Madam Rundholmen. Now's your chance to speak for me, if she's not too busy; for then she's apt to be snappish. You do your best, my dear fellow, and leave the rest to me. Do you happen to have seen Aslaksen?

STENSGÅRD. He's probably at the polling place.

(BASTIAN goes out by the back, as MADAM RUNDHOLMEN enters from the right.)

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Things are going as smooth as possible, Mr. Stensgård ; every one's voting for you.

STENSGÅRD. That's strange !

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Goodness knows what Mosen of Stonelee will say.

STENSGÅRD. I want a word with you, Madam Rundholmen.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Well, what is it ?

STENSGÅRD. Will you listen to me ?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Lord yes, that I will.

STENSGÅRD. Well then : you were talking just now about your loneliness——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Oh, it was that horrid old Heire——

STENSGÅRD. You were saying how hard it is for an unprotected widow——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Yes, indeed ; you should just try it, Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD. But now if there came a fine young man——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. A fine young man ?

STENSGÅRD. One who had long loved you in secret——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Oh, come now, Mr. Stensgård, I won't hear any more of your nonsense.

STENSGÅRD. You must ! A young man who, like you, finds it hard to stand alone.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Well, what then ? I don't understand you at all.

STENSGÅRD. If you could make the happiness of two people, Madam Rundholmen——your own and——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. And a fine young man's?

STENSGÅRD. Just so; now, answer me——

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Mr. Stensgård, you're never in earnest?

STENSGÅRD. You don't suppose I'd jest on such a subject? Should you be willing——?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Yes, that I am, the Lord knows! Oh, my dear, sweet——

STENSGÅRD (*recoiling a step*). What's this?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Bother, here comes some one.

(RAGNA MONSEN *enters hastily, and in evident disquietude, from the back.*)

RAGNA. I beg your pardon—isn't my father here?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Your father? Yes; no; —I—I don't know—excuse me——

RAGNA. Where is he?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Your father? Oh, he drove past here——

STENSGÅRD. Towards Christiania.

RAGNA. No; it's impossible.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Yes, he certainly drove down the road, that I know. Oh, my dear Miss Monsen, you can't think how happy I am! Wait a moment,—I'll just run to the cellar, and fetch up a bottle of the real thing. (*Goes out to the left.*)

STENSGÅRD. Tell me, Miss Monsen—is it really your father you're looking for?

RAGNA. Yes, of course it is.

STENSGÅRD. And you didn't know that he'd gone away?

RAGNA. Oh, how should I know? They tell me

nothing. But to Christiania——? That's impossible; they'd have met him. Good-bye!

STENSGÅRD (*intercepts her*). Ragna! Tell me! Why are you so changed towards me?

RAGNA. I? Let me pass! Let me go!

STENSGÅRD. No, you shan't go! I believe Providence guided you here at this moment. Oh, why do you shrink from me? You used not to.

RAGNA. Ah, that's all over, thank God!

STENSGÅRD. But why?

RAGNA. I have learnt to know you better;—it's well that I learned in time.

STENSGÅRD. Oh, that's it? People have been lying about me? Perhaps I'm to blame too; I have been lured from the right path; but that's over now. Oh, when I see you, I feel myself a new man. It's you I care for, deeply and truly; it's you I love, Ragna—you and no other!

RAGNA. Let me pass! I'm afraid of you.

STENSGÅRD. Oh, but to-morrow, Ragna—may I come and speak to you to-morrow?

RAGNA. Yes, yes, if you must; only for heaven's sake not to-day.

STENSGÅRD. Only not to-day! Hurrah! I've won; now I'm happy!

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN (*enters from the left with cake and wine*). Come now, we must drink a glass for luck.

STENSGÅRD. For luck in love! A glass for love and happiness! Hurrah for to-morrow! (*He drinks.*)

MR. HELLE (*entering by the right, to RAGNA*). Have you found him?

RAGNA. No, he's not here. Come, come!

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Heaven help us, what's the matter?

HELLE. Nothing; only some visitors have arrived at Stonelee—

RAGNA. Thanks for all your kindness, Madam Rundholmen.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Oh, have you got visitors on your hands again?

RAGNA. Yes, yes; excuse me; I must go home Good-bye!

STENSGÅRD. Good-bye—till to-morrow!

(RAGNA and HELLE go out by the back. DANIEL HEIRE enters from the right.)

HEIRE. Ha-ha! It's going like a house on fire! They're all cackling Stensgård, Stensgård, Stensgård! They're all plumping for you. Now you should plump for him too, Madam Rundholmen!

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Hey, that's an idea! Are they all voting for him?

HEIRE. Unanimously—Mr. Stensgård enjoys the confidence of the constituency, as they say. Old Lundestad's going about with a face like a pickled cucumber. Oh, it's a pleasure to see it all.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. They shan't regret having voted for him! If I can't vote, I can stand treat. (*Goes out to the left.*)

HEIRE. Ah, you're the man for the widows, Mr. Stensgård. I'll tell you what—if you can only get hold of her, you're a made man, sir!

STENSGÅRD. Get hold of Madam Rundholmen?

HEIRE. Yes, why not? She's a substantial

woman in every way. She'll be mistress of the situation as soon as the Stonelee card-castle has come to grief.

STENSGÅRD. There's nothing wrong at Stonelee, is there?

HEIRE. Isn't there? You've a short memory, my dear sir. I told you there were rumours of failure, and bankruptcy, and——

STENSGÅRD. Well, what then?

HEIRE. What then? That's just what we want to know. There's a hue and cry after Monsen; two men have come to Stonelee——

STENSGÅRD. Yes, I know—a couple of visitors——

HEIRE. Uninvited visitors, my dear young friend; there are whispers of the police and infuriated creditors—there's something queer about the accounts, you must know! Talking of that—what paper was that Monsen gave you yesterday?

STENSGÅRD. Oh, just a paper—— Something queer about the accounts, you say? Look here; you know Chamberlain Bratsberg's signature?

HEIRE. Hee-hee! I should rather think I did.

STENSGÅRD (*produces the bill*). Well, look at this.

HEIRE. Give it here—I'm rather short-sighted, you know. (*After examining it.*) That, my dear sir? That's not the Chamberlain's hand.

STENSGÅRD. Not? Then it's——!

HEIRE. And it's drawn by Monsen?

STENSGÅRD. No, by young Mr. Bratsberg.

HEIRE. Nonsense! Let me see. (*Looks at the paper and hands it back again.*) You can light your cigar with this.

STENSGÅRD. What! The drawer's name too——?

HEIRE. A forgery, young man; a forgery, as sure as my name's Daniel. You've only to look at it with the keen eye of suspicion.

STENSGÅRD. But how can that be? Monsen can't have known——

HEIRE. Monsen? No, he knows nothing about either his own paper or other people's. But I'm glad it's coming to an end, Mr. Stensgård—it's a satisfaction to one's moral sense. Ah, I've often burnt with a noble rage, if I may say so, at having to stand by and see—— I say no more! But the best of it all is that now Monsen's down he'll drag young Bratsberg after him; and the son will bring the father down——

STENSGÅRD. Yes, so Lundestad said.

HEIRE. But of course there's method in bankruptcy. You'll see; I'm an old prophet: Monsen will go to prison; young Bratsberg will make a composition; and the Chamberlain will be placed under trustees; that's to say, his creditors will present him with an annuity of a couple of thousand dollars. That's how things go, Mr. Stensgård; I know it, I know it! What says the classic? *Fiat justitia, pereat mundus*; which means: Fie on what's called justice in this wicked world, sir!

STENSGÅRD (*pacing the room*). One after the other! Both ways barred!

HEIRE. What the deuce——?

STENSGÅRD. And now too! Just at this moment!

ASLAKSEN (*enters from the right*). I congratulate you, chosen of the people!

STENSGÅRD. Elected!

ASLAKSEN. Elected by 117 votes, and Lundestad by 53. The rest all nowhere.

HEIRE. Your first step on the path of fame, Mr. Stensgård.

ASLAKSEN. And it'll cost you a bowl of punch——

HEIRE. Well, it's the first step that costs, they say.

ASLAKSEN (*goes off to the left shouting*). Punch, Madam Rundholmen! A bowl of punch! The chosen of the people stands treat!

(LUNDESTAD, *and after him* SEVERAL ELECTORS, *enter from the right.*)

HEIRE (*in a tone of condolence to LUNDESTAD*). Fifty-three! That's the grey-haired patriot's reward!

LUNDESTAD (*whispers to STENSGÅRD*). Are you firm in your resolve?

STENSGÅRD. What's the use of being firm when everything's tumbling about your ears?

LUNDESTAD. Do you think the game's lost?

ASLAKSEN (*returning by the left*). Madam Rundholmen stands treat herself. She says she has the best right to.

STENSGÅRD (*struck by an idea*). Madam Rundholmen!—has the best right to——!

LUNDESTAD. What?

STENSGÅRD. The game is *not* lost, Mr. Lundestad! (*Sits at the right-hand table and writes.*)

LUNDESTAD (*in a low voice*). Oh, Aslaksen—can you get something into your next paper for me?

ASLAKSEN. Of course I can. Is it libellous?

LUNDESTAD. No, certainly not!

ASLAKSEN. Well, never mind; I'll take it all the same.

LUNDESTAD. It's my political last will and testament ; I'll write it to-night.

A MAID-SERVANT (*enters from the left*). The punch, with Madam Rundholmen's compliments.

ASLAKSEN. Hurrah! Now there's some life in the local situation. (*He places the punch-bowl on the middle table, serves the others, and drinks freely himself during the following scene.* BASTIAN MONSEN *has meanwhile entered from the right.*)

BASTIAN (*softly*). You're remembering my letter?

ASLAKSEN. Don't be afraid. (*Taps his breast pocket.*) I've got it here.

BASTIAN. You'll deliver it as soon as you can—when you see she's disengaged, you understand.

ASLAKSEN. I understand. (*Calls.*) Come, now, the glasses are filled.

BASTIAN. Curse me, but you shan't do it for nothing.

ASLAKSEN. All right, all right. (*To the servant.*) A lemon, Karen, quick as the wind! (*BASTIAN retires.*)

STENSGÅRD. A word, Aslaksen; shall you be passing here to-morrow evening?

ASLAKSEN. To-morrow evening? I can, if you like.

STENSGÅRD. Then you might look in and give Madam Rundholmen this letter.

ASLAKSEN. From you?

STENSGÅRD. Yes. Put it in your pocket. There now. To-morrow evening, then?

ASLAKSEN. All right; trust to me.

(*The servant brings the lemon; STENSGÅRD goes towards the window.*)

BASTIAN. Well—have you spoken to Madam Rundholmen?

STENSGÅRD. Spoken? Oh yes, a little—

BASTIAN. And what do you think?

STENSGÅRD. Oh—well—we were interrupted. I can't say anything definite.

BASTIAN. I'll take my chance all the same; she's always complaining of her loneliness. My fate shall be sealed within an hour.

STENSGÅRD. Within an hour?

BASTIAN (*sees MADAM RUNDHOLMEN, who enters from the left*). Hush! Let no one know anything. (*Goes towards the back.*)

STENSGÅRD (*whispers to ASLAKSEN*). Give me back the letter.

ASLAKSEN. Do you want it back?

STENSGÅRD. Yes, at once; I'll deliver it myself.

ASLAKSEN. Very well; here it is. (*STENSGÅRD thrusts the letter into his pocket, and mixes with the rest.*)

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN (*to BASTIAN*). What do you say to the election, Monsen?

BASTIAN. I'm delighted. Stensgård and I are bosom friends, you know. I shouldn't be surprised if he got into Parliament.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. But your father wouldn't much like that.

BASTIAN. Oh, father has so many irons in the fire. Besides, if Stensgård's elected, it'll still be all in the family I daresay.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. How so?

BASTIAN. He's in love with—

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Lord! Has he said anything?

BASTIAN. Yes, and I've promised to put in a word for him. It'll be all right. I'm sure Ragna likes him.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Ragna!

LUNDESTAD (*approaching*). What's interesting you so much, Madam Rundholmen?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. What do you think he says? Why, that Stensgård's in love with——

LUNDESTAD. Yes, but he won't find the Chamberlain so easy to deal with.

BASTIAN. The Chamberlain?

LUNDESTAD. He probably thinks her too good a match for a mere lawyer.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Who? Who?

LUNDESTAD. Why, his daughter, Miss Bratsberg of course.

BASTIAN. He's surely not making love to Miss Bratsberg?

LUNDESTAD. Yes, indeed he is.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. You're quite sure of that?

BASTIAN. And he told me——! Oh, I want to say a word to you!

(LUNDESTAD and BASTIAN go towards the back.)

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN (*approaching* STENSGÅRD). You must be on your guard, Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD. Against whom?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Against malicious people who are slandering you.

STENSGÅRD. Why, let them——so long as *one* person doesn't believe their slanders.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. And who's that one person?

STENSGÅRD (*slips the letter into her hand*). Take this; read it when you're alone.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Oh, I was sure of it (*Goes off to the right*.)

RINGDAL (*enters from the right*). Well, I hear you've won a brilliant victory, Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD. Yes, I have, Mr. Ringdal, in spite of your noble chief's endeavours.

RINGDAL. His endeavours? What to do?

STENSGÅRD. To keep me out.

RINGDAL. Like other people, he has a right to vote as he pleases.

STENSGÅRD. It's a pity he's not likely to retain that right for long.

RINGDAL. What do you mean?

STENSGÅRD. I mean, since his affairs are not so straight as they might be——

RINGDAL. His affairs! What affairs? What have you got in your head?

STENSGÅRD. Oh, you needn't pretend ignorance. Isn't there a storm brewing?—Bankruptcy on a large scale?

RINGDAL. Yes, so I hear on all sides.

STENSGÅRD. And aren't both the Bratsbergs involved in it?

RINGDAL. My dear sir, are you crazy?

STENSGÅRD. Oh, you naturally want to keep it dark.

RINGDAL. What good would that be? That sort of thing can't be kept dark.

STENSGÅRD. Isn't it true then?

RINGDAL. Not a word of it, so far as the Chamberlain's concerned. How could you believe such nonsense? Who's been gammoning you?

STENSGÅRD. I won't tell you just yet.

RINGDAL. Well you needn't; but whoever it was must have had a motive.

STENSGÅRD. A motive——!

RINGDAL. Yes, just think; is there no one who has an interest in keeping you and the Chamberlain apart?

STENSGÅRD. Yes, on my soul, but there is though.

RINGDAL. The Chamberlain in reality thinks very highly of you——

STENSGÅRD. Does he?

RINGDAL. Yes, and that's why people want to make mischief between you. They reckon on your ignorance of the situation, on your impulsiveness and simplicity——

STENSGÅRD. Oh, the vipers! And Madam Rundholmen has got my letter!

RINGDAL. What letter?

STENSGÅRD. Oh, nothing; but it's not too late. My dear Mr. Ringdal, shall you see the Chamberlain this evening?

RINGDAL. I'm pretty sure to.

STENSGÅRD. Then tell him to think no more of those threats—he'll understand; tell him I'll call to-morrow and explain everything.

RINGDAL. You'll call?

STENSGÅRD. Yes, to prove to him—Ah! a proof!

Look here, Mr. Ringdal ; will you give the Chamberlain this bill from me ?

RINGDAL. This bill ?

STENSGÅRD. Yes ; it's something I can't explain to you ; but just you give it to him——

RINGDAL. Upon my word, Mr. Stensgård——

STENSGÅRD. And just add these words from me : It's thus I treat those who vote against me ?

RINGDAL. I shan't forget.

(Goes out at back.)

STENSGÅRD. I say, Mr. Heire—how could you go and palm off that story about the Chamberlain upon me ?

HEIRE. How could I palm it off on you—— ?

STENSGÅRD. Yes—it's a lie from beginning to end.

HEIRE. No ! is it indeed ? I'm delighted to hear it. Do you hear, Mr. Lundestad ? It's all a lie about the Chamberlain.

LUNDESTAD. Hush ! We were on a false scent ; it's nearer at hand.

STENSGÅRD. How nearer at hand ?

LUNDESTAD. I know nothing ; but they talk of Madam Rundholmen——

STENSGÅRD. What !

HEIRE. Haven't I prophesied it ! She's been too much mixed up with our friend at Stonelee——

LUNDESTAD. He drove off this morning before daylight——

HEIRE. And his family is out hunting for him——

LUNDESTAD. And the son has been doing all he knows to get his sister provided for——

STENSGÅRD. Provided for! "To-morrow" she said; and then her anxiety about her father——

HEIRE. Hee-hee! You'll see he's gone and hanged himself, sir!

ASLAKSEN. Has any one hanged himself!

LUNDESTAD. Mr. Heire says Monsen of Stonelee——

MONSEN (*enters from the back*). A dozen of champagne!

ASLAKSEN AND OTHERS. Monsen!

MONSEN. Yes, Monsen! Champagne-Monsen! Money-Monsen! Let's have the wine, confound it all!

HEIRE. But, my dear sir——

STENSGÅRD. Why, where have you dropped from?

MONSEN. I've been at business, sir! Cleared a hundred thousand! Hei! To-morrow I'll give a thundering dinner at Stonelee. I invite you all. Champagne, I say! I congratulate you, Stensgård! I hear you're elected.

STENSGÅRD. Yes; I must explain to you——

MONSEN. Pooh; what does it matter to me? Wine, I say! Where's Madam Rundholmen? (*Makes a motion to go out to the left.*)

THE MAID-SERVANT (*who has just entered, intercepts him*). No one can see the mistress just now; she's got a letter——

BASTIAN. Oh, damn it all. (*Goes out by the back.*)

STENSGÅRD. Is she reading it?

SERVANT. Yes; and it seems quite to have upset her.

STENSGÅRD. Good-bye, Mr. Monsen; dinner at Stonelee to-morrow?

MONSEN. Yes, to-morrow. Good-bye!

STENSGÅRD (*whispers*). Mr. Heire, will you do me a service?

HEIRE. Certainly, certainly.

STENSGÅRD. Then just run me down a little to Madam Rundholmen; indulge in an innuendo or two at my expense. You're so good at that sort of thing.

HEIRE. What the deuce is the meaning of this?

STENSGÅRD. I have my reasons. It's a joke, you know—a wager with—with some one you have a grudge against.

HEIRE. Aha, I understand. I say no more!

STENSGÅRD. Don't go too far, you know. Just place me in a more or less equivocal light—make her a little doubtful about me, for the moment.

HEIRE. Trust to me; it'll be a real pleasure to me.

STENSGÅRD. Thanks, thanks in advance. (*Goes towards the table.*) Mr. Lundestad, we'll meet to-morrow forenoon at the Chamberlain's.

LUNDESTAD. Have you hopes?

STENSGÅRD. A threefold hope.

LUNDESTAD. Threefold? I don't understand——

STENSGÅRD. You needn't. Henceforth I'll be my own counsellor. (*Goes out by the back.*)

MONSEN (*at the punch-bowl*). Another glass, Aslaksen! Where's Bastian?

ASLAKSEN. He's just gone out. But I have a letter to deliver for him.

MONSEN. Have you?

ASLAKSEN. To Madam Rundholmen.

MONSEN. Ah, at last!

ASLAKSEN. But not till to-morrow evening, he said; to-morrow evening, neither sooner nor later. Here's to you!

HEIRE (*to LUNDESTAD*). What the deuce is all this between Stensgård and Madam Rundholmen?

LUNDESTAD (*whispers*). He's courting her.

HEIRE. I suspected as much! But he asked me to run him down a bit—to cast doubts on his character. I say no more!

LUNDESTAD. And you said you would?

HEIRE. Yes, of course.

LUNDESTAD. I believe he says of you that your word is as good as your bond—and no better.

HEIRE. Hee-hee! the dear fellow. He'll find out his mistake this time.

MADAM R. (*with an open letter in her hand, at the left-hand door*). Where's Mr. Stensgård?

HEIRE. He kissed your chambermaid and went, Madam Rundholmen.

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

Act Fifth.

(Large reception room at the CHAMBERLAIN'S. Entrance door at the back. Doors right and left.)

(RINGDAL stands at a table looking through some papers. A knock.)

RINGDAL. Come in.

FIELDBO *(from the back)*. Good morning.

RINGDAL. Good morning, Doctor.

FIELDBO. All well, eh?

RINGDAL. Oh, yes, well enough; but——

FIELDBO. What?

RINGDAL. Of course you've heard the great news?

FIELDBO. No. What is it?

RINGDAL. Do you mean to say you haven't heard what's happened at Stonelee?

FIELDBO. No.

RINGDAL. Monsen has absconded.

FIELDBO. Absconded! Monsen?

RINGDAL. Absconded.

FIELDBO. Great heavens——!

RINGDAL. There were ugly rumours yesterday; but then Monsen turned up again; he'd managed to throw dust in people's eyes——

FIELDBO. But the reason? The reason?

RINGDAL. Immense losses in timber, they say. Several houses in Christiania have stopped payment, and so——

FIELDBO. And so he's gone off.

RINGDAL. To Sweden, probably. The authorities took possession at Stonelee this morning. Things are being inventoried and sealed up——

FIELDBO. And the unhappy children?

RINGDAL. The son seems to have kept clear of the business; at least I hear he puts a bold face on it.

FIELDBO. But the daughter?

RINGDAL. Hush! The daughter is here.

FIELDBO. Here?

RINGDAL. The tutor brought her and the two little ones here this morning. Miss Bratsberg is looking after them, quietly you know.

FIELDBO. And how does she bear it?

RINGDAL. Oh, pretty well, I fancy. You may guess, after the treatment she's met with at home—— and, besides, I may tell you she's—— Hush, here's the Chamberlain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*from the left*). So you're there, my dear Doctor?

FIELDBO. Yes, I'm pretty early astir. Let me wish you many happy returns of the day, Chamberlain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, as for happiness——! But thank you, all the same; I know you mean it kindly.

FIELDBO. And may I ask, Chamberlain——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. One word: be good enough to drop that title.

FIELDBO. What do you mean?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I am an ironmaster, and nothing more.

FIELDBO. Why, what strange notion is this?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I've renounced my post and my title. I'm sending in my resignation to-day.

FIELDBO. You should sleep upon that.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. When His Majesty was gracious enough to assign me a place in his immediate circle, he did so because of the unblemished honour of my family through long generations.

FIELDBO. Well, what then?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. My family is disgraced, just as much as Mr. Monsen's. Of course you've heard about Monsen?

FIELDBO. Yes, I have.

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*to RINGDAL*). Any further news about him?

RINGDAL. Only that he brings down with him a good many of the younger men.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. And my son?

RINGDAL. Your son has sent me his balance-sheet. He'll be able to pay in full; but there'll be nothing over.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Hm. Then will you get my resignation copied?

RINGDAL. I'll see to it.

(*Goes out by the foremost door on the right.*)

FIELDBO. Have you reflected what you're doing? Things can be arranged without any one being a bit the wiser.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Indeed! Can I make myself ignorant of what has happened?

FIELDBO. Oh, after all, what *has* happened? Hasn't he written to you, acknowledged his fault, and prayed for your forgiveness? This is the only time he's done anything of the sort; why not simply blot it out?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Would you do what my son has done?

FIELDBO. He won't repeat it, and that's the main point.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. How do you know he won't repeat it?

FIELDBO. If for no other reason, because of what you yourself told me—the scene with your daughter-in-law. Whatever else comes of it, that'll steady him.

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*pacing the room*). My poor Selma! Our peace and happiness gone!

FIELDBO. There are higher things than peace and happiness. Your happiness has been an illusion. I must speak my mind: in that, as in many other things, you have built on a hollow foundation. You have been shortsighted and arrogant, Chamberlain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*stops short*). I?

FIELDBO. Yes, you! You've plumed yourself on your family honour; but when has that honour been tried? Are you sure it would have stood the test?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. You can spare your sermons, Doctor. Do you think I haven't learnt a lesson from the events of these days?

FIELDBO. I daresay you have; then prove it, by showing greater tolerance and clearer insight. You reproach your son; but what have you done for him?

You have taken care to develop his faculties, but not to form his character. You have lectured him upon the honour of his family, but you have not guided and moulded him so that honour became to him an irresistible instinct.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Do you think so?

FIELDBO. I not only think, I know it. But it's always the same here; people are bent on learning, not on living. And you see what comes of it; you see hundreds of men with great gifts, who seem never more than half ripe; who are one thing in their ideas and feelings, and something quite different in their habits and acts. Just look at Stensgård——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh yes, Stensgård! What do you make of him?

FIELDBO. A patchwork. I've known him since we were children. His father was a mere rag of a man, a withered weed, a nobody. He kept a little huckster's shop, and did some pawnbroking into the bargain, or rather his wife did it for him. She was a coarse-grained woman, the most unwomanly I ever knew. She had her husband declared incapable;¹ she hadn't an ounce of heart in her. And in that home Stensgård passed his childhood. Then he went to the grammar school. "He shall go to college," said his mother; "I'll make a smart solicitor of him." Sordidness at home, stimulation at school; soul, disposition, will, talents, all pulling in different ways—what could it lead to but disintegration of character?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What could it lead to, eh? I'd like to know what's good enough for you. There's

¹ "Gjort umyndig" = placed under a legal interdict.

nothing to be hoped for from Stensgård or from my son ; but from you, I suppose—from you——?

FIELDBO. Yes, from me ; just from me. Oh, you needn't laugh ; I'm not boasting ; but my lot has been one that begets equilibrium and firmness of character. I grew up amid peace and harmony in a modest middle-class home. My mother was a type of what is best in womanhood ; in our home we had no desires that outstripped our opportunities, no cravings that went to shipwreck on the rocks of circumstance ; and death did not break in upon our circle, leaving emptiness and longing behind it. We were brought up in the love of beauty, but it informed our whole view of life, instead of being a side-interest, a thing apart. We were taught to shun excesses, whether of the intellect or of the feelings——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Bless me ! So that accounts for your being the pink of perfection ?

FIELDBO. I'm far from thinking so. I only say that fate has been infinitely kind to me, and that I regard its favours in the light of obligations.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Very well ; but if Stensgård is under no such obligations, it's all the more to his credit that he——

FIELDBO. What ? What's to his credit ?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. You've judged him falsely, my good doctor ! Look here. What do you say to this ?

FIELDBO. Your son's bill ?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes ; he's handed it over to me.

FIELDBO. Of his own accord ?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Of his own accord, and unconditionally. It's fine; it's noble. So, from this day forth, my house is open to him.

FIELDBO. Think again; for your own sake, for your daughter's—

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, let me alone! He's better than you in many ways. At anyrate he's straightforward, while you're underhand in your dealings.

FIELDBO. I?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, you! You've made yourself the master of this house; you come and go as you please; I consult you about everything—and yet—

FIELDBO. Well?—and yet?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. And yet there's something cursedly jesuitical about you; yes, and something—something uppish that I can't endure.

FIELDBO. Please explain yourself!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I? No, it's you that ought to explain yourself. But you must take the consequences of your conduct.

FIELDBO. We don't understand each other, Chamberlain. I have no bill to give up to you; but who knows but I may be making a greater sacrifice for your sake?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Indeed! How so?

FIELDBO. By holding my tongue.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Holding your tongue, indeed! Shall I tell you what I'm tempted to do? To forget my manners, swear, and join the League of Youth. You're a stiff-necked Pharisee, my good

Doctor ; and that sort of thing's out of place in our free society. Look at Stensgård ; he's not like that ; so he shall come here whenever he likes ; he shall— he shall—— Oh, why bother about it?—you must take the consequences ; as you make your bed, so you must lie.

LUNDESTAD (*enters from the back*). My congratulations, Chamberlain ! And may you long enjoy the respect and——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, go to the devil—I'm almost inclined to say ! That's all humbug, my dear Lundestad. There's nothing but humbug in this world.

LUNDESTAD. That's what Mr. Monsen's creditors are saying.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Ah, about Monsen—didn't it come upon you like a thunderbolt ?

LUNDESTAD. Oh, you've prophesied it so often, Chamberlain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Hm, hm ;—yes, to be sure I have. I prophesied it only the day before yesterday ; he came here to implore me—

FIELDBO. To save him ?

LUNDESTAD. Impossible ; he was too deep in the mire ; and whatever is, is for the best.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. That's your opinion ? Was it for the best, then, that you were beaten at the poll yesterday ?

LUNDESTAD. I wasn't beaten ; everything went just as I wanted. Stensgård's not a man to make an enemy of ; he's got what we others have to whistle for.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I don't quite understand that expression.

LUNDESTAD. He has the power of carrying people away with him. And then he has the luck to be unhampered by either character, or conviction, or social position ; so that Liberalism is the easiest thing in the world to him.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Why, aren't we all Liberals?

LUNDESTAD. Yes, of course we're Liberals, Chamberlain ; not a doubt of it. But the thing is that we're Liberal only on our own behalf, whereas Stensgård's Liberalism extends to other people. That's the novelty of the thing.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. And you're going over to these subversive ideas ?

LUNDESTAD. I've read in old story books about people who could summon up spirits, but could not lay them again.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Why, my dear Lundestad, how can a man of your enlightenment——?

LUNDESTAD. I know it's mere popish superstition, Chamberlain ; but new ideas are like these spirits ; it's not so easy to lay them ; it's wisest to compromise with them as best you can.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. But now that Monsen's fallen, and no doubt his crew of agitators with him——

LUNDESTAD. If Monsen's fall had come two or three days ago, things would have been very different.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, unfortunately. You've been too hasty.

LUNDESTAD. It was out of consideration for you, Chamberlain.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. For me?

LUNDESTAD. Our party must keep up its reputation in the eyes of the people. We represent the old, deep-rooted Norse sense of honour. If I had deserted Stensgård, you know he holds a paper——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Not now.

LUNDESTAD. What?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Here it is.

LUNDESTAD. He has given it up to you?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes. Personally, he's a gentleman; so much I must say for him.

LUNDESTAD (*thoughtfully*). Mr. Stensgård has rare abilities.

STENSGÅRD (*at the back, standing in the doorway*). May I come in?

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*going to meet him*). I'm glad to see you.

STENSGÅRD. And you'll accept my congratulations?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. With all my heart.

STENSGÅRD. Then with all *my* heart I wish you happiness! And you must forget all the stupid things I wrote——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I go by deeds, not words, Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD. God bless you!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. And henceforth—since you wish it—you must consider yourself at home here.

STENSGÅRD. May I? May I? (*A knock at the door.*)

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Come in.

(*Several LEADING MEN of the neighbourhood,*

TOWN COUNCILLORS, etc., *enter*. THE CHAMBERLAIN *goes to receive them, accepts their congratulations, and converses with them.*)

THORA (*who has meantime entered by the second door on the left*). Mr. Stensgård, let me thank you.

STENSGÅRD. You, Miss Bratsberg!

THORA. My father has told me how nobly you have acted.

STENSGÅRD. But——?

THORA. Oh, how we have misjudged you!

STENSGÅRD. Have you——?

THORA. It was your own fault—— No, no; it was ours. Oh, what would I not do to atone for our error!

STENSGÅRD. Would you? You yourself? Would you really——?

THORA. All of us would; if we only knew——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Refreshments for the gentlemen, my child.

THORA. They're just coming. (*She goes back towards the door again, whence a SERVANT presently appears with cake and wine, which are handed round.*)

STENSGÅRD. Oh, my dear Lundestad! I feel like a conquering god.

LUNDESTAD. So you must have felt yesterday, I suppose.

STENSGÅRD. Pooh! This is something quite different; the final triumph; the crown of all! There's a glory, a halo, over my life.

LUNDESTAD. Oho; dreams of love!

STENSGÅRD. Not dreams! Realities, glorious realities!

LUNDESTAD. So brother Bastian has brought you the answer?

STENSGÅRD. Bastian?

LUNDESTAD. Yes, he gave me a hint yesterday; he'd promised to plead your cause with a certain young lady.

STENSGÅRD. Oh, what nonsense——

LUNDESTAD. Why make a mystery of it? If you haven't heard already, I can give you the news. You've won the day, Mr. Stensgård; I have it from Ringdal.

STENSGÅRD. What have you from Ringdal?

LUNDESTAD. Miss Monsen has consented.

STENSGÅRD. What?

LUNDESTAD. Consented, I say.

STENSGÅRD. Consented! And the father has run away!

LUNDESTAD. But the daughter hasn't.

STENSGÅRD. Consented! In the midst of all this family trouble! How unwomanly! How repellent to any man with the least delicacy of feeling! But the whole thing's a misunderstanding. I never commissioned Bastian—— How could that beast——? However, it doesn't matter to me; he must answer for his follies himself.

DANIEL HEIRE (*enters from the back*). Hee-hee! Quite a gathering! Of course, of course! We're paying our respects, propitiating the powers that be, as the saying goes. May I, too——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Thanks, thanks, old friend!

HEIRE. Oh, I protest, my dear sir! That's too much condescension. (*New GUESTS arrive.*) Ah,

here we have the myrmidons of justice—the executive—— I say no more. (*Goes over to STENSGÅRD.*) Ah, my dear fortunate youth, are you there? Your hand! Accept the assurance of an old man's unfeigned delight.

STENSGÅRD. At what?

HEIRE. You asked me yesterday to run you down a little to her—you know——

STENSGÅRD. Yes, yes; what then?

HEIRE. It was a heartfelt pleasure to me to oblige you——

STENSGÅRD. What happened then? How did she take it?

HEIRE. Like a loving woman, of course. Burst into tears; locked herself into her room; would neither answer nor show herself.

STENSGÅRD. Ah, thank goodness!

HEIRE. It's barbarous to subject a widow's heart to such cruel tests, to go and gloat over her jealous agonies! But love has cat's eyes—— I say no more! For to-day, as I drove past, there stood Madam Rundholmen, brisk and buxom, at her open window, combing her hair. She looked like a mermaid, if you'll allow me to say so. Oh, she's a fine woman!

STENSGÅRD. Well, and then?

HEIRE. Why, she laughed like one possessed, sir, and waved a letter in the air, and called out "A proposal, Mr. Heire! I'm engaged to be married."

STENSGÅRD. What! Engaged?

HEIRE. My hearty congratulations, young man, I'm inexpressibly pleased to be the first to announce to you——

STENSGÅRD. It's all rubbish! It's nonsense!

HEIRE. What's nonsense?

STENSGÅRD. You've misunderstood her; or else she's misunderstood— Engaged! What nonsense! Now that Monsen's down, she'll probably—

HEIRE. Not at all, sir, not at all! Madam Rundholmen has solid legs to stand on.

STENSGÅRD. It doesn't matter. I have quite other intentions. All that about the letter was only a joke—a wager, as I told you. My dear Mr. Heire, do oblige me by not saying a word to any one of this silly affair.

HEIRE. I understand; it's to be kept secret; it's to be a romance. Ah, youth, youth! it's nothing if not poetical

STENSGÅRD. Yes, yes; mum's the word. You shan't regret it—I'll take up your cases— Hush, I rely upon you. (*He retires.*)

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*who has meanwhile been talking to LUNDESTAD*). No, Lundestad—that I really can't believe!

LUNDESTAD. I assure you, Chamberlain—Daniel Heire told me so himself.

HEIRE. What did I tell you, may I inquire?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Did Mr. Stensgård show you a bill yesterday?

HEIRE. Yes, by-the-by—! What on earth was the meaning of all that?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I'll tell you afterwards. And you told him—

LUNDESTAD. You persuaded him it was a forgery?

HEIRE. Pooh, a mere innocent jest to bamboozle him a little in the hour of triumph.

LUNDESTAD. And you told him both signatures were forged?

HEIRE. Oh yes; why not both while I was about it?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. So that was it!

LUNDESTAD (*to the CHAMBERLAIN*). And when he heard that——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. He gave the bill to Ringdal!

LUNDESTAD. The bill that was useless as a weapon of offence!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. He shams magnanimity! Makes a fool of me again! Gains admission to my house, and makes me welcome him and thank him! Oh that—that—that fellow!

HEIRE. Why, what's the matter, my dear Sir?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I'll tell you all about it afterwards. (*Takes LUNDESTAD apart.*) And this is the fellow you protect, push forward, help to rise!

LUNDESTAD. Well, he took you in, too!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, I'd like to——!

LUNDESTAD (*pointing to STENSGÅRD, who is speaking to THORA*). Look there! What'll people be fancying?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I'll soon put a stop to these fancies.

LUNDESTAD. Too late, Chamberlain; he'll worm himself forward by hook or by crook.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I too can manœuvre, Mr. Lundestad.

LUNDESTAD. What will you do?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Just watch. (*Goes over to* FIELDBO.) Doctor Fieldbo, will you do me a service?

FIELDBO. With pleasure.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Then turn that fellow out of my house.

FIELDBO. Stensgård?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, the adventurer; I hate his very name; turn him out!

FIELDBO. But how can I?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. That's your affair; I give you a free hand.

FIELDBO. A free hand! Do you mean it? Entirely free?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, yes, by all means.

FIELDBO. Your hand on it, Chamberlain!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Here it is.

FIELDBO. So be it then; now or never! (*Loudly.*) May I request the attention of the company for a moment?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Silence for Dr. Fieldbo!

FIELDBO. With Chamberlain Bratsberg's consent, I have the pleasure of announcing my engagement to his daughter. (*An outburst of astonishment. THORA utters a slight scream. THE CHAMBERLAIN is on the point of speaking, but refrains. Loud talk and congratulations.*)

STENSGÅRD. Your engagement! Yours——

HEIRE. With the Chamberlain's——? With your——? What does it mean?

LUNDESTAD. Is the Doctor out of his mind?

STENSGÅRD. But, Chamberlain——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What can I do? I'm a Liberal. I join the League of Youth!

FIELDBO. Thanks, thanks—and forgive me!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Associations are the order of the day, Mr. Stensgård. There's nothing like free competition!

THORA. Oh, my dear father!

LUNDESTAD. Yes, and engagements are the order of the day; I have another to announce.

STENSGÅRD. A mere invention!

LUNDESTAD. No, not a bit of it; Miss Monsen's engaged to——

STENSGÅRD. False, false, I say!

THORA. No, father, it's true; they're both here.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Who? Where?

THORA. Ragna and Mr. Helle. They're in here.

(Goes towards the second door on the right.)

LUNDESTAD. Mr. Helle! Then it's he——!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Here? In my house? *(Goes towards the door.)* Come along, young people.

RAGNA *(shrinking back shyly)*. Oh, no, no; there are such a lot of people.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Don't be bashful; you couldn't help what has happened.

HELLE. She's homeless now, Chamberlain.

RAGNA. Oh, you must help us!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I will indeed; and thank you for giving me the chance!

HEIRE. You may well say engagements are the order of the day. I have one to add to the list.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What? You? At your age?—How rash of you!

HEIRE. Oh—I say no more!

LUNDESTAD. The game's up, Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD. Indeed? (*Loudly.*) I have one to add to the list, Mr. Heire! An announcement, gentlemen; I too have cast anchor for life.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What?

STENSGÅRD. One is now and then forced to play a double game, to conceal one's true intentions. I regard this as permissible when the general weal is at stake. My life-work lies clear before me, and is all in all to me. I consecrate my whole energies to this district; I find here a ferment of ideas which I must strive to clarify. But this task cannot be accomplished by a mere adventurer. The men of the district must gather round one of themselves. Therefore I have determined to unite my interests indissolubly with yours, by a bond of affection. If I have awakened any false hopes, I must plead for forgiveness. I too am engaged.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. You?

FIELDBO. Engaged?

HEIRE. I can bear witness.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. But how——?

FIELDBO. Engaged? To whom?

LUNDESTAD. It's never——?

STENSGÅRD. It is a union both of the heart and of the understanding. Yes, my fellow-citizens, I am engaged to Madam Rundholmen.

FIELDBO. To Madam Rundholmen!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. The storekeeper's widow!

LUNDESTAD. Hm. Indeed!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Why, my head's going round! How could you——?

STENSGÅRD. Manœuvring, Mr. Bratsberg!

LUNDESTAD. He has rare abilities!

ASLAKSEN (*looks in by the door at the back*). I humbly beg pardon——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Oh, come in, Aslaksen! A visit of congratulation, eh?

ASLAKSEN. Oh, not at all; I wouldn't presume—— But I've something very important to say to Mr. Stensgård.

STENSGÅRD. Another time; you can wait outside.

ASLAKSEN. No, confound it; I must tell you——

STENSGÅRD. Hold your tongue? What intrusiveness is this?—— Yes, gentlemen, strange are the ways of destiny. The district and I required a bond that should bind us firmly together; and I found on my path a woman of ripened character who could make a home for me. I have put off the adventurer, gentlemen, and here I stand in your midst, as one of yourselves. Take me; I'm ready to stand or fall in any post your confidence may assign me.

LUNDESTAD. You have won.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Well, really, I must say—— (*To the SERVANT, who has entered from the back.*) Well, what is it? What are you giggling about?

THE SERVANT. Madam Rundholmen——

THE COMPANY. Madam Rundholmen?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. What about her?

THE SERVANT. Madam Rundholmen is waiting outside with her young man——

THE COMPANY (*to each other*). Young man? Madam Rundholmen! How's this?

STENSGÅRD. What nonsense!

ASLAKSEN. Yes, I was just telling you——

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*at the door*). Come along, come along!

(BASTIAN MONSEN, *with* MADAM RUNDHOLMEN *on his arm, enters from the back. A general movement.*)

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. I hope I'm not intruding, sir——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Not at all, not at all.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. But I couldn't resist bringing up my young man to show him to you and Miss Bratsberg.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, I hear you're engaged; but——

THORA. We didn't know——

STENSGÅRD (*to* ASLAKSEN). How's all this?

ASLAKSEN. I'd so much in my head yesterday; so much to think about, I mean——

STENSGÅRD. But I gave her my letter, and——

ASLAKSEN. No, you gave her Bastian Monsen's; here's yours.

STENSGÅRD. Bastian's? And here——? (*Glances at the address, crumples the letter together, and crams it into his pocket*). Oh, you confounded blunderer!

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Of course I said yes. Men are deceivers, I know; but when you have it in black and white that his intentions are honourable—— Why, there's Mr. Stensgård, I declare. Well, Mr. Stensgård, won't you congratulate me?

HEIRE (*to* LUNDESTAD). How she glares at him!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Of course he will, Madam

Rundholmen ; but won't you congratulate your sister-in-law to be ?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Who ?

THORA. Ragna ; she's engaged too.

BASTIAN. Are you, Ragna ?

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Indeed ? Yes, Bastian said a certain person was going courting. I wish you both joy ; and welcome into the family, Mr. Stensgård.

FIELDBO. No, it's not he.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. No, it's Mr. Helle ; an excellent choice. And, by-the-bye, you may congratulate my daughter too.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Miss Bratsberg ! Ah, so Lundestad was right, after all. I congratulate you, Miss Thora ; and you, Mr. Stensgård.

FIELDBO. You mean Dr. Fieldbo.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. What ?

FIELDBO. I am the happy man.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN. Well, now, I don't in the least know where I am.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. And we've just found out where we are.

STENSGÅRD. Excuse me ; I have an appointment——

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*aside*). Lundestad, what was the other word ?

LUNDESTAD. What other ?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Not adventurer, but the other—— ?

LUNDESTAD. Demagogue.

STENSGÅRD. I take my leave.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. One word——only one word,

Mr. Stensgård—a word which has long been on the tip of my tongue.

STENSGÅRD (*at the door*). Excuse me; I'm in a hurry.

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*following him*). Demagogue.

STENSGÅRD. Good-bye; good-bye! (*Goes out by the back.*)

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*coming forward again*). Now the air's pure again, my friends.

BASTIAN. You don't blame me, sir, for what has happened at home?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Every one must bear his own burden.

BASTIAN. I had really no part in it.

SELMA (*who, during the preceding scene, has been listening at the second door on the right*). Father! Now you're happy; may he come now?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Selma? You? You plead for him? After what happened two days ago——

SELMA. Oh, two days are a long time. It's all right now. I know now that he can go astray——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. And that pleases you?

SELMA. Yes, that he *can*; but in future I won't let him.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Bring him in then.

(*SELMA goes out again to the right.*)

RINGDAL (*enters by the foremost door on the right*). Here is your resignation.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Thanks; but you can tear it up.

RINGDAL. Tear it up?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, Ringdal; I've found

another way. I can atone without that; earnest work——

ERIK (*enters with SELMA from the right*). Can you forgive me?

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*hands him the bill*). I can't be less merciful than fate.

ERIK. Father! This very day I'll retire from the business you dislike so much.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. No, thanks; you must stick to it. No cowardice! No running away from temptation! But I'll stand at your side. (*Loudly.*) News for you, gentlemen! I go into partnership with my son.

SEVERAL GENTLEMEN. What? You, Chamberlain?

HEIRE. You, my dear sir?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes; it's a useful and honourable calling; or at any rate it can be made so. And now I've no reason to hold back any longer.

LUNDESTAD. Well, I'll tell you what, Chamberlain—since you're going to set to work for the good of the district, it would be a shame and disgrace if an old soldier like me were to sulk in his tent.

ERIK. Ah, what's this?

LUNDESTAD. I can't, in fact. After the disappointments in love that have befallen Mr. Stensgård to-day, Heaven forbid we should force the poor fellow into the political mill. He must rest and recover; a little travelling is what he wants, and I'll see that he gets it. So if my constituents want me, why, they can have me.

THE GENTLEMEN (*shaking hands with him enthusiastically*). Thanks, Lundestad! That's a good fellow! You won't fail us?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Now, this is as it should be; things are settling down again. But whom have we to thank for all this?

FIELDBO. Come, you, Aslaksen, you can explain —?

ASLAKSEN (*frightened*). I, Doctor? I'm as innocent as the babe unborn!

FIELDO. But that letter, then——!

ASLAKSEN. It wasn't my fault, I tell you! It was the election and Bastian Monsen, and chance, and destiny, and Madam Rundholmen's punch—there was no lemon in it—and there was I, with the whole responsibility of the press upon me——

THE CHAMBERLAIN (*approaching*). What? What's that?

ASLAKSEN. The press, sir!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. The press! That's just it! Haven't I always said that the press has marvellous influence in these days?

ASLAKSEN. Oh, Chamberlain——!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. No false modesty, Mr. Aslaksen! I haven't hitherto been in the habit of reading your paper, but henceforth I will. I'll subscribe for ten copies.

ASLAKSEN. Oh, you can have twenty, Chamberlain!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Very well, then, let me have twenty. And if you need money, come to me; I mean to support the press; but I tell you once for all—I won't write for it.

RINGDAL. What's this I hear? Your daughter engaged?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes; what do you say to that?

RINGDAL. I'm delighted! But when was it arranged?

FIELDBO (*quickly*). I'll tell you afterwards——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Why, it was arranged on the Seventeenth of May.

FIELDBO. What?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. The day little Miss Ragna was here.

THORA. Father, father; did you know——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, my dear; I've known all along.

FIELDBO. Oh, Chamberlain——?

THORA. Who can have——?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Another time I should advise you young ladies not to talk so loud when I'm sitting dozing in the bay window.

THORA. Oh! so you were behind the curtains?

FIELDBO. Now I understand!

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Yes, you're the one to keep your own counsel——

FIELDBO. Would it have been any good if I'd spoken earlier?

THE CHAMBERLAIN. You're right, Fieldbo. These days have taught me a lesson.

THORA (*aside to FIELDBO*). Yes, you *can* keep your own counsel. All this about Mr. Stensgård—why did you tell me nothing?

FIELDBO. When a hawk is hovering over the dove-cote, one watches and protects his little dove—but doesn't alarm her.

(*They are interrupted by MADAM RUNDHOLMEN.*)

HEIRE (*to the CHAMBERLAIN*). I'm sorry to tell you, Chamberlain, that the settlement of our little legal differences will have to be adjourned indefinitely.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Indeed! Why so?

HEIRE. You must know I've accepted a post as social paragraph-writer on Aslaksen's paper.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I'm glad to hear it.

HEIRE. And of course you'll understand—with so much business on hand——

THE CHAMBERLAIN. All right, my old friend; I can wait.

MADAM RUNDHOLMEN (*to THORA*). Yes, I can tell you he's cost me many a tear, that bad man. But now I thank the Lord for Bastian. The other was false as the sea-foam; and then he's a terrible smoker, Miss Bratsberg, and frightfully particular about his meals. I found him a regular gourmand.

A SERVANT (*enters from the left*). Dinner is on the table.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. Come along, then, all of you. Mr. Lundestad, you'll sit beside me; and you too, Mr. Aslaksen.

RINGDAL. Ah, we'll have a lot of toasts to drink after dinner.

HEIRE. Yes, and perhaps an old man may be allowed to put in a claim for the toast of "Absent Friends."

LUNDESTAD. One absent friend will return, Mr. Heire.

HEIRE. Mr. Stensgård?

LUNDESTAD. Yes; you'll see, gentlemen! In ten or fifteen years Stensgård will either be in Parliament or in the Ministry—perhaps in both at once.

FIELDBO. In ten or fifteen years? Yes; but then he can scarcely stand at the head of the League of Youth.

HEIRE. Why not?

FIELDBO. Why because by that time his youth will be—questionable.

HEIRE. Then he can stand at the head of the Questionable League, sir. That's what Lundestad means. He says like Napoleon—"It's the questionable people that make politicians;" hee-hee!

FIELDBO. Well, after all's said and done, *our* League shall last through young days and questionable days as well; and it shall continue to be the League of Youth. When Stensgård founded his League, and was carried shoulder-high amid all the enthusiasm of Independence Day, he said—"Providence is on the side of the League of Youth." I think even Mr. Helle, theologian as he is, will let us apply that saying to ourselves.

THE CHAMBERLAIN. I think so too, my friends; for truly we have been groping and stumbling in darkness; but good angels guided us.

LUNDESTAD. Oh, for that matter, I think the angels were only middling.

ASLAKSEN. Yes; that comes of the local situation, Mr. Lundestad.

THE END.

THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY.

(1877.)

Characters.

CONSUL BERNICK.	RUMMEL,	} Merchants.
MRS. BERNICK, <i>his wife.</i>	VIGELAND,	
OLAF, <i>their son, a boy of thirteen.</i>	SANDSTAD,	
MISS BERNICK (MARTHA), <i>the Consul's sister.</i>	DINA DORF, <i>a young girl living in the Consul's house.</i>	
JOHAN TÖNNESEN, <i>Mrs. Bernick's younger brother.</i>	KRAP, <i>the Consul's clerk.</i>	
MISS HESSEL (LONA), <i>her elder step-sister.</i>	SHIPBUILDER AUNE.	
HILMAR TÖNNESEN, <i>Mrs. Bernick's cousin.</i>	MRS. RUMMEL.	
RECTOR RÖRLUND.	MRS. POSTMASTER HOLT.	
	MRS. DOCTOR LYNGE.	
	MISS RUMMEL.	
	MISS HOLT.	

Townspeople and others, foreign sailors, steamboat passengers, etc.

The action takes place in Consul Bernick's house, in a small Norwegian coast-town.

[TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.—The title of the original is "Samfundets Stötter," literally "Society's Pillars." In the text the word "Samfund" has sometimes been translated "society," sometimes "community." The noun "Stötte," a pillar, has for its correlative the verb "at stötte," to support; so that the English phrase, "to support society," represents the Norwegian "at stötte Samfundet." The reader may bear in mind, then, that this phrase is, in the original, a direct allusion to the title of the play. "Rector Rörlund" is in the original an "Adjunkt," or Assistant-Master. As it is important that he should have some official title by which he may be addressed, I have ventured to make him a Rector, using that word in its Scotch sense of Head-Master (which survives at Oxford), not in its English sense of a beneficed clergyman.—*Pronunciation of Names:* Rörlund = Rörloond; Rummel = Roomel; Aune = Ownè; Lyngè = Lynghè. The modified "ö" is pronounced much as in German.—W. A.]

THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY

PLAY IN FOUR ACTS.

Act First.

(A spacious garden-room in CONSUL BERNICK'S house. In front, to the left, a door leads into the Consul's office; farther back, in the same wall, a similar door. In the middle of the opposite wall is a large entrance-door. The wall in the background is almost entirely composed of plate-glass, with an open door-way leading to a broad flight of steps, over which a sun-shade is let down. Beyond the steps a part of the garden can be seen, shut in by a railing with a little gate. Outside the railing is a street consisting of small brightly-painted wooden houses. It is summer, and the sun shines warmly. Now and then people pass along the street: they stop and speak to each other: customers come and go at the little corner shop, and so forth.)

(In the garden-room a number of ladies are gathered round a table. At the head of the table sits MRS. BERNICK. On her left sit MRS. HOLT and her daughter: next to them, MRS. and MISS RUMMEL. On MRS. BERNICK'S right sit MRS. LYNGE, MISS BERNICK (MARTHA), and DINA DORF. All the ladies are busy sewing. On the table lie large heaps of half-finished and cut-out linen, and other articles of clothing. Farther back, at a little table on which are two flower-pots and a glass of eau sucré, sits RECTOR RÖRLUND, reading from a book with gilt edges, a word here and there being heard by the audience. Out in the garden OLAF

BERNICK *is running about, shooting at marks with a cross-bow.*)

(Presently SHIPBUILDER AUNE enters quietly by the door on the right. The reading is stopped for a moment; MRS. BERNICK nods to him and points to the left-hand door. AUNE goes quietly to the Consul's door, knocks softly, pauses a moment, then knocks again. KRAP, the Consul's clerk, opens the door and comes out with his hat in his hand and papers under his arm.)

KRAP. Oh, it's you knocking!

AUNE. The Consul sent for me.

KRAP. Yes; but he can't see you just now; he has commissioned me——

AUNE. You? I would much rather——

KRAP. Commissioned me to tell you this: You must stop these Saturday lectures to the workmen.

AUNE. Indeed? I thought I might use my leisure time——

KRAP. You must not use your leisure time to make the men useless in work-time. Last Saturday you must needs hold forth about the injury our new machines and new method of work will cause to the workmen. Why do you do so?

AUNE. I do it to support society.

KRAP. That's an odd notion! The Consul says it's undermining society.

AUNE. My "society" is not the Consul's "society," Mr. Krap! As foreman of the Industrial Society, I have to——

KRAP. Your first duty is as foreman of Consul Bernick's shipyard. Your first duty is to the society called Bernick & Co., for by it we all live.—Well, now you know what the Consul had to say to you.

AUNE. The Consul would have said it differently, Mr. Krap! But I know well enough what I have to thank for this. It's that cursed American that's put in for repairs. These people think work can be done here as they do it over there, and that——

KRAP. Yes, yes—I have no time to go into generalities. I've told you the Consul's wishes, and that's enough. Now you'd better go down to the yard again; you're wanted there; I shall be down myself presently.—I beg your pardon, ladies!

(He bows, and goes out through the garden and down the street. AUNE goes quietly out to the right. RECTOR RÖRLUND, who during the whole of the foregoing conversation has continued reading, presently closes the book with a bang.)

RÖRLUND. There, my dear ladies, that's the end.

MRS. RUMMEL. Oh, what an instructive tale!

MRS. HOLT. And so moral!

MRS. BERNICK. Such a book really gives one a great deal to think over.

RÖRLUND. Yes; it forms a refreshing contrast to what we unhappily see every day, both in newspapers and magazines. The superficial rouge and gilding, flaunted by the great communities—what does it really conceal? Hollowness and rottenness, if I may say so. They have no moral foundation under their feet. In one word—they are whited sepulchres, these great communities of the modern world.

MRS. HOLT. Too true! too true!

MRS. RUMMEL. We have only to look at the crew of the American ship that's lying out there.

RÖRLUND. Oh, I won't speak of such scum of

humanity. But even in the higher classes—how do matters stand? Doubt and fermenting restlessness on every side; the mind unsettled; insecurity everywhere. See how the family is undermined!—how a brazen spirit of destruction is attacking the most vital truths!

DINA (*without looking up*). But many great things are done there too, aren't they?

RÖRLUND. Great things?—I don't understand.

MRS. HOLT (*astonished*). Good heavens, Dina——!

MRS. RUMMEL (*at the same time*). Oh, Dina, how can you?

RÖRLUND. It would scarcely be for our good if such "great things" became common among us. No; we ought to thank God that things are as they are with us. A tare, alas! will now and then spring up among the wheat, but we honestly do our best to weed it out. Our task, ladies, is to keep society pure—to exclude from it all the dangerous elements which an impatient age would force upon us.

MRS. HOLT. Ah! there's more than enough of that sort of thing, unfortunately.

MRS. RUMMEL. Yes; last year we only escaped the railway by a hair's-breadth.

MRS. BERNICK. Oh, Karsten managed to block the way.

RÖRLUND. Providentially, Mrs. Bernick! You may be sure your husband was a tool in a higher hand when he refused to support that scheme.

MRS. BERNICK. And yet the papers said such horrid things about him! But we're quite forgetting to thank you, my dear Rector. It's really

more than kind of you to sacrifice so much of your time to us.

RÖRLUND. Oh, not at all; now, in the holidays——

MRS. BERNICK. Yes, yes; but it's a sacrifice, nevertheless.

RÖRLUND (*drawing his chair nearer*). Don't speak of it, my dear lady. Do not all of you make sacrifices for a good cause? And do you not make them willingly and gladly? The Lapsed and Lost, for whom we are working, are like wounded soldiers on a battle-field; you, ladies, are the Red Cross Guild, the sisters of mercy, who pick lint for these unhappy sufferers, tie the bandages gently round the wounds, dress, and heal them——

MRS. BERNICK. It must be a great blessing to see everything in such a beautiful light.

RÖRLUND. The gift is largely inborn; but it can also be acquired. The great point is to see things in the light of an earnest mission. What do *you* say, Miss Bernick? Do you not find that you have, as it were, firmer ground under your feet since you have given up your life to your school-work?

MARTHA. I scarcely know what to say. Often when I am in the school-room I wish I were far out upon the stormy sea.

RÖRLUND. Yes, yes; that is temptation, my dear Miss Bernick. You must bar the door against such an unquiet guest. The stormy sea—of course you do not mean that literally; you mean the great billowing world, where so many are wrecked. And do you really think so much of the life you hear rushing and roaring outside? Just look out into the street.

Look at the people in the burning sunshine, toiling and moiling over their paltry affairs! Ours, surely, is the better part, sitting here in the cool shadow, and turning our backs towards the quarter from which distraction comes.

MARTHA. Yes, I suppose you're quite right——

RÖRLUND. And in a house like this—in a good and pure home, where the Family is seen in its fairest shape—where peace and unity reign—— (*To MRS. BERNICK.*) What are you listening to, Mrs. Bernick?

MRS. BERNICK (*who has turned towards the door of the Consul's room*). How loud they're speaking in there!

RÖRLUND. Is there anything particular going on?

MRS. BERNICK. I don't know. There's evidently some one with my husband.

(*HILMAR TÖNNESEN, with a cigar in his mouth, comes in by the door on the right, but stops on seeing so many ladies.*)

HILMAR. Oh, I beg pardon—— (*turning to go*).

MRS. BERNICK. Come in, Hilmar, come in; you're not disturbing us. Do you want anything?

HILMAR. No, I only looked in in passing. Good morning, ladies. (*To MRS. BERNICK.*) Well, what's going to come of it?

MRS. BERNICK. Of what?

HILMAR. You know Bernick has called a cabinet council.

MRS. BERNICK. Indeed! What is it about?

HILMAR. Oh, it's this railway nonsense again.

MRS. RUMMEL. No! Is it possible?

MRS. BERNICK. Poor Karsten; is he to have all that worry again——?

RÖRLUND. Why, what can be the meaning of this, Mr. Tönnesen? Consul Bernick made it plainly understood last year that he would have no railway here.

HILMAR. Yes, I thought so too; but I met Krap just now, and he told me the railway question was to the fore again, and that Bernick was holding a conference with three of our capitalists.

MRS. RUMMEL. I was sure I heard Rummel's voice.

HILMAR. Yes, Mr. Rummel is there, of course, and Sandstad and Michael Vigeland — "Holy Michael," as they call him.

RÖRLUND. Hm——

HILMAR. I beg your pardon, Rector.

MRS. BERNICK. Just when everything was so nice and quiet too!

HILMAR. Well, for my part, I don't mind their beginning their bickerings again. It's a variety at least.

RÖRLUND. I think we could get on without that sort of variety.

HILMAR. It depends upon one's constitution. Some natures crave for a Titanic struggle now and then. But there's no room for that sort of thing in our petty provincial life, and it's not every one that can—— (*turning over the leaves of Rörlund's book*). *Woman as the Servant of Society*—what rubbish is this?

MRS. BERNICK. Oh, Hilmar, you mustn't say that. You've surely not read the book.

HILMAR. No, and don't intend to.

MRS. BERNICK. You seem out of sorts to-day.

HILMAR. Yes, I am.

MRS. BERNICK. Perhaps you didn't sleep well last night?

HILMAR. No, I slept very badly. After my evening constitutional I went to the club, and read an account of a polar expedition. There's something bracing in watching men at war with the elements.

MRS. RUMMEL. But it doesn't seem to have agreed with you, Mr Tönnesen?

HILMAR. No, it didn't agree with me at all. I lay tossing all night half asleep, and dreamt I was chased by a horrible walrus.

OLAF (*comes up the garden steps*). Have you been chased by a walrus, Uncle?

HILMAR. I dreamt it, little stupid! Do you still go playing with that ridiculous bow? Why don't you get hold of a proper gun?

OLAF. I should like to very much, but——

HILMAR. There would be some sense in a gun; it braces the nerves.

OLAF. And then I could shoot bears, Uncle—but father won't let me.

MRS. BERNICK. You really mustn't put such ideas into his head, Hilmar.

HILMAR. Hm! That's the rising generation nowadays! Goodness knows there's plenty of talk about pluck and daring, but it all ends in play; no one really cares for the invigoration of looking danger manfully in the face. Don't stand and point at me with your bow, stupid; it might go off.

OLAF. No, Uncle, there's no bolt in it.

HILMAR. How do you know? There may very likely be a bolt in it. Take it away, I tell you! Why have you never gone to America in one of your father's ships. There you'd see buffalo-hunts and fights with the red-skins.

MRS. BERNICK. But Hilmar——

OLAF. I should like to very much, Uncle; and then perhaps I might meet Uncle Johan and Aunt Lona.

HILMAR. Hm. Don't talk nonsense.

MRS. BERNICK. Now you can go down the garden again, Olaf.

OLAF. May I go out into the street too, mother?

MRS. BERNICK. Yes; but take care not to go too far. (OLAF runs out through the garden gate.)

RÖRLUND. You shouldn't put such notions into the child's head, Mr. Tønnesen.

HILMAR. No, of course, he's to be a mere stick-in-the-mud, like so many others.

RÖRLUND. Why don't you go to America yourself?

HILMAR. I? With my complaint? Of course no one here makes any allowance for that. But besides—one has duties towards the society one belongs to. There must be *one* person to hold high the banner of the ideal. Ugh, there he's shouting again!

THE LADIES. Who's shouting?

HILMAR. Oh, I don't know. They're rather loud-voiced in there, and it makes me so nervous.

MRS. RUMMEL. It's my husband you hear, Mr. Tønnesen; you must remember he's so accustomed to addressing great assemblies——

RÖRLUND. The others are not whispering either, it seems to me.

HILMAR. No, sure enough, when it's a question of the pocket, then——; everything here ends in paltry material calculations. Ugh!

MRS. BERNICK. At least that's better than it used to be, when everything ended in dissipation.

MRS. LYNGE. Were things really so bad as all that?

MRS. RUMMEL. They couldn't have been worse, Mrs. Lyngé. You may think yourself lucky that you didn't live here then.

MRS. HOLT. Yes, there's certainly been a great change! When I think of the time when I was a girl——

MRS. RUMMEL. Oh, you needn't go back more than fourteen or fifteen years—heaven help us, what a life it was! There was both a dancing club and a music club——

MARTHA. And the dramatic club—I remember it so well.

MRS. RUMMEL. Yes; it was there your play was acted, Mr. Tönnesen.

HILMAR (*in the background*). Oh, rubbish——!

RÖRLUND. Mr. Tönnesen's play?

MRS. RUMMEL. Yes; that was long before you came here, Rector. Besides, it only ran one night.

MRS. LYNGE. Wasn't it in that play you told me you played the heroine, Mrs. Rummel?

MRS. RUMMEL (*glancing at the RECTOR*). I? I really don't remember, Mrs. Lyngé. But I remember

too well all the noisy gaiety that went on among families.

MRS. HOLT. Yes; I actually know houses where two great dinner parties were given in one week.

MRS. LYNGE. And then there was a company of actors, I've been told.

MRS. RUMMEL. Yes, that was the worst of all——

MRS. HOLT (*uneasily*). Hm, hm——

MRS. RUMMEL. Oh, actors did you say? No, I remember nothing about them.

MRS. LYNGE. Why, I was told they caused all sorts of trouble. What was the truth of the matter?

MRS. RUMMEL. Oh, it was nothing at all, Mrs. Lynge.

MRS. HOLT. Dina, dear, hand me that piece of linen, please.

MRS. BERNICK (*at the same time*). Dina, my love, go out and ask Katrina to bring in the coffee.

MARTHA. I'll go with you, Dina.

(DINA and MARTHA go out by the second door on the left.)

MRS. BERNICK (*rising*). And you must excuse me for a moment, ladies; I think we had better take our coffee in the garden.

(*She goes down the garden-steps and begins arranging a table; RÖRLUND stands in the doorway talking to her. HILMAR sits outside smoking.*)

MRS. RUMMEL (*softly*). Oh dear, Mrs. Lynge, how you frightened me!

MRS. LYNGE. I?

MRS. HOLT. Ah, but you began it yourself, Mrs. Rummel.

MRS. RUMMEL. I? Oh, how can you say so, Mrs. Holt? Not a single word did I say.

MRS. LYNGE. But what's it all about?

MRS. RUMMEL. How could you begin to talk about——! Only think——didn't you see that Dina was in the room?

MRS. LYNGE. Why, bless me! what has she to do with——?

MRS. HOLT. Here, in this house, too! Don't you know that it was Mrs. Bernick's brother——?

MRS. LYNGE. What about him? I know nothing at all; remember I've not been here long——

MRS. RUMMEL. Then you haven't heard that ——? Hm—— (*To her daughter.*) You can go down the garden for a little, Hilda.

MRS. HOLT. You too, Netta. And be sure you are very kind to poor Dina when she comes.

(MISS RUMMEL and MISS HOLT go out into the garden.)

MRS. LYNGE. Well, what about Mrs. Bernick's brother?

MRS. RUMMEL. Don't you know, he was the hero of the scandal?

MRS. LYNGE. Mr. Hilmar the hero of a scandal!

MRS. RUMMEL. Good heavens, no; Hilmar's her cousin, Mrs. Lynge. I'm talking of her brother——

MRS. HOLT. The Prodigal Tönnesen——

MRS. RUMMEL. Johan was his name. He ran away to America.

MRS. HOLT. Had to run away, you understand.

MRS. LYNGE. Then the scandal was about him ?

MRS. RUMMEL. Yes, it was a sort of—what shall I call it?—a sort of—with Dina's mother. Oh, I remember it as if it were yesterday. Johan Tønnesen was in old Mrs. Bernick's office ; Karsten Bernick had just come home from Paris—it was before his engagement——

MRS. LYNGE. Yes, but the scandal—— ?

MRS. RUMMEL. Well, you see, that winter Möller's comedy company was in the town——

MRS. HOLT. And in the company were Dorf and his wife. All the young men were mad about her.

MRS. RUMMEL. Yes, heaven knows how they could think her pretty. But one evening Dorf came home very late——

MRS. HOLT. And quite unexpectedly——

MRS. RUMMEL. And there he found—no, really I'm ashamed to tell you.

MRS. HOLT. Why, you know, Mrs. Rummel, he found nothing, for the door was locked on the inside.

MRS. RUMMEL. Yes; that's what I say—he found the door locked. And only think! some one inside had to jump out of the window.

MRS. HOLT. Right from the attic window.

MRS. LYNGE. And it was Mrs. Bernick's brother ?

MRS. RUMMEL. Of course it was.

MRS. LYNGE. And that was why he ran off to America ?

MRS. HOLT. He had to run, you may be sure.

MRS. RUMMEL. For afterwards something else was found out, almost as bad. Only think, he had been playing tricks with the cash-box——

MRS. HOLT. But, after all, no one knows exactly about that, Mrs. Rummel; it may have been mere gossip.

MRS. RUMMEL. Well, I really must say——! Wasn't it known over the whole town? For that matter, wasn't old Mrs. Bernick almost bankrupt? Rummel himself has told me that. But heaven forbid *I* should say anything!

MRS. HOLT. Well, the money didn't go to Madam Dorf, at any rate, for she——

MRS. LYNGE. Yes; what became of Dina's parents?

MRS. RUMMEL. Oh, Dorf deserted both wife and child. But Madam was impudent enough to remain here a whole year. She didn't dare to show herself in the theatre again; but she made a living by washing and sewing——

MRS. HOLT. And she tried to set up a dancing school.

MRS. RUMMEL. Of course it wouldn't do. What parents could trust their children with such a person? But it didn't last long; the fine Madam wasn't accustomed to work, you see; her chest became affected, and she died.

MRS. LYNGE. What a wretched story!

MRS. RUMMEL. Yes; you may believe it has been a terrible thing for the Bernicks. It's the dark spot on the sun of their happiness, as Rummel once expressed it. You must never talk of these things in *this* house again, Mrs. Lynge.

MRS. HOLT. And, for heaven's sake, don't mention the step-sister either.

MRS. LYNGE. Yes, by-the-bye, Mrs. Bernick has a step-sister too?

MRS. RUMMEL. Used to have—fortunately; for now they don't recognise the relationship. Yes, she was a strange one! Would you believe it, she cut her hair short, and went about in rainy weather with men's shoes on!

MRS. HOLT. And when her step-brother—the prodigal—had run away, and all the town was of course in commotion about him—what do you think she did? Why, she followed him.

MRS. RUMMEL. Yes, but think of the scandal before she left, Mrs. Holt!

MRS. HOLT. Hush! don't talk about it.

MRS. LYNGE. What, was there a scandal about her too?

MRS. RUMMEL. Yes, I'll tell you all about it, Mrs. Lynge. Bernick was just engaged to Betty Tönnesen; and as he was coming, with her on his arm, into her aunt's room to tell her of the engagement—

MRS. HOLT. The Tönnesens were orphans, you understand.

MRS. RUMMEL. —Lona Hessel rose from her chair, and gave the handsome, aristocratic Karsten Bernick a ringing box on the ear!

MRS. LYNGE. Well, I never——!

MRS. HOLT. Yes; every one knows it.

MRS. RUMMEL. And then she packed up her traps and went off to America.

MRS. LYNGE. She must have been making eyes at him herself.

MRS. RUMMEL. Yes; that was just it. She imagined he was going to propose to her as soon as he came home from Paris.

MRS. HOLT. Only think, how could she dream of such a thing!—Bernick, a polished young man of the world—a perfect gentleman—the darling of all the ladies——

MRS. RUMMEL. —And so proper, besides, Mrs. Holt—so moral.

MRS. LYNGE. Then what has become of this Miss Hessel in America?

MRS. RUMMEL. Well, you see, over that, as Rummel once expressed it, there rests a veil which should scarcely be lifted.

MRS. LYNGE. What does that mean?

MRS. RUMMEL. She has no communication with the family now, of course; but every one in town knows that she has sung for money in taverns over there——

MRS. HOLT. And has given lectures——

MRS. RUMMEL. And has written an insane book.

MRS. LYNGE. Is it possible——?

MRS. RUMMEL. Yes, Lona Hessel, too, is certainly a sun-spot in the Bernicks' happiness. But now you know the whole story, Mrs. Lynge. Heaven knows, I've only told it that you may take care what you say.

MRS. LYNGE. You may be quite easy on that point. But poor Dina Dorf! I'm really very sorry for her!

MRS. RUMMEL. Oh, for her it was an absolute stroke of luck. Only think, if she had remained in her parents' hands! Of course we all took an interest in her, and tried to instil good principles into her mind. At last Miss Bernick got leave for her to come and live here.

MRS. HOLT. But she's always been a difficult girl to deal with—after all the bad examples she has had, you know. Of course she's not like one of our own—we have to make the best of her, Mrs. Lyngé.

MRS. RUMMEL. Hush, there she comes. (*Loud.*) Yes, as you say, Dina's really a clever girl. What, are you there, Dina? We're just finishing our work here.

MRS. HOLT. Ah, how nice your coffee smells my dear Dina— Such a cup of coffee in the forenoon—

MRS. BERNICK (*standing on the steps*). The coffee is ready, ladies.

(*MARTHA and DINA have meanwhile helped the servant to bring in the coffee things. All the ladies go out and sit down; they vie with each other in talking kindly to DINA. After a time she comes into the room and looks for her sewing.*)

MRS. BERNICK (*out at the coffee-table*). Dina, won't you have—?

DINA. No, thanks; I'd rather not.

(*She sits down to sew. MRS. BERNICK and RÖRLUND exchange a few words; a moment after, he comes into the room.*)

RÖRLUND (*goes up to the table, as if looking for something, and says in a low voice*). Dina.

DINA. Yes.

RÖRLUND. Why will you not come out?

DINA. When I came with the coffee I could see by the strange lady's looks that they had been talking about me.

RÖRLUND. And did you not see, too, how friendly she was with you?

DINA. But that's what I can't bear.

RÖRLUND. You are a headstrong girl, Dina.

DINA. Yes.

RÖRLUND. What makes you so?

DINA. I was born so.

RÖRLUND. But could you not try to change?

DINA. No.

RÖRLUND. Why not?

DINA (*looks up at him*). Because I belong to the "Lapsed and Lost."

RÖRLUND. Fie, Dina.

DINA. And so did my mother before me.

RÖRLUND. Who has spoken to you of such things?

DINA. No one; they never speak. Why don't they? They all handle me as carefully as though I would fall to pieces, if—— Oh, how I hate all this good-heartedness!

RÖRLUND. My dear Dina, I understand very well how you feel oppressed here, but——

DINA. Oh, if I could only get far away! I could get on well enough by myself, if only the people I lived amongst weren't so—so——

RÖRLUND. So what?

DINA. So proper and moral.

RÖRLUND. Now, Dina, you don't mean that.

DINA. Oh, you know very well *how* I mean it. Every day Hilda and Netta come here that I may take example by them. I can never be as well-behaved as they are, and I *won't* be. Oh! if I were only far away, I could be good.

RÖRLUND. You *are* good, my dear Dina.

DINA. What does it matter here?

RÖRLUND. Then you're seriously thinking of going away?

DINA. I wouldn't remain here a day longer, if you weren't here.

RÖRLUND. Tell me, Dina, why do you like so much to be with me?

DINA. Because you teach me so much that is beautiful.

RÖRLUND. Beautiful? Do you call what I can teach you beautiful?

DINA. Yes; or rather—you teach me nothing; but when I hear you speak, it makes me think of so much that is beautiful.

RÖRLUND. What do you understand, then, by a beautiful thing?

DINA. I have never thought of that.

RÖRLUND. Then think of it now. What do you understand by a beautiful thing?

DINA. A beautiful thing is something great—and far away.

RÖRLUND. Hm—My dear Dina, I sympathise with you from my inmost heart.

DINA. Is that all?

RÖRLUND. You know very well how unspeakably dear you are to me.

DINA. If I were Hilda or Netta you wouldn't be afraid to let any one see it.

RÖRLUND. Oh, Dina, you have no conception of the thousand considerations—— When a man is placed as a moral pillar of the society he lives in,

why—he cannot be too careful. If I were only sure that people would interpret my motives rightly! But that doesn't matter; you must and shall be helped to rise. Dina, shall we make a bargain that when I come—when circumstances permit me to come—and say: Here is my hand—that you will take it and be my wife? Do you promise me that, Dina?

DINA. Yes.

RÖRLUND. Thanks! thanks! For I too—— Oh, Dina, I love you so—— Hush! some one is coming. Dina, for my sake—go out to the others.

(She goes out to the coffee-table. At the same moment RUMMEL, SANDSTAD, and VIGELAND come out from the Consul's office, followed by CONSUL BERNICK, who has a bundle of papers in his hand.)

BERNICK. Then that matter's settled.

VIGELAND. Yes, in heaven's name, so let it be.

RUMMEL. It's settled, Bernick. A Norseman's word stands firm as the Dovrefjeld, you know.

BERNICK. And no one is to give in or fall away, whatever opposition we may meet with.

RUMMEL. We stand or fall together, Bernick.

HILMAR *(coming up from the garden)*. Excuse me, isn't it the railway that falls?

BERNICK. On the contrary, it's to go ahead——

RUMMEL. Full steam, Mr. Tönnesen.

HILMAR *(coming forward)*. Indeed!

RÖRLUND. What?

MRS. BERNICK *(at the door)*. My dear Karsten, what's the meaning——?

BERNICK. Oh, my dear Betty, how can it interest

you? (*To the three men.*) Now we must get the lists ready; the sooner the better. Of course we four put our names down first. Our position in society makes it our duty to do as much as we can.

SANDSTAD. No doubt, Consul.

RUMMEL. We *will* make it go, Bernick; we're bound to.

BERNICK. Oh, yes; I have no fear as to the result. We must work hard, each in his own circle; and if we can once point to a really lively interest in the affair among all classes of society, it follows that the Town must also contribute its share.

MRS. BERNICK. Now, Karsten, you must really come and tell us——

BERNICK. Oh, my dear Betty, ladies don't understand these things.

HILMAR. Then you're actually going to back up the railway after all?

BERNICK. Yes, of course.

RÖRLUND. But last year, Consul——?

BERNICK. Last year it was a different matter altogether. Then it was a coast line that was proposed——

VIGELAND. ——Which would have been entirely superfluous, Rector; for have we not steamboats?

SANDSTAD. ——And would have been outrageously expensive——

RUMMEL. ——Yes, and would actually have ruined vested interests here in the town.

BERNICK. The chief objection was that it would have done no good to the great mass of the

community. Therefore I opposed it; and then the inland line was adopted.

HILMAR. Yes, but that won't touch the towns about here.

BERNICK. It will touch *our* town, my dear Hilmar, for we are going to build a branch line.

HILMAR. Aha; an entirely new plan, then?

RUMMEL. Yes; isn't it a magnificent idea, eh?

RÖRLUND. Hm——

VIGELAND. It cannot be denied that Providence seems to have ordered the lie of the land specially for a branch line.

RÖRLUND. Do you really say so, Mr. Vigeland?

BERNICK. Yes, I must admit I too regard it as a special guidance that I had to go up country on business this spring, and happened to return by a valley where I'd never been before. It struck me like a flash of lightning that here was the very track for a branch line. I sent an engineer to inspect it all; I have here the preliminary accounts and estimates; nothing stands in our way.

MRS. BERNICK (*still standing, along with the other ladies, at the garden door*). But, my dear Karsten, why have you kept all this so secret?

BERNICK. Oh, my good Betty, you wouldn't have been able to grasp the position. Besides, I haven't spoken of it to any living creature until to-day. But now the decisive moment has come. Now we must go to work openly, and with all our might. Ay, if I have to risk all I possess in the affair, I will make it succeed.

RUMMEL. We too, Bernick ; you may rely on us.

RÖRLUND. Do you really expect such great results from this undertaking, gentlemen ?

BERNICK. Yes, I should think so ! What a lever it will be for our whole community ! Only think of the great tracts of forest it will bring within reach ; think of all the rich mineral-seams it will allow us to work ; think of the river, with its one waterfall above the other ! What great manufactures are sure to spring up !

RÖRLUND. And you're not afraid that a more frequent intercourse with a depraved outer world——

BERNICK. No ; make your mind easy, Rector. Our busy little town rests nowadays, heaven be thanked, on a sound moral foundation ; we have all helped to drain it, if I may say so ; and that we will continue to do, each in his own way. You, Rector, will carry on your beneficent activity in the school and in the home. We, the men of practical work, will support society by spreading prosperity in as wide a circle as possible. And our women—yes, come nearer, ladies ; I am glad that you should hear—our women, I say, our wives and daughters, will work on unwearied in well-doing, and be a help and comfort to those nearest and dearest to them, as my dear Betty and Martha are to me and Olaf—— (*looks round*). Why, where's Olaf to-day ?

MRS. BERNICK. Oh, in the holidays it's impossible to keep him at home.

BERNICK. Then he's certain to have gone down to the water again. You'll see, this will end in a misfortune.

HILMAR. Bah—a little sport with the powers of nature——

MRS. RUMMEL. How nice it is of you to be so domestic, Mr. Bernick.

BERNICK. Ah, the Family is the kernel of society. A good home, honourable and trusty friends, a little close-drawn circle, where no disturbing elements cast their shadow——

(KRAP comes in from the right with letters and papers.)

KRAP. The foreign mail, Consul—and a telegram from New York.

BERNICK (*taking it*). Ah, from the owners of the *Indian Girl*.

RUMMEL. Oh, the mail has come? Then you must excuse me——

VIGELAND. And me too.

SANDSTAD. Good-day, Consul.

BERNICK. Good-day, good-day, gentlemen. And remember we have a meeting this afternoon at five o'clock.

THE THREE. Yes—of course—all right. (*They go out to the right.*)

BERNICK (*who has read the telegram*). Well, this is really too American! Positively shocking!

MRS. BERNICK. Why, Karsten, what is it?

BERNICK. Look here, Krap—read this!

KRAP (*reads*). “Fewest possible repairs; send *Indian Girl* without delay; good season: at worst, cargo will keep her afloat.” Well, I must say——

BERNICK. The cargo keep her afloat! These gentlemen know very well that with that cargo

she'll go to the bottom like a stone, if anything happens.

RÖRLUND. This shows the state of things in these vaunted large communities.

BERNICK. You're right there—no consideration even for human life when there are profits to be made. (*To Krap.*) Can the *Indian Girl* be ready for sea in four or five days?

KRAP. Yes, if Mr. Vigeland will agree to let the *Palm Tree* stand over in the meantime.

BERNICK. Hm—he won't do that. Oh, just look through the mail, please. By the way, did you see Olaf down on the pier?

KRAP. No, Consul. (*He goes into Consul's office.*)

BERNICK (*looking again at the telegram*). These fellows never think twice about risking the lives of eighteen men——

HILMAR. Well, it's a sailor's calling to brave the elements; there must be something bracing to the nerves in having only a thin plank between you and eternity——

BERNICK. I'd like to see the shipowner amongst us that would have the conscience for such a thing! not a single one! (*Catches sight of OLAF.*) Ah, thank heaven, he's safe and sound.

(*OLAF, with a fishing-line in his hand, comes running up the street and through the garden-gate.*)

OLAF (*still in the garden*). Uncle Hilmar, I've been down seeing the steamboat.

BERNICK. Have you been on the pier again?

OLAF. No, I was only out in a boat. But just think, Uncle Hilmar, a circus company came with

the steamer, with horses and wild beasts; and there were a great many passengers besides.

MRS. RUMMEL. Oh! are we to have a circus?

RÖRLUND. We? Really I should hope not.

MRS. RUMMEL. No, of course not *we*, but——

DINA. I should like to see the horsemanship.

OLAF. And I too.

HILMAR. You're a little blockhead. What is there to see? All sham. Now it would be something worth while to see the Gaucho sweeping over the Pampas on his snorting mustang. But, hang it! here in these little towns——

OLAF (*pulling Martha's dress*). Aunt Martha, look, look——there they come.

MRS. HOLT. Yes indeed, here we have them.

MRS. LYNGE. Oh, what horrid people!

(*Many travellers, and a whole crowd of townspeople, come up the street.*)

MRS. RUMMEL. Aren't they a regular set of mountebanks! Just look at that one in the grey dress, Mrs. Holt; the one with the knapsack on her back.

MRS. HOLT. Yes, see, she's slung it on the handle of her parasol. Of course it's the manager's wife.

MRS. RUMMEL. Oh, and there's the manager himself, the one with the beard. Well, he looks a regular pirate. Don't look at him, Hilda!

MRS. HOLT. Nor you either, Netta.

OLAF. Oh, mother, the manager is bowing to us.

BERNICK. What?

MRS. BERNICK. What do you say, child?

MRS. RUMMEL. Yes, I declare, and there's the woman nodding too!

BERNICK. Come, this is really too much!

MARTHA (*with an involuntary cry*). Ah——!

MRS. BERNICK. What is it, Martha?

MARTHA. Oh, nothing—only I thought——

OLAF (*shrieks with delight*). Look, there come the others, with the horses and wild beasts! And there are the Americans too! All the sailors from the *Indian Girl*——

(*“Yankee Doodle” is heard, played on a clarinet and drum.*)

HILMAR (*stopping his ears*). Ugh, ugh, ugh!

RÖRLUND. I think we should withdraw for a moment, ladies. This is not a scene for us. Let us get to our work again.

MRS. BERNICK. Perhaps we should draw the curtains!

RÖRLUND. Yes, that's just what I was thinking.

(*The ladies take their places at the table; RÖRLUND shuts the garden-door and draws the curtain over it and over the windows; it becomes half dark in the room.*)

OLAF (*peeping out*). Mother, the manager's wife is standing at the fountain washing her face!

MRS. BERNICK. What? In the middle of the market-place!

MRS. RUMMEL. And in broad daylight!

HILMAR. Well, if I were travelling in the desert and came upon a spring, I should never hesitate to—— Ugh, that abominable clarinet!

RÖRLUND. It seems to me the police should interfere.

BERNICK. Oh, no; one mustn't be too hard upon

foreigners; these people haven't the deep-rooted sense of propriety that keeps us within the right limits. Let them do as they please; it doesn't hurt us. All this vulgarity, this rebellion against propriety and good manners, is, fortunately, quite out of touch with our society, if I may say so—— What is this?

(A STRANGE LADY suddenly enters by the door on the right.)

THE LADIES (*frightened, and speaking low*). The circus woman! The manager's wife!

MRS. BERNICK. Good heavens! what does this mean?

MARTHA (*starts up*). Ah——!

THE LADY. Good-day, my dear Betty! Good-day, Martha! Good-day, brother-in-law!

MRS. BERNICK (*with a shriek*). Lona——!

BERNICK (*starts back a step*). As I live——!

MRS. HOLT. Why, mercy on us——!

MRS. RUMMEL. It can't be possible——!

HILMAR. What? Ugh!

MRS. BERNICK. Lona! Is it really——?

LONA. ——Really me? Yes, indeed it is. You may fall on my neck and embrace me, for that matter.

HILMAR. Ugh! ugh!

MRS. BERNICK. And you come here as——?

BERNICK. You're actually going to appear——?

LONA. Appear? How appear?

BERNICK. I mean—in the circus?

LONA. Ha ha ha! What nonsense, brother-in-law. Do you think I belong to the circus? No;

it's true I've turned my hand to all sorts of things, and made a fool of myself in many ways——

MRS. RUMMEL. Hm——

LONA. But I've never learned to play tricks on horseback——

BERNICK. Then you're not——?

MRS. BERNICK. Oh, thank goodness!

LONA. No, indeed; we came like other respectable people—second-class, it's true; but we're used to that.

MRS. BERNICK. *We*, you say?

BERNICK (*striding forward*). What *we*?

LONA. Why, my boy and I, of course.

THE LADIES (*with a cry*). Your boy!

HILMAR. What?

RÖRLUND. Well, I must say——

MRS. BERNICK. Why, what do you mean, Lona?

LONA. Of course I mean John; I've no other boy but John, that I know of—or Johan, as you call him.

MRS. BERNICK. Johan——!

MRS. RUMMEL (*aside to MRS. LYNGE*). The prodigal brother!

BERNICK (*hesitatingly*). Is Johan with you?

LONA. Of course, of course; I wouldn't travel without him. But you're all looking so dismal—and sitting here in this twilight, sewing at something white? There hasn't been a death in the family?

RÖRLUND. You find yourself, Miss Hessel, in the Society for the Lapsed and Lost.

LONA (*half to herself*). What? These nice-looking, well-behaved ladies, can *they* be——?

MRS. RUMMEL. Oh, this is too much!

LONA. Oh, I understand, I understand! Why,

good gracious, that's Mrs. Rummel! And there sits Mrs. Holt too! Well we three haven't grown younger since we last met. But listen now, good people; let the Lapsed and Lost wait for one day; they'll be none the worse for it. A joyful occasion like this——

RÖRLUND. A return home is not always a joyful occasion!

LONA. Indeed? How do you read your Bible, Pastor?

RÖRLUND. I am not a clergyman.

LONA. Oh, then you will be for certain—— But, fie, fie——this moral linen here smells so tainted——just like a shroud. I'm accustomed to the air of the prairies now, I can tell you.

BERNICK (*wiping his forehead*). Yes; it's really rather oppressive in here.

LONA. Wait a moment——we'll soon rise from the sepulchre. (*Draws back the curtains.*) We must have broad daylight here when my boy comes. Yes——then you'll see a boy that has washed himself——

HILMAR. Ugh!

LONA (*opens the door and the windows*). I mean when he *has* washed himself——up at the hotel——for on board the steamer you get as dirty as a pig.

HILMAR. Ugh, ugh!

LONA. Ugh? Why I declare it's—— (*Points to HILMAR, and asks the others.*) Does he still loaf about saying "ugh" to everything?

HILMAR. I don't loaf; I stop here for the sake of my health.

RÖRLUND. Hm, ladies, I don't think that——

LONA (*catches sight of OLAF*). Is he yours, Betty? Give me your fist, my boy! Or are you afraid of your ugly old aunt?

RÖRLUND (*putting his book under his arm*). I don't think, ladies, that we are quite in the mood for doing more work to-day. But we shall meet again to-morrow?

LONA (*as the visitors rise to go*). Yes, let us—I shall be here.

RÖRLUND. You? Allow me, Miss Hessel, to ask what *you* will do in our Society?

LONA. I will let in fresh air, Pastor.

Act Second.

(The garden-room in CONSUL BERNICK'S house.)

(MRS. BERNICK is sitting alone at the work-table, sewing. In a little while CONSUL BERNICK enters from the right, with his hat and gloves on, and a stick in his hand.)

MRS. BERNICK. Are you home already, Karsten?

BERNICK. Yes. I have an appointment here.

MRS. BERNICK *(sighing)*. Oh, yes; I suppose Johan will be down here again.

BERNICK. No; it's with one of my men. *(Takes off his hat.)* Where are all the ladies to-day?

MRS. BERNICK. Mrs. Rummel and Hilda hadn't time to come.

BERNICK. Ah! Sent excuses?

MRS. BERNICK. Yes; they had so much to do at home.

BERNICK. Of course. And the others aren't coming either, I suppose.

MRS. BERNICK. No; something has prevented them too.

BERNICK. I was sure it would. Where's Olaf?

MRS. BERNICK. I allowed him to go out a little with Dina.

BERNICK. Hm; Dina, the thoughtless hussy! How could she go and at once make friends with Johan——!

MRS. BERNICK. Why, my dear Karsten, Dina has no idea——

BERNICK. Well, then, Johan at least should have had tact enough not to take notice of her. I could see Vigeland's expressive glances.

MRS. BERNICK (*dropping her work into her lap*). Karsten, can you understand what has brought them home?

BERNICK. Hm; I daresay his farm's not getting on very well; she hinted yesterday that they had to travel second-class——

MRS. BERNICK. Yes, I'm afraid it must be something of that sort. But that she should have come with him! She! after the terrible way she insulted you——!

BERNICK. Oh, don't think of these old stories.

MRS. BERNICK. How can I think of anything else? He's my own brother——; and yet it's not him I think of, but all the unpleasantness it will bring upon you. Karsten, I am so dreadfully afraid that——

BERNICK. What are you afraid of?

MRS. BERNICK. Might they not think of arresting him for that money your mother lost?

BERNICK. What nonsense! Who can prove that she lost the money?

MRS. BERNICK. Unfortunately the whole town knows it, and you said yourself——

BERNICK. I said nothing. The town knows nothing about these affairs; it was mere gossip.

MRS. BERNICK. Oh, how noble you are, Karsten!

BERNICK. Forget these old stories, I say. You

don't know how you torture me by raking all this up again. (*He walks up and down the room; then he pitches his stick away from him.*) That they should come home just at this time, when I depend so much on unmixed good-feeling, both in the press and in the town! There'll be paragraphs in the papers all over the country-side. Whether I receive them well or ill, my action will be discussed, my motives misinterpreted. They'll rip up all these old stories—just as you do. In a community like ours— (*Throws down his gloves upon the table.*) And I haven't a person here I can confide in, or that can give me any support.

MRS. BERNICK. No one at all, Karsten?

BERNICK. No; you know I haven't. That they should come upon me just at this moment! They're certain to make a scandal in one way or another—especially she. It is a perfect calamity to have such people in one's family.

MRS. BERNICK. Well, it's not my fault that—

BERNICK. What's not your fault? That you're related to them? No; that's true enough.

MRS. BERNICK. And it wasn't I that asked them to come home.

BERNICK. Aha! now we have it. "*I didn't ask them to come home; I didn't write for them; I didn't drag them home by the hair of their heads.*" Oh, I know the whole story off by heart.

MRS. BERNICK (*bursting into tears*). Oh, why are you so unkind?

BERNICK. Yes, that's right; set to crying, so that the town may have that to talk about too. Stop this

nonsense, Betty. You'd better sit outside there; some one might come in. Perhaps you want people to see madam with red eyes? Yes, it would be nice if it got abroad that—— Ah! I hear some one in the lobby. (*A knock.*) Come in.

(MRS. BERNICK goes out to the garden steps with her work. AUNE comes in from the right.)

AUNE. Good-day, Consul!

BERNICK. Good-day. Well, I suppose you can guess what I want with you?

AUNE. Your clerk told me yesterday that you were not pleased with——

BERNICK. I am altogether displeased with the way things are going at the yard, Aune. You're not getting on at all with the repairs. The *Palm Tree* should have been at sea long ago. Mr. Vigeland comes bothering me about it every day. He's a troublesome partner.

AUNE. The *Palm Tree* can sail the day after to-morrow.

BERNICK. At last! But the American, the *Indian Girl*, that's been lying here five weeks, and——

AUNE. The American? I understood that we were first to get on as fast as possible with your own ship.

BERNICK. I've given you no reason for such an idea. You should have made all possible progress with the American too; but you've done nothing.

AUNE. The vessel's bottom is as rotten as match-wood, Consul; the more we patch at it the worse it gets.

BERNICK. That's not the true reason. Krap has

told me the whole truth. You don't understand the new machines—or rather, you won't understand them.

AUNE. Consul Bernick, I'm getting on for sixty; from my boyhood I've been used to the old ways——

BERNICK. We can't get on with them nowadays. You mustn't think, Aune, that it's for the sake of mere profit; luckily I don't require that; but I must consider the community I live in, and the business I have to manage. Progress must come from me, or it will never come at all.

AUNE. I have no objection to progress, Consul.

BERNICK. No, for your own narrow circle, for the working-class. Oh, I know all about your agitations: you make speeches; you stir people up; but when it comes to a tangible piece of progress, as in the case of the machines, you'll have nothing to do with it; you're afraid.

AUNE. Yes, I'm afraid, Consul; I'm afraid for the many whom the machines will rob of their daily bread. You often talk of duty towards Society, Consul, but it seems to me that Society too has its duties. How dare science and capital set all this new mechanism to work before Society has educated a generation that can use it?

BERNICK. You read and think too much, Aune; it does you no good; it makes you dissatisfied with your position.

AUNE. It's not that, Consul; but I can't bear to see one good workman after another sent to starvation for the sake of these machines.

BERNICK. Hm; when printing was discovered, many copyists had to starve.

AUNE. Would you have admired the art so much, Consul, if you had been a copyist?

BERNICK. I didn't send for you to argue with you. I sent for you to tell you that the *Indian Girl* must be ready to sail the day after to-morrow.

AUNE. Why, Consul——

BERNICK. The day after to-morrow, do you hear; at the same time as our own ship; not an hour later. I have my reasons for hurrying on the affair. Have you read this morning's paper? Ah!—then you know that the Americans have been making disturbances again. The shameless pack turn the whole town topsy-turvy. Not a night passes without fights in the taverns or on the street; not to speak of other abominations.

AUNE. Yes, they're certainly a bad lot.

BERNICK. And who gets the blame of all this? It is I—yes I, that suffer for it. These newspaper scribblers are covertly carping at us for giving our whole attention to the *Palm Tree*. And I, whose mission it is to be an example to my fellow-citizens, must have such things thrown in my teeth! I won't bear it. I can't have my name bespattered in this way.

AUNE. Oh, your name is good enough to bear more than that.

BERNICK. Not just now; precisely at this moment I need all the respect and good-will of my fellow-citizens. I have a great undertaking on hand, as you've probably heard; but if evil-disposed persons succeed in shaking people's unqualified confidence in me, it may involve me in the greatest difficulties. I

must silence these carping and spiteful scribblers at any price, and that's why I give you till the day after to-morrow.

AUNE. You might as well give me till this afternoon, Consul Bernick.

BERNICK. You mean that I'm demanding impossibilities?

AUNE. Yes, with the working staff we have now——

BERNICK. Oh, very well;—then we must look about us elsewhere.

AUNE. Will you really dismiss still more of the old workmen?

BERNICK. No, that's not what I'm thinking of.

AUNE. I'm sure if you did there would be an outcry both in the town and in the newspapers.

BERNICK. Very possibly; therefore I won't do it. But if the *Indian Girl* isn't cleared the day after to-morrow, I shall dismiss you.

AUNE (*with a start*). Me! (*Laughing.*) Oh, you're joking now, Consul.

BERNICK. I don't advise you to trust to that.

AUNE. You can think of dismissing me! Why, my father and grandfather worked in the shipyard all their lives, and myself too——

BERNICK. Who forces me to it?

AUNE. You demand impossibilities, Consul.

BERNICK. Oh, where there's a will there's a way. Yes or no? Answer me decidedly, or I dismiss you on the spot.

AUNE (*coming nearer*). Consul Bernick, have you rightly reflected what it is to dismiss an old workman?

You say he can look about for something else? Oh, yes, I daresay he can—but is that all? If you could only look into the house of a dismissed workman on the evening when he comes home and brings his tool-chest with him.

BERNICK. Do you think I'm glad to part with you? Haven't I always been a good master to you?

AUNE. So much the worse, Consul. Just on that account my people at home will not blame you. They won't say anything to me, for they dare not; but they'll look at me when I am not noticing, and think: It must surely have been his fault. You see, it's that—it's that I can't bear. Poor as I am, I've always been the first in my own house. My humble home is itself a little community, Consul Bernick. That little community I've been able to support and hold together because my wife believed in me, my children believed in me. And now the whole thing falls to pieces.

BERNICK. Well, if it can't be otherwise, the less must fall before the greater; the part must, in heaven's name, be sacrificed to the whole. I can give you no other answer; and you'll find it's the way of the world. But you're an obstinate man, Aune! You stand against me, not because you can't help it, but because you *will* not prove the superiority of machinery to manual labour.

AUNE. And you hold fast to this, Consul, because you know that if you send me away you'll at least have shown the papers your goodwill.

BERNICK. What if it were so? You hear what a dilemma I'm in—I must either conciliate the papers

or have them all down upon me at the moment when I'm working for a great and beneficent cause. What follows? Can I possibly act otherwise? I tell you in order to keep up your home hundreds of new homes would have to be kept down. Hundreds of homes will never be founded, will never have a smoking hearthstone, if I do not succeed in my present enterprise. So I give you your choice.

AUNE. Well, if that's how it stands, I have nothing more to say.

BERNICK. Hm—my dear Aune, I'm truly sorry we must part.

AUNE. We will *not* part, Consul Bernick.

BERNICK. What?

AUNE. Even a common man has something to fight for here in the world.

BERNICK. Of course, of course. Then you can promise——?

AUNE. The *Indian Girl* shall be cleared the day after to-morrow.

(He bows and goes out to the right.)

BERNICK. Aha, I've got over his stiff-necked notions. I take that as a good omen——

(HILMAR TÖNNESEN, with a cigar in his mouth, comes through the garden gate.)

HILMAR *(on the garden steps)*. Good morning, Betty! Good morning, Bernick!

MRS. BERNICK. Good morning.

HILMAR. Oh, you've been crying, I see. Then you've heard all?

MRS. BERNICK. All what?

HILMAR. That the scandal is in full swing! Ugh!

BERNICK. What do you mean?

HILMAR (*coming into the room*). Why, that the two Americans are flaunting about the streets in company with Dina Dorf.

MRS. BERNICK (*also coming in*). Oh, Hilmar, is it possible——?

HILMAR. Not a doubt of it, worse luck! Lona had even the want of tact to call out to *me*; but of course I pretended not to hear her.

BERNICK. And of course all this hasn't been going on unnoticed.

HILMAR. No; you may be sure it hasn't. People stopped and looked at them. It ran like wildfire over the town—like a fire on the western prairies. There were people at the windows of all the houses, head to head behind the curtains, waiting for the procession to pass. Ugh! You must excuse me, Betty; I say ugh! for it makes me so nervous. If this goes on I shall have to think of taking a trip somewhere, pretty far off.

MRS. BERNICK. But you should have spoken to him, and showed him——

HILMAR. In the public street? No; I beg to be excused. The idea that that fellow should dare to show himself here! Well, we'll see if the papers don't put a stopper on him. I beg your pardon, Betty, but——

BERNICK. The papers, you say? Have you heard any hints of the sort?

HILMAR. I should think so! When I left here last night I took my constitutional up to the club. I could see from the sudden silence when I came in

that the two Americans had been on the *tapis*. And then in came that impertinent Editor Hammer, and congratulated me, before everybody, upon my rich cousin's return.

BERNICK. Rich——?

HILMAR. Yes; that was what he said. I measured him from top to toe with the scorn he deserved, and gave him to understand that I knew nothing of Johan Tønnesen being rich. "Indeed," says he; "that's strange. In America people generally get on when they've something to start with, and your cousin didn't go over empty-handed."

BERNICK. Hm, be so good as to——

MRS. BERNICK (*anxiously*). There, you see, Karsten.

HILMAR. Well, at any rate, I haven't slept a wink for thinking of the fellow. And there he is marching about the streets, as if he had nothing to be ashamed of. Why wasn't he finished at once? Some people are intolerably tough.

MRS. BERNICK. Oh, Hilmar, what are you saying?

HILMAR. Oh, I'm not saying anything. But here he escapes safe and sound from railway accidents, and fights with Californian bears and Blackfoot Indians; why, he's not even scalped—— Ugh! here they are.

BERNICK (*looks down the street*). Olaf with them too!

HILMAR. Yes, of course; they won't let people forget that they belong to the first family in the town. Look, look, there come all the loafers out of the druggist's shop to stare at them and make remarks.

Really, this is too much for my nerves; how a man under such circumstances is to hold high the banner of the ideal——

BERNICK. They're coming straight here. Listen, Betty; it's my decided wish that you should be as friendly as possible to them.

MRS. BERNICK. Will you allow me, Karsten?

BERNICK. Of course, of course; and you too, Hilmar. They surely won't remain very long; and when we're alone with them—no innuendoes—we mustn't hurt their feelings in any way.

MRS. BERNICK. Oh, Karsten, how noble you are.

BERNICK. Now now, don't talk of that.

MRS. BERNICK. Oh, but you must let me thank you; and forgive me for being so hasty. You had every reason to——

BERNICK. Don't talk of it, don't talk of it, I say.

HILMAR. Ugh!

(JOHAN TÖNNESEN and DINA, *and after them*
LONA and OLAF, *come through the garden.*)

LONA. Good-day, good-day, my dear people.

JOHAN. We have been out looking all about the old place, Karsten.

BERNICK. Yes; so I hear. Greatly changed, isn't it?

LONA. Consul Bernick's great and good works everywhere. We've been up in the gardens you've presented to the town——

BERNICK. Oh, there!

LONA. "Karsten Bernick's Gift," as the inscription over the entrance says. Yes; it's all your work here.

JOHAN. And such magnificent ships as you've

got! I met my old school-fellow, the captain of the *Palm Tree*—

LONA. Yes, and you've built a new school-house too. And they owe both the gas and the water-works to you, I hear.

BERNICK. Oh, one must work for the community one lives in.

LONA. Well, it's good of you, brother-in-law; but it's a pleasure, too, to see how people appreciate you. I don't think I'm vain, but I couldn't help reminding one or two of the people we talked to that we belong to the family.

HILMAR. Ugh—!

LONA. Do you say "Ugh!" to that?

HILMAR. No, I said "Hm"—

LONA. Oh, was that all, poor fellow? But you're quite alone here to-day!

MRS. BERNICK. Yes, to-day we're quite alone.

LONA. By-the-bye, we met one or two of the Lapsed and Lost up in the market-place; they seemed to be very busy. But we've never had a proper talk yet; yesterday we had the three pioneers of progress here, and the Pastor too—

HILMAR. The Rector.

LONA. I call him the Pastor. But now—what do you think of my work for these fifteen years? Hasn't he grown a fine boy? Who would recognise the madcap that ran away from home?

HILMAR. Hm—!

JOHAN. Oh, Lona, don't boast too much.

LONA. I don't care, I'm really proud of it. Well, well, it's the only thing I've done in the world, but it

gives me a sort of right to exist. Yes, Johan, when I think how we two began life over there with only our four paws——

HILMAR. Hands.

LONA. I say paws, for they were as dirty as——

HILMAR. Ugh!

LONA. And empty too.

HILMAR. Empty. Well, I must say——

LONA. What must you say?

BERNICK. Hm!

HILMAR. I must say——ugh!

(Goes out upon the garden stair.)

LONA. What's wrong with the man?

BERNICK. Oh, never mind him; he's rather nervous just now. But wouldn't you like to look round the garden a little? You haven't been down there yet, and I happen to have an hour to spare.

LONA. Yes, I should like it very much; you may believe my thoughts have often been with you all here in the garden.

MRS. BERNICK. There have been great changes there too, as you'll see.

(The CONSUL, his WIFE, and LONA go down the garden, where they are now and then visible during the following scene.)

OLAF *(at the garden door)*. Uncle Hilmar, do you know what Uncle John asked me? He asked if I'd like to go with him to America.

HILMAR. You, you little good-for-nothing, that go about tied to your mother's apron-strings!

OLAF. Yes, but I won't be so any more. You shall see, when I'm big——

HILMAR. Oh, rubbish; you don't really want to be made a man of——

(They go down the garden together.)

JOHAN *(to DINA, who has taken off her hat, and stands at the door to the right, shaking the dust from her dress)*. The walk has made you very warm.

DINA. Yes; it was splendid. I've never had such a nice walk before.

JOHAN. Perhaps you don't often go walks in the morning.

DINA. Oh, yes; but only with Olaf.

JOHAN. Ah!—Perhaps you'd rather go down the garden?

DINA. No; I'd rather remain here.

JOHAN. And I too. Then it's settled that we take a walk every morning?

DINA. No, Mr. Tönnesen, you mustn't do that.

JOHAN. Why shouldn't I? You know you promised.

DINA. Yes, but on thinking over it, I—— You mustn't go out with me.

JOHAN. Why not?

DINA. Ah, you're a stranger here; you don't understand; but I must tell you——

JOHAN. Well?

DINA. No, I'd rather not speak about it.

JOHAN. Oh, yes—you may say anything you like to me.

DINA. Then I must tell you that I'm not like the other girls here; there's something—something about me. That's why you mustn't walk with me.

JOHAN. But I can't understand this at all. You haven't done anything wrong?

DINA. No, not I, but——; no, I won't say any more about it. You're sure to hear it from the others.

JOHAN. Hm——

DINA. But there was something else I wanted to ask you about.

JOHAN. And what was that?

DINA. Is it really so easy to lead a life that's worth something, over in America?

JOHAN. Well, it isn't always *easy*; one has often to suffer much and work hard in the beginning.

DINA. I would willingly do that——

JOHAN. You?

DINA. I can work well enough; I'm strong and healthy, and Aunt Martha has taught me a great deal.

JOHAN. Then, hang it all, why not come with us?

DINA. Oh, now you're only joking; you said the same to Olaf. But I wanted to know, too, if people over there are very—very moral, you know?

JOHAN. Moral?

DINA. Yes, I mean, are they so—so proper and well-behaved as they are here?

JOHAN. Well, at any rate, they're not so bad as people here think. Don't be at all afraid of that.

DINA. You don't understand me. What I want is just that they should not be so very proper and moral.

JOHAN. Indeed? What would you have them then?

DINA. I would have them natural.

JOHAN. Well, that's perhaps just what they are.

DINA. Then that would be the place for me.

JOHAN. Yes, indeed it would ; so you must come with us.

DINA. No, I wouldn't go with you ; I'd have to go alone. Oh, I should get on ; I should soon be fit for something——

BERNICK (*at the foot of the garden stair with the two ladies*). Stay here, stay here ; I'll fetch it, my dear Betty. You might easily catch cold.

(*Comes into the room and looks for his wife's shawl.*)

MRS. BERNICK (*from the garden*). You must come too, Johan ; we're going down to the grotto.

BERNICK. No, Johan must remain here just now. Here, Dina ; take my wife's shawl and go with them. Johan will remain here with me, my dear Betty. I want to ask him about things in America.

MRS. BERNICK. Very well ; then come after us ; you know where to find us.

(*MRS. BERNICK, LONA, and DINA go down through the garden to the left.*)

BERNICK (*looks out after them for a moment, goes and shuts the second door on the left, then goes up to JOHAN, seizes both his hands, shakes them, and presses them warmly*). Johan, now we are alone ; you must give me leave to thank you.

JOHAN. Oh, nonsense !

BERNICK. My house and home, my domestic happiness, my whole position in society—all these I owe to you.

JOHAN. Well, I'm glad of it, my dear Karsten ; so some good came of that foolish story after all.

BERNICK (*shaking his hands again*). Thanks, thanks, all the same ! Not one in ten thousand would have done what you then did for me.

JOHAN. Oh, nonsense ! Were we not both of us young and thoughtless ? One of us had to take the blame upon him——

BERNICK. But to whom did it lie nearer than to the guilty one ?

JOHAN. Stop ! *Then* it lay nearer to the innocent one. I was alone, free, an orphan ; it was a positive blessing to me to escape from the grind of the office. You, on the other hand, had your old mother in life ; and, besides, you had just got secretly engaged to Betty, and she was very fond of you. What would have become of her if she had come to know—— ?

BERNICK. True, true, true ; but——

JOHAN. And was it not just for Betty's sake that you broke off that entanglement with Madam Dorf ? It was for the very purpose of putting an end to it that you were up at her house that night——

BERNICK. Yes, the fatal night when that drunken beast came home —— ! Yes, Johan, it was for Betty's sake ; but yet—that you should turn appearances against yourself and go away——

JOHAN. Have no scruples, my dear Karsten. We agreed that it should be so ; you had to be saved, and you were my friend. I can tell you I was proud of that friendship. Here was I, plodding along like a poor stay-at-home, when you came back like a very prince from your great foreign tour ; you'd been both

to London and to Paris. Then you chose me for your bosom friend, though I was four years younger than you. Well, that was because you were making love to Betty; now I understand it well enough. But how proud I was of it then! And who wouldn't have been proud? Who wouldn't willingly have sacrificed himself for you, especially when it was only a matter of a month's town-talk, and a new start out in the wide world.

BERNICK. Hm, my dear Johan, I must tell you openly that the story is not so entirely forgotten yet.

JOHAN. Isn't it? Well, what does it matter to me when once I am back again at my farm?

BERNICK. Then you're going back?

JOHAN. Of course.

BERNICK. But not so very soon, I hope?

JOHAN. As soon as possible. It was only to please Lona that I came over at all.

BERNICK. Indeed! How so?

JOHAN. Well, you see, Lona isn't young now, and for some time past a sort of home-sickness has come over her, though she would never admit it. (*Smiling.*) She dared not leave behind her an irresponsible being like me, who, before I was out of my teens, had been mixed up in——

BERNICK. And then?

JOHAN. Well, Karsten, now I must make a confession I'm really ashamed of.

BERNICK. You haven't told her the whole truth?

JOHAN. Yes, I have. It was wrong of me, but I couldn't help it. You have no conception what Lona

has been to me. You could never endure her ; but to me she has been a mother. In the first few years over there, when we were desperately poor, oh, how she worked ! And when I had a long illness, and couldn't earn anything, and couldn't keep her from doing it, she took to singing songs in the cafés ; gave lectures that people laughed at ; wrote a book she has both laughed and cried over since—and all to keep my soul and body together. Last winter, when I saw her pining away, she who had toiled and moiled for me, could I sit still and look on ? No ; I couldn't, Karsten. I said, "Go, go, Lona ; don't be afraid of me. I'm not such a scapegrace as you think." And then—then I told her everything.

BERNICK. And how did she take it ?

JOHAN. Oh, she said what was quite true—that as I was innocent I could have no objection to taking a trip over here myself. But you needn't be afraid ; Lona will say nothing, and I'll take better care of my own tongue another time.

BERNICK. Yes, yes ; I'm sure you will.

JOHAN. Here's my hand upon it. And now don't let us talk any more of that old story ; fortunately it's the only escapade either you or I have been mixed up in, I hope. And now I mean thoroughly to enjoy the few days I shall have here. You can't think what a splendid walk we've had this forenoon. Who'd have thought that little baggage that used to trot about and play angels in the theatre—— ! But tell me—what became of her parents afterwards ?

BERNICK. Oh, there's nothing more to tell than

what I wrote you immediately after you left. You got the two letters, of course ?

JOHAN. Of course, of course ; I have them both. The drunken scoundrel left her ?

BERNICK. And was afterwards killed in a drinking bout.

JOHAN. And she too died soon after ? I suppose you did all you could for her without exciting attention ?

BERNICK. She was proud ; she betrayed nothing, but she would accept nothing.

JOHAN. Well, at any rate, you did right in taking Dina into your house.

BERNICK. Oh, yes—— However, it was really Martha that arranged that.

JOHAN. Ah, it was Martha ? By-the-bye, where is Martha to-day ?

BERNICK. Oh, she's always busy either at the school, or among her sick people.

JOHAN. Then it was Martha that looked after her ?

BERNICK. Yes ; Martha always had a sort of weakness for education. That's why she accepted a place in the communal school. It was very foolish of her.

JOHAN. She certainly looked very weary yesterday ; I shouldn't think her health would stand it.

BERNICK. Oh, so far as her health goes, I suppose it's all right. But it's unpleasant for me. It looks as if I, her brother, were not willing to maintain her.

JOHAN. Maintain her ? I thought she had enough of her own to——

BERNICK. Not a halfpenny. I daresay you remember what difficulties my mother was in when you left. She got on for some time with my help; but of course in the long run that wouldn't do for me. So I got myself taken into partnership; but even then things didn't go well. At last I had to take over the whole affair, and when we made up our accounts, there was scarcely anything left to my mother's share; and as she died shortly afterwards, Martha, of course, was left with nothing.

JOHAN. Poor Martha!

BERNICK. Poor! Why so? You don't suppose I let her want for anything? Oh no; I think I may say I'm a good brother. Of course she lives with us and eats at our table; her salary is quite enough for her dress, and—what can a single woman want more?

JOHAN. Hm; that's not the way we think in America.

BERNICK. No, I daresay not; there are too many agitators at work over there. But here, in our little circle, where, thank heaven, corruption has not yet managed to creep in, here women are content with a modest and becoming position. For the rest, it's Martha's own fault; she could have been provided for long ago if she had cared to.

JOHAN. You mean she could have married?

BERNICK. Yes, and married very well too; she has had several good offers; it's strange enough—a woman without money, no longer young, and, besides, quite insignificant.

JOHAN. Insignificant?

BERNICK. Oh, I don't blame her at all. Indeed,

I wouldn't have her otherwise. You know, in a large house like ours, it's always well to have some steady-going person like her, whom one can put to anything that may turn up.

JOHAN. Yes, but she herself——?

BERNICK. She herself? Why of course she has plenty to interest herself in—Betty, and Olaf, and me, you know. People should not think of themselves first; women least of all. We have each our community, great or small, to support and work for. I do so, at any rate. (*Pointing to KRAP, who enters from the right.*) See, here you have a proof. Do you think it's my own business I am occupied with? By no means. (*Quickly to KRAP.*) Well?

KRAP (*whispers, showing him a bundle of papers*). All the arrangements for the purchase are complete.

BERNICK. Capital! first-rate!—Oh, Johan, you must excuse me for a moment. (*Low, and with a pressure of the hand.*) Thanks, thanks, Johan, and be sure that anything I can do to serve you—you understand.—Come, Mr. Krap!

(*They go into the Consul's office.*)

JOHAN (*looks after him for some time*). Hm——!

(*He turns to go down the garden. At the same moment MARTHA enters from the right with a little basket on her arm.*)

JOHAN. Ah, Martha?

MARTHA. Oh—Johan—is it you?

JOHAN. Have you been out so early too?

MARTHA. Yes. Wait a little; the others will be here soon.

(*Turns to go out to the left.*)

JOHAN. I say, Martha,—why are you always in such a hurry?

MARTHA. I?

JOHAN. Yesterday you kept out of the way so that I couldn't get a word with you; and to-day——

MARTHA. Yes, but——

JOHAN. Before, we were always together, we two old playfellows.

MARTHA. Ah, Johan, that's many, many years ago.

JOHAN. Why, bless me, it's fifteen years ago, neither more nor less. Perhaps you think I've changed a great deal?

MARTHA. You? Oh yes, you too, although——

JOHAN. What do you mean?

MARTHA. Oh, nothing.

JOHAN. You don't seem overjoyed to see me again.

MARTHA. I've waited so long, Johan—too long.

JOHAN. Waited? For me to come?

MARTHA. Yes.

JOHAN. And why did you think I would come?

MARTHA. To expiate where you had sinned.

JOHAN. I?

MARTHA. Have you forgotten that a woman died in shame and need for your sake? Have you forgotten that by your fault a young girl's best years have been embittered?

JOHAN. And I must hear this from you? Martha, has your brother never——?

MARTHA. What of him?

JOHAN. Has he never——; oh, I mean has he never even said a word in my defence?

MARTHA. Ah, Johan, you know Karsten's strict principles.

JOHAN. Hm—of course, of course,—yes, I know my old friend Karsten's strict principles. But this is——! Well, well—I've just been talking to him. It seems to me he has changed a good deal.

MARTHA. How can you say so? Karsten has always been an excellent man.

JOHAN. That wasn't exactly what I meant; but let that pass—— Hm; now I understand the light you've seen me in; it's the prodigal's return that you've been waiting for.

MARTHA. Listen, Johan, and I will tell you in what light I have seen you. (*Points down to the garden.*) Do you see that girl playing in the grass with Olaf? That is Dina. Do you remember that confused letter you wrote me when you went away? You told me to believe in you. I have believed in you, Johan. All the bad things that there were rumours of afterwards must have been done in desperation, without thought, without purpose——

JOHAN. What do you mean?

MARTHA. Oh, you understand me well enough; no more of that. But you had to go away—to begin afresh—a new life. See, Johan, I have stood in your place here, I, your old playfellow. The duties you forgot, or could not look to, I performed for you. I tell you this so that you may have the less to reproach yourself with. I have been a mother to that much-wronged child, have brought her up as well as I could——

JOHAN. And sacrificed your whole life in so doing!

MARTHA. It has not been thrown away. But you have been long of coming, Johan.

JOHAN. Martha, if I could say to you—— Well, let me at any rate thank you for your faithful friendship.

MARTHA (*smiling sadly*). Hm—well, now we've made a clean breast of it, Johan. Hush, here comes some one. Good-bye; I don't want them to——

(*She goes out through the second door on the left.*

LONA HESSEL *comes from the garden, followed by MRS. BERNICK.*)

MRS. BERNICK (*still in the garden*). Good heavens, Lona, what can you be thinking of?

LONA. Let me alone, I tell you; I must and will talk to him.

MRS. BERNICK. Think of the scandal it would be! Ah, Johan, are you still here?

LONA. Out with you, boy; don't hang about indoors in the stuffy rooms; go down the garden and talk to Dina.

JOHAN. Just what I was thinking of doing.

MRS. BERNICK. But——

LONA. Listen, Johan; have you ever looked rightly at Dina?

JOHAN. Yes; I should think I had.

LONA. Well, you should look at her to some purpose. She's the very thing for you.

MRS. BERNICK. But, Lona——

JOHAN. The thing for me?

LONA. Yes; to look at, I mean. Now go!

JOHAN. Yes, yes; I don't need any driving.

(*He goes down the garden.*)

MRS. BERNICK. Lona, you amaze me. You can't possibly be in earnest.

LONA. Yes, indeed I am. Isn't she fresh, and sound, and true? She's just the wife for John. She's the sort of companion he needs over there; something better than an old step-sister.

MRS. BERNICK. Dina! Dina Dorf! Just think——!

LONA. I think first and foremost of the boy's happiness. Help him I must and will; he's no hand at such things; he has never had much of an eye for women.

MRS. BERNICK. He? Johan! Why, haven't we sad cause to know that——

LONA. Oh, don't talk of that foolish story! Where is Bernick? I want to speak to him.

MRS. BERNICK. Lona, you must not do it, I tell you!

LONA. I shall do it. If the boy likes her, and she him, why then they shall have each other. Bernick is such a clever man; he must manage the thing——

MRS. BERNICK. And you think that these American infamies will be tolerated here——

LONA. Nonsense, Betty——

MRS. BERNICK. ——That a man like Karsten, with his strict moral ideas——

LONA. Oh, come now; surely they're not so unreasonably strict.

MRS. BERNICK. What do you dare to say?

LONA. I dare to say that I don't believe Bernick is very much more moral than other men.

MRS. BERNICK. Do you still hate him so bitterly? But what do you want here, since you've never

been able to forget that——? I can't understand how you dare look him in the face, after the shameful way you insulted him.

LONA. Yes, Betty; I forgot myself terribly that time.

MRS. BERNICK. And how nobly he has forgiven you—he, who had done no wrong! For *he* couldn't help your foolish fancies. But since that time you've hated me too. (*Bursts into tears.*) You've always envied me my happiness; and now you come here to heap this trouble upon me; to show the town what sort of a family I've brought Karsten into. Yes; it's I that have to suffer for it all, and that's what you want. Oh, it's cruel of you!

(*She goes out crying through the second door on the left.*)

LONA (*looking after her*). Poor Betty!

(CONSUL BERNICK *comes out of his office.*)

BERNICK (*still at the door*). Yes, yes; that's all right, Krap—that's excellent. Send four hundred crowns for a dinner to the poor. (*Turns.*) Lona! (*Coming nearer.*) You are alone? Isn't Betty here?

LONA. No. Shall I fetch her?

BERNICK. No, no; don't. Oh, Lona, you don't know how I've burned to talk openly with you—to beg for your forgiveness.

LONA. Now listen, Karsten; don't let us get sentimental. It doesn't suit us.

BERNICK. You *shall* hear me, Lona. I know very well how much appearances are against me, since you know all that about Dina's mother. But I swear to

you it was only a short madness ; at one time I really, truly, and honestly loved you.

LONA. What do you think has brought me home just now ?

BERNICK. Whatever you are intending, I implore you to do nothing before I have justified myself. I can do it, Lona ; at least I can show that I was not altogether to blame.

LONA. Now you're frightened—— You once loved me, you say ? Yes, you assured me so, often enough, in your letters ; and perhaps it was true, too, after a fashion, so long as you were living out there in a great, free world, that gave you courage to think freely and greatly yourself. You perhaps found in me a little more character, and will, and independence than in most people at home here. And then it was a secret between us ; no one could make fun of your bad taste.

BERNICK. Lona, how can you think—— ?

LONA. But when you came home, when you saw the ridicule that poured down upon me, when you heard the laughter at what were called my eccentricities——

BERNICK. You *were* extravagant then.

LONA. Principally for the sake of annoying the prudes, both in trousers and petticoats, that infested the town. And then you met that fascinating young actress——

BERNICK. The whole thing was a piece of folly—— nothing more. I swear to you, not a tithe of the scandal and tittle-tattle was true.

LONA. Perhaps so ; but then Betty came home——

young, beautiful, idolised by every one—and when it became known that she was to have all our aunt's money and I nothing——

BERNICK. Yes, here we are at the root of the matter, Lona; and now you shall hear the plain truth. I did not love Betty; it was for no new fancy that I broke with you; it was entirely for the sake of the money. I was forced to do it; I *had* to make sure of the money.

LONA. And you tell me this to my face!

BERNICK. Yes, I do. Hear me, Lona——!

LONA. And yet you wrote me that an unconquerable love for Betty had seized you, appealed to my magnanimity, conjured me for Betty's sake to say nothing of what had passed between us——

BERNICK. I had to, I tell you.

LONA. Now, by all that's holy, I don't regret having forgotten myself as I did that day.

BERNICK. Let me tell you, calmly and quietly, what my position was at that time. My mother, you know, stood at the head of the business; but she had no business ability. I was called home quickly from Paris; the times were critical; I was to retrieve the situation. What did I find? I found—what had to be kept strictly secret—a house as good as ruined. Yes, it was as good as ruined, the old, respected house, that had stood through three generations. What could I, the son, the only son, do, but look about me for a means of saving it?

LONA. So you saved the house of Bernick at the expense of a woman.

BERNICK. You know very well that Betty loved me.

LONA. But I?

BERNICK. Believe me, Lona, you would never have been happy with me.

LONA. Was it your care for my happiness that made you give me up?

BERNICK. Perhaps you think I acted from selfish motives? If I had stood alone then, I would have begun the world again bravely and cheerfully. But you don't understand how the head of a great house becomes a living part of the business he inherits, with its enormous responsibility. Do you know that the weal and woe of hundreds, ay of thousands, depends upon him? Can you not consider that the whole community, which both you and I call our home, would have suffered deeply if the house of Bernick had fallen?

LONA. Is it for the sake of the community, then, that for these fifteen years you have stood upon a lie?

BERNICK. A lie?

LONA. How much does Betty know of all that lies beneath and before her marriage with you?

BERNICK. Can you think that I would wound her to no purpose by telling her these things?

LONA. To no purpose, you say? Well well, you are a business man; you should understand what is to the purpose. But listen, Karsten; I, too, will speak calmly and quietly. Tell me, after all, are you really happy?

BERNICK. In my family, do you mean?

LONA. Of course.

BERNICK. I am indeed, Lona. Oh, you have not sacrificed yourself in vain. I can say truly that I

have grown happier year by year. Betty is so good and docile. In the course of years she has learned to mould her character to what is peculiar in mine——

LONA. Hm!

BERNICK. At first, indeed, she had some high-flown notions about love; she could not reconcile herself to the thought that, little by little, it must pass over into a quiet friendship.

LONA. And is she quite reconciled to that *now*?

BERNICK. Entirely. You may guess that daily intercourse with me has not been without a ripening influence upon her. People must learn to moderate their personal claims if they are to fulfil their duties in the community in which they are placed. Betty has by degrees come to understand this, so that our house is now a model for our fellow-citizens.

LONA. But these fellow-citizens know nothing of the lie?

BERNICK. Of the lie?

LONA. Yes, of the lie upon which you have stood for these fifteen years.

BERNICK. You call that——?

LONA. I call it the lie—the threefold lie. First the lie towards me; then the lie towards Betty; then the lie towards Johan.

BERNICK. Betty has never asked me to speak.

LONA. Because she has known nothing.

BERNICK. And you will not ask me to; out of consideration for her, you will not.

LONA. Oh, no; I daresay I shall manage to bear all the ridicule; I have a broad back.

BERNICK. And Johan will not ask me either—he has promised me that.

LONA. But you, yourself, Karsten; is there not something within you that longs to get clear of the lie?

BERNICK. You would have me voluntarily sacrifice my domestic happiness and my position in society?

LONA. What right have you to stand where you are standing?

BERNICK. For fifteen years I have every day gained more and more right—by my whole life, by all I have laboured for, by all I have achieved.

LONA. Yes, you have laboured for much and achieved much, both for yourself and others. You are the richest and most powerful man in the town; they have to bow before your will, all of them, because you are held to be without stain or flaw—your home is a model, your life a model. But all this eminence, and you yourself along with it, stand on a trembling quicksand; a moment may come, a word may be spoken, and, if you do not save yourself in time, you and your whole grandeur go to the bottom.

BERNICK. Lona, what did you come here to do?

LONA. To help you to get firm ground under your feet, Karsten.

BERNICK. Revenge! You want to revenge yourself. I thought so long ago. But you cannot do it. There is only one who has a right to speak, and he is silent.

LONA. Johan?

BERNICK. Yes, Johan. If any one else accuses

me, I shall deny all. If you try to crush me, I shall fight for my life. But I tell you you will never succeed. He who could destroy me will not speak—and he's going away again.

(RUMMEL *and* VIGELAND *enter from the right.*)

RUMMEL. Good-day, good-day, my dear Bernick; you must come with us to the Trade Council. We have a meeting on the railway business, you know.

BERNICK. I cannot; it's impossible just now.

VIGELAND. You really must, Consul.

RUMMEL. You must, Bernick. There are people working against us. Editor Hammer and the others who went for the coast line, declare that there are private interests hidden behind the new proposal.

BERNICK. Why, then, explain to them——

VIGELAND. It's no good explaining to them, Consul.

RUMMEL. No, no, you must come yourself. Of course no one will dare to suspect you of anything of that sort.

LONA. No, I should think not.

BERNICK. I cannot, I tell you; I am unwell;—or at any rate wait—let me collect myself.

(RECTOR RÖRLUND *enters from the right.*)

RÖRLUND. Excuse me, Consul; you see me most painfully agitated——

BERNICK. Well, well, what's the matter with you?

RÖRLUND. I must ask you a question, Consul. Is it with your consent that the young girl who has found an asylum under your roof shows herself in the public streets in company with a person whom——

LONA. What person, Pastor?

RÖRLUND. With the person from whom, of all others in the world, she should be kept furthest apart.

LONA. Ho-ho!

RÖRLUND. Is it with your consent, Consul?

BERNICK. I know nothing about it. (*Looking for his hat and gloves.*) Excuse me; I'm in a hurry; I'm going up to the Trade Council.

HILMAR (*comes from the garden and goes over to the second door to the left*). Betty, Betty, come here!

MRS. BERNICK (*at the door*). What is it?

HILMAR. You must go down the garden and put an end to the flirtation a certain person is carrying on with that Dina Dorf. It has made me quite nervous to listen to it.

LONA. Indeed? What did the person say?

HILMAR. Oh, only that he wants her to go with him to America. Ugh!

RÖRLUND. Can such things be possible?

MRS. BERNICK. You don't mean it!

LONA. Why, that would be capital.

BERNICK. Impossible! You have made a mistake.

HILMAR. Then ask himself. Here come the couple. Only let me be out of the business.

BERNICK (*to RUMMEL and VIGELAND*). I shall follow you—in a moment——

(*RUMMEL and VIGELAND go out to the right.*)

JOHAN TÖNNESEN and DINA *come in from the garden.*)

JOHAN. Hurrah, Lona, she's coming with us!

MRS. BERNICK. Oh, Johan—how can you——!

RÖRLUND. Can this be true? Such a crying scandal! By what vile arts have you——?

JOHAN. What, what, man? what are you saying?

RÖRLUND. Answer me, Dina: is this your intention—is it your full and free determination?

DINA. I *must* get away from here.

RÖRLUND. But with him—with him!

DINA. Tell me of any one else that has courage to set me free?

RÖRLUND. Then I must let you know who he is.

JOHAN. Be silent!

BERNICK. Not a word more!

RÖRLUND. Then I should ill serve the community over whose manners and morals I am placed as a guardian; and I should act most indefensibly towards this young girl, in whose training I have had an important part, and who is to me——

JOHAN. Take care what you're doing!

RÖRLUND. She *shall* know it! Dina, it was this man who caused all your mother's misfortune and shame.

BERNICK. Rector——!

DINA. He! (*To JOHAN.*) Is this true?

JOHAN. Karsten, you answer!

BERNICK. Not a word more! Not a word more to-day.

DINA. Then it is true.

RÖRLUND. True, true! and more than that. This person, in whom you were about to place your trust, did not run away empty-handed;—Widow Bernick's strong box—the Consul can bear witness!

LONA. Liar!

BERNICK. Ah——!

MRS. BERNICK. Oh God! oh God!

JOHAN (*goes towards him with uplifted arm*). You dare to——!

LONA (*keeping him back*). Don't strike him, Johan.

RÖRLUND. Yes, yes; attack me if you like. But the truth shall out; and this is the truth. Consul Bernick has said so himself, and the whole town knows it. Now, Dina, now you know him!

(*A short pause.*)

JOHAN (*softly, seizing BERNICK'S arm*). Karsten, Karsten, what have you done?

MRS. BERNICK (*softly, in tears*). Oh, Karsten, that I should bring all this shame upon you!

SANDSTAD (*comes quickly in from the right, and says, with his hand still on the door-handle*). You must really come now, Consul! The whole railway is hanging by a thread.

BERNICK (*absently*). What is it? What am I to——?

LONA (*earnestly and with emphasis*). You are to rise and support society, brother-in-law!

SANDSTAD. Yes, come, come; we need all your moral predominance.

JOHAN (*close to him*). Bernick,—we two will talk of this to-morrow.

(*He goes out through the garden; BERNICK goes out to the right with SANDSTAD, as if his will were paralysed.*)

Act Third.

(The garden-room in CONSUL BERNICK'S house.)

(BERNICK, with a cane in his hand, enters, in a violent passion, from the second room on the left, leaving the door half open behind him.)

BERNICK. There, now! At last I've done it in earnest; I don't think he'll forget that thrashing. *(To some one in the other room.)* What do you say?—I say you are a foolish mother! You make excuses for him, and support him in all his naughtiness—Not naughtiness? What do you call it then? To steal out of the house at night and go to sea in a fishing boat; to remain out till late in the day, and put me in mortal terror, as if I hadn't enough anxiety without that. And the young rascal dares to threaten me with running away! Just let him try it!—You? No, I daresay not; you don't seem to care much what becomes of him. I believe if he were to get killed——! Oh, indeed? But I have work to leave behind me; I can't afford to be left childless. Don't argue, Betty; it must be as I say; he must be kept in the house. *(Listens.)* Hush, don't let people notice anything.

(KRAP comes in from the right.)

KRAP. Can you spare me a moment, Consul?

BERNICK (*throws away the cane*). Of course, of course. Have you come from the yard?

KRAP. Just this moment. Hm——!

BERNICK. Well? Nothing wrong with the *Palm Tree*?

KRAP. The *Palm Tree* can sail to-morrow, but——

BERNICK. The *Indian Girl*, then? I might have guessed that that stiff-necked——

KRAP. The *Indian Girl* can sail to-morrow, too; but I don't think she'll get very far.

BERNICK. What do you mean?

KRAP. Excuse me, Consul, that door is ajar, and I think there's some one in the room.

BERNICK (*shuts the door*). There now. What's the meaning of all this secrecy?

KRAP. It means this: I believe Aune intends to send the *Indian Girl* to the bottom, with every soul on board.

BERNICK. Good heavens! how can you think——?

KRAP. I can't explain it any other way, Consul.

BERNICK. Well then, tell me as shortly as——

KRAP. I shall. You know how things have been dragging in the yard since we got the new machines and the new inexperienced workmen?

BERNICK. Yes, yes.

KRAP. But this morning, when I went down there, I noticed that the repairs on the American had been going at a great rate. The big patch in her bottom—the rotten place, you know——

BERNICK. Yes, yes; what about it?

KRAP. It was completely repaired—to all appear-

ance ; covered over ; looked as good as new. I heard that Aune himself had been working at it by lantern-light the whole night through.

BERNICK. Yes, yes, and then——?

KRAP. I went and examined it ; the workmen were at breakfast, so I could poke about as I pleased, both outside and inside. It was difficult to get down into the hold, as she's loaded ; but I saw enough to convince me. There's rascality at work, Consul.

BERNICK. I can't believe it, Krap. I cannot, and will not believe such a thing of Aune.

KRAP. I'm sorry for it, but it's the simple truth. There's rascality at work, I say. There was no new timber put in, so far as I could see. It was only botched and puttied up, and covered with tarpaulins, and so forth. All bogus ! The *Indian Girl* will never get to New York. She'll go to the bottom like a cracked pot.

BERNICK. Why, this is horrible ! What do you think can be his motive ?

KRAP. He probably wants to bring the machines into discredit ; wants to revenge himself ; wants to have the old workmen taken on again.

BERNICK. And for that he would sacrifice all these lives ?

KRAP. He has been heard to say that there are no men on board the *Indian Girl*—only beasts.

BERNICK. Yes, yes, that may be ; but does he not think of the immense capital that will be lost ?

KRAP. Aune is not over fond of capital, Consul.

BERNICK. True enough; he's an agitator and spreader of discontent; but such a piece of villainy as this——! Listen, Krap; this affair must be looked into again. Not a word of it to any one. Our yard would lose its reputation if this came to people's ears.

KRAP. Of course, but——

BERNICK. During the dinner-hour you must go down there again; I must have perfect certainty.

KRAP. You shall, Consul; but, excuse me, what will you do then?

BERNICK. Why, report the case of course. We cannot be accessories to a crime. I must keep my conscience clear. Besides, it will make a good impression on both the press and the public, if they see me set aside all personal considerations and let justice take its course.

KRAP. Very true, Consul.

BERNICK. But, first of all, perfect certainty—and, until then, silence.

KRAP. Not a word, Consul; and you shall have absolute certainty. (*He goes out through the garden and down the street.*)

BERNICK (*half aloud*). Horrible! But no, it's impossible—inconceivable!

(*As he turns to go to his own room HILMAR TÖNNESEN enters from the right.*)

HILMAR. Good-day, Bernick! Well, I congratulate you on your field-day in the Trade Council yesterday.

BERNICK. Oh, thanks.

HILMAR. It was a brilliant victory, I hear; the victory of intelligent public spirit over self-interest and prejudice—like a French razzia upon the

Kabyles. Strange, that after the unpleasant scene here, you——

BERNICK. Yes, yes, don't speak of it.

HILMAR. But the tug of war is to come yet.

BERNICK. In the matter of the railway, you mean?

HILMAR. Yes. I suppose you've heard of the egg that Editor Hammer's hatching?

BERNICK (*anxiously*). No! what is it?

HILMAR. Oh, he's got hold of the report that's going about, and is going to make an article of it.

BERNICK. What report?

HILMAR. Of course that about the great purchase of property along the branch line.

BERNICK. What do you mean? Is there such a report?

HILMAR. Yes, over the whole town. I heard it at the club. It's said that one of our lawyers has been secretly commissioned to buy up all the forests, all the veins of ore, all the water-power——

BERNICK. And is it known for whom?

HILMAR. They said at the club that it must be for a company from some other town that had got wind of your scheme, and had rushed in before the prices rose. Isn't it disgraceful? Ugh!

BERNICK. Disgraceful?

HILMAR. Yes, that strangers should trespass on our preserves in that way. And that one of our own lawyers could lend himself to anything like that! Now all the profit will go to strangers.

BERNICK. But this is only a vague rumour.

HILMAR. It's believed, at any rate; and to-morrow

or next day you may be sure Editor Hammer will nail it fast as a fact. Every one's indignant about it already. I heard several say that if this rumour is confirmed they will strike their names off the lists.

BERNICK. Impossible!

HILMAR. Indeed? Why do you think these peddling creatures were so ready to join you in your undertaking? Do you think they weren't themselves hankering after——?

BERNICK. Impossible, I say; there's at least so much public spirit in our little community——

HILMAR. Here? Oh, yes, you're an optimist, and judge others by yourself. But I'm a pretty keen observer, and I tell you there's not a person here—except ourselves, of course—not one, I say, that holds high the banner of the ideal. (*Up towards the background.*) Ugh, there they are!

BERNICK. Who?

HILMAR. The two Americans. (*Looks out to the right.*) And who's that with them? Why, it's the captain of the *Indian Girl*. Ugh!

BERNICK. What can they want with him?

HILMAR. Oh, it's very appropriate company. They say he has been a slave-dealer or a pirate; and who knows what that couple have turned their hands to in all these years.

BERNICK. I tell you, such notions are utterly unjust.

HILMAR. Yes, you're an optimist. But here we have them upon us again; so I'll get away in time.

(*Goes towards the door on the left.*)

(LONA HESSEL *enters from the right.*)

LONA. What, Hilmar, am I driving you away?

HILMAR. Not at all, not at all. I'm in a great hurry; I have something to say to Betty.

(Goes out by the second door on the left.)

BERNICK *(after a short pause)*. Well, Lona?

LONA. Well?

BERNICK. What do you think of me to-day?

LONA. The same as yesterday; a lie more or less——!

BERNICK. I must explain all this. Where has Johan gone to?

LONA. He'll be here directly; he had to talk to a man out there.

BERNICK. After what you heard yesterday, you can understand that my whole position is ruined if the truth comes to light.

LONA. I understand.

BERNICK. Of course you know well enough that *I* was not guilty of the supposed crime.

LONA. Of course not. But who was the thief?

BERNICK. There was no thief. There was no money stolen; not a halfpenny was wanting.

LONA. What?

BERNICK. Not a halfpenny, I say.

LONA. But the rumour? How did that shameful rumour get abroad, that Johan——?

BERNICK. Lona, I find I can talk to you as I can to no other person; I shall conceal nothing from you. *I* had my share in spreading the rumour.

LONA. You! And you could do this wrong to the man who, for your sake——?

BERNICK. You must not condemn me without

remembering how matters stood at the time. As I told you yesterday, I came home to find my mother involved in a whole series of foolish undertakings. Misfortunes of various kinds followed; all possible ill-luck seemed to come upon us at once; our house was on the verge of ruin. I was half reckless and half in despair. Lona, I believe it was principally to deaden thought that I got into that entanglement which ended in Johan's running away.

LONA. Hm——

BERNICK. You can easily imagine how all sorts of rumours flew about after he and you left. It was said that this was not his first misdemeanour. Some said Dorf had received a large sum of money from him to say nothing, and keep out of the way; others declared she had got the money. At the same time it got abroad that our house had difficulty in meeting its engagements. What more natural than that the gossips should put these two rumours together? As Madam Dorf remained here in unmistakable poverty, people began to say that he had taken the money with him to America, and rumour made the sum larger and larger every day.

LONA. And you, Karsten——?

BERNICK. I clutched at the rumour as a drowning man clutches at a straw.

LONA. You helped to spread it?

BERNICK. I did not contradict it. Our creditors were beginning to press upon us; I had to quiet them—to keep them from suspecting the solidity of the firm; to let it be thought that a momentary misfortune had befallen us, but that if people only

refrained from pressing us—if they would only give us time—every one could have his own.

LONA. And every one got his own?

BERNICK. Yes, Lona; that rumour saved our house, and made me the man I am.

LONA. A lie, then, has made you the man you are.

BERNICK. Whom did it hurt, then? Johan intended never to return.

LONA. You ask whom it hurt. Look into yourself and see if it has not hurt you.

BERNICK. Look into any man you please, and you will find at least one dark spot that must be kept covered.

LONA. And you call yourselves pillars of society!

BERNICK. Society has none better.

LONA. Then what does it matter whether such a society is supported or not? What is it that passes current here? Lies and shams—nothing else. Here are you, the first man in the town, living in wealth and pride, in power and honour—you, who have set the brand of crime upon an innocent man.

BERNICK. Do you think I don't feel deeply how I have wronged him? Do you think I am not prepared to make atonement?

LONA. How? By speaking out?

BERNICK. Can you ask such a thing?

LONA. What else can atone for such a wrong?

BERNICK. I am rich, Lona; Johan may ask for what he pleases—

LONA. Yes, offer him money, and you'll see what he'll answer.

BERNICK. Do you know what he intends to do?

LONA. No. Since yesterday he has been silent. It seems as if all this had suddenly made a full-grown man of him.

BERNICK. I must speak to him.

LONA. Then here he is.

(JOHAN TÖNNESEN *enters from the right.*)

BERNICK (*going towards him*). Johan——!

JOHAN. Let me speak first. Yesterday morning I gave you my word to be silent.

BERNICK. You did.

JOHAN. But I did not know then——

BERNICK. Johan, let me in two words explain the circumstances——

JOHAN. There's no need; I understand the circumstances very well. Your house was in a difficult position; and when I was no longer here, and you had my unprotected name and fame to do what you liked with—— Well, I don't blame you so much for it; we were young and heedless in those days. But now I need the truth, and now you must speak out.

BERNICK. And just at this moment I need all my moral repute, and so cannot speak out.

JOHAN. I don't care so much about the falsehoods you've spread abroad; it's the other thing you yourself must take the blame of. Dina shall be my wife, and I shall live here, here in this town, along with her.

LONA. You will?

BERNICK. With Dina! As your wife? Here, in this town!

JOHAN. Yes, just here; I shall remain here to defy all these liars and backbiters. And that I may win her, you must set me free.

BERNICK. Have you considered that to admit the one thing is to admit the other as well? You may say that I can prove by our books that there was no robbery at all. But I cannot; our books weren't kept so exactly at that time. And even if I could, what would be gained by it? Should I not, at best, appear as the man who, having once saved himself by a falsehood, had let that falsehood, and all its consequences, run on for fifteen years, without saying a word against it? You've forgotten what our society is, or you would know that that would crush me to the very dust.

JOHAN. I can only repeat that I shall make Madam Dorf's daughter my wife, and live with her here, in this town.

BERNICK (*wipes the perspiration from his forehead*). Hear me, Johan—and you, too, Lona. My position at this moment is not an ordinary one. I am so situated, that if you strike this blow you ruin me utterly, and not only me, but also a great and blessed future for the community which was the home of your childhood.

JOHAN. And if I do not strike the blow, I ruin my whole future.

LONA. Go on, Karsten.

BERNICK. Then listen. It all arises from this affair of the railway, and that's not so simple as you think. Of course you've heard that last year there was some talk of a coast-line? It had many powerful advocates in the district, and especially in the press; but I got it shelved, because it would have injured our steamboat trade along the coast.

LONA. Have you an interest in this steamboat trade?

BERNICK. Yes. But no one dared to suspect me on that account. My honoured name was an ample safeguard. For that matter, I could have borne the loss; but the town could not have borne it. Then the inland line was determined on. When that was settled, I assured myself secretly that a branch could be constructed down to the town.

LONA. Why secretly, Karsten?

BERNICK. Have you heard any talk of the great buying-up of forests, mines, and water-power?

JOHAN. Yes, for a company in some other town——

BERNICK. As these properties now lie, they are as good as worthless to their scattered owners; so they have sold comparatively cheap. If the buyer had waited until the branch line was generally spoken of, the holders would have demanded fancy prices.

LONA. Very likely; but what then?

BERNICK. Now comes the point which may or may not be interpreted favourably—a thing which no man in our community could risk, unless he had a spotless and honoured name to rely upon.

LONA. Well?

BERNICK. It is I who have bought the whole.

LONA. You?

JOHAN. On your own account?

BERNICK. On my own account. If the branch line is made, I am a millionaire; if not, I am ruined.

LONA. This is a great risk, Karsten.

BERNICK. I have staked all I possess upon the throw.

LONA. I was not thinking of the money; but when it's known that——

BERNICK. Yes, that's the great point. With the spotless name I have hitherto borne, I can take the whole affair upon my shoulders and carry it through, saying to my fellow-citizens, "See, this I have ventured for the good of the community!"

LONA. Of the community?

BERNICK. Yes; and not one will question my motives.

LONA. Then, after all, there are men here who have acted more openly than you, with no private or underhand designs.

BERNICK. Who?

LONA. Why, of course, Rummel and Sandstad and Vigeland.

BERNICK. To gain them over I had to let them into the secret.

LONA. And then?

BERNICK. They have stipulated for a fifth of the profits.

LONA. Oh, these pillars of society!

BERNICK. Don't you see that it is society itself that forces us into these subterfuges? What would have happened if I had not acted secretly? Why, every one would have thrown himself into the undertaking, and the whole thing would have been broken up, frittered away, bungled, and ruined. There's not a single man here, except myself, that knows how to manage an enormous concern such as this will

become; in this country the men of real business ability are almost all of foreign descent. That's why my conscience acquits me in this matter. Only in my hands can all this property be of permanent benefit to the many who will live by it.

LONA. I believe you're right there, Karsten.

JOHAN. But I know nothing of "the many," and my life's happiness is at stake.

BERNICK. The welfare of your native place is also at stake. If things come to the surface which cast a slur upon my past life, all my enemies will fall upon me with united strength. A boyish error is never atoned for in our society. People will go over my whole career, will rake up a thousand little circumstances, and explain and interpret them in the light of what has been discovered; they will crush me beneath the weight of rumours and slanders. I shall have to retire from the railway-board; and if I take my hand away the whole thing will fall to pieces, and I shall have to face not only ruin but social extinction.

LONA. Johan, after what you have heard you must be silent and go away.

BERNICK. Yes, yes, Johan, you must!

JOHAN. Yes, I shall go away, and be silent too; but I shall come back again, and then I shall speak.

BERNICK. Remain over there, Johan; be silent, and I am ready to share with you——

JOHAN. Keep your money, and give me back my name and fame.

BERNICK. And sacrifice my own!

JOHAN. You and your society must settle that!

I must and shall win Dina for myself. So I shall sail to-morrow with the *Indian Girl*?

BERNICK. With the *Indian Girl*?

JOHAN. Yes; the captain has promised to take me. I shall go across, I tell you; sell my farm, and arrange my affairs. In two months I shall be back again.

BERNICK. And then you will tell all?

JOHAN. Then the guilty one must take the guilt upon himself.

BERNICK. Do you forget that I must also take upon me guilt that is not mine?

JOHAN. Who was it that, fifteen years ago, reaped the benefit of that slander?

BERNICK. You drive me to desperation! But if you speak, I shall deny all! I shall say it's a conspiracy against me; a piece of revenge; that you have come here to blackmail me!

LONA. Shame on you, Karsten!

BERNICK. I am desperate, I tell you; I am fighting for my life. I shall deny all, all!

JOHAN. I have your two letters. I found them in my box among my other papers. I read them through this morning; they are plain enough.

BERNICK. And you'll produce them?

JOHAN. If you force me.

BERNICK. And in two months you'll be here again?

JOHAN. I hope so. The wind is fair. In three weeks I shall be in New York, if the *Indian Girl* doesn't go to the bottom.

BERNICK (*starting*). Go to the bottom? Why should the *Indian Girl* go to the bottom?

JOHAN. That's just what I say.

BERNICK (*almost inaudibly*). Go to the bottom?

JOHAN. Well, Bernick, now you know what you have to expect; you must do what you can in the meantime. Good-bye! Give my love to Betty, though she certainly hasn't received me in a very sisterly fashion. But Martha I must see. She must say to Dina—she must promise me—— (*He goes out by the second door on the left.*)

BERNICK (*to himself*). The *Indian Girl*——? (*Quickly.*) Lona, you must get this stopped!

LONA. You see yourself, Karsten—I have lost all power over him.

(*She follows JOHAN into the room on the left.*)

BERNICK (*in unquiet thought*). Go to the bottom——?

(*AUNE enters from the right.*)

AUNE. Excuse me, Consul, are you disengaged?

BERNICK (*turns angrily*). What do you want?

AUNE. I wish, by your leave, to ask you a question, Consul Bernick.

BERNICK. Well, well; be quick. What's it about?

AUNE. I want to know if it's your determination—your fixed determination—to dismiss me, if the *Indian Girl* should not be able to sail to-morrow?

BERNICK. What now? The ship *will* be ready to sail.

AUNE. Yes—she will. But supposing she were not—should I be dismissed?

BERNICK. Why do you ask such a useless question?

AUNE. I want very much to know, Consul. Just answer me: should I be dismissed?

BERNICK. Do I generally change my mind?

AUNE. Then to-morrow I should have lost the position I now hold in my house and home—lost all my influence over the workmen—lost all power to help the needy and oppressed?

BERNICK. We've discussed that point long ago, Aune.

AUNE. Then the *Indian Girl* must sail.

(*A short pause.*)

BERNICK. Listen: I can't look after everything myself; can't be responsible for everything. I suppose you're prepared to assure me that the repairs are thoroughly carried out?

AUNE. You gave me very short time, Consul.

BERNICK. But the repairs are all right, you say?

AUNE. The weather is fine, and it's midsummer.

(*Another pause.*)

BERNICK. Have you anything more to say to me?

AUNE. I don't know of anything else, Consul.

BERNICK. Then—the *Indian Girl* sails——

AUNE. To-morrow?

BERNICK. Yes.

AUNE. Very well. (*He bows and goes out.*)

(BERNICK stands for a moment undecided; then he goes quickly to the door as if to call AUNE back, but stops and stands hesitating with his hand on the knob. At that moment the door is opened from outside and KRAP enters.)

KRAP (*speaking low*). Aha, he's been here. Has he confessed?

BERNICK. Hm——; have you discovered anything?

KRAP. What need was there? Did you not see the evil conscience looking out of his very eyes?

BERNICK. Oh, nonsense;—such things are not to be seen. Tell me if you've discovered anything?

KRAP. I couldn't get at it; I was too late; they were busy hauling the ship out of dock. But this very haste proves plainly that——

BERNICK. It proves nothing. The inspection has taken place, then?

KRAP. Of course; but——

BERNICK. There you see! and they've found nothing to complain of?

KRAP. Consul, you know very well how such inspections are conducted, especially in a yard that has such a name as ours.

BERNICK. That doesn't matter; it relieves us of all reproach.

KRAP. Could you really not read in Aune's face, Consul——?

BERNICK. Aune has entirely satisfied me, I tell you.

KRAP. And I tell you I am morally convinced——

BERNICK. What does this mean, Krap? I know very well that you have a grudge against the man; but if you want to attack him, you should choose some other opportunity. You know how necessary it is for me—or rather for the owners—that the *Indian Girl* should sail to-morrow.

KRAP. Very well; so be it; but if ever we hear of her again—hm!

(VIGELAND enters from the right.)

VIGELAND. How do you do, Consul? Have you a moment to spare?

BERNICK. At your service, Mr. Vigeland.

VIGELAND. I only want to know if you agree with me that the *Palm Tree* should sail to-morrow?

BERNICK. Yes—I thought that was settled.

VIGELAND. But the captain has just come to tell me that the storm-signals have been hoisted.

KRAP. The barometer has fallen rapidly since this morning.

BERNICK. Indeed? Is there a storm coming?

VIGELAND. A stiff gale at any rate; but not a contrary wind; quite the reverse——

BERNICK. Hm; what do you say, then?

VIGELAND. I say as I said to the captain, that the *Palm Tree* is in the hands of Providence. And besides, she's only going over the North Sea to begin with; and freights are tolerably high in England just now, so that——

BERNICK. Yes, it would probably mean a loss if we delayed.

VIGELAND. The vessel's well built, you know, and fully insured as well. I can tell you it's another matter with the *Indian Girl*——

BERNICK. What do you mean?

VIGELAND. Why, she's to sail to-morrow too.

BERNICK. Yes, the owners hurried us on, and besides——

VIGELAND. Well, if that old hulk can venture out—and with such a crew into the bargain—it would be a shame if we couldn't——

BERNICK. Well well; I suppose you've got the ship's papers with you.

VIGELAND. Yes, here they are.

BERNICK. Good; perhaps you'll go with Mr. Krap——

KRAP. This way, please; we'll soon put them in order.

VIGELAND. Thanks—— And the result we'll leave in the hands of Omnipotence, Consul.

(He goes with KRAP into the foremost room on the left. RECTOR RÖRLUND comes through the garden.)

RÖRLUND. What! You at home at this time of the day, Consul!

BERNICK *(absently)*. As you see!

RÖRLUND. I looked in to see your wife. I thought she might need a word of consolation.

BERNICK. I daresay she does. But I, too, should like a word or two with you.

RÖRLUND. With pleasure, Consul. But what's the matter with you? You look quite pale and disturbed.

BERNICK. Indeed? Do I? Well, you can't wonder at it, with such a lot of things besetting me all at once. In addition to all my usual business, I have this affair of the railway—— Listen a moment, Rector; let me ask you a question.

RÖRLUND. By all means, Consul.

BERNICK. A thought has occurred to me lately: When one stands at the commencement of a great undertaking, that's to promote the welfare of thousands, if a single sacrifice should be demanded——?

RÖRLUND. How do you mean ?

BERNICK. Take, for example, a man who is starting a large manufactory. He may be quite sure—for all experience has taught him—that sooner or later, in the working of that manufactory, human life will be lost.

RÖRLUND. Yes, it's only too probable.

BERNICK. Or he is engaged in mining operations. He takes into his service both fathers of families and young men in the heyday of life. Can't it be predicted with certainty that some of these are bound to perish in the undertaking ?

RÖRLUND. Unfortunately there can be little doubt of that.

BERNICK. Well ; such a man, then, knows beforehand that his enterprise will undoubtedly, some time or other, lead to the loss of life. But the undertaking is for the greater good of the greater number ; for every life it costs, it will, with equal certainty, promote the welfare of many hundreds.

RÖRLUND. Aha, you're thinking of the railway—of all the dangerous tunnelling, and blastings, and that sort of thing——

BERNICK. Yes—yes, of course ; I'm thinking of the railway. And, besides, the railway will bring along with it both manufactories and mines. But don't you think that——

RÖRLUND. My dear Consul, you're almost too Quixotic. If you place the affair in the hands of Providence——

BERNICK. Yes—yes, of course ; Providence——

RÖRLUND. ——You can have nothing to reproach yourself with. Go on and prosper with the railway.

BERNICK. Yes, but let us take a peculiar case. Let us suppose a mine has to be sprung at a dangerous place; and, unless it's sprung, the railway will come to a standstill. Suppose the engineer knows that it will cost the life of the workman who fires the train; but fired it must be, and it's the engineer's duty to send a workman to do it.

RÖRLUND. Hm——

BERNICK. I know what you'll say: It would be noble for the engineer himself to take the match and go and fire the train. But no one does such things. Then he must sacrifice a workman.

RÖRLUND. No engineer among us would ever do that.

BERNICK. No engineer in the great nations would think twice about doing it.

RÖRLUND. In the great nations? No, I daresay not. In these depraved and unprincipled communities——

BERNICK. Oh, these communities have their good points, too.

RÖRLUND. Can you say that—you, who yourself——?

BERNICK. In the great nations one has always room to press forward a useful enterprise. There, one has courage to sacrifice something for a great cause; but here, one is cramped in by all sorts of petty considerations.

RÖRLUND. Is a human life a petty consideration?

BERNICK. When that human life threatens the welfare of thousands.

RÖRLUND. But you're putting quite inconceivable

cases, Consul. I don't understand you to-day. And then you refer me to the great communities. Yes, there—what does a human life count for there? They think less of squandering life than of risking capital. But we, I hope, look at things from an entirely different moral standpoint. Think of our noble ship-owners! Name me a single merchant here among us who, for paltry gain, would sacrifice a single life! And then think of those scoundrels in the great communities who make money by sending out one coffin-ship after another——

BERNICK. I'm not speaking of coffin-ships.

RÖRLUND. But I am, Consul.

BERNICK. Yes, but to what purpose? It's quite away from the question. Oh, these timid little scruples! If a general among us were to lead his troops under fire, and get some of them shot, he wouldn't be able to sleep at night after it. It's not so in other places. You should hear what he says—— (*Pointing to the door on the left.*)

RÖRLUND. He? Who? the American——?

BERNICK. Of course. You should hear how people in America——

RÖRLUND. Is he in there? Why didn't you tell me? I shall go at once——

BERNICK. It's of no use. You'll make no impression upon him.

RÖRLUND. That we shall see. Ah, here he is.

(JOHAN TÖNNESEN *comes from the room on the left.*)

JOHAN (*speaking through the open doorway*). Yes, yes, Dina, so be it; but I shall not give you up, all

the same. I shall return, and things will come all right.

RÖRLUND. May I ask what you mean by these words? What do you want?

JOHAN. I want that young girl, before whom you yesterday traduced me, to be my wife.

RÖRLUND. Yours? Can you think that——?

JOHAN. She *shall* be my wife.

RÖRLUND. Well, then, you shall hear—— (*Goes to the half-open door.*) Mrs. Bernick, you must have the kindness to be a witness—— And you too, Miss Martha; and let Dina come too. (*Sees LONA.*) Ah, are you here?

LONA (*at the door*). Shall I come too?

RÖRLUND. As many as will—the more the better.

BERNICK. What are you going to do?

(LONA, MRS. BERNICK, MARTHA, DINA, and HILMAR TÖNNESEN *come out of the room on the left.*)

MRS. BERNICK. Rector, all I can say cannot prevent him from——

RÖRLUND. I shall prevent him, Mrs. Bernick.— Dina, you are a thoughtless girl. But I do not blame you very much. You have stood here too long without the moral support that should have sustained you. I blame myself for not having given you that support.

DINA. You must not speak now!

MRS. BERNICK. What is all this?

RÖRLUND. It is now that I must speak, Dina, though your behaviour to-day has rendered it ten times more difficult for me. But all other considerations must give place to your rescue. You re-

member the promise I gave you. You remember what you promised to answer, when I found that the time had come. Now I can hesitate no longer, and therefore—(to JOHAN TÖNNESEN)—this young girl, whom you are pursuing, is my betrothed.

MRS. BERNICK. What do you say?

BERNICK. Dina!

JOHAN. She! Your——?

MARTHA. No, no, Dina!

LONA. A lie!

JOHAN. Dina,—does that man speak the truth?

DINA (*after a short pause*). Yes.

RÖRLUND. This, I trust, will paralyse all your arts of seduction. The step I have determined to take for Dina's welfare may now be made known to our whole community. I hope—nay, I am sure—that it will not be misinterpreted. And now, Mrs. Bernick, I think we had better take her away from here and try to restore her mind to peace and equilibrium.

MRS. BERNICK. Yes, come. Oh, Dina, what happiness for you!

(*She leads DINA out to the left; RECTOR RÖRLUND goes along with them.*)

MARTHA. Good-bye, Johan! (*She goes out.*)

HILMAR (*at the garden door*). Hm—well, I really must say——

LONA (*who has been following DINA with her eyes*). Don't be cast down, boy! I shall remain here and look after the Pastor. (*She goes out to the right.*)

BERNICK. Johan, you won't sail now with the *Indian Girl*.

JOHAN. Now more than ever.

BERNICK. Then you won't come back again?

JOHAN. I shall come back again.

BERNICK. After this? What can you do after this?

JOHAN. Revenge myself on you all; crush as many of you as I can.

(He goes out to the right. VIGELAND and KRAP come from the Consul's office.)

VIGELAND. See, the papers are in order now, Consul.

BERNICK. Good, good——

KRAP *(aside)*. Then it's settled that the *Indian Girl* is to sail to-morrow?

BERNICK. She is to sail.

(He goes into his room. VIGELAND and KRAP go out to the right. HILMAR TÖNNESEN is following them, when OLAF peeps cautiously out at the door on the left.)

OLAF. Uncle! Uncle Hilmar!

HILMAR. Ugh, is that you? Why don't you remain upstairs? You know you're under arrest.

OLAF *(comes a few steps forward)*. Hush! Uncle Hilmar, do you know the news?

HILMAR. I know that you got a thrashing to-day.

OLAF *(looks threateningly towards his father's room)*. He shan't thrash me again. But do you know that Uncle Johan is to sail to-morrow with the Americans?

HILMAR. What's that to you? You get upstairs again!

OLAF. Perhaps I may go buffalo-hunting yet, uncle.

HILMAR. Rubbish! such a coward as you——

OLAF. Just wait a little; you'll hear something to-morrow!

HILMAR. Little blockhead!

(He goes out through the garden. OLAF runs in again and shuts the door, when he catches sight of KRAP, who comes from the right.)

KRAP *(goes up to the Consul's door and opens it a little)*. Excuse my coming again, Consul, but there's a terrible storm brewing. *(He waits a moment; there is no answer.)* Is the *Indian Girl* to sail in spite of it? *(After a short pause.)*

BERNICK *(answers from the office)*. The *Indian Girl* is to sail in spite of it.

(KRAP shuts the door and goes out again to the right.)

Act Fourth.

(The garden-room in CONSUL BERNICK'S house. The table has been removed. It is a stormy afternoon, already half dark, and growing darker.)

(A servant lights the chandelier; two maid-servants bring in flower-pots, lamps, and candles, which are placed on tables and stands along the wall. RUMMEL, wearing a dress-coat, white gloves, and a white necktie, stands in the room giving directions.)

RUMMEL *(to the servant)*. Only every second candle, Jacob. The place mustn't look too brilliant; it's supposed to be a surprise, you know. And all these flowers——? Oh, yes, let them stand; it'll seem as if they were there always.

(CONSUL BERNICK comes out of his room.)

BERNICK *(at the door)*. What's the meaning of all this?

RUMMEL. Tut, tut, are you there? *(To the servants.)* Yes, you can go now.

(The servants go out by the second door on the left.)

BERNICK *(coming into the room)*. Why, Rummel, what does all this mean?

RUMMEL. It means that the proudest moment of your life has arrived. The whole town is coming in procession to do honour to its leading citizen.

BERNICK. What do you mean?

RUMMEL. With banners and music, sir! We should have had torches too; but we dared not attempt it in this stormy weather. However, there's to be an illumination; it'll look quite splendid in the newspapers.

BERNICK. Listen, Rummel—I'll have nothing to do with all this.

RUMMEL. Oh, it's too late now; they'll be here in half-an-hour.

BERNICK. Why have you not told me of this before?

RUMMEL. Just because I was afraid you would make objections. But I arranged it all with your wife; she allowed me to put things in order a little, and she's going to look to the refreshments herself.

BERNICK (*listening*). What's that? Are they coming already? I thought I heard singing.

RUMMEL (*at the garden-door*). Singing? Oh, it's only the Americans. They are hauling the *Indian Girl* out to the buoy.

BERNICK. Hauling her out! Yes——! I really cannot this evening, Rummel; I'm not well.

RUMMEL. You're certainly not looking well. But you must brace yourself up. Come, come, man, brace yourself up! I and Sandstad and Vigeland attach the greatest importance to this affair. Our opponents must be crushed by an overwhelming utterance of public opinion. The rumours are spreading over the town; the announcement as to the purchase of the property can't be kept back any longer. This very evening, amid songs and speeches and the ring of

brimming goblets, in short, amid all the effervescent festivity of the occasion, you must make known what you have ventured for the good of the community. With the aid of effervescent festivity, as I have just expressed it, it's astonishing what one can effect here among us. But we must have the effervescence, or it won't do.

BERNICK. Yes, yes, yes——

RUMMEL. And especially when such a difficult and delicate matter is to be brought forward. Thank heaven, you've a name that will carry us through, Bernick. But listen now; we must make some arrangement. Hilmar Tønnesen has written a song in your honour. It begins very prettily with the line, "Wave th' Ideal's banner high." And Rector Rörlund has been commissioned to make the speech of the evening. Of course, you must reply to it.

BERNICK. I cannot, I cannot this evening, Rummel. Couldn't you——?

RUMMEL. Impossible, much as I should like to. The speech will, of course, be mainly directed to you. Perhaps a few words will be devoted to the rest of us. I have spoken to Vigeland and Sandstad about it. We had arranged that you should answer with a toast to the welfare of the community; Sandstad should say a few words on the union between the different classes of the community; Vigeland should express the fervent hope that our new undertaking may not disturb the moral basis upon which we have placed the community; and I should call attention, in a few well-chosen words, to the claims of Woman,

whose more modest activity is not without its use in the community. But you're not listening——

BERNICK. Yes—yes, I am. But, tell me, do you think the sea is running very high outside?

RUMMEL. Oh, you're anxious on account of the *Palm Tree*? She's well insured, isn't she?

BERNICK. Yes, insured; but——

RUMMEL. And in good repair; and that's the main thing.

BERNICK. Hm—and even if anything happens to a vessel, it doesn't follow that lives will be lost. The ship and cargo may go down—people may lose chests and papers——

RUMMEL. Good gracious, why worry about chests and papers——

BERNICK. Worry? No, no, I only meant—— Hark;—that singing again!

RUMMEL. It's on board the *Palm Tree*.

(VIGELAND enters from the right.)

VIGELAND. Yes, they're hauling out the *Palm Tree*. Good evening, Consul!

BERNICK. And you, who know the sea well, hold fast to——?

VIGELAND. I hold fast to Providence, Consul; besides, I've been on board and distributed a few leaflets, which I hope will act with a blessing.

(SANDSTAD and KRAP enter from the right.)

SANDSTAD (at the door). It's a miracle if they escape. Ah, here we are—good evening, good evening.

BERNICK. Is anything the matter, Krap?

KRAP. I have nothing to say, Consul.

SANDSTAD. Every man on board the *Indian Girl* is drunk. If these animals ever get over alive, I'm no prophet.

(LONA comes from the right.)

LONA (to BERNICK). Well, I've been seeing him off.

BERNICK. Is he on board already?

LONA. Will be soon, at any rate. We parted outside the hotel.

BERNICK. And he holds to his purpose?

LONA. Firm as a rock.

RUMMEL (at one of the windows). Deuce take these new-fangled arrangements. I can't get the blinds down.

LONA. Are they to come down? I thought, on the contrary——

RUMMEL. They're to be down at first, Miss Hessel. Of course you know what's going on?

LONA. Oh, of course. Let me help you. (*Takes one of the cords.*) I shall let the curtain fall upon my brother-in-law—though I would rather raise it.

RUMMEL. That you can do later. When the garden is filled with a surging crowd, then the curtains rise, and they look in upon a surprised and happy family—a citizen's house should be transparent to all the world.

(BERNICK seems about to say something, but turns quickly and goes into his office.)

RUMMEL. Well, let's hold our last council of war. Come, Mr. Krap; we want you to supply us with a few facts.

(*All the men go into the Consul's office. LONA has lowered all the window-blinds, and is just*

going to draw the curtain over the open glass door, when OLAF jumps down from above upon the garden stair; he has a plaid over his shoulder and a bundle in his hand.)

LONA. Good heavens, child, how you startled me!

OLAF (*hiding the bundle*). Hush, aunt!

LONA. Why did you jump out at the window? Where are you going?

OLAF. Hush, don't say anything, aunt. I'm going to Uncle Johan; only down to the pier, you know;—only to say good-bye to him. Good-night, aunt!

(He runs out through the garden.)

LONA. No! stop! Olaf—Olaf!

(JOHAN TÖNNESEN, dressed for a journey, with a bag over his shoulder, steals in by the door on the right.)

JOHAN. Lona!

LONA (*turning*). What! you here again?

JOHAN. There are still a few minutes to spare. I must see her once more. We can't part so.

(MARTHA and DINA, both wearing cloaks, and the latter with a little knapsack in her hand, enter from the second door on the left.)

DINA. To him; to him!

MARTHA. Yes, you shall go to him, Dina!

DINA. There he is!

JOHAN. Dina!

DINA. Take me with you!

JOHAN. What?

LONA. You will?

DINA. Yes, take me with you. The other one

has written to me saying that this evening it shall be announced to every one——

JOHAN. Dina—you do not love him?

DINA. I have never loved the man. I would rather be at the bottom of the fjord than be betrothed to him! Oh, how he seemed to make me grovel before him yesterday with his patronising words! How he made me feel that he was stooping to an abject creature! I will not be despised any more. I will go away. May I come with you?

JOHAN. Yes, yes—a thousand times yes!

DINA. I shan't be a burden on you long. Only help me over there; help me to make a start——

JOHAN. Hurrah! We'll manage all that, Dina!

LONA (*pointing to the Consul's door*). Hush; don't speak so loud.

JOHAN. Dina, I will shield and protect you!

DINA. I will not allow you to. I will make my own way; over there I shall manage well enough. Only let me get away from here. Oh, these women—you don't know—they have written to me to-day; they have exhorted me to appreciate my good fortune; they have impressed upon me what magnanimity he has shown. To-morrow, and for ever after, they would be watching me to see whether I showed myself worthy of it all. I loathe all this propriety.

JOHAN. Tell me, Dina, is that your only reason for coming? Am I nothing to you?

DINA. Yes, Johan, you are more to me than any one else.

JOHAN. Oh, Dina!

DINA. They all tell me that I must hate and detest you; that it's my duty; but I don't understand what they mean by duty; I never could understand it.

LONA. And you never shall, my child!

MARTHA. No, you shall not; and that's why you must go with him, as his wife.

JOHAN. Yes, yes!

LONA. What? Now I must kiss you, Martha! I didn't expect this of you.

MARTHA. No, I daresay not; I didn't expect it myself. But sooner or later the crisis was bound to come. Oh, how we writhe under this tyranny of custom and convention! Rebel against it, Dina! Become his wife! Do something to defy all this use-and-wont!

JOHAN. What is your answer, Dina?

DINA. Yes, I will be your wife.

JOHAN. Dina!

DINA. But first I will work, and become something for myself, just as you are. I will give myself; I will not be taken.

LONA. Right, right! So it should be!

JOHAN. Good; I shall wait and hope——

LONA. ——and win too, boy! But now, on board.

JOHAN. Yes, on board! Ah, Lona, my dear sister, one word; come here——

(He leads her up towards the background and talks rapidly to her.)

MARTHA. Dina, you happy one—let me look at you and kiss you once more—for the last time.

DINA. Not the last time ; no, my dear, dear aunt ; we shall meet again.

MARTHA. Never ! Promise me, Dina, never to come back again. (*Seizes both her hands and looks into her face.*) Now go to your happiness, my dear child, over the sea. Oh, how often have I sat in the school-room and longed to be over there ! It must be beautiful there ; the heaven is wider ; the clouds sail higher than here ; a freer air streams over the heads of the people——

DINA. Oh, Aunt Martha, you will follow us some day.

MARTHA. I ? Never, never. My little life-work lies here, and now I think I can be fully and wholly what I should be.

DINA. I cannot think of being parted from you.

MARTHA. Ah, one can part from so much, Dina. (*Kisses her.*) But you will never know it, my sweet child. Promise me to make him happy.

DINA. I will not promise anything. I hate this promising ; things must come as they can.

MARTHA. Yes, yes, so they must ; you need only remain as you are—true and faithful to yourself.

DINA. That I will, Aunt Martha.

LONA (*puts in her pocket some papers which Johan has given her*). Good, good, my dear boy. But now, away.

JOHAN. Yes, now there's no time to be lost. Good-bye, Lona ; thanks, thanks for all your love for me. Good-bye, Martha, and thanks to you too for your true friendship.

MARTHA. Good-bye, Johan! Good-bye, Dina!
And happiness be over all your days!

(She and LONA hurry them towards the door in the background. JOHAN TÖNNESEN and DINA go quickly out through the garden. LONA shuts the door and draws the curtain.)

LONA. Now we are alone, Martha. You have lost her, and I him.

MARTHA. You—him?

LONA. Oh, I had half lost him already over there. The boy longed to stand on his own feet; so I made him think *I* was longing for home.

MARTHA. That was it? Now I understand why you came. But he will want you back again, Lona.

LONA. An old step-sister—what can he want with her now? Men snap many bonds to arrive at happiness.

MARTHA. It is so, sometimes.

LONA. Now we two must hold together, Martha.

MARTHA. Can I be anything to you?

LONA. Who more? We two foster-mothers—have we not both lost our children? Now we are alone.

MARTHA. Yes, alone. And therefore I will tell you—I have loved him more than all the world.

LONA. Martha? *(Seizes her arm.)* Is this the truth?

MARTHA. My whole life lies in the words. I have loved him, and waited for him. From summer to summer I have looked for his coming. And then he came—but he did not see me.

LONA. Loved him! and it was you that gave his happiness into his hands.

MARTHA. Should I not give him his happiness since I love him? Yes, I have loved him. My whole life has been for him, ever since he went away. What reason had I to hope, you ask? Well, I think I had *some* reason. But then, when he came again—it seemed as if everything were wiped out of his memory. He did not see me.

LONA. It was Dina that overshadowed you, Martha.

MARTHA. It is well that she did! When he went away we were of the same age; when I saw him again—oh, that horrible moment—it seemed to me that I was ten years older than he. He had lived in the bright, quivering sunshine, and drunk in youth and health at every breath; and here sat I the while, spinning and spinning—

LONA. The thread of his happiness, Martha.

MARTHA. Yes, it was gold I spun. No bitterness! We have been two good sisters to him, Lona, have we not?

LONA (*embraces her*). Martha!

(CONSUL BERNICK *comes out of his room.*)

BERNICK (*to the men inside*). Yes, yes, arrange it as you please. When the time comes, I shall be ready— (*Shuts the door.*) Ah, are you there? Listen, Martha, you must look to your dress a little. And tell Betty to do the same. I don't want anything gorgeous, you know; just homely neatness. But you must be quick.

LONA. And you must look pleased and happy, Martha; no tears in your eyes.

BERNICK. Olaf must come down too. I will have him at my side.

LONA. Hm, Olaf——

MARTHA. I'll tell Betty.

(*She goes out by the second door on the left.*)

LONA. Well, so the great and solemn hour has come.

BERNICK (*walks restlessly up and down*). Yes, it has come.

LONA. At such a time a man must feel proud and happy, I should think.

BERNICK (*looks at her*). Hm——

LONA. The whole town is to be illuminated, I hear.

BERNICK. Yes, I believe there's some such idea.

LONA. All the clubs will turn out with their banners. Your name will shine in letters of fire. To-night it will be telegraphed to all corners of the country—"Surrounded by his happy family, Consul Bernick received the homage of his fellow-citizens as one of the pillars of society."

BERNICK. So it will; and they will hurrah outside, and the people will call me forward into the doorway there, and I shall have to bow and thank them.

LONA. Have to——?

BERNICK. Do you think I feel happy at such a time?

LONA. No, I do not think that you can feel altogether happy.

BERNICK. Lona, you despise me.

LONA. Not yet.

BERNICK. And you have no right to. Not to *despise* me!—Lona, you cannot conceive how unspeakably alone I stand, here in this narrow, stunted

society—how I have had, year by year, to suppress my longing for a full and satisfying life-work. What are all my achievements, manifold as they seem? Scrap-work—odds and ends. There's no room here for other and larger work. If I tried to go a step in advance of the views and ideas of the day, all my power was gone. Do you know what we are, we, who are reckoned the pillars of society? We are the tools of society, neither more nor less.

LONA. Why do you only see this now?

BERNICK. Because I've been thinking much lately—since you came home—and most of all this evening. Oh, Lona, why didn't I know you to the core then, in the old days?

LONA. What then?

BERNICK. I should never have given you up; and, if I had had you, I shouldn't have stood where I stand now.

LONA. And do you never think what she might have been to you, she, whom you chose in my stead?

BERNICK. I know, at any rate, that she hasn't been anything that I required.

LONA. Because you have never shared your life-work with her; because you have never placed her in a free and true relation to you; because you have allowed her to go on pining under the weight of shame you cast upon those nearest her.

BERNICK. Yes, yes, yes; it all comes of the lie and the hypocrisy.

LONA. Then why not break with all this lying and hypocrisy?

BERNICK. Now? It's too late now, Lona.

LONA. Karsten, tell me—what satisfaction does this show and deception give you?

BERNICK. It gives *me* none. I must sink, along with the whole of this bungled social system. But a new generation will grow up after us; it's my son I am working for; it's for him that I am preparing a life-task. There will come a time when truth shall spread through our social life, and upon it he shall found a happier life than his father's.

LONA. With a lie for its ground-work? Reflect what it is you are giving your son for an inheritance.

BERNICK (*with suppressed despair*). I am giving him a thousand times worse inheritance than you know of. But, sooner or later, the curse must pass away. And yet—and yet—(*breaking off*). How could you bring all this upon my head! But it's done now. I must go on now. You *shall* not succeed in crushing me!

(HILMAR TÖNNESEN, *with an open note in his hand, and much discomposed, enters quickly from the right*).

HILMAR. Why, this is—— Betty, Betty!

BERNICK. What now? Are they coming already?

HILMAR. No, no; but I must speak to some one at once.

(*He goes out by the second door on the left.*)

LONA. Karsten, you say we came to crush you. Then let me tell you what stuff he is made of, this prodigal whom your moral society shrinks from as if he were plague-struck. He has nothing more to do with you, for he has gone away.

BERNICK. But he's coming back——

LONA. Johan will never come back. He has gone for ever, and Dina has gone with him.

BERNICK. Gone for ever? And Dina gone with him?

LONA. Yes, to be his wife. That's how these two strike your virtuous society in the face, as I once—— No matter!

BERNICK. Gone!—she too!—in the *Indian Girl*?

LONA. No; he dared not trust such a precious freight to that rotten old tub. Johan and Dina have sailed in the *Palm Tree*.

BERNICK. Ah! And so—in vain—— (*Rushes to the door of his office, tears it open, and calls in.*) Krap, stop the *Indian Girl*; she mustn't sail to-night.

KRAP (*inside*). The *Indian Girl* is already standing out to sea, Consul.

BERNICK (*shuts the door, and says feebly*). Too late—and all for nothing.

LONA. What do you mean?

BERNICK. Nothing, nothing. Leave me——!

LONA. Hm. Listen, Karsten. Johan told me to tell you that he leaves in my hands the good name he once lent you, and also that which you stole from him while he was far away. Johan will be silent; and I can do or let alone in this matter as I will. See, I hold in my hand your two letters.

BERNICK. You have them! And now—now you will—this very night—perhaps when the procession——

LONA. I did not come here to betray you, but to make you speak out of your own accord. I have

failed. Remain standing in the lie. See; I tear your two letters to pieces. Take the pieces; here they are. Now, there's nothing to bear witness against you, Karsten. Now you are safe; be happy too—if you can.

BERNICK (*deeply moved*). Lona, why did you not do this before? It's too late now; my whole life is ruined now; I cannot live after to-day.

LONA. What has happened?

BERNICK. Don't ask me. And yet I *must* live! I *will* live—for Olaf's sake. He shall restore all and expiate all——

LONA. Karsten——!

(HILMAR TÖNNESEN *enters again rapidly*.)

HILMAR. No one to be found; all away; not even Betty!

BERNICK. What's the matter with you?

HILMAR. I daren't tell you.

BERNICK. What is it? You must and shall tell me!

HILMAR. Well then, Olaf has run away in the *Indian Girl*.

BERNICK (*staggering backwards*). Olaf—in the *Indian Girl*! No, no!

LONA. Yes, he has! Now I understand; I saw him jump out of the window.

BERNICK (*at the door of his room, calls out in despair*). Krap, stop the *Indian Girl* at any cost!

KRAP (*comes into the room*). Impossible, Consul. How should we be able to——?

BERNICK. We *must* stop her! Olaf is on board!

KRAP. What?

RUMMEL (*enters from the office*). Olaf run away? Impossible!

SANDSTAD (*enters from the office*). He'll be sent back with the pilot, Consul.

HILMAR. No, no; he has written to me (*showing the letter*); he says he's going to hide among the cargo until they're fairly out to sea.

BERNICK. I shall never see him again!

RUMMEL. Oh, nonsense; a good strong ship, newly repaired——

VIGELAND (*who has also come in*). And in your own yard, too, Consul.

BERNICK. I shall never see him again, I tell you. I have lost him, Lona; and—I see it now—he has never been really mine. (*Listens.*) What's that?

RUMMEL. Music. The procession is coming.

BERNICK. I cannot, I will not receive any one.

RUMMEL. What are you thinking of? It's impossible——

SANDSTAD. Impossible, Consul; think how much is at stake for yourself.

BERNICK. What does it all matter to me now? Whom have I now to work for?

RUMMEL. Can you ask? You have us and the community.

VIGELAND. Yes, very true.

SANDSTAD. And surely, Consul, you don't forget that we——

(*MARTHA enters by the second door on the left. Low music is heard far down the street.*)

MARTHA. Here comes the procession; but Betty is not at home; I don't understand where she——

BERNICK. Not at home! There you see, Lona; no support either in joy or sorrow.

RUMMEL. Up with the blinds. Come and help me, Mr. Krap! You too, Sandstad! What a terrible pity that the family should be dispersed just at this moment; quite against the programme.

(The blinds are drawn up from the door and windows. The whole street is seen to be illuminated. On the house opposite is a large transparency with the inscription, "Long live Karsten Bernick, the Pillar of our Society!")

BERNICK *(shrinking back)*. Away with all this! I will not look at it! Out with it, out with it!

RUMMEL. Are you in your senses, may I ask?

MARTHA. What's the matter with him, Lona?

LONA. Hush! *(Whispers to her.)*

BERNICK. Away with the mocking words, I say! Don't you see, all these lights are gibing at us?

RUMMEL. Well, I must say——

BERNICK. Oh, you know nothing——! But I, I——! They're the lights in a dead-room!

KRAP. Hm!

RUMMEL. Well really, now—you make far too much of it.

SANDSTAD. The boy will have a trip over the Atlantic, and then you'll have him back again.

VIGELAND. Only put your trust in the Almighty, Consul.

RUMMEL. And in the ship, Bernick; it'll weather the storm safe enough.

KRAP. Hm!

RUMMEL. Now, if it were one of these coffin-ships we hear of in the great nations——

BERNICK. I can feel my very hair growing grey.

(MRS. BERNICK, *with a large shawl over her head, comes through the garden door.*)

MRS. BERNICK. Karsten, Karsten, do you know —— ?

BERNICK. Yes, I know—— ; but you—you who can see nothing—you who haven't a mother's care for him—— !

MRS. BERNICK. Oh, listen to me—— !

BERNICK. Why did you not watch over him? Now I have lost him. Give him back to me, if you can !

MRS. BERNICK. I can, I can ; I have got him !

BERNICK. You have got him !

THE MEN. Ah !

HILMAR. Ah, I thought so.

MARTHA. Now you have him again, Karsten !

LONA. Yes ; now win him as well !

BERNICK. You've got him ! Is this true ? Where is he ?

MRS. BERNICK. I shall not tell you until you have forgiven him.

BERNICK. Oh, forgiven, forgiven—— ! But how did you come to know—— ?

MRS. BERNICK. Do you think a mother doesn't see ? I was in mortal terror lest you should hear of it. A few words he let fall yesterday—— ; and his room being empty, and his knapsack and clothes gone——

BERNICK. Yes, yes—— ?

MRS. BERNICK. I ran; I got hold of Aune; we went out in his sailing-boat; the American ship was on the point of sailing. Thank Heaven, we arrived in time—we got on board—we looked in the hold—and we found him. Oh, Karsten, you mustn't punish him!

BERNICK. Betty!

MRS. BERNICK. Nor Aune either!

BERNICK. Aune? What of him? Is the *Indian Girl* under sail again?

MRS. BERNICK. No, that is just the thing——

BERNICK. Speak, speak!

MRS. BERNICK. Aune was as much alarmed as I; the search took some time; the darkness increased, and the pilot made objections; and so Aune ventured—in your name——

BERNICK. Well?

MRS. BERNICK. To stop the ship till to-morrow.

KRAP. Hm——

BERNICK. Oh, what unspeakable happiness!

MRS. BERNICK. You're not angry?

BERNICK. Oh, what surpassing happiness, Betty!

RUMMEL. Why, you're absurdly nervous.

HILMAR. Yes; whenever it comes to a little struggle with the elements, then—ugh!

KRAP (*at the window*). The procession is coming through the garden gate, Consul.

BERNICK. Yes, now let them come!

RUMMEL. The whole garden is full of people.

SANDSTAD. The very street is full.

RUMMEL. The whole town has turned out, Bernick. This is really an inspiring moment.

VIGELAND. Let us take it in a humble spirit, Mr. Rummel.

RUMMEL. All the banners are out. What a procession! Ah, here's the Committee, with Rector Rörlund at its head.

BERNICK. Let them come, I say!

RUMMEL. But listen; in your excited state of mind——

BERNICK. What then?

RUMMEL. Why, I shouldn't mind speaking for you.

BERNICK. No, thank you; to-night I shall speak myself.

RUMMEL. Do you know, then, what you've got to say?

BERNICK. Yes, don't be alarmed, Rummel—now I know what I have to say.

(The music has meanwhile ceased. The garden door is thrown open. RECTOR RÖRLUND enters at the head of the Committee, accompanied by two porters, carrying a covered basket. After them come townspeople of all classes, as many as the room will hold. An immense crowd, with banners and flags, can be seen out in the garden and in the street.)

RÖRLUND. Consul Bernick! I see from the surprise depicted in your countenance, that it is as unexpected guests we force ourselves upon you in your happy family-circle, at your peaceful hearth, surrounded by upright and public-spirited friends and fellow-citizens. Our excuse is that we obey a heartfelt impulse in bringing you our homage. It is not

the first time we have done so, but it is the first time we have greeted you thus publicly and unanimously. We have often expressed to you our gratitude for the broad moral basis upon which you have, so to speak, built up our society. This time we chiefly hail in you the clear-sighted, indefatigable, unselfish, nay, self-sacrificing citizen, who has taken the initiative in an undertaking which, we are credibly assured, will give a powerful impetus to the temporal prosperity and well-being of the community.

VOICES (*among the crowd*). Bravo, bravo!

RÖRLUND. Consul Bernick, you have for many years stood before our town as a shining example. I do not speak of your exemplary domestic life, your spotless moral record. Such things should be left to the closet, not proclaimed from the house-tops. But I speak of your activity as a citizen, as it lies open to the eyes of all. Well-appointed ships sail from your wharves, and fly our flag in the most distant seas. A numerous and happy body of workmen looks up to you as to a father. By calling into existence new branches of industry, you have brought comfort into hundreds of homes. In other words—you are in an eminent sense the pillar and corner-stone of this community.

VOICES. Hear, hear! Bravo!

RÖRLUND. And it is just this light of disinterestedness shining over all your actions that is so unspeakably beneficent, especially in these times. You are now on the point of procuring for us—I do not hesitate to say the word plainly and prosaically—a railway.

MANY VOICES. Bravo! bravo!

RÖRLUND. But this undertaking seems destined to meet with difficulties, principally arising from narrow and selfish interests.

VOICES. Hear, hear! Hear, hear!

RÖRLUND. It is no longer unknown that certain individuals, not belonging to our community, have been beforehand with the energetic citizens of this place, and have obtained possession of certain advantages, which should by rights have fallen to the share of our own town.

VOICES. Yes, yes! Hear, hear!

RÖRLUND. You are of course not ignorant of this deplorable fact, Consul Bernick. But, nevertheless, you steadily pursue your undertaking, well knowing that a patriotic citizen must not be exclusively concerned with the interests of his own parish.

DIFFERENT VOICES. Hm! No, no! Yes, yes!

RÖRLUND. We have assembled, then, this evening to do homage, in your person, to the ideal citizen—the model of all the civic virtues. May your undertaking contribute to the true and lasting welfare of this community! The railway is, no doubt, an institution which lays us open to the importation of elements of evil from without, but it is also an institution that helps us to get quickly rid of them. From elements of evil from without we cannot even now keep ourselves quite free. But I am happy to hear that we have, precisely on this festal evening, got rid more quickly than was expected of certain elements of this nature——

VOICES. Hush, hush!

RÖRLUND. This I accept as a good omen for the undertaking. I should not touch upon this point here, did we not know ourselves to be in a house where family ties are subordinated to the ethical ideal.

VOICES. Hear, hear! Bravo!

BERNICK (*at the same time*). Permit me—

RÖRLUND. Only a few words more, Consul Bernick. Your labours on behalf of this community have certainly not been undertaken in the hope of any tangible reward. But you cannot reject a slight token of your grateful fellow-citizens' appreciation, least of all on this momentous occasion, when, according to the assurances of practical men, we are standing on the threshold of a new era.

MANY VOICES. Bravo! Hear, hear! Hear, hear!

(*He gives the porters a sign; they bring forward the basket; members of the Committee take out and present, during the following speech, the articles mentioned.*)

RÖRLUND. Therefore, I have now, Consul Bernick, to hand you a silver coffee service. Let it grace your board when we in future, as so often in the past, have the pleasure of meeting under this hospitable roof. And you, too, gentlemen, who have so actively co-operated with the first man of our community, we would beg to accept a little remembrance. This silver goblet is for you, Mr. Rummel. You have many a time, amid the ring of wine-cups, done battle in eloquent words for the civic interests of our community; may you often find worthy opportunities to lift and drain this goblet. To you, Mr. Sandstad, I

hand this album, with photographs of your fellow-citizens. Your well-known and much-appreciated philanthropy has placed you in the happy position of counting among your friends members of all parties in the community. And to you, Mr. Vigeland, I have to offer, for the decoration of your domestic sanctum, this book of family devotion, on vellum, and luxuriously bound. Under the ripening influence of time, you have attained to an earnest view of life; your activity in the daily affairs of this world has for a long series of years been purified and ennobled by thoughts of things higher and holier. (*Turns towards the Crowd.*) And now, my friends, long live Consul Bernick and his fellow-workers! Hurrah for the Pillars of Society!

THE WHOLE CROWD. Long live Consul Bernick! Long live the Pillars of Society! Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!

LONA. I congratulate you, brother-in-law!

(*An expectant silence intervenes.*)

BERNICK (*begins earnestly and slowly*). My fellow-citizens,—your spokesman has said that we stand this evening on the threshold of a new era; and there, I hope, he was right. But in order that it may be so, we must bring home to ourselves the truth—the truth which has, until this evening, been utterly and in all things banished from our community. (*Astonishment among the audience.*) I must begin by rejecting the panegyric with which you, Rector Rörlund, according to use and wont on such occasions, have overwhelmed me. I do not deserve it; for until to-day I have not been disinterested in my dealings. If I

have not always striven for pecuniary profit, at least I am now conscious that a longing desire for power, influence, and respect has been the motive of most of my actions.

RUMMEL (*half aloud*). What next?

BERNICK. Before my fellow-citizens I do not reproach myself for this; for I still believe that I may place myself in the first rank among men of practical usefulness.

MANY VOICES. Yes, yes, yes!

BERNICK. But what I do blame myself for is my weakness in condescending to subterfuges, because I knew and feared the tendency of our society to suspect impure motives behind everything a man undertakes. And now I come to a case in point.

RUMMEL (*anxiously*). Hm—hm!

BERNICK. There are rumours abroad of great sales of property along the projected line. This property I have bought—all of it—I alone.

SUPPRESSED VOICES. What does he say? The Consul? Consul Bernick?

BERNICK. It is for the present in my hands. Of course, I have confided in my fellow-workers, Messrs. Rummel, Vigeland, and Sandstad, and we have agreed to—

RUMMEL. It's not true! Prove!—prove——!

VIGELAND. We have not agreed to anything!

SANDSTAD. Well, I must say——

BERNICK. Quite right; we have not yet agreed on what I was about to mention. But I am quite sure that these three gentlemen will acquiesce when I say that I have this evening determined to form a

joint-stock company for the exploitation of these lands; whoever will can have shares in it.

MANY VOICES. Hurrah! Long live Consul Bernick!

RUMMEL (*aside to BERNICK*). Such mean treachery!

SANDSTAD (*likewise*). Then you've been fooling us——!

VIGELAND. Why then, devil take——! Oh, Lord, what am I saying?

THE CROWD (*outside*). Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!

BERNICK. Silence, gentlemen. I have no right to this homage; for what I have now determined was not my first intention. My intention was to retain the whole myself; and I am still of opinion that the property can be most profitably worked if it remains in the control of one man. But it is for you to choose. If you wish it, I am willing to manage it for you to the best of my ability.

VOICES. Yes, yes, yes!

BERNICK. But, first, my fellow-citizens must know me to the core. Then let every one examine himself, and let us realise the prediction, that from this evening we begin a new era. The old, with its tinsel, its hypocrisy, its hollowness, its lying propriety, and its pitiful cowardice, shall lie behind us like a museum, open for instruction; and to this museum we shall present—shall we not, gentlemen?—the coffee service, and the goblet, and the album, and the family devotions on vellum and luxuriously bound.

RUMMEL. Yes, of course.

VIGELAND (*mutters*). If you have taken all the rest, why——

SANDSTAD. As you please.

BERNICK. And now to make my settlement with society. It has been said that elements of evil have left us this evening. I can add what you do not know; the man thus alluded to did not go alone; with him went, to become his wife——

LONA (*loudly*). Dina Dorf!

RÖRLUND. What?

MRS. BERNICK. What do you say?

(*There is great excitement.*)

RÖRLUND. Fled? Run away—with him! Impossible!

BERNICK. To become his wife, Rector Rörlund. And I have more to add. (*Aside.*) Betty, collect yourself to bear what is coming. (*Aloud.*) I say, let us bow before that man, for he has nobly taken another's sin upon himself. My fellow-citizens, I will come out of the lie; it had almost poisoned every fibre in my being. You shall know all. Fifteen years ago *I* was the guilty one.

MRS. BERNICK (*in a low and trembling voice*). Karsten!

MARTHA (*likewise*). Oh, Johan——!

LONA. Now at last you have found yourself again.

(*Voiceless astonishment among the audience.*)

BERNICK. Yes, my fellow-citizens, I was the guilty one, and he fled. The false and vile rumours which were afterwards current, it is now in no human power to disprove. But I cannot complain of this. Fifteen years ago I swung myself aloft upon these rumours; whether I am now to fall with them is for you to decide.

RÖRLUND. What a thunderbolt! The first man in the town! (*Aside to MRS. BERNICK.*) Oh, how I pity you, Mrs. Bernick!

HILMAR. Such a confession! Well, I must say——

BERNICK. But do not decide this evening. I ask every one to go home—to collect himself—to look into himself. When your minds are calm again, it will be seen whether I have lost or won by speaking out. Good-night! I have still much, very much, to repent of, but that concerns only my own conscience. Good-night! Away with all this show! We all feel that it is out of place here.

RÖRLUND. Certainly it is. (*Aside to MRS. BERNICK.*) Run away! Then she was unworthy of me, after all. (*Half aloud, to the Committee.*) Yes gentlemen, after this I think we had better go away quietly.

HILMAR. How, after this, one is to hold high the banner of the ideal, I for one—— Ugh!

(The announcement has meanwhile been whispered from mouth to mouth. All the members of the procession retire through the garden. RUMMEL, SANDSTAD, and VIGELAND go off disputing earnestly but softly. CONSUL BERNICK, MRS. BERNICK, MARTHA, LONA, and KRAP alone remain in the room. There is a short silence.)

BERNICK. Betty, can you forgive me?

MRS. BERNICK (*looks smilingly at him*). Do you know, Karsten, you have opened to me the brightest hope I have had for many years?

BERNICK. How?

MRS. BERNICK. For many years I have believed that you had once been mine, and I had lost you. Now I know that you never were mine; but I shall win you.

BERNICK (*embracing her*). Oh, Betty, you *have* won me. Through Lona I have at last learned to know you aright. But now let Olaf come.

MRS. BERNICK. Yes, now you shall have him. Mr. Krap——!

(*She whispers to him in the background. He goes out by the garden door. During the following all the transparencies and lights in the houses are put out one by one.*)

BERNICK (*softly*). Thanks, Lona; you have saved what is best in me—and for me.

LONA. What else did I intend?

BERNICK. Yes, what—what did you intend? I cannot fathom you.

LONA. Hm——

BERNICK. Then it was not hatred? Not revenge? Why did you come over?

LONA. Old friendship does not rust.

BERNICK. Lona!

LONA. When Johan told me all that about the lie, I swore to myself: The hero of my youth shall stand free and true.

BERNICK. Oh, how little have I, pitiful creature, deserved this of you!

LONA. Yes, if we women always asked for deserts, Karsten——!

(AUNE and OLAF enter from the garden.)

BERNICK (*rushing to him*). Olaf!

OLAF. Father, I promise never to do it again.

BERNICK. To run away?

OLAF. Yes, yes, I promise, father.

BERNICK. And I promise that you shall never have reason to. Henceforth you shall be allowed to grow up, not as the heir of my life-work, but as one who has a life-work of his own to come.

OLAF. And shall I be allowed to be what I like?

BERNICK. Whatever you like.

OLAF. Thank you, father. Then I shan't be a pillar of society.

BERNICK. Ah! Why not?

OLAF. Oh, I think it must be so tiresome.

BERNICK. You shall be yourself, Olaf; and the rest may go as it will. And you, Aune——

AUNE. I know it, Consul; I am dismissed.

BERNICK. We will remain together, Aune; and forgive me——

AUNE. What? The ship does not sail to-night!

BERNICK. Nor yet to-morrow. I gave you too short time. It must be looked to more thoroughly.

AUNE. It shall be, Consul, and with the new machines!

BERNICK. So be it—but thoroughly and uprightly. There are many among us that need thorough and upright repairs. So good-night, Aune.

AUNE. Good-night, Consul; and thanks, thanks, thanks.

(He goes out to the right.)

MRS. BERNICK. Now they are all gone.

BERNICK. And we are alone. My name no longer shines in the transparencies; all the lights are put out in the windows.

LONA. Would you have them lighted again?

BERNICK. Not for all the world. Where have I been? You will be horrified when you know. Now, I feel as if I had just recovered my senses after being poisoned. But I feel—I feel that I *can* be young and strong again. Oh, come nearer—closer around me. Come, Betty! Come, Olaf! Come, Martha! Oh, Martha, it seems as though I had never seen you during all these years.

LONA. No, I daresay not; your society is a society of bachelor-souls; you have no eyes for Woman.

BERNICK. True, true. And now, of course, it's agreed, Lona—you won't leave Betty and me?

MRS. BERNICK. No, Lona; you must not!

LONA. No; how could I think of going away and leaving you young people, just beginning life? Am I not your foster-mother? You and I, Martha, we are the two old aunts. What are you looking at?

MARTHA. How the sky is clearing; how it grows light over the sea. The *Palm Tree* has fortune with it—

LONA. And happiness on board.

BERNICK. And we—we have a long, earnest day of work before us; I most of all. But let it come; gather close around me, you true and faithful women. I have learned this, in these days: it is you women who are the pillars of society.

LONA. Then you have learned a poor wisdom, brother-in-law. (*Lays her hand firmly upon his shoulder.*) No, no; the spirits of Truth and Freedom—these are the Pillars of Society.

THE END.

A DOLL'S HOUSE.

(1879.)

Characters.

TORVALD HELMER.
NORA, *his wife*.
DOCTOR RANK.
MRS. LINDEN.¹
NILS KROGSTAD.
THE HELMERS' THREE CHILDREN.
ANNA,² *their nurse*.
A MAID-SERVANT.
A PORTER.

The action passes in Helmer's house (a flat) in Christiania.

¹ In the original "Fru Linde."

² In the original "Anne-Marie."

[TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.—I have to express my obligations, in the first place, to Miss Frances Lord's version of this play, which has afforded many suggestions; in the second place, to Miss Janet Achurch and Mr. Charles Charrington, who gave me most valuable assistance in revising the text for representation at the Novelty Theatre, London, June 1889.—W. A.]

A DOLL'S HOUSE.

Act First.

A room, comfortably and tastefully, but not expensively, furnished. In the back, to the right, a door leads to the hall; to the left another door leads to HELMER'S study. Between the two doors a pianoforte. In the middle of the left wall a door, and nearer the front a window. Near the window a round table with arm-chairs and a small sofa. In the right wall, somewhat to the back, a door, and against the same wall, further forward, a porcelain stove; in front of it a couple of arm-chairs and a rocking-chair. Between the stove and the side door a small table. Engravings on the walls. A what-not with china and bric-a-brac. A small book-case of handsomely-bound books. Carpet. A fire in the stove. It is a winter day.)

(A bell rings in the hall outside. Presently the outer door is heard to open. Then NORA enters, humming gaily. She is in outdoor dress, and carries several parcels, which she lays on the right-hand table. She leaves the door into the hall open behind her, and a PORTER is seen outside, carrying a Christmas-tree and a basket, which he gives to the MAID-SERVANT who has opened the door.)

NORA. Hide the Christmas-tree carefully, Ellen; the children mustn't see it before this evening, when it's lighted up. *(To the PORTER, taking out her purse.)* How much?

PORTER. Fifty öre.¹

NORA. There is a crown. No, keep the change.

(The PORTER thanks her and goes. NORA shuts the door. She continues smiling in quiet glee as she takes off her walking things. Then she takes from her pocket a bag of macaroons, and eats one or two. As she does so, she goes on tip-toe to her husband's door and listens.)

NORA. Yes; he is at home. *(She begins humming again, going to the table on the right.)*

HELMER *(in his room)*. Is that my lark twittering there?

NORA *(busy opening some of her parcels)*. Yes, it is.

HELMER. Is it the squirrel skipping about?

NORA. Yes!

HELMER. When did the squirrel get home?

NORA. Just this minute. *(Hides the bag of macaroons in her pocket and wipes her mouth.)* Come here, Torvald, and see what I've bought.

HELMER. Don't disturb me. *(A little later he opens the door and looks in, pen in hand.)* "Bought," did you say? What! All that? Has my little spendthrift been making the money fly again?

NORA. Why, Torvald, surely we can afford to launch out a little now! It's the first Christmas we haven't had to pinch.

HELMER. Come, come; we can't afford to squander money.

NORA. Oh yes, Torvald, do let's squander a little

¹ About sixpence. There are 100 öre in a krone or crown, which is worth thirteence halfpenny.

—just the least little bit, won't you? You know you'll soon be earning heaps of money.

HELMER. Yes, from New Year's Day. But there's a whole quarter before my first salary is due.

NORA. Never mind; we can borrow in the meantime.

HELMER. Nora! (*He goes up to her and takes her playfully by the ear.*) Thoughtless as ever! Supposing I borrowed a thousand crowns to-day, and you spent it during Christmas week, and then on New Year's Eve a tile blew off the roof and knocked my brains out——

NORA (*laying her hand on his mouth*). Hush! How can you talk so horridly?

HELMER. But supposing it were to happen—what then?

NORA. If anything so dreadful happened, I shouldn't care whether I was in debt or not.

HELMER. But what about the creditors?

NORA. They! Who cares for them? They're only strangers.

HELMER. Nora, Nora! What a woman you are! But seriously, Nora, you know my principles on these points. No debts! No credit! Home-life ceases to be free and beautiful as soon as it is founded on borrowing and debt. We two have held out bravely till now, and we won't give in at the last.

NORA (*going to the fire-place*). Very well—as you please, Torvald.

HELMER (*following her*). Come, come; my little lark mustn't let her wings droop like that. What?

Is the squirrel pouting there? (*Takes out his purse.*)
Nora, what do you think I've got here?

NORA (*turning round quickly*). Money!

HELMER. There! (*Gives her some notes.*) Of course I know all sorts of things are wanted at Christmas.

NORA (*counting*). Ten, twenty, thirty, forty. Oh! Thank you, thank you, Torvald. This will go a long way.

HELMER. I should hope so.

NORA. Yes, indeed; a long way! But come here, and see all I've been buying. And so cheap! Look, here's a new suit for Ivar, and a little sword. Here are a horse and a trumpet for Bob. And here are a doll and a cradle for Emmy. They're only common; but she'll soon pull them all to pieces. And dresses and neckties for the servants; only I should have got something better for dear old Anna.

HELMER. And what's in that other parcel?

NORA (*crying out*). No, Torvald, you're not to see that until this evening!

HELMER. Oh! Ah! But now tell me, you little rogue, what have you got for yourself?

NORA. For myself? Oh, I don't want anything.

HELMER. Nonsense! Just tell me something sensible you would like to have.

NORA. No, really I want nothing—— Well, listen, Torvald——

HELMER. Well?

NORA (*playing with his coat buttons, without looking him in the face*). If you really want to give me something, you might, you know, you might——

HELMER. Well well? Out with it!

NORA (*quickly*). You might give me money, Torvald. Only just what you think you can spare; then I can buy myself something with it later.

HELMER. But, Nora——

NORA. Oh, please do, dear Torvald, please do! Then I would hang the money in lovely gilt paper on the Christmas-tree. Wouldn't that be fun?

HELMER. What do they call the birds that are always making the money fly?

NORA. Yes, I know—spendthrifts,¹ of course. But please do as I say, Torvald. Then I shall have time to think what I want most. Isn't that very sensible now?

HELMER (*smiling*). Certainly; that is to say, if you really kept the money I gave you, and really bought yourself something with it. But it all goes in housekeeping, and for all sorts of useless things, and then I have to find more.

NORA. But, Torvald——

HELMER. Can you deny it, Nora dear? (*He puts his arm round her.*) It's a sweet little lark; but it gets through a lot of money. No one would believe how much it costs a man to keep such a little bird as you.

NORA. For shame! How can you say so? Why, I save as much as ever I can.

HELMER (*laughing*). Very true—as much as you can—but you can't.

NORA (*hums and smiles in quiet satisfaction*). Hm!

¹ "Spillefugl," literally, "playbird," means a gambler.

You should just know, Torvald, what expenses we larks and squirrels have.

HELMER. You're a strange little being! Just like your father—always eager to get hold of money, but the moment you have it, it seems to slip through your fingers; you never know what becomes of it. Well, one must take you as you are. It's in the blood. Yes, Nora, that sort of thing is inherited.

NORA. I wish I had inherited many of my father's qualities.

HELMER. And I don't wish you anything but just what you are—my own, sweet little song-bird. But, I say—it strikes me—you look so, so—what shall I call it?—so suspicious to-day——

NORA. Do I?

HELMER. You do, indeed. Look me full in the face.

NORA (*looking at him*). Well?

HELMER (*threatening with his finger*). Hasn't the little sweet-tooth been breaking the rules to-day?

NORA. No; how can you think of such a thing!

HELMER. Didn't she just look in at the confectioner's?

NORA. No, Torvald; really——

HELMER. Not to sip a little jelly?

NORA. No; certainly not.

HELMER. Hasn't she even nibbled a macaroon or two?

NORA. No, Torvald, indeed, indeed!

HELMER. Well well well; of course I'm only joking.

NORA (*goes to the table on the right*). I shouldn't think of doing what you disapprove of.

HELMER. No, I'm sure of that; and, besides, you've given me your word. (*Going towards her.*) Well, keep your little Christmas secrets to yourself, Nora darling. The Christmas-tree will bring them all to light, I daresay.

NORA. Have you remembered to ask Dr. Rank?

HELMER. No. But it's not necessary; he'll come as a matter of course. Besides, I shall invite him when he looks in to-day. I've ordered some capital wine. Nora, you can't think how I look forward to this evening!

NORA. And I too. How the children will enjoy themselves, Torvald!

HELMER. Ah! It's glorious to feel that one has an assured position and ample means. Isn't it delightful to think of?

NORA. Oh, it's wonderful!

HELMER. Do you remember last Christmas? For three whole weeks beforehand you shut yourself up till long past midnight to make flowers for the Christmas-tree, and all sorts of other marvels that were to have astonished us. I was never so bored in my life.

NORA. I didn't bore myself at all.

HELMER (*smiling*). And it came to so little after all, Nora.

NORA. Oh! Are you going to tease me about that again? How could I help the cat getting in and spoiling it all?

HELMER. To be sure you couldn't, my poor little Nora. You did your best to amuse us all, and that's

the main thing. But, all the same, it's a good thing the hard times are over.

NORA. Oh, isn't it wonderful?

HELMER. Now I needn't sit here boring myself all alone; and you needn't tire your dear eyes and your delicate little fingers——

NORA (*clapping her hands*). No, I needn't, need I, Torvald? Oh! it's wonderful to think of! (*Takes his arm.*) And now I'll tell you how I think we ought to manage, Torvald. As soon as Christmas is over—— (*The hall-door bell rings.*) Oh, there's a ring! (*Arranging the room.*) That's somebody come to call. How vexing!

HELMER. I'm "not at home" to callers; remember that.

ELLEN (*in the doorway*). A lady to see you, ma'am.

NORA. Show her in.

ELLEN (*to HELMER*). And the doctor has just come, sir.

HELMER. Has he gone into my study?

ELLEN. Yes, sir.

(HELMER goes into his study. ELLEN ushers in MRS. LINDEN, in travelling costume, and shuts the door behind her.)

MRS. LINDEN (*timidly and hesitatingly*). How do you do, Nora?

NORA (*doubtfully*). How do you do?

MRS. LINDEN. I daresay you don't recognise me?

NORA. No, I don't think—oh, yes!—I believe—— (*Effusively.*) What! Christina! Is it really you?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; really I!

NORA. Christina! and to think I didn't know you! But how could I—— (*More softly.*) How changed you are, Christina!

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, no doubt. In nine or ten years——

NORA. Is it really so long since we met? Yes, so it is. Oh! the last eight years have been a happy time, I can tell you. And now you've come to town? All that long journey in mid-winter! How brave of you!

MRS. LINDEN. I arrived by this morning's steamer.

NORA. To keep Christmas, of course. Oh, how delightful! What fun we shall have! Take your things off. Aren't you frozen? (*Helping her.*) There; now we'll sit cosily by the fire. No, you take the arm-chair; I'll sit in this rocking-chair. (*Seizes her hands.*) Yes, now I can see the dear old face again. It was only at the first glance.—But you're a little paler, Christina, and perhaps a little thinner.

MRS. LINDEN. And much, much older, Nora.

NORA. Yes, perhaps a little older—not much—ever so little. (*She suddenly stops; seriously.*) Oh! what a thoughtless wretch I am! Here I sit chattering on, and——Dear, dear Christina, can you forgive me?

MRS. LINDEN. What do you mean, Nora?

NORA (*softly*). Poor Christina! I forgot: you are a widow?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; my husband died three years ago.

NORA. I know, I know; I saw it in the papers.

Oh! believe me, Christina, I did mean to write to you; but I kept putting it off, and something always came in the way.

MRS. LINDEN. I can quite understand that, Nora dear.

NORA. No, Christina; it was horrid of me. Oh, you poor darling! how much you must have gone through! And he left you nothing?

MRS. LINDEN. Nothing.

NORA. And no children?

MRS. LINDEN. None.

NORA. Nothing, nothing at all?

MRS. LINDEN. Not even a sorrow or a longing to dwell upon.

NORA (*looking at her incredulously*). My dear Christina, how is that possible?

MRS. LINDEN (*smiling sadly and stroking her hair*). Oh, it happens sometimes, Nora.

NORA. So utterly alone! How dreadful that must be! I have three of the loveliest children. I can't show them to you just now; they're out with their nurse. But now you must tell me everything.

MRS. LINDEN. No, no; I want you to tell me—

NORA. No, you must begin; I won't be egotistical to-day. To-day I'll think only of you. Oh! I must tell you one thing—but perhaps you've heard of our great stroke of fortune?

MRS. LINDEN. No. What is it?

NORA. Only think! my husband has been made Manager of the Joint Stock Bank.

MRS. LINDEN. Your husband! Oh, how fortunate!

NORA. Yes; isn't it? A lawyer's position is so

uncertain, you see, especially when he won't touch any business that's the least bit—shady, as of course Torvald won't; and in that I quite agree with him. Oh! you can imagine how glad we are. He's to enter on his new position at the New Year, and then he'll have a large salary, and percentages. In future we shall be able to live quite differently—just as we please, in fact. Oh, Christina, I feel so light and happy! It's splendid to have lots of money, and no need to worry about things, isn't it?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; it must be delightful to have what you need.

NORA. No, not only what you need, but heaps of money—heaps!

MRS. LINDEN (*smiling*). Nora, Nora, haven't you learnt reason yet? In our school-days you were a shocking little spendthrift!

NORA (*quietly smiling*). Yes; Torvald says I am still. (*Threatens with her finger.*) But “Nora, Nora” is not so silly as you all think. Oh! I haven't had the chance to be much of a spendthrift. We have both had to work.

MRS. LINDEN. You too?

NORA. Yes, light fancy work: crochet, and embroidery, and things of that sort (*significantly*), and other work too. You know, of course, that Torvald left the Government service when we were married. He had little chance of promotion, and of course he required to make more money. But in the first year of our marriage he overworked himself terribly. He had to undertake all sorts of odd jobs, you know, and to work early and late. He couldn't stand it,

and fell dangerously ill. Then the doctors declared he must go to the South.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; you spent a whole year in Italy, didn't you?

NORA. We did. It wasn't easy to manage, I can tell you. It was just after Ivar's birth. But of course we had to go. Oh, it was a delicious journey! And it saved Torvald's life. But it cost a frightful lot of money, Christina.

MRS. LINDEN. So I should think.

NORA. Twelve hundred dollars! Four thousand eight hundred crowns!¹ Isn't that a lot of money?

MRS. LINDEN. How lucky you had the money to spend!

NORA. We got it from father, you must know.

MRS. LINDEN. Ah, I see. He died just about that time, didn't he?

NORA. Yes, Christina, just then. And only think! I couldn't go and nurse him! I was expecting little Ivar's birth daily; and then I had my poor sick Torvald to attend to. Dear, kind old father! I never saw him again, Christina. Oh! that's the hardest thing I've had to bear since my marriage.

MRS. LINDEN. I know how fond you were of him. And then you went to Italy?

NORA. Yes; we had the money, and the doctors insisted. We started a month later.

MRS. LINDEN. And your husband returned completely cured?

NORA. Sound as a bell.

¹ The dollar (4s. 6d.) was the old unit of currency in Norway. The crown was substituted for it shortly before the date of this play.

MRS. LINDEN. But—the doctor?

NORA. What about him?

MRS. LINDEN. I thought as I came in your servant announced the doctor——

NORA. Oh, yes; Doctor Rank. But he doesn't come as a doctor. He's our best friend, and never lets a day pass without looking in. No, Torvald hasn't had an hour's illness since that time. And the children are so healthy and well, and so am I. (*Jumps up and claps her hands.*) Oh, Christina, Christina, it's lovely to live and to be happy? Oh! but it's really too horrid of me! Here am I talking about nothing but my own concerns. (*Sits down upon a footstool close to her and lays her arms on CHRISTINA'S lap.*) Oh! don't be angry with me! Now just tell me, is it really true that you didn't love your husband? What made you take him then?

MRS. LINDEN. My mother was then alive, bed-ridden and helpless; and then I had my two younger brothers to think of. I thought it my duty to accept him.

NORA. Perhaps it was. I suppose he was rich then?

MRS. LINDEN. Very well off, I believe. But his business was uncertain. It fell to pieces at his death, and there was nothing left.

NORA. And then——?

MRS. LINDEN. Then I had to fight my way by keeping a shop, a little school, anything I could turn my hand to. The last three years have been one long struggle for me. But now it's over, Nora. My poor mother no longer needs me; she is at rest. And

the boys are in business, and can look after themselves.

NORA. How free your life must feel!

MRS. LINDEN. No, Nora; only inexpressibly empty. No one to live for! (*Stands up restlessly.*) That's why I couldn't bear to stay any longer in that out-of-the-way corner. Here it must be easier to find something really worth doing—something to occupy one's thoughts. If I could only get some settled employment—some office work.

NORA. But, Christina, that's such drudgery, and you look worn out already. You should rather go to some watering-place and rest.

MRS. LINDEN (*going to the window*). I have no father to give me the money, Nora.

NORA (*rising*). Oh! don't be vexed with me.

MRS. LINDEN (*going towards her*). My dear Nora, don't you be vexed with me. The worst of a position like mine is that it makes one bitter. You have no one to work for, yet you have to be always on the strain. You must live; and so you become selfish. When I heard of the happy change in your circumstances—can you believe it?—I rejoiced more on my own account than on yours.

NORA. How do you mean? Ah! I see. You mean Torvald could perhaps do something for you.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; I thought so.

NORA. And so he shall, Christina. Just you leave it all to me. I shall lead up to it beautifully, and think of something pleasant to put him in a good humour! Oh! I should so love to do something for you.

MRS. LINDEN. How good of you, Nora! And doubly good in you, who know so little of the troubles of life.

NORA. I? I know so little of——?

MRS. LINDEN (*smiling*). Oh, well! a little fancy-work, and so forth. You're a mere child, Nora.

NORA (*tosses her head and paces the room*). Oh, come, you mustn't be so patronising!

MRS. LINDEN. No?

NORA. You're like the rest. You all think I'm fit for nothing really serious——

MRS. LINDEN. Well——

NORA. You think I've had no troubles in this weary world.

MRS. LINDEN. My dear Nora, you've just told me all your troubles.

NORA. Pooh—those trifles! (*Softly*.) I haven't told you the great thing.

MRS. LINDEN. The great thing? What do you mean?

NORA. I know you look down upon me, Christina; but you've no right to. You're proud of having worked so hard and so long for your mother.

MRS. LINDEN. I'm sure I don't look down upon any one; but it's true I'm both proud and glad when I remember that I was able to make my mother's last days free from care.

NORA. And you're proud to think of what you have done for your brothers.

MRS. LINDEN. Have I not the right to be?

NORA. Yes, surely. But now let me tell you,

Christina.—I, too, have something to be proud and glad of.

MRS. LINDEN. I don't doubt it. But what do you mean?

NORA. Hush! Not so loud. Only think, if Torvald were to hear! He mustn't—not for worlds! No one must know about it, Christina—no one but you.

MRS. LINDEN. What can it be?

NORA. Come over here. (*Draws her down beside her on the sofa.*) Yes—I, too, have something to be proud and glad of. I saved Torvald's life!

MRS. LINDEN. Saved his life? How?

NORA. I told you about our going to Italy. Torvald would have died but for that.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes—and your father gave you the money.

NORA (*smiling*). Yes, so Torvald and every one believes; but——

MRS. LINDEN. But——?

NORA. Father didn't give us one penny. I found the money.

MRS. LINDEN. You? All that money?

NORA. Twelve hundred dollars. Four thousand eight hundred crowns. What do you say to that?

MRS. LINDEN. My dear Nora, how did you manage it? Did you win it in the lottery?

NORA (*contemptuously*). In the lottery? Pooh! Any fool could have done that!

MRS. LINDEN. Then where ever did you get it from?

NORA (*hums and smiles mysteriously*). Hm; tra-la-la-la!

MRS. LINDEN. Of course you couldn't borrow it.

NORA. No? Why not?

MRS. LINDEN. Why, a wife can't borrow without her husband's consent.

NORA (*tossing her head*). Oh! when the wife knows a little of business, and how to set about things, then——

MRS. LINDEN. But, Nora, I don't understand——

NORA. Well, you needn't. I never said I borrowed the money. Perhaps I got it another way. (*Throws herself back on the sofa.*) I may have got it from some admirer. When one is so—attractive as I am——

MRS. LINDEN. You're too silly, Nora.

NORA. Now I'm sure you're dying of curiosity, Christina——

MRS. LINDEN. Listen to me, Nora dear: haven't you been a little rash?

NORA (*sitting upright again*). Is it rash to save one's husband's life?

MRS. LINDEN. I think it was rash of you, without his knowledge——

NORA. But it would have been fatal for him to know! Can't you understand that? He was never to suspect how ill he was. The doctors came to me privately and told me his life was in danger—that nothing could save him but a trip to the South. Do you think I didn't try diplomacy first? I told him how I longed to have a trip abroad, like other young wives; I wept and prayed; I said he ought to think of my condition, and not to thwart me; and then I hinted that he could borrow the money. But

then, Christina, he got almost angry. He said I was frivolous, and that it was his duty as a husband not to yield to my whims and fancies—so he called them. Very well, thought I, but saved you must be; and then I found the way to do it.

MRS. LINDEN. And did your husband never learn from your father that the money was not from him?

NORA. No; never. Father died at that very time. I meant to have told him all about it, and begged him to say nothing. But he was so ill—unhappily, it wasn't necessary.

MRS. LINDEN. And you've never confessed to your husband?

NORA. Good heavens! What can you be thinking of? Tell him, when he has such a loathing of debt! And besides—how painful and humiliating it would be for Torvald, with his manly self-reliance, to know that he owed anything to me! It would utterly upset the relation between us; our beautiful, happy home would never again be what it is.

MRS. LINDEN. Will you never tell him?

NORA (*thoughtfully, half-smiling*). Yes, some time perhaps—after many years, when I'm—not so pretty. You mustn't laugh at me. Of course I mean when Torvald is not so much in love with me as he is now; when it doesn't amuse him any longer to see me skipping about, and dressing up and acting. Then it might do well to have something in reserve. (*Breaking off.*) Nonsense! nonsense! That time will never come. Now, what do you say to my grand secret, Christina? Am I fit for nothing now? You may

believe it has cost me a lot of anxiety. It has been no joke to meet my engagements punctually. You must know, Christina, that in business there are things called instalments, and quarterly interest, that are terribly hard to provide for. So I had to pinch a little here and there, wherever I could. I couldn't save anything out of the housekeeping, for of course Torvald had to live well. And I couldn't let the children go about badly dressed; all I got for them, I spent on them, the darlings.

MRS. LINDEN. Poor Nora! So it had to come out of your own pocket-money.

NORA. Yes, of course. After all, the whole thing was my doing. When Torvald gave me money for clothes and so on, I never spent more than half of it; I always bought the simplest things. It's a mercy that everything suits me so well, Torvald never noticed anything. But it was often very hard, Christina dear. For it's nice to be beautifully dressed—now, isn't it?

MRS. LINDEN. Indeed it is.

NORA. Well, and besides that, I made money in other ways. Last winter I was so lucky—I got a heap of copying to do. I shut myself up every evening and wrote far into the night. Oh, sometimes I was so tired, so tired. And yet it was splendid to work in that way and earn money. I almost felt as if I was a man.

MRS. LINDEN. Then how much have you been able to pay off?

NORA. Well, I can't precisely say. It's difficult to keep that sort of business clear. I only know that

I've paid everything I could scrape together. Sometimes I really didn't know where to turn. (*Smiles.*) Then I used to sit here and imagine that a rich old gentleman was in love with me——

MRS. LINDEN. What! What gentleman?

NORA. Oh, nobody!—that he was now dead, and that when his will was opened, there stood in large letters: Pay over at once everything of which I die possessed to that charming person, Mrs. Nora Helmer.

MRS. LINDEN. But, my dear Nora, what gentleman do you mean?

NORA. Dear dear, can't you understand? There wasn't any old gentleman: it was only what I used to dream and dream when I was at my wits' end for money. But it's all over now—the tiresome old creature may stay where he is for me: I care nothing for him, or his will; for now my troubles are over. (*Springing up.*) Oh, Christina, how glorious it is to think of! Free from cares! Free, quite free. To be able to play and romp about with the children; to have things tasteful and pretty in the house, exactly as Torvald likes it! And then the spring is coming, with the great blue sky. Perhaps then we shall have a short holiday. Perhaps I shall see the sea again. Oh, what a wonderful thing it is to live and to be happy!

(*The hall-door bell rings.*)

MRS. LINDEN (*rising*). There's a ring. Perhaps I had better go.

NORA. No; do stay. It's sure to be some one for Torvald.

ELLEN (*in the doorway*). If you please, ma'am, there's a gentleman to speak to Mr. Helmer.

NORA. Who is the gentleman?

KROGSTAD (*in the doorway to the hall*). It is I, Mrs. Helmer.

(ELLEN *goes*.)

(MRS. LINDEN *starts and turns away to the window*.)

NORA (*goes a step towards him, anxiously, half aloud*). You? What is it? What do you want with my husband?

KROGSTAD. Bank business—in a way. I hold a small post in the Joint Stock Bank, and your husband is to be our new chief, I hear.

NORA. Then it is——?

KROGSTAD. Only tiresome business, Mrs. Helmer; nothing more.

NORA. Then will you please go to his study.

(KROGSTAD *goes*. *She bows indifferently while she closes the door into the hall. Then she goes to the fireplace and looks to the fire*.)

MRS. LINDEN. Nora—who was that man?

NORA. A Mr. Krogstad. Do you know him?

MRS. LINDEN. I used to know him—many years ago. He was in a lawyer's office in our town.

NORA. Yes, so he was.

MRS. LINDEN. How he has changed!

NORA. I believe his marriage was unhappy.

MRS. LINDEN. And he's a widower now?

NORA. With a lot of children. There! Now it'll burn up. (*She closes the stove, and pushes the rocking-chair a little aside*.)

MRS. LINDEN. His business is not of the most creditable, they say.

NORA. Isn't it? I daresay not. I don't know. But don't let us think of business—it's so tiresome.

(DR. RANK *comes out of HELMER'S room.*)

RANK (*still in the doorway*). No, no; I won't keep you. I'll just go and have a chat with your wife. (*Shuts the door and sees MRS. LINDEN.*) Oh, I beg your pardon. I'm *de trop* here too.

NORA. No, not in the least. (*Introduces them.*)
Dr. Rank—Mrs. Linden.

RANK. Oh, indeed; I've often heard Mrs. Linden's name; I think I passed you on the stairs as I came up.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; I go so very slowly. Stairs try me so much.

RANK. You're not very strong?

MRS. LINDEN. Only overworked.

RANK. Ah! Then you've come to town to find rest in a round of dissipation?

MRS. LINDEN. I have come to look for employment.

RANK. Is that an approved remedy for overwork?

MRS. LINDEN. One must live, Doctor Rank.

RANK. Yes, that seems to be the general opinion.

NORA. Come, Doctor Rank, you yourself want to live.

RANK. To be sure I do. However wretched I may be, I want to drag on as long as possible. And my patients have all the same mania. It's just the same with people whose complaint is moral. At this very moment Helmer is talking to such a wreck as I mean.

MRS. LINDEN (*softly*). Ah!

NORA. Whom do you mean!

RANK. Oh, a fellow named Krogstad, a man you know nothing about—corrupt to the very core of his character. But even he began by announcing solemnly that he must live.

NORA. Indeed? Then what did he want with Torvald?

RANK. I really don't know; I only gathered that it was some bank business.

NORA. I didn't know that Krog—that this Mr. Krogstad had anything to do with the Bank?

RANK. He has some sort of place there. (*To MRS. LINDEN.*) I don't know whether, in your part of the country, you have people who go rooting and sniffing around in search of moral rotteness—whose policy it is to fill good places with men of tainted character whom they can keep under their eye and in their power? The honest men they leave out in the cold.

MRS. LINDEN. Well, I suppose the—delicate characters require most care.

RANK (*shrugs his shoulders*). There we have it! It's that notion that makes society a hospital.

(*NORA, deep in her own thoughts, breaks into half-stifled laughter and claps her hands.*)

RANK. What are you laughing at? Have you any idea what society is?

NORA. What do I care for your tiresome society? I was laughing at something else—something awfully amusing. Tell me, Dr. Rank, are all the employees at the Bank dependent on Torvald now?

RANK. Is that what strikes you as awfully amusing?

NORA (*smiles and hums*). Never mind, never mind! (*Walks about the room.*) Yes, it *is* amusing to think that we—that Torvald has such power over so many people. (*Takes the bag from her pocket.*) Doctor Rank, will you have a macaroon?

RANK. Oh, dear dear—macaroons! I thought they were contraband here.

NORA. Yes; but Christina brought me these.

MRS. LINDEN. What! I?

NORA. Oh, well! Don't be frightened. You couldn't possibly know that Torvald had forbidden them. The fact is, he's afraid of me spoiling my teeth. But, oh bother, just for once!—That's for you, Doctor Rank! (*Puts a macaroon into his mouth.*) And you too, Christina. And I'll have one at the same time—only a tiny one, or at most two. (*Walks about again.*) Oh dear, I *am* happy! There's only one thing in the world I really want.

RANK. Well; what's that?

NORA. There's something I should so like to say—in Torvald's hearing.

RANK. Then why don't you say it?

NORA. Because I daren't, it's so ugly.

MRS. LINDEN. Ugly?

RANK. In that case you'd better not. But to us you might. What is it you would so like to say in Helmer's hearing?

NORA. I should so love to say "Damn!"¹

¹ "Död og pine," literally "death and torture"; but by usage a comparatively mild oath.

RANK. Are you out of your mind?

MRS. LINDEN. Good gracious, Nora!

RANK. Say it—there he is!

NORA (*hides the macaroons*). Hush—sh—sh!

(HELMER comes out of his room, hat in hand, with his overcoat on his arm.)

NORA (*going towards him*). Well, Torvald dear, have you got rid of him?

HELMER. Yes; he's just gone.

NORA. May I introduce you? This is Christina, who has come to town—

HELMER. Christina? Pardon me, but I don't know—

NORA. Mrs. Linden, Torvald dear—Christina Linden.

HELMER (*to MRS. LINDEN*). A school-friend of my wife's, no doubt?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; we knew each other as girls.

NORA. And, only think! she has taken this long journey on purpose to speak to you.

HELMER. To speak to me!

MRS. LINDEN. Well, not quite—

NORA. You see, Christina is tremendously clever at accounts, and she's so anxious to work under a first-rate man of business in order to learn still more—

HELMER (*to MRS. LINDEN*). Very sensible indeed.

NORA. And when she heard you were appointed manager—it was telegraphed, you know—she started off at once, and—Torvald dear, for my sake, you must do something for Christina. Now can't you?

HELMER. It's not impossible. I presume you are a widow?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes.

HELMER. And have already had some experience in office-work?

MRS. LINDEN. A good deal.

HELMER. Well, then, it's very likely I may find a place for you.

NORA (*clapping her hands*). There now! There now!

HELMER. You have come at a lucky moment, Mrs. Linden.

MRS. LINDEN. Oh, how can I thank you——?

HELMER (*smiling*). There is no occasion. (*Puts on his overcoat.*) But for the present you must excuse me——

RANK. Wait; I'll go with you. (*Fetches his fur coat from the hall and warms it at the fire.*)

NORA. Don't be long, Torvald dear.

HELMER. Only an hour; not more.

NORA. Are you going too, Christina?

MRS. LINDEN (*putting on her walking things*). Yes; I must set about looking for lodgings.

HELMER. Then perhaps we can go together?

NORA (*helping her*). What a pity we haven't a spare room for you; but it's impossible——

MRS. LINDEN. I shouldn't think of troubling you. Good-bye, dear Nora, and thank you for all your kindness.

NORA. Good-bye for a little while. Of course you'll come back this evening. And you too, Doctor Rank. What! If you're well enough? Of course

you'll be well enough. Only wrap up warmly. (*They go out, talking, into the hall. Outside on the stairs are heard children's voices.*) There they are! There they are! (*She runs to the door and opens it.*) Come in! Come in! (*Bends down and kisses the children.*) Oh, my sweet darlings! Do you see them, Christina? Aren't they lovely?

RANK. Don't let's stand here chattering in the draught.

HELMER. Come, Mrs. Linden; only mothers can stand such a temperature.

(DR. RANK, HELMER, and MRS. LINDEN go down the stairs; ANNA enters the room with the children; NORA also, shutting the door.)

NORA. How fresh and bright you look! And what red cheeks you have! Like apples and roses. (*The children chatter to her during the following.*) Have you had great fun? That's splendid. Oh, really! You've been giving Emmy and Bob a ride on your sledge!—both at once, only think! Why, you're quite a man, Ivar. Oh, give her to me a little, Anna. My sweet little dolly! (*Takes the smallest from the nurse and dances with her.*) Yes, yes; mother will dance with Bob too. What! Did you have a game of snow-balls? Oh, I wish I'd been there. No; leave them, Anna; I'll take their things off. Oh, yes, let me do it; it's such fun. Go to the nursery; you look frozen. You'll find some hot coffee on the stove.

(*The NURSE goes into the room on the left. NORA takes off the children's things and throws them*

down anywhere, while the children talk to each other and to her.)

Really! A big dog ran after you all the way home? But he didn't bite you? No; dogs don't bite dear little dolly children. Don't peep into those parcels, Ivar. What is it? Wouldn't you like to know? Oh, take care—it'll bite! What! Shall we have a game? What shall we play at? Hide-and-seek? Yes, let's play hide-and-seek. Bob shall hide first. Am I to? Yes, let me hide first.

(She and the children play, with laughter and shouting, in the room and the adjacent one to the right. At last NORA hides under the table; the children come rushing in, look for her, but cannot find her, hear her half-choked laughter, rush to the table, lift up the cover and see her. Loud shouts. She creeps out, as though to frighten them. Fresh shouts. Meanwhile there has been a knock at the door leading into the hall. No one has heard it. Now the door is half opened and KROGSTAD appears. He waits a little; the game is renewed.)

KROGSTAD. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Helmer——

NORA *(with a suppressed cry turns round and half jumps up)*. Ah! What do you want?

KROGSTAD. Excuse me, the outer door was ajar—somebody must have forgotten to shut it——

NORA *(standing up)*. My husband is not at home.

KROGSTAD. I know it.

NORA. Then what do you want here?

KROGSTAD. To say a few words to you.

NORA. To me? *(To the children, softly.)* Go in

to Anna. What? No, the strange man won't hurt mamma. When he's gone we'll go on playing. (*She leads the children into the left-hand room, and shuts the door behind them. Uneasy, in suspense.*) It's with me you wish to speak?

KROGSTAD. Yes.

NORA. To-day? But it's not the first yet——

KROGSTAD. No, to-day is Christmas Eve. It will depend upon yourself whether you have a merry Christmas.

NORA. What do you want? I'm not ready to-day——

KROGSTAD. Never mind that just now. It's about another matter. You have a minute to spare?

NORA. Oh, yes, I suppose so; although——

KROGSTAD. Good. I was sitting in the restaurant opposite, and I saw your husband go down the street.

NORA. Well?

KROGSTAD. With a lady.

NORA. What then?

KROGSTAD. May I ask if the lady was a Mrs. Linden?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. Who has just come to town?

NORA. Yes. To-day.

KROGSTAD. I believe she's an intimate friend of yours?

NORA. Certainly. But I don't understand——

KROGSTAD. I used to know her too.

NORA. I know you did.

KROGSTAD. Ah, you know all about it! I

thought as much. Now, frankly, is Mrs. Linden to have a place in the Bank?

NORA. How dare you catechise me in this way, Mr. Krogstad—you, a subordinate of my husband's? But since you ask, you shall know. Yes, Mrs. Linden is to be employed. And it's I who recommended her, Mr. Krogstad. Now you know.

KROGSTAD. Then my guess was right.

NORA (*walking up and down*). You see one has a little wee bit of influence. It doesn't follow because one's only a woman that—when one is in a subordinate position, Mr. Krogstad, one ought really to take care not to offend anybody who—hm——

KROGSTAD. Who has influence?

NORA. Exactly!

KROGSTAD (*taking another tone*). Mrs. Helmer, will you have the kindness to employ your influence on my behalf?

NORA. What? How do you mean?

KROGSTAD. Will you be so good as to see that I retain my subordinate position in the Bank?

NORA. What do you mean? Who wants to take it from you?

KROGSTAD. Oh, you needn't pretend ignorance. I can very well understand that it cannot be pleasant for your friend to meet me; and I can also understand now for whose sake I am to be hounded out.

NORA. But I assure you——

KROGSTAD. Come now, once for all: there's time yet, and I advise you to use your influence to prevent it.

NORA. But, Mr. Krogstad, I have absolutely no influence.

KROGSTAD. None? I thought you just said——

NORA. Of course not in that sense. I! How should I have such influence over my husband?

KROGSTAD. Oh, I know your husband from our college days. I don't think he's firmer than other husbands.

NORA. If you talk disrespectfully of my husband, I must request you to go.

KROGSTAD. You are bold, madam.

NORA. I'm afraid of you no longer. When New Year's Day is over, I shall soon be out of the whole business.

KROGSTAD (*controlling himself*). Listen to me, Mrs. Helmer. If need be, I shall fight as though for my life to keep my little place in the Bank.

NORA. Yes, so it seems.

KROGSTAD. It's not only for the money: that matters least to me. It's something else. Well, I'd better make a clean breast of it. Of course you know, like every one else, that some years ago I—got into trouble.

NORA. I think I've heard something of the sort.

KROGSTAD. The matter never came into court; but from that moment all paths were barred to me. Then I took up the business you know about. I was obliged to grasp at something; and I don't think I've been one of the worst. But now I must clear out of it all. My sons are growing up; for their sake I must try to win back as much respectability as I can. This place in the Bank was the first step; and now your husband wants to kick me off the ladder back into the mire.

NORA. But I assure you, Mr. Krogstad, I haven't the power to help you.

KROGSTAD. You haven't the will; but I can compel you.

NORA. You won't tell my husband that I owe you money?

KROGSTAD. Hm; suppose I were to?

NORA. It would be shameful of you. (*With tears in her voice.*) This secret, which is my joy and my pride—that he should learn it in such an ugly, coarse way—and from you! It would involve me in all sorts of unpleasantness.

KROGSTAD. Only unpleasantness?

NORA (*hotly*). But just do it. It will be worst for you, for then my husband will see what a bad man you are, and then you certainly won't keep your place.

KROGSTAD. I asked if it was only domestic unpleasantness you feared?

NORA. If my husband gets to know about it, he will of course pay you off at once, and then we'll have nothing more to do with you.

KROGSTAD (*stepping a pace nearer*). Listen, Mrs. Helmer: either you have a weak memory, or you don't know much about business. I must make the position clear to you.

NORA. How so?

KROGSTAD. When your husband was ill, you came to me to borrow twelve hundred dollars.

NORA. I knew of nobody else.

KROGSTAD. I promised to find you the money——

NORA. And you did find it.

KROGSTAD. I promised to find you the money, under certain conditions. You were then so much taken up about your husband's illness, and so eager to have the wherewithal for your journey, that you probably didn't give much thought to the details. Let me remind you of them. I promised to find you the amount in exchange for a note of hand which I drew up.

NORA. Yes, and I signed it.

KROGSTAD. Quite right. But then I added a few lines, making your father security for the debt. Your father was to sign this.

NORA. Was to? He did sign it!

KROGSTAD. I had left the date blank. That is to say, your father was himself to date his signature. Do you recollect that?

NORA. Yes, I believe——

KROGSTAD. Then I gave you the paper to send to your father. Is not that so?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. And of course you did so at once? For within five or six days you brought me back the paper, signed by your father; and I gave you the money.

NORA. Well? Haven't I made my payments punctually?

KROGSTAD. Fairly—yes. But to return to the point: You were in great trouble at the time, Mrs. Helmer.

NORA. I was indeed!

KROGSTAD. Your father was very ill, I believe?

NORA. He was on his death-bed.

KROGSTAD. And died soon after?

NORA. Yes.

KROGSTAD. Tell me, Mrs. Helmer: do you happen to recollect the day of his death? The day of the month, I mean?

NORA. Father died on the 29th of September.

KROGSTAD. Quite correct. I have made inquiries. And here comes in the remarkable point—(*produces a paper*) which I cannot explain.

NORA. What remarkable point? I don't know——

KROGSTAD. The remarkable point, madam, that your father signed this paper three days after his death!

NORA. What! I don't understand——

KROGSTAD. Your father died on the 29th of September. But look here: he has dated his signature October 2nd! Is not that remarkable, Mrs. Helmer? (*NORA is silent.*) Can you explain it? (*NORA continues silent.*) It is noteworthy, too, that the words "October 2nd" and the year are not in your father's handwriting, but in one which I believe I know. Well, this may be explained; your father may have forgotten to date his signature; and somebody may have added the date at random, before the fact of your father's death was known. There's nothing wrong in that. Everything depends on the signature. Of course it is genuine, Mrs. Helmer? It was really your father who, with his own hand, wrote his name here?

NORA (*after a short silence, throws her head back and looks defiantly at him.*) No; I wrote father's name there.

KROGSTAD. Ah! Are you aware, madam, that that is a dangerous admission?

NORA. Why? you'll soon get your money.

KROGSTAD. May I ask you one more question? Why did you not send the paper to your father?

NORA. It was impossible. Father was ill. If I had asked him for his signature I should have had to tell him why I wanted the money; but he was so ill I really could not tell him that my husband's life was in danger. It was impossible.

KROGSTAD. Then it would have been better to have given up your tour.

NORA. No, I couldn't do that; my husband's life depended on that journey. I couldn't give it up.

KROGSTAD. And did you not consider that you were playing me false?

NORA. That was nothing to me. I didn't care in the least about you. I couldn't endure you for all the cruel difficulties you made, although you knew how ill my husband was.

KROGSTAD. Mrs. Helmer, you have evidently no clear idea of what you have really done. But I can assure you it is nothing more and nothing worse that made me an outcast from society.

NORA. You! You want me to believe that you did a brave thing to save your wife's life?

KROGSTAD. The law takes no account of motives.

NORA. Then it must be a very bad law.

KROGSTAD. Bad or not, if I lay this document before a court of law you will be condemned according to law.

NORA. I don't believe that. Do you mean to tell

me that a daughter has no right to spare her dying father anxiety?—that a wife has no right to save her husband's life? I don't know much about the law, but I'm sure you'll find, somewhere or another, that *that* is allowed. And you don't know that—you, a lawyer! You must be a bad one, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD. Possibly. But business—such business as ours—I do understand. You believe that? Very well; now do as you please. But this I may tell you, that if I'm flung into the gutter a second time, you shall keep me company.

(Bows and goes out through hall.)

NORA *(stands a while thinking, then tosses her head)*. Never! He wants to frighten me. I'm not so foolish as that. *(Begins folding the children's clothes. Pauses.)* But——? No, it's impossible. I did it for love!

CHILDREN *(at the door, left)*. Mamma, the strange man has gone now.

NORA. Yes, yes, I know. But don't tell any one about the strange man. Do you hear? Not even papa!

CHILDREN. No, mamma; and now will you play with us again?

NORA. No, no, not now.

CHILDREN. Oh do, mamma; you know you promised.

NORA. Yes, but I can't just now. Run to the nursery; I've so much to do. Run along, run along, and be good, my darlings! *(She pushes them gently into the inner room, and closes the door behind them. Sits on the sofa, embroiders a few stitches, but soon pauses.)* No! *(Throws down work, rises, goes to the*

hall door and calls out.) Ellen, bring in the Christmas-tree! (*Goes to table, left, and opens the drawer; again pauses.*) No, it's quite impossible!

ELLEN (*with Christmas-tree*). Where shall I stand it, ma'am?

NORA. There, in the middle of the room.

ELLEN. Shall I bring in anything else?

NORA. No, thank you, I have all I want.

(*ELLEN having put down the tree, goes out.*)

NORA (*busy dressing the tree*). There must be a candle here, and flowers there. The horrid man! Nonsense, nonsense! there's nothing in it. The Christmas-tree shall be beautiful. I'll do everything to please you, Torvald; I'll sing and dance, and——

(*Enter HELMER by the hall door, with bundle of documents.*)

NORA. Oh! You're back already?

HELMER. Yes. Has anybody been here?

NORA. Here? No.

HELMER. Curious! I saw Krogstad come out of the house.

NORA. Did you? Oh, yes, by-the-bye, he was here for a minute.

HELMER. Nora, I can see by your manner that he has been asking you to put in a good word for him?

NORA. Yes.

HELMER. And you were to do it of your own accord? You were to say nothing to me of his having been here! Didn't he suggest that too?

NORA. Yes, Torvald; but——

HELMER. Nora, Nora! And you could condescend to that! To speak to such a man, to make him a promise! And then to tell me an untruth about it!

NORA. An untruth!

HELMER. Didn't you say nobody had been here? (*Threatens with his finger.*) My little bird must never do that again! A song-bird must never sing false notes. (*Puts his arm round her.*) That's so, isn't it? Yes, I was sure of it. (*Lets her go.*) And now we'll say no more about it. (*Sits down before the fire.*) Oh, how cosy and quiet it is here! (*Glances into his documents.*)

NORA (*busy with the tree, after a short silence*).
Torvald.

HELMER. Yes.

NORA. I'm looking forward so much to the Stenborg's fancy ball the day after to-morrow.

HELMER. And I'm on tenterhooks to see what surprise you have in store for me.

NORA. Oh, it's too tiresome!

HELMER. What is?

NORA. I can't think of anything good. Everything seems so foolish and meaningless.

HELMER. Has little Nora made that discovery?

NORA (*behind his chair, with her arms on the back*).
Are you very busy, Torvald?

HELMER. Well——

NORA. What sort of papers are those?

HELMER. Bank business.

NORA. Already?

HELMER. I got the retiring manager to let me

make some changes in the staff, and so forth. This will occupy Christmas week. Everything will be straight by the New Year.

NORA. Then that's why that poor Krogstad——

HELMER. Hm.

NORA (*still leaning over the chair back and slowly stroking his hair*). If you hadn't been so very busy I should have asked you a great, great favour, Torvald.

HELMER. What can it be? Let's hear it.

NORA. Nobody has such exquisite taste as you; and I should so love to look well at the fancy ball. Torvald, dear, couldn't you take me in hand, and settle what I'm to be, and arrange my costume for me?

HELMER. Aha! So my wilful little woman is at a loss, and making signals of distress.

NORA. Yes, please, Torvald. I can't get on without you.

HELMER. Well, well, I'll think it over, and we'll soon hit upon something.

NORA. Oh, how good that is of you! (*Goes to the tree again; pause.*) How well the red flowers show. Tell me, was it anything so very dreadful this Krogstad got into trouble about?

HELMER. Forgery, that's all. Don't you know what that means?

NORA. Mayn't he have been driven to it by need?

HELMER. Yes, or like so many others, he may have done it in pure heedlessness. I'm not so hard-hearted as to condemn a man absolutely for a single fault.

NORA. No, surely not, Torvald.

HELMER. Many a man can retrieve his character, if he owns his crime and takes the punishment.

NORA. Crime?

HELMER. But Krogstad didn't do that. He resorted to tricks and dodges, and it's that that has corrupted him.

NORA. Do you think that——?

HELMER. Just think how a man with a thing of that sort on his conscience must be always lying and canting and shamming. Think of the mask he must wear even towards his own wife and children. It's worst for the children, Nora!

NORA. Why?

HELMER. Because such a dust-cloud of lies poisons and contaminates the whole air of home. Every breath the children draw contains some germ of evil.

NORA (*closer behind him*). Are you sure of that?

HELMER. As a lawyer, my dear, I've seen it often enough. Nearly all cases of early corruption may be traced to lying mothers.

NORA. Why—mothers?

HELMER. It generally comes from the mother's side; but of course the father's influence may act in the same way. And this Krogstad has been poisoning his own children for years past by a life of lies and hypocrisy—that's why I call him morally ruined. (*Stretches out his hands towards her.*) So my sweet little Nora must promise not to plead his cause. Shake hands upon it. Come, come, what's this? Give me your hand. That's right. Then it's a bargain. I assure you it would have been impossible for me to work with him. It gives me a positive

sense of physical discomfort to come in contact with such people.

(NORA *snatches her hand away, and moves to the other side of the Christmas-tree.*)

NORA. How warm it is here ; and I have so much to do.

HELMER. Yes, and I must try to get some of of these papers looked through before dinner ; and I'll think over your costume too. Perhaps I may even find something to hang in gilt paper on the Christmas-tree ! (*Lays his hand on her head.*) My precious little song-bird !

(*He goes into his room and shuts the door behind him.*)

NORA (*softly, after a pause.*) It can't be. It's impossible. It must be impossible !

ANNA (*at the door, left.*) The little ones are begging so prettily to come to mamma.

NORA. No, no, don't let them come to me ! Keep them with you, Anna.

ANNA. Very well, ma'am. (*Shuts the door.*)

NORA (*pale with terror.*) Corrupt my children !— Poison my home ! (*Short pause. She raises her head.*) It's not true ! It can never, never be true !

Act Second.

(The same room. In the corner, beside the piano, stands the Christmas-tree, stripped, and with the candles burnt out. NORA'S out-door things lie on the sofa.)

(NORA discovered, walking about restlessly. She stops by the sofa, takes up her cloak, then lays it down again.)

NORA. There's somebody coming. *(Goes to hall door, listens.)* Nobody; nobody's likely to come to-day, Christmas-day; nor to-morrow either. But perhaps—— *(Opens the door and looks out.)* No, nothing in the letter-box; quite empty. *(Comes forward.)* Stuff and nonsense! Of course he only meant to frighten me. There's no fear of any such thing. It's impossible! Why, I have three little children.

(Enter ANNA from the left with a large cardboard box.)

ANNA. At last I've found the box with the fancy dress.

NORA. Thanks, put it down on the table.

ANNA *(does so)*. But it's very much out of order.

NORA. Oh, I wish I could tear it into a hundred thousand pieces.

ANNA. Oh, no. It can easily be put to rights—just a little patience.

NORA. I'll go and get Mrs. Linden to help me.

ANNA. Going out again? In such weather as this! You'll catch cold, ma'am, and be ill.

NORA. Worse things might happen. What are the children doing?

ANNA. They're playing with their Christmas presents, poor little dears; but——

NORA. Do they often ask for me?

ANNA. You see they've been so used to having their mamma with them.

NORA. Yes; but Anna, in future I can't have them so much with me.

ANNA. Well, little children get used to anything.

NORA. Do you think they do? Do you believe they would forget their mother if she went quite away?

ANNA. Gracious me! Quite away?

NORA. Tell me, Anna—— I've so often wondered about it—how could you bring yourself to give your child up to strangers?

ANNA. I had to when I came to nurse my little Miss Nora.

NORA. But how could you make up your mind to it?

ANNA. When I had the chance of such a good place? A poor girl who's been in trouble must take what comes. That wicked man did nothing for me.

NORA. But your daughter must have forgotten you.

ANNA. Oh, no, ma'am, that she hasn't. She wrote to me both when she was confirmed and when she was married.

NORA (*embracing her*). Dear old Anna—you were a good mother to me when I was little.

ANNA. My poor little Nora had no mother but me.

NORA. And if my little ones had nobody else, I'm sure you would—— Nonsense, nonsense! (*Opens the box.*) Go in to the children. Now I must—— To-morrow you shall see how beautiful I'll be.

ANNA. I'm sure there will be no one at the ball so beautiful as my Miss Nora. (*She goes into the room on the left.*)

NORA (*takes the costume out of the box, but soon throws it down again*). Oh, if I dared go out. If only nobody would come. If only nothing would happen here in the meantime. Rubbish; nobody will come. Only not to think. What a delicious muff! Beautiful gloves, beautiful gloves! Away with it all—away with it all! One, two, three, four, five, six—(*with a scream*) Ah, there they come—(*goes towards the door, then stands undecidedly*).

(MRS. LINDEN *enters from the hall, where she has taken off her things.*)

NORA. Oh, it's you, Christina. Is nobody else there? How delightful of you to come.

MRS. LINDEN. I hear you called at my lodgings.

NORA. Yes, I was just passing. I did so want you to help me. Let's sit here on the sofa—so. To-morrow evening there's to be a fancy ball at Consul Stenborg's overhead, and Torvald wants me to appear as a Neapolitan fisher-girl, and dance the tarantella; I learned it at Capri.

MRS. LINDEN. I see—quite a performance.

NORA. Yes, Torvald wishes it. Look, this is the costume. Torvald had it made for me in Italy; but now it's all so torn, I don't know——

MRS. LINDEN. Oh! We'll soon set that to rights. It's only the trimming that's got loose here and there. Have you a needle and thread? Ah, here's the very thing.

NORA. Oh, how kind of you.

MRS. LINDEN. So you're to be in costume tomorrow, Nora? I'll tell you what—I shall come in for a moment to see you in all your glory. But I've quite forgotten to thank you for the pleasant evening yesterday.

NORA (*rises and walks across room*). Oh, yesterday, it didn't seem so pleasant as usual. You should have come a little sooner, Christina. Torvald has certainly the art of making home bright and beautiful.

MRS. LINDEN. You too, I should think, or you wouldn't be your father's daughter. But tell me—is Doctor Rank always so depressed as he was last evening?

NORA. No, yesterday it was particularly striking. You see he has a terrible illness. He has spinal consumption, poor fellow. They say his father led a terrible life—kept mistresses and all sorts of things—so the son has been sickly from his childhood, you understand.

MRS. LINDEN (*lets her sewing fall into her lap*). Why, my darling Nora, how do you learn such things?

NORA (*walking*). Oh! When one has three

children, one has visits from women who know something of medicine—and they talk of this and that.

MRS. LINDEN (*goes on sewing; a short pause*). Does Doctor Rank come here every day?

NORA. Every day. He's been Torvald's friend from boyhood, and he's a good friend of mine too. Doctor Rank is quite one of the family.

MRS. LINDEN. But tell me—is he quite sincere? I mean, doesn't he like to say flattering things to people?

NORA. On the contrary. Why should you think so?

MRS. LINDEN. When you introduced us yesterday he declared he had often heard my name; but I noticed your husband had no notion who I was. How could Dr. Rank——?

NORA. Yes, he was quite right, Christina. You see, Torvald loves me so indescribably, he wants to have me all to himself, as he says. When we were first married he was almost jealous if I even mentioned one of the people at home; so I naturally let it alone. But I often talk to Doctor Rank about the old times, for he likes to hear about them.

MRS. LINDEN. Listen to me, Nora! You're still a child in many ways. I'm older than you, and have had more experience. I'll tell you something: You ought to get clear of the whole affair with Doctor Rank.

NORA. What affair?

MRS. LINDEN. You were talking yesterday of a rich admirer who was to find you money——

NORA. Yes, one who never existed, worse luck. What then?

MRS. LINDEN. Has Doctor Rank money?

NORA. Yes, he has.

MRS. LINDEN. And nobody to provide for?

NORA. Nobody. But——

MRS. LINDEN. And he comes here every day?

NORA. Yes, every day.

MRS. LINDEN. I should have thought he'd have had better taste.

NORA. I don't understand you.

MRS. LINDEN. Don't pretend, Nora. Do you suppose I don't guess who lent you the twelve hundred dollars?

NORA. Are you out of your senses? You think *that!* A friend who comes here every day! How painful that would be!

MRS. LINDEN. Then it really is not he?

NORA. No, I assure you. It never for a moment occurred to me—— Besides, at that time he had nothing to lend; he came into his property afterwards.

MRS. LINDEN. Well, I believe that was lucky for you, Nora dear.

NORA. No, really, it would never have struck me to ask Dr. Rank. But I'm certain that if I did——

MRS. LINDEN. But of course you never would?

NORA. Of course not. It's inconceivable that it should ever be necessary. But I'm quite sure that if I spoke to Dr. Rank——

MRS. LINDEN. Behind your husband's back?

NORA. I must get out of the other thing; that's behind his back too. I must get out of that.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, yes, I told you so yesterday; but——

NORA (*walking up and down*). A man can manage these things much better than a woman.

MRS. LINDEN. One's own husband, yes.

NORA. Nonsense. (*Stands still*). When everything is paid, one gets back the paper?

MRS. LINDEN. Of course.

NORA. And can tear it into a hundred thousand pieces, and burn it, the nasty, filthy thing!

MRS. LINDEN (*looks at her fixedly, lays down her work, and rises slowly*). Nora, you're hiding something from me.

NORA. Can you see it in my face?

MRS. LINDEN. Something has happened since yesterday morning. Nora, what is it?

NORA (*going towards her*). Christina—— (*Listens*). Hush! There's Torvald coming home. Here, go into the nursery. Torvald can't bear to see dress-making. Get Anna to help you.

MRS. LINDEN (*gathers some of the things together*). Very well; but I shan't go away until you've told me all about it.

(*She goes out to the left, as HELMER enters from the hall.*)

NORA (*runs to meet him*). Oh, how I've been longing for you to come, Torvald dear!

HELMER. Was the dressmaker here?

NORA. No, Christina. She's helping me with my costume. You'll see how nice I shall look.

HELMER. Yes, wasn't that a lucky thought of mine?

NORA. Splendid. But isn't it good of me, too, to have given in to you?

HELMER (*takes her under the chin*). Good of you! To give in to your own husband? Well well, you little madcap, I know you don't mean it. But I won't disturb you. I daresay you want to be "trying on."

NORA. And you're going to work, I suppose?

HELMER. Yes (*shows her a bundle of papers*). Look here (*goes toward his room*). I've just come from the Bank.

NORA. Torvald.

HELMER (*stopping*). Yes?

NORA. If your little squirrel were to beg you for something so prettily——

HELMER. Well?

NORA. Would you do it?

HELMER. I must know first what it is.

NORA. The squirrel would skip about and play all sorts of tricks if you would only be nice and kind.

HELMER. Come, then, out with it.

NORA. Your lark would twitter from morning till night——

HELMER. Oh, that she does in any case.

NORA. I'll be an elf and dance in the moonlight for you, Torvald.

HELMER. Nora,—you can't mean what you were hinting at this morning?

NORA (*coming nearer*). Yes, Torvald, I beg and implore you.

HELMER. Have you really the courage to begin that again?

NORA. Yes, yes; for my sake, you must let Krogstad keep his place in the Bank.

HELMER. My dear Nora, it's his place I intend for Mrs. Linden.

NORA. Yes, that's so good of you. But instead of Krogstad, you could dismiss some other clerk.

HELMER. Why, this is incredible obstinacy! Because you thoughtlessly promised to put in a word for him, I am to——

NORA. It's not that, Torvald. It's for your own sake. This man writes for the most scurrilous newspapers; you said so yourself. He can do you such a lot of harm. I'm terribly afraid of him.

HELMER. Oh, I understand; it's old recollections that are frightening you.

NORA. What do you mean?

HELMER. Of course you're thinking of your father.

NORA. Yes, of course. Only think of the shameful things wicked people used to write about father. I believe they'd have got him dismissed if you hadn't been sent to look into the thing, and been kind to him and helped him.

HELMER. My dear Nora, between your father and me there is all the difference in the world. Your father was not altogether unimpeachable. I am; and I hope to remain so.

NORA. Oh, no one knows what wicked men can hit upon. We could live so happily now, in our cosy, quiet home, you and I and the children, Torvald! That's why I beg and implore you——

HELMER. And it's just by pleading his cause that you make it impossible for me to keep him. It's already known at the Bank that I intend to dismiss Krogstad. If it were now reported that the new manager let himself be turned round his wife's little finger——

NORA. What then?

HELMER. Oh, nothing, so long as a wilful woman can have her way—I am to make myself the laughing-stock of every one, and set people saying I'm under petticoat government? Take my word for it, I should soon feel the consequences. And besides, there's one thing that makes Krogstad impossible for me to work with.

NORA. What thing?

HELMER. I could perhaps have overlooked his shady character at a pinch——

NORA. Yes, couldn't you, Torvald?

HELMER. And I hear he's good at his work. But the fact is, he was a college chum of mine—there was one of those rash friendships between us that one so often repents of later. I don't mind confessing it—he calls me by my Christian name;¹ and he insists on doing it even when others are present. He delights in putting on airs of familiarity—Torvald here, Torvald there! I assure you it's most painful to me. He would make my position at the Bank perfectly unendurable.

NORA. Torvald, you're not serious?

HELMER. No? Why not?

¹ In the original, "We say 'thou' to each other."

NORA. That's such a petty reason.

HELMER. What! Petty! Do you consider me petty?

NORA. No, on the contrary, Torvald dear; and that's just why——

HELMER. Never mind, you call my motives petty; then I must be petty too. Petty! Very well. Now we'll put an end to this, once for all. (*Goes to the door into the hall and calls.*) Ellen!

NORA. What do you want?

HELMER (*searching among his papers*). To settle the thing. (*ELLEN enters.*) There, take this letter, give it to a messenger. See that he takes it at once. The address is on it. Here's the money.

ELLEN. Very well, sir. (*Goes with the letter.*)

HELMER (*putting his papers together*). There, Madam Obstinacy.

NORA (*breathless*). Torvald, what was in that letter?

HELMER. Krogstad's dismissal.

NORA. Call it back again, Torvald! There's still time. Oh, Torvald, get it back again! For my sake, for your own, for the children's sake! Do you hear, Torvald? Do it. You don't know what that letter may bring upon us all.

HELMER. Too late.

NORA. Yes, too late.

HELMER. My dear Nora, I forgive your anxiety, though it's anything but flattering to me. Why should I be afraid of a blackguard scribbler's spite? But I forgive you all the same, for it's a proof of your great love for me. (*Takes her in his arms.*) That's

as it should be, my own dear Nora. Let what will happen—when the time comes, I shall have strength and courage enough. You shall see; my shoulders are broad enough to bear the whole burden.

NORA (*terror-struck*). What do you mean by that?

HELMER. The whole burden, I say.

NORA (*with decision*). That you shall never, never do!

HELMER. Very well; then we'll share it, Nora, as man and wife. (*Petting her.*) Are you satisfied now? Come, come, come, don't look like a scared dove. It is all nothing—fancy. Now you must play the tarantella through and practise with the tambourine. I shall sit in my inner room and shut both doors, so that I shall hear nothing. You can make as much noise as you please. (*Turns round in doorway.*) And when Rank comes, just tell him where I'm to be found. (*He nods to her, and goes with his papers into his room, closing the door.*)

NORA (*bewildered with terror, stands as though rooted to the ground, and whispers*). He would do it. Yes, he would do it. He would do it, in spite of all the world. No, never that, never, never! Anything rather than that! Oh, for some way of escape! What to do! (*Hall bell rings.*) Doctor Rank——! Anything rather than that—anything, anything!

(NORA *draws her hands over her face, pulls herself together, goes to the door and opens it. RANK stands outside hanging up his great-coat. During the following it grows dark.*)

NORA. Good afternoon, Dr. Rank. I knew you

by your ring. But you mustn't go to Torvald now. I believe he's busy.

RANK. And you?

NORA. Oh, you know very well, I've always time for you.

RANK. Thank you. I shall avail myself of your kindness as long as I can!

NORA. What do you mean? As long as you can?

RANK. Yes. Does that frighten you?

NORA. I think it's an odd expression. Do you expect anything to happen?

RANK. Something I have long been prepared for; but I didn't think it would come so soon.

NORA (*seizing his arm*). What is it, Dr. Rank? You must tell me.

RANK (*sitting down by the stove*). I am running down hill. There's no help for it.

NORA (*draws a long breath of relief*). It's you——?

RANK. Who else should it be?—Why lie to oneself? I'm the most wretched of all my patients, Mrs. Helmer. I've been auditing my life account—bankrupt! Before a month is over I shall lie rotting in the churchyard.

NORA. Oh! What an ugly way to talk!

RANK. The thing itself is so confoundedly ugly, you see. But the worst of it is, so many other ugly things have to be gone through first. There's one last investigation to be made, and when that's over I shall know exactly when the break-up will begin. There's one thing I want to say to you: Helmer's delicate nature shrinks so from all that is horrible; I will not have him in my sick room.

NORA. But, Doctor Rank——

RANK. I won't have him, I say—not on any account! I shall lock my door against him. As soon as I've ascertained the worst, I shall send you my visiting-card with a black cross on it; and then you'll know that the horror has begun.

NORA. Why, you're perfectly unreasonable to-day; and I did so want you to be in a really good humour.

RANK. With death staring me in the face? And to suffer thus for another's sin! Where's the justice of it? And in every family you can see some such inexorable retribution.

NORA (*stopping her ears*). Nonsense, nonsense; now cheer up.

RANK. Well, after all, the whole thing's only worth laughing at. My poor innocent spine must do penance for my father's wild oats.

NORA (*at table, left*). I suppose he was too fond of asparagus and Strasbourg pâté, wasn't he?

RANK. Yes; and truffles.

NORA. Yes, truffles, to be sure. And oysters, I believe?

RANK. Yes, oysters; oysters, of course.

NORA. And then all the port and champagne! It's sad all these good things should attack the spine.

RANK. Especially when the spine attacked never had any good of them.

NORA. Yes, that's the worst of it.

RANK (*looks at her searchingly*). Hm——

NORA (*a moment later*). Why did you smile?

RANK. No; it was you that laughed.

NORA. No; it was you that smiled, Doctor Rank.

RANK (*standing up*). You're deeper than I thought.

NORA. I'm in such a crazy mood to-day.

RANK. So it seems.

NORA (*with her hands on his shoulders*). Dear, dear Dr. Rank, death shall not take you away from Torvald and me.

RANK. Oh, you'll easily get over the loss. The absent are soon forgotten.

NORA (*looks at him anxiously*). Do you think so?

RANK. People make fresh ties, and then——

NORA. Who make fresh ties?

RANK. You and Helmer will, when I'm gone. You yourself are taking time by the forelock, it seems to me. What was that Mrs. Linden doing here yesterday?

NORA. Oh, you're surely not jealous of Christina?

RANK. Yes, I am. She will be my successor in this house. When I'm gone, this woman will perhaps——

NORA. Hush! Not so loud; she's in there.

RANK. To-day as well? You see!

NORA. Only to put my costume in order—how unreasonable you are! (*Sits on sofa.*) Now do be good, Dr. Rank! To-morrow you shall see how beautifully I'll dance; and then you may fancy that I'm doing it all to please you—and of course Torvald as well. (*Takes various things out of box.*) Dr. Rank, sit here, and I'll show you something.

RANK (*sitting*). What is it?

NORA. Look here. Look!

RANK. Silk stockings.

NORA. Flesh-coloured. Aren't they lovely? Oh, it's so dark here now; but to-morrow—No, no, no, you must only look at the feet. Oh, well, I suppose you may look at the rest too.

RANK. Hm——

NORA. What are you looking so critical about? Do you think they won't fit me?

RANK. I can't possibly have any valid opinion on that point.

NORA (*looking at him a moment*). For shame! (*Hits him lightly on the ear with the stockings.*) Take that. (*Rolls them up again.*)

RANK. And what other wonders am I to see?

NORA. You shan't see any more, for you don't behave nicely. (*She hums a little and searches among the things.*)

RANK (*after a short silence*). When I sit here gossiping with you, I simply can't imagine what would have become of me if I had never entered this house.

NORA (*smiling*). Yes, I think you do feel at home with us.

RANK (*more softly—looking straight before him*). And now to have to leave it all——

NORA. Nonsense. You shan't leave us.

RANK (*in the same tone*). And not to be able to leave behind the slightest token of gratitude; scarcely even a passing regret—nothing but an empty place, that can be filled by the first comer.

NORA. And if I were to ask you for——? No——

RANK. For what?

NORA. For a great proof of your friendship.

RANK. Yes—yes?

NORA. No, I mean—for a very, very great service.

RANK. Would you really for once make me so happy?

NORA. Oh, you don't know what it is.

RANK. Then tell me.

NORA. No, I really can't; it's far, far too much—not only a service, but help and advice besides——

RANK. So much the better. I can't think what you can mean. But go on. Don't you trust me?

NORA. As I trust no one else. I know you are my best and truest friend. So I will tell you. Well then, Dr. Rank, you must help me to hinder something. You know how deeply, how wonderfully Torvald loves me; he wouldn't hesitate a moment to give his very life for my sake.

RANK (*bending towards her*). Nora, do you think he is the only one who——

NORA (*with a slight start*). Who——?

RANK. Who would gladly give his life for you?

NORA (*sadly*). Oh!

RANK. I have sworn that you shall know it before I—go. I shall never find a better opportunity.—Yes, Nora, now you know it; and now you know too that you can trust me as you can no one else.

NORA (*standing up simply and calmly*). Let me pass, please.

RANK (*makes way for her, but remains sitting*). Nora——

NORA (*in the doorway*). Ellen, bring the lamp. (*Crosses to the stove.*) Oh dear, Dr. Rank, that was too bad of you.

DR. RANK (*rising*). That I have loved you as deeply as—any one else? Was that too bad of me?

NORA. No, but that you should have told me so. It was so unnecessary——

RANK. What do you mean? Did you know——?

(*ELLEN enters with the lamp; sets it on the table and goes out again.*)

RANK. Nora—Mrs. Helmer—I ask you, did you know?

NORA. Oh, how can I tell what I knew or didn't know? I really can't say. How could you be so clumsy, Dr. Rank? It was all so nice!

RANK. Well, at any rate, you know now that I am yours, soul and body. And now, go on.

NORA (*looking at him*). Go on—now?

RANK. I beg you to tell me what you want.

NORA. I can tell you nothing now.

RANK. Yes, yes! You mustn't punish me in that way. Let me do for you whatever a man can.

NORA. You can do nothing for me now. Besides, I really want no help. You'll see it was only my fancy. Yes, it must be so. Of course! (*Sits in the rocking-chair, smiling at him.*) You're a nice one, Dr. Rank! Aren't you ashamed of yourself, now the lamp's on the table?

RANK. No, not exactly. But perhaps I ought to go—for ever.

NORA. No, indeed you mustn't. Of course you must come and go as you've always done. You know very well that Torvald can't do without you.

RANK. Yes, but you?

NORA. Oh, you know I always like to have you here.

RANK. That's just what led me astray. You're a riddle to me. It has often seemed to me as if you liked being with me almost as much as being with Helmer.

NORA. Yes; don't you see? There are people one loves, and others one likes to talk to.

RANK. Yes—there's something in that.

NORA. When I was a girl I naturally loved papa best. But it always delighted me to steal into the servants' room. In the first place they never lectured me, and in the second it was such fun to hear them talk.

RANK. Oh, I see; then it's their place I have taken?

NORA (*jumps up and hurries towards him*). Oh, my dear Dr. Rank, I don't mean that. But you understand, with Torvald it's the same as with papa——

(ELLEN *enters from the hall*.)

ELLEN. Please, ma'am—(*whispers to NORA, and gives her a card*).

NORA (*glancing at card*). Ah! (*puts it in her pocket*).

RANK. Anything wrong?

NORA. No, not in the least. It's only—it's my new costume——

RANK. Why, it's there.

NORA. Oh, that one, yes. But it's another that—I ordered it—Torvald mustn't know——

RANK. Aha! So that's the great secret.

NORA. Yes, of course. Do just go to him; he's in the inner room. Do keep him as long as you can.

RANK. Make yourself easy; he shan't escape.
(*Goes into HELMER'S room.*)

NORA (*to ELLEN*). Is he waiting in the kitchen?

ELLEN. Yes, he came up the back stair——

NORA. Didn't you tell him I was engaged?

ELLEN. Yes, but it was no use.

NORA. He won't go away?

ELLEN. No, ma'am, not until he has spoken with you.

NORA. Then let him come in; but quietly. And, Ellen—say nothing about it; it's a surprise for my husband.

ELLEN. Oh yes, ma'am, I understand.

(*She goes out.*)

NORA. It's coming. It's coming, after all. No, no, no, it can never be; it shall not!

(*She goes to HELMER'S door and slips the bolt.*

ELLEN *opens the hall-door for KROGSTAD, and shuts it after him. He wears a travelling coat, high boots, and a fur cap.*)

NORA. Speak quietly; my husband is at home.

KROGSTAD. All right. I don't care.

NORA. What do you want?

KROGSTAD. A little information.

NORA. Be quick, then. What is it?

KROGSTAD. You know I've got my dismissal.

NORA. I couldn't prevent it, Mr. Krogstad. I fought for you to the last, but it was no good.

KROGSTAD. Does your husband care for you so

little? He knows what I can bring upon you, and yet he dares——

NORA. How can you think I should tell him?

KROGSTAD. I knew very well you hadn't. It wasn't like my friend Torvald Helmer to show so much courage——

NORA. Mr. Krogstad, be good enough to speak respectfully of my husband.

KROGSTAD. Certainly, with all due respect. But since you're so anxious to keep the matter secret, I suppose you're a little clearer than yesterday as to what you have done.

NORA. Clearer than you could ever make me.

KROGSTAD. Yes, such a bad lawyer as I——

NORA. What is it you want?

KROGSTAD. Only to see how you're getting on, Mrs. Helmer. I've been thinking about you all day. A mere money-lender, a penny-a-liner, a—in short, a creature like me—has a little bit of what people call “heart.”

NORA. Then show it; think of my little children.

KROGSTAD. Did you and your husband think of mine? But enough of that. I only wanted to tell you that you needn't take this matter too seriously. I shan't lodge any information, for the present.

NORA. No, surely not. I knew you wouldn't.

KROGSTAD. The whole thing can be settled quite quietly. Nobody need know. It can remain among us three.

NORA. My husband must never know.

KROGSTAD. How can you prevent it? Can you pay off the debt?

NORA. No, not at once.

KROGSTAD. Or have you any means of raising the money in the next few days?

NORA. None, that I will make use of.

KROGSTAD. And if you had, it would be no good to you now. If you offered me ever so much ready money you should not get back your I.O.U.

NORA. Tell me what you want to do with it.

KROGSTAD. I only want to keep it, to have it in my possession. No outsider shall hear anything of it. So, if you've got any desperate scheme in your head——

NORA. What if I have?

KROGSTAD. If you should think of leaving your husband and children——

NORA. What if I do?

KROGSTAD. Or if you should think of——something worse——

NORA. How do you know that?

KROGSTAD. Put all that out of your head.

NORA. How did you know what I had in my mind?

KROGSTAD. Most of us think of *that* at first. I thought of it, too; but I hadn't the courage——

NORA (*voicelessly*). Nor I.

KROGSTAD (*relieved*). No, one hasn't. You haven't the courage either, have you?

NORA. I haven't, I haven't.

KROGSTAD. Besides, it would be very silly——when the first storm's over——! I have a letter in my pocket for your husband——

NORA. Telling him everything?

KROGSTAD. Sparring you as much as possible.

NORA (*quickly*). He must never have that letter. Tear it up. I will get the money somehow.

KROGSTAD. Pardon me, Mrs. Helmer, but I believe I told you——

NORA. Oh, I'm not talking about the money I owe you. Tell me how much you demand from my husband—I'll get it.

KROGSTAD. I demand no money from your husband.

NORA. What *do* you demand then?

KROGSTAD. I'll tell you. I want to regain my footing in the world. I want to rise; and your husband shall help me to do it. For the last eighteen months my record has been spotless; I've been in bitter need all the time; but I was content to fight my way up, step by step. Now, I've been thrust down, and I won't be satisfied with merely being allowed to sneak back again. I want to rise, I tell you. I must get into the Bank again, in a higher position than before. Your husband shall create a place on purpose for me——

NORA. He will never do that!

KROGSTAD. He will do it; I know him—he won't dare to refuse! And when I'm in, you'll soon see! I shall be the manager's right hand. It won't be Torvald Helmer, but Nils Krogstad, that manages the Joint Stock Bank.

NORA. That will never be.

KROGSTAD. Perhaps you'll——?

NORA. *Now* I have the courage for it.

KROGSTAD. Oh, you don't frighten me! A sensitive, petted creature like you——

NORA. You shall see, you shall see!

KROGSTAD. Under the ice, perhaps? Down into the cold, black water? And next spring to come up again, ugly, hairless, unrecognisable——

NORA. You can't terrify me.

KROGSTAD. Nor you me. People don't do that sort of thing, Mrs. Helmer. And, after all, what good would it be? I have your husband in my pocket, all the same.

NORA. Afterwards? When I am no longer——?

KROGSTAD. You forget, your reputation remains in my hands! (NORA stands speechless, and looks at him.) Well, now you're prepared. Do nothing foolish. So soon as Helmer has received my letter, I shall expect to hear from him. And remember that it's your husband himself who has forced me back again into such paths. That I will never forgive him. Good-bye, Mrs. Helmer.

(Goes through hall. NORA hurries to the door, opens it a little, and listens.)

NORA. He's going. He's not putting the letter into the box. No, no, it would be impossible. (Opens the door further and further.) What's that? He's standing still; not going down stairs. Is he changing his mind? Is he——? (A letter falls into the box. KROGSTAD'S footsteps are heard gradually receding down the stair. NORA utters a suppressed shriek; pause.) In the letter-box! (Slips shrinkingly up to the door.) There it lies—Torvald, Torvald—now we are lost!

(MRS. LINDEN enters from the left with the costume.)

MRS. LINDEN. There, I think it's all right now. Shall we just try it on?

NORA (*hoarsely and softly*). Christina, come here.

MRS. LINDEN (*throws dress on sofa*). What's the matter? You look quite aghast.

NORA. Come here. Do you see that letter? There, see—through the glass of the letter-box.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, yes, I see it.

NORA. That letter is from Krogstad—

MRS. LINDEN. Nora—it was Krogstad who lent you the money!

NORA. Yes; and now Torvald will know everything.

MRS. LINDEN. Believe me, Nora, it's the best thing for you both.

NORA. You don't know all yet. I have forged a name—

MRS. LINDEN. Good heavens!

NORA. Now, listen to me, Christina; you shall bear me witness—

MRS. LINDEN. How "witness"? What am I to—?

NORA. If I should go out of my mind—it might easily happen—

MRS. LINDEN. Nora!

NORA. Or if anything else should happen to me—so that I couldn't be here myself—!

MRS. LINDEN. Nora, Nora, you're quite beside yourself!

NORA. In case any one wanted to take it all upon himself—the whole blame—you understand—

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, but how can you think—?

NORA. You shall bear witness that it's not true, Christina. I'm not out of my mind at all; I know quite well what I'm saying; and I tell you nobody else knew anything about it; I did the whole thing, I myself. Don't forget that.

MRS. LINDEN. I won't forget. But I don't understand what you mean——

NORA. Oh, how should you? It's the miracle coming to pass.

MRS. LINDEN. The miracle?

NORA. Yes, the miracle. But it's so terrible, Christina; it mustn't happen for anything in the world.

MRS. LINDEN. I'll go straight to Krogstad and talk to him.

NORA. Don't; he'll do you some harm.

MRS. LINDEN. Once he would have done anything for me.

NORA. He?

MRS. LINDEN. Where does he live?

NORA. Oh, how can I tell——? Yes (*feels in her pocket*). Here's his card; but the letter, the letter——!

HELMER (*knocking outside*). Nora!

NORA (*shrieks in terror*). What is it? What do you want?

HELMER. Don't be frightened, we're not coming in; you've bolted the door. Are you trying on your dress?

NORA. Yes, yes, I'm trying it on. It suits me so well, Torvald.

MRS. LINDEN (*who has read the card*). Then he lives close by here?

NORA. Yes, but it's no use now. The letter is there in the box.

MRS. LINDEN. And your husband has the key?

NORA. Always.

MRS. LINDEN. Krogstad must demand his letter back, unread. He must make some excuse——

NORA. But this is the very time when Torvald generally——

MRS. LINDEN. Prevent him. Keep him occupied. I'll come back as quickly as I can.

(She goes out quickly through the hall door.)

NORA *(opens HELMER'S door and peeps in)*. Torvald!

HELMER. Well, now may one come back into one's own room? Come, Rank, we'll have a look—— *(In the doorway.)* But how's this?

NORA. What, Torvald dear?

HELMER. Rank led me to expect a grand dressing-up.

RANK *(in the doorway)*. So I understood. I suppose I was mistaken.

NORA. No, no one shall see me in my glory till to-morrow evening.

HELMER. Why, Nora dear, you look so tired. Have you been practising too hard?

NORA. No, I haven't practised at all yet.

HELMER. But you'll have to——

NORA. Oh yes, I must, I must! But, Torvald, I can't get on without your help. I've forgotten everything.

HELMER. Oh, we'll soon freshen it up again.

NORA. Yes, do help me, Torvald. You must pro-

mise me—— Oh, I'm so nervous about it. Before so many people—— This evening you must give yourself up entirely to me. You mustn't do a stroke of work! Now promise, Torvald dear!

HELMER. I promise. All this evening I'll be your slave. Little helpless thing——! But, by-the-bye, I must first—— (*Going to hall door.*)

NORA. What do you want there?

HELMER. Only to see if there are any letters.

NORA. No, no, don't do that, Torvald.

HELMER. Why not?

NORA. Torvald, I beg you not to. There are none there.

HELMER. Let me just see. (*Is going.*)

(*NORA, at the piano, plays the first bars of the tarantella.*)

HELMER (*at the door, stops*). Aha!

NORA. I can't dance to-morrow if I don't rehearse with you first.

HELMER (*going to her*). Are you really so nervous, dear Nora?

NORA. Yes, dreadfully! Let me rehearse at once. We have time before dinner. Oh! do sit down and accompany me, Torvald dear; direct me as you used to do.

HELMER. With all the pleasure in life, if you wish it. (*Sits at piano.*)

(*NORA snatches the tambourine out of the box, and hurriedly drapes herself in a long parti-coloured shawl; then, with a bound, stands in the middle of the floor.*)

NORA. Now play for me! Now I'll dance!

(HELMER *plays and NORA dances. RANK stands at the piano behind HELMER and looks on.*)

HELMER (*playing*). Slower! Slower!

NORA. Can't do it slower!

HELMER. Not so violently, Nora.

NORA. I must! I must!

HELMER (*stops*). Nora—that'll never do.

NORA (*laughs and swings her tambourine*). Didn't I tell you so!

RANK. Let me accompany her.

HELMER (*rising*). Yes, do—then I can direct her better.

(RANK *sits down to the piano and plays; NORA dances more and more wildly. HELMER stands by the stove and addresses frequent corrections to her; she seems not to hear. Her hair breaks loose, and falls over her shoulders. She does not notice it, but goes on dancing. MRS. LINDEN enters and stands spell-bound in the doorway.*)

MRS. LINDEN. Ah——!

NORA (*dancing*). We're having such fun here, Christina!

HELMER. Why, Nora dear, you're dancing as if it were a matter of life and death.

NORA. So it is.

HELMER. Rank, stop! This is the merest madness. Stop, I say!

(RANK *stops playing, and NORA comes to a sudden standstill.*)

HELMER (*going towards her*). I couldn't have believed it. You've positively forgotten all I taught you.

NORA (*throws tambourine away*). You see for yourself.

HELMER. You really do want teaching.

NORA. Yes, you see how much I need it. You must practise with me up to the last moment. Will you promise me, Torvald?

HELMER. Certainly, certainly.

NORA. Neither to-day nor to-morrow must you think of anything but me. You mustn't open a single letter—mustn't look at the letter-box!

HELMER. Ah, you're still afraid of that man——

NORA. Oh yes, yes, I am.

HELMER. Nora, I can see it in your face—there's a letter from him in the box.

NORA. I don't know, I believe so. But you're not to read anything now; nothing must come between us until all is over.

RANK (*softly, to HELMER*). You mustn't contradict her.

HELMER (*putting his arm around her*). The child shall have her own way. But to-morrow night, when the dance is over——

NORA. Then you will be free.

(ELLEN *appears in the doorway, right*.)

ELLEN. Dinner is ready, ma'am.

NORA. We'll have some champagne, Ellen!

ELLEN. Yes, ma'am. (*Goes out.*)

HELMER. Dear me! Quite a feast.

NORA. Yes, and we'll keep it up till morning. (*Calling out.*) And macaroons, Ellen—plenty—just this once.

HELMER (*seizing her hand*). Come, come, don't

let's have this wild excitement! Be my own little lark again.

NORA. Oh yes, I will. But now go into the dining-room; and you too, Dr. Rank. Christina, you must help me to do up my hair.

RANK (*softly, as they go*). There's nothing in the wind? Nothing—I mean——?

HELMER. Oh no, nothing of the kind. It's merely this babyish anxiety I was telling you about.

(*They go out to the right.*)

NORA. Well?

MRS. LINDEN. He's gone out of town.

NORA. I saw it in your face.

MRS. LINDEN. He comes back to-morrow evening. I left a note for him.

NORA. You shouldn't have done that. Things must take their course. After all, there's something glorious in waiting for the miracle.

MRS. LINDEN. What is it you're waiting for?

NORA. Oh, you can't understand. Go to them in the dining-room; I'll come in a moment.

(MRS. LINDEN *goes into the dining-room*. NORA *stands for a moment as though collecting her thoughts; then looks at her watch.*)

NORA. Five. Seven hours till midnight. Then twenty-four hours till the next midnight. Then the tarantella will be over. Twenty-four and seven? Still thirty-one hours to live.

(HELMER *appears at the door, right.*)

HELMER. What's become of my little lark?

NORA (*runs to him with open arms*). Here she is!

Act Third.

(The same room. The table, with the chairs around it, in the middle. A lamp lit on the table. The door to the hall stands open. Dance music is heard from the floor above.)

(MRS. LINDEN sits by the table and absently turns the pages of a book. She tries to read, but seems unable to fix her attention; she frequently listens and looks anxiously towards the hall door.)

MRS. LINDEN *(looks at her watch)*. Not here yet; and the time's nearly up. If only he hasn't— *(Listens again.)* Ah, there he is— *(She goes into the hall and cautiously opens the outer door; soft footsteps are heard on the stairs; she whispers.)* Come in; there's no one here.

KROGSTAD *(in the doorway)*. I found a note from you at my house. What does it mean?

MRS. LINDEN. I must speak to you.

KROGSTAD. Indeed? and in this house?

MRS. LINDEN. I could not see you at my rooms. They have no separate entrance. Come in; we are quite alone. The servants are asleep, and the Helmers are at the ball upstairs.

KROGSTAD *(coming into the room)*. Ah! So the Helmers are dancing this evening. Really?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes. Why not?

KROGSTAD. Quite right. Why not?

MRS. LINDEN. And now let us talk a little.

KROGSTAD. Have we anything to say to each other?

MRS. LINDEN. A great deal.

KROGSTAD. I shouldn't have thought so.

MRS. LINDEN. Because you have never really understood me.

KROGSTAD. What was there to understand? The most natural thing in the world—a heartless woman throws a man over when a better match offers.

MRS. LINDEN. Do you really think me so heartless? Do you think I broke with you lightly?

KROGSTAD. Did you not?

MRS. LINDEN. Do you really think so?

KROGSTAD. If not, why did you write me that letter?

MRS. LINDEN. Was it not best? Since I had to break with you, was it not right that I should try to put an end to your love for me?

KROGSTAD (*pressing his hands together*). So that was it? And all this—for the sake of money!

MRS. LINDEN. You ought not to forget that I had a helpless mother and two little brothers. We could not wait for you, as your prospects then stood.

KROGSTAD. Did that give you the right to discard me for another?

MRS. LINDEN. I don't know. I have often asked myself whether I did right.

KROGSTAD (*more softly*). When I had lost you, the very ground seemed to sink from under my feet. Look at me now. I am a shipwrecked man clinging to a spar.

MRS. LINDEN. Rescue may be at hand.

KROGSTAD. It was at hand; but then you stood in the way.

MRS. LINDEN. Without my knowledge, Nils. I did not know till to-day that it was you I was to replace in the Bank.

KROGSTAD. Well, I take your word for it. But now you do know, do you mean to give way?

MRS. LINDEN. No, for that wouldn't help you.

KROGSTAD. Oh, help, help——! I should do it whether or no.

MRS. LINDEN. I have learnt prudence. Life and bitter necessity have schooled me.

KROGSTAD. And life has taught me not to trust fine speeches.

MRS. LINDEN. Then life has taught you a very sensible thing. But deeds you will trust?

KROGSTAD. What do you mean?

MRS. LINDEN. You said you were a shipwrecked man, clinging to a spar.

KROGSTAD. I have good reason to say so.

MRS. LINDEN. I am a shipwrecked woman, clinging to a spar. I have no one to care for.

KROGSTAD. You made your own choice.

MRS. LINDEN. I had no choice.

KROGSTAD. Well, what then?

MRS. LINDEN. How if we two shipwrecked people could join hands?

KROGSTAD. What!

MRS. LINDEN. Two on a raft have a better chance than if each clings to a separate spar.

KROGSTAD. Christina!

MRS. LINDEN. What do you think brought me to town?

KROGSTAD. Had you any thought of me?

MRS. LINDEN. I must have work or I can't live. All my life, as long as I can remember, I have worked; work has been my one great joy. Now I stand quite alone in the world, so terribly aimless and forsaken. There's no happiness in working for oneself. Nils, give me somebody and something to work for.

KROGSTAD. No, no; that can never be. It's simply a woman's romantic notion of self-sacrifice.

MRS. LINDEN. Have you ever found me romantic?

KROGSTAD. Would you really——? Tell me, do you know my past?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes.

KROGSTAD. And do you know what people say of me?

MRS. LINDEN. Didn't you say just now that with me you could have been another man?

KROGSTAD. I am sure of it.

MRS. LINDEN. Is it too late?

KROGSTAD. Christina, do you know what you are doing? Yes, you do; I see it in your face. Have you the courage——?

MRS. LINDEN. I need some one to tend, and your children need a mother. You need me, and I—I need you. Nils, I believe in your better self. With you I fear nothing.

KROGSTAD (*seizing her hand*). Thank you—thank you, Christina. Now I shall make others see me as you do. Ah, I forgot——

MRS. LINDEN (*listening*). Hush! The tarantella!
Go! go!

KROGSTAD. Why? What is it?

MRS. LINDEN. Don't you hear the dancing overhead? As soon as that's over they'll be here.

KROGSTAD. Oh yes, I'll go. But it's too late now. Of course you don't know the step I've taken against the Helmers.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, Nils, I do know.

KROGSTAD. And yet you have the courage to——

MRS. LINDEN. I know what lengths despair can drive a man to.

KROGSTAD. Oh, if I could only undo it!

MRS. LINDEN. You can—— Your letter is still in the box.

KROGSTAD. Are you sure?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, but——

KROGSTAD (*looking at her searchingly*). Ah, now I understand. You want to save your friend at any price. Say it out—is that your idea?

MRS. LINDEN. Nils, a woman who has once sold herself for the sake of others, doesn't do so again.

KROGSTAD. I'll demand my letter back again.

MRS. LINDEN. No, no.

KROGSTAD. Yes, of course. I'll wait till Helmer comes; I'll tell him to give it back to me—that it's only about my dismissal—that I don't want it read——

MRS. LINDEN. No, Nils, you must not recall the letter.

KROGSTAD. But tell me, wasn't that just why you got me to come here?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, in my first terror. But a day has passed since then, and in that day I have seen incredible things in this house. Helmer must know everything; there must be an end to this unhappy secret. These two must come to a full understanding. They can't possibly go on with all these shifts and concealments.

KROGSTAD. Very well, if you like to risk it. But one thing I can do, and at once——

MRS. LINDEN (*listening*). Make haste, go, go! The dance is over; we're not safe another moment.

KROGSTAD. I'll wait for you in the street.

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, do; you must take me home.

KROGSTAD. I never was so happy in all my life!

(*KROGSTAD goes out by the outer door. The door between the room and hall remains open.*)

MRS. LINDEN (*setting furniture straight and getting her out-door things together*). What a change! What a change! To have some one to work for; a home to make happy! I shall have to set to work in earnest. I wish they would come. (*Listens.*) Ah, here they are! I must get my things on.

(*Takes bonnet and cloak. HELMER'S and NORA'S voices are heard outside, a key is turned in the lock, and HELMER drags NORA almost by force into the hall. She wears the Italian costume with a large black shawl over it. He is in evening dress and wears a black domino.*)

NORA (*struggling with him in the doorway*). No, no, no! I won't go in! I want to go upstairs again; I don't want to leave so early!

HELMER. But, my dearest girl——!

NORA. Oh, please, please, Torvald, only one hour more!

HELMER. Not one minute more, Nora dear; you know what we agreed! Come, come in; you're catching cold here!

(He leads her gently into the room in spite of her resistance.)

MRS. LINDEN. Good evening.

NORA. Christina!

HELMER. What, Mrs. Linden! You here so late?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, pardon me. I did so want to see Nora in her costume.

NORA. Have you been sitting here waiting for me?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; unfortunately I came too late. You had already gone upstairs, and I couldn't go away without seeing you.

HELMER *(taking NORA'S shawl off)*. Well then, just look at her! I think she's worth looking at. Isn't she lovely, Mrs. Linden?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, I must say——

HELMER. Isn't she exquisite? Every one said so. But she's dreadfully obstinate, dear little creature. What's to be done with her? Just think, I had almost to force her away.

NORA. Oh, Torvald, you'll be sorry some day you didn't let me stop, if only for one half-hour.

HELMER. There! You hear her, Mrs. Linden? She dances her tarantella with wild applause, and well she deserved it, I must say—though there was, perhaps, a little too much nature in her rendering of the idea—more than was, strictly speaking, artistic. But never mind—she made a great success, and that's

the main thing. Ought I to let her stop after that—to weaken the impression? Not if I know it. I took my sweet little Capri girl—my capricious little Capri girl, I might say—under my arm; a rapid turn round the room, a curtsy to all sides, and—as they say in novels—the lovely apparition vanished! An exit should always be effective, Mrs. Linden; but I can't get Nora to see it. By Jove, it's warm here. (*Throws his domino on a chair, and opens the door to his room.*) What! No light here? Oh, of course! Excuse me—— (*Goes in and lights candles.*)

NORA (*whispers breathlessly*). Well?

MRS. LINDEN (*softly*). I've spoken to him.

NORA. And——?

MRS. LINDEN. Nora—you must tell your husband everything——

NORA (*almost voiceless*). I knew it!

MRS. LINDEN. You have nothing to fear from Krogstad; but you must speak out.

NORA. I shall not speak!

MRS. LINDEN. Then the letter will.

NORA. Thank you, Christina. Now I know what I have to do. Hush!

HELMER (*coming back*). Well, Mrs. Linden, have you admired her?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes; and now I'll say good-night.

HELMER. What, already? Does this knitting belong to you?

MRS. LINDEN (*takes it*). Yes, thanks; I was nearly forgetting it.

HELMER. Then you do knit?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes.

HELMER. Do you know, you ought to embroider instead?

MRS. LINDEN. Indeed! Why?

HELMER. Because it's so much prettier. Look now! You hold the embroidery in the left hand, so, and then work the needle with the right hand, in a long, easy curve, don't you?

MRS. LINDEN. Yes, I suppose so.

HELMER. But knitting is always ugly. Just look—your arms close to your sides, and the needles going up and down—there's something Chinese about it.—They really gave us splendid champagne to-night.

MRS. LINDEN. Well, good-night, Nora, and don't be obstinate any more.

HELMER. Well said, Mrs. Linden!

MRS. LINDEN. Good-night, Mr. Helmer.

HELMER (*going with her to the door*). Good-night, good-night; I hope you'll get safely home. I should be glad to—but really you haven't far to go. Good-night, good-night! (*She goes; HELMER shuts the door after her and comes forward again.*) At last we've got rid of her; she's an awful bore.

NORA. Aren't you very tired, Torvald?

HELMER. No, not in the least.

NORA. Nor sleepy?

HELMER. Not a bit. I feel particularly lively. But you? You do look tired and sleepy.

NORA. Yes, very tired. I shall soon sleep now.

HELMER. There, you see. I was right after all not to let you stop longer.

NORA. Oh, everything you do is right.

HELMER (*kissing her forehead*). Now my lark is speaking like a reasonable being. Did you notice how jolly Rank was this evening?

NORA. Was he? I had no chance of speaking to him.

HELMER. Nor I, much; but I haven't seen him in such good spirits for a long time. (*Looks at NORA a little, then comes nearer her.*) It's splendid to be back in our own house, to be quite alone together! Oh, you enchanting creature!

NORA. Don't look at me in that way, Torvald.

HELMER. I am not to look at my dearest treasure?—at the loveliness that is mine, mine only, wholly and entirely mine?

NORA (*goes to the other side of the table*). You mustn't say these things to me this evening.

HELMER (*following*). I see you have the tarantella still in your blood—and that makes you all the more enticing. Listen! the other people are going now. (*More softly.*) Nora—soon the whole house will be still.

NORA. I hope so.

HELMER. Yes, don't you, Nora darling? When we're among strangers do you know why I speak so little to you, and keep so far away, and only steal a glance at you now and then—do you know why I do it? Because I am fancying that we love each other in secret, that I am secretly betrothed to you, and that no one guesses there is anything between us.

NORA. Yes, yes, yes. I know all your thoughts are with me.

HELMER. And then, when we have to go, and I put the shawl about your smooth, soft shoulders, and this glorious neck of yours, I imagine you are my bride, that our marriage is just over, that I am bringing you for the first time to my home, and that I am alone with you for the first time, quite alone with you, in your trembling loveliness. All this evening I was longing for you, and you only. When I watched you swaying and whirling in the tarantella—my blood boiled—I could endure it no longer; and that's why I made you come home with me so early.

NORA. Go now, Torvald! Go away from me! I won't have all this.

HELMER. What do you mean? Ah, I see you're teasing me! Won't—won't! Am I not your husband?

(A knock at the outer door.)

NORA *(starts)*. Did you hear?

HELMER *(going towards the hall)*. Who's there?

RANK *(outside)*. It's I; may I come in a moment?

HELMER *(in a low tone, annoyed)*. Oh! what can he want? *(Aloud.)* Wait a moment. *(Opens door.)* Come, it's nice of you to give us a look in.

RANK. I thought I heard your voice, and that put it into my head. *(Looks round.)* Ah, this dear old place! How cosy you two are here!

HELMER. You seemed to find it pleasant enough upstairs, too.

RANK. Exceedingly. Why not? Why shouldn't one get all one can out of the world? All one can for as long as one can. The wine was splendid——

HELMER. Especially the champagne.

RANK. Did you notice it? It's incredible the quantity I contrived to get down.

NORA. Torvald drank plenty of champagne too.

RANK. Did he?

NORA. Yes, and it always puts him in such spirits.

RANK. Well, why shouldn't one have a jolly evening after a well-spent day?

HELMER. Well-spent! Well, I haven't much to boast of.

RANK (*slapping him on the shoulder*). But I have, don't you see?

NORA. I suppose you've been engaged in a scientific investigation, Dr. Rank?

RANK. Quite right.

HELMER. Bless me! Little Nora talking about scientific investigations!

NORA. Am I to congratulate you on the result?

RANK. By all means.

NORA. It was good then?

RANK. The best possible, both for doctor and patient—certainty.

NORA (*quickly and searchingly*). Certainty?

RANK. Absolute certainty. Wasn't I right to enjoy myself after that?

NORA. Yes, quite right, Dr. Rank.

HELMER. And so say I, provided you don't have to pay for it to-morrow.

RANK. Well, in this life nothing's to be had for nothing.

NORA. Dr. Rank, aren't you very fond of masquerades?

RANK. Yes, when there are plenty of comical disguises.

NORA. Tell me, what shall we two be at our next masquerade?

HELMER. Little insatiable! Thinking of your next already!

RANK. We two? I'll tell you. You must go as a good fairy.

HELMER. Ah, but what costume would indicate that?

RANK. She has simply to wear her every-day dress.

HELMER. Capital! But don't you know what you will be yourself?

RANK. Yes, my dear friend, I'm perfectly clear upon that point.

HELMER. Well?

RANK. At the next masquerade I shall be invisible.

HELMER. What a comical idea!

RANK. There's a big black hat—haven't you heard of the invisible hat? It comes down all over you, and then no one can see you.

HELMER (*with a suppressed smile*). No, you're right there.

RANK. But I'm quite forgetting what I came for. Helmer, give me a cigar, one of the dark Havanas.

HELMER. With the greatest pleasure. (*Hands case.*)

RANK (*takes one and cuts the end off*). Thanks.

NORA (*striking a wax match*). Let me give you a light.

RANK. A thousand thanks.

(She holds match. He lights his cigar at it.)

RANK. And now, good-bye!

HELMER. Good-bye, good-bye, my dear fellow.

NORA. Sleep well, Dr. Rank.

RANK. Thanks for the wish.

NORA. Wish me the same.

RANK. You? Very well, since you ask me—Sleep well; and thanks for the light.

(He nods to them both and goes out.)

HELMER *(in an undertone)*. He's been drinking a good deal.

NORA *(absently)*. I daresay. *(HELMER takes his bunch of keys from his pocket and goes into the hall.)* Torvald, what are you doing there?

HELMER. I must empty the letter-box, it's quite full; there will be no room for the newspapers to-morrow morning.

NORA. Are you going to work to-night?

HELMER. Not very likely! Why, what's this? Some one's been at the lock.

NORA. The lock——?

HELMER. I'm sure of it. What does it mean? I can't think that the servants——? Here's a broken hair-pin. Nora, it's one of yours.

NORA *(quickly)*. It must have been the children.

HELMER. Then you must break them of such tricks. Hm, hm! There! At last I've got it open. *(Takes contents out and calls into the kitchen.)* Ellen, Ellen, just put the hall door lamp out. *(He returns with letters in his hand, and shuts the inner door.)*

HELMER. Just see how they've accumulated. (*Turning them over.*) Why, what's this?

NORA (*at the window*). The letter! Oh no, no, Torvald!

HELMER. Two visiting-cards—from Rank.

NORA. From Dr. Rank?

HELMER (*looking at them*). Dr. Rank. They were on the top. He must just have put them in.

NORA. Is there anything on them?

HELMER. There's a black cross over the name. Look at it. What a horrid idea! It looks just as if he were announcing his own death.

NORA. So he is.

HELMER. What! Do you know anything? Has he told you anything?

NORA. Yes. These cards mean that he has taken his last leave of us. He intends to shut himself up and die.

HELMER. Poor fellow! Of course I knew we couldn't hope to keep him long. But so soon—and then to go and creep into his lair like a wounded animal——

NORA. What must be, must be, and the fewer words the better. Don't you think so, Torvald?

HELMER (*walking up and down*). He had so grown into our lives, I can't realise that he's gone. He and his sufferings and his loneliness formed a sort of cloudy background to the sunshine of our happiness. Well, perhaps it's best so—at any rate for him. (*Stands still.*) And perhaps for us too, Nora. Now we two are thrown entirely upon each other. (*Takes her in his arms.*) My darling wife!

I feel as if I could never hold you close enough. Do you know, Nora, I often wish some danger might threaten you, that I might risk body and soul, and everything, everything, for your dear sake.

NORA (*tears herself from him and says firmly*). Now you shall read your letters, Torvald.

HELMER. No, no; not to-night. I want to be with you, sweet wife.

NORA. With the thought of your dying friend?

HELMER. You are right. This has shaken us both. Unloveliness has come between us—thoughts of death and decay. We must seek to cast them off. Till then we will remain apart.

NORA (*her arms round his neck*). Torvald! Good-night, good-night.

HELMER (*kissing her forehead*). Good-night, my little bird. Sleep well, Nora. Now I'll go and read my letters.

(*He goes into his room and shuts the door.*)

NORA (*with wild eyes, gropes about her, seizes HELMER'S domino, throws it round her, and whispers quickly, hoarsely, and brokenly*). Never to see him again. Never, never, never. (*Throws her shawl over head.*) Never to see the children again. Never, never. Oh that black, icy water! Oh that bottomless——! If it were only over! Now he has it; he's reading it. Oh no, no, no, not yet. Torvald, good-bye——! Good-bye, my little ones——!

(*She is rushing out by the hall; at the same moment*

HELMER *tears his door open, and stands with open letter in his hand.*)

HELMER. Nora!

NORA (*shrieking*). Ah——!

HELMER. What is this? Do you know what is in this letter?

NORA. Yes, I know. Let me go! Let me pass!

HELMER (*holds her back*). Where do you want to go?

NORA (*tries to get free*). You shan't save me, Torvald.

HELMER (*falling back*). True! Is it true what he writes? No, no, it cannot be true.

NORA. It is true. I have loved you beyond all else in the world.

HELMER. Pshaw—no silly evasions!

NORA (*a step nearer him*). Torvald——!

HELMER. Wretched woman! What have you done?

NORA. Let me go—you shall not save me! You shall not take my guilt upon yourself!

HELMER. I don't want any melodramatic airs. (*Locks the door.*) Here you shall stay and give an account of yourself. Do you understand what you have done? Answer. Do you understand it?

NORA (*looks at him fixedly, and says with a stiffening expression*). Yes; now I begin fully to understand it.

HELMER (*walking up and down*). Oh, what an awful awakening! During all these eight years—she who was my pride and my joy—a hypocrite, a liar—worse, worse—a criminal. Oh, the hideousness of it! Ugh! Ugh!

(NORA is silent, and continues to look fixedly at him.)

HELMER. I ought to have foreseen something of the kind. All your father's dishonesty—be silent! I say your father's dishonesty! you have inherited—no religion, no morality, no sense of duty. How I am punished for shielding him! I did it for your sake, and you reward me like this.

NORA. Yes—like this!

HELMER. You have destroyed my whole happiness. You have ruined my future. Oh, it's frightful to think of! I am in the power of a scoundrel; he can do whatever he pleases with me, demand whatever he chooses, and I must submit. And all this disaster is brought upon me by an unprincipled woman.

NORA. When I am gone, you will be free.

HELMER. Oh, no fine phrases. Your father, too, was always ready with them. What good would it do me, if you were "gone," as you say? No good in the world! He can publish the story all the same; I might even be suspected of collusion. People will think I was at the bottom of it all and egged you on. And for all this I have you to thank—you whom I have done nothing but pet and spoil during our whole married life. Do you understand now what you have done to me?

NORA (*with cold calmness*). Yes.

HELMER. It's impossible. I can't grasp it. But we must come to an understanding. Take that shawl off. Take it off, I say! I must try to pacify him in one way or other—the secret must be kept, cost what it may. As for ourselves, we must live as we have always done; but of course only in the eyes of the

world. Of course you will continue to live here. But the children cannot be left in your care. I dare not trust them to you.—Oh, to have to say this to one I have loved so tenderly—whom I still—but that must be a thing of the past. Henceforward there can be no question of happiness, but merely of saving the ruins, the shreds, the show of it! (*A ring; HELMER starts.*) What's that? So late! Can it be the worst? Can he——? Hide yourself, Nora; say you are ill.

(*NORA stands motionless. HELMER goes to the door and opens it.*)

ELLEN (*half-dressed, in the hall*). Here is a letter for you, ma'am.

HELMER. Give it to me. (*Seizes letter and shuts the door.*) Yes, from him. You shall not have it. I shall read it.

NORA. Read it!

HELMER (*by the lamp*). I have hardly courage to. We may both be lost, both you and I. Ah! I must know. (*Hastily tears the letter open; reads a few lines, looks at an enclosure; a cry of joy.*) Nora!

(*NORA looks inquiringly at him.*)

HELMER. Nora! Oh! I must read it again. Yes, yes, it is so. I am saved! Nora, I am saved!

NORA. And I?

HELMER. You too, of course; we are both saved, both of us. Look here, he sends you back your promissory note. He writes that he regrets and apologises; that a happy turn in his life—— Oh, what matter what he writes. We are saved, Nora! No one can harm you. Oh, Nora, Nora——; but

first to get rid of this hateful thing. I'll just see—
(*Glances at the I.O.U.*) No, I won't look at it; the whole thing shall be nothing but a dream to me. (*Tears the I.O.U. and both letters in pieces. Throws them into the fire and watches them burn.*) There! it's gone! He wrote that ever since Christmas Eve— Oh, Nora, they must have been three awful days for you!

NORA. I have fought a hard fight for the last three days.

HELMER. And in your agony you saw no other outlet but— no; we won't think of that horror. We will only rejoice and repeat—it's over, all over! Don't you hear, Nora? You don't seem able to grasp it. Yes, it's over. What is this set look on your face? Oh, my poor Nora, I understand; you can't believe that I have forgiven you. But I have, Nora; I swear it. I have forgiven everything. I know that what you did was all for love of me.

NORA. That's true.

HELMER. You loved me as a wife should love her husband. It was only the means you misjudged. But do you think I love you the less for your helplessness? No, no. Only lean on me; I will counsel and guide you. I should be no true man if this very womanly helplessness didn't make you doubly dear in my eyes. You mustn't think of the hard things I said in my first moment of terror, when the world seemed to be tumbling about my ears. I have forgiven you, Nora—I swear I have forgiven you.

NORA. I thank you for your forgiveness. (*Goes out right.*)

HELMER. No, stay! (*Looks in.*) What are you going to do?

NORA (*inside*). To take off my doll's dress.

HELMER (*in the doorway*). Yes, do, dear. Try to calm down, and recover your balance, my scared little song-bird. You may rest secure. I have broad wings to shield you. (*Walking up and down near the door.*) Oh, how lovely—how cosy our home is, Nora! Here you are safe; here I can shelter you like a hunted dove, whom I have saved from the claws of the hawk. I shall soon bring your poor beating heart to rest; believe me, Nora, very soon. Tomorrow all this will seem quite different—everything will be as before. I shall not need to tell you again that I forgive you; you will feel for yourself that it is true. How could I find it in my heart to drive you away, or even so much as to reproach you? Oh, you don't know a true man's heart, Nora. There is something indescribably sweet and soothing to a man in having forgiven his wife—honestly forgiven her, from the bottom of his heart. She becomes his property in a double sense. She is as though born again; she has become, so to speak, at once his wife and his child. That is what you shall henceforth be to me, my bewildered, helpless darling. Don't worry about anything, Nora; only open your heart to me, and I will be both will and conscience to you. (*NORA enters, crossing to table, in everyday dress.*) Why, what's this? Not gone to bed? You have changed your dress?

NORA. Yes, Torvald; now I have changed my dress.

HELMER. But why now, so late?

NORA. I shall not sleep to-night.

HELMER. But, Nora dear——

NORA (*looking at her watch*). It's not so late yet. Sit down, Torvald; you and I have much to say to each other. (*She sits on one side of the table.*)

HELMER. Nora, what does this mean? Your cold, set face——

NORA. Sit down. It will take some time; I have much to talk over with you.

(HELMER *sits at the other side of the table.*)

HELMER. You alarm me; I don't understand you.

NORA. No, that's just it. You don't understand me; and I have never understood you—till to-night. No, don't interrupt. Only listen to what I say. We must come to a final settlement, Torvald!

HELMER. How do you mean?

NORA (*after a short silence*). Does not one thing strike you as we sit here?

HELMER. What should strike me?

NORA. We have been married eight years. Does it not strike you that this is the first time we two, you and I, man and wife, have talked together seriously?

HELMER. Seriously! Well, what do you call seriously?

NORA. During eight whole years, and more—ever since the day we first met—we have never exchanged one serious word about serious things.

HELMER. Was I always to trouble you with the cares you could not help me to bear?

NORA. I'm not talking of cares. I say that we

have never yet set ourselves seriously to get to the bottom of anything.

HELMER. Why, my dear Nora, what have you to do with serious things?

NORA. There we have it! You have never understood me. I have had great injustice done me, Torvald; first by father, and then by you.

HELMER. What! By your father and me?—By us who have loved you more than all the world?

NORA (*shaking her head*). You have never loved me. You only thought it amusing to be in love with me.

HELMER. Why, Nora, what a thing to say!

NORA. Yes, it is so, Torvald. While I was at home with father, he used to tell me all his opinions, and I held the same opinions. If I had others I concealed them, because he wouldn't have liked it. He used to call me his doll-child, and played with me as I played with my dolls. Then I came to live in your house——

HELMER. What an expression to use about our marriage!

NORA (*undisturbed*). I mean I passed from father's hands into yours. You settled everything according to your taste; and I got the same tastes as you; or I pretended to—I don't know which—both ways, perhaps. When I look back on it now, I seem to have been living here like a beggar, from hand to mouth. I lived by performing tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and father have done me a great wrong. It's your fault that my life has been wasted.

HELMER. Why, Nora, how unreasonable and ungrateful you are. Haven't you been happy here?

NORA. No, never; I thought I was, but I never was.

HELMER. Not—not happy?

NORA. No, only merry. And you've always been so kind to me. But our house has been nothing but a play-room. Here I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I used to be papa's doll-child. And the children, in their turn, have been my dolls. I thought it fun when you played with me, just as the children did when I played with them. That has been our marriage, Torvald.

HELMER. There is some truth in what you say, exaggerated and overstrained though it be. But henceforth it shall be different. Play-time is over; now comes the time for education.

NORA. Whose education? Mine, or the children's?

HELMER. Both, my dear Nora.

NORA. Oh, Torvald, you can't teach me to be a fit wife for you.

HELMER. And you say that?

NORA. And I—am I fit to educate the children?

HELMER. Nora!

NORA. Didn't you say yourself, a few minutes ago, you dared not trust them to me?

HELMER. In the excitement of the moment! Why should you dwell upon that?

NORA. No—you were perfectly right. That problem is beyond me. There's another to be solved first—I must try to educate myself. You are not the man

to help me in that. I must set about it alone. And that's why I am now leaving you!

HELMER (*jumping up*). What—do you mean to say—

NORA. I must stand quite alone to know myself and my surroundings; so I cannot stay with you.

HELMER. Nora! Nora!

NORA. I am going at once. Christina will take me in for to-night—

HELMER. You are mad. I shall not allow it. I forbid it.

NORA. It's no use your forbidding me anything now. I shall take with me what belongs to me. From you I will accept nothing, either now or afterwards.

HELMER. What madness!

NORA. To-morrow I shall go home.

HELMER. Home!

NORA. I mean to what was my home. It will be easier for me to find some opening there.

HELMER. Oh, in your blind inexperience—

NORA. I must try to gain experience, Torvald.

HELMER. To forsake your home, your husband, and your children! You don't consider what the world will say.

NORA. I can pay no heed to that! I only know that I must do it.

HELMER. It's exasperating! Can you forsake your holiest duties in this way?

NORA. What do you call my holiest duties?

HELMER. Do you ask me that? Your duties to your husband and your children.

NORA. I have other duties equally sacred.

HELMER. Impossible! What duties do you mean?

NORA. My duties towards myself.

HELMER. Before all else you are a wife and a mother.

NORA. That I no longer believe. I think that before all else I am a human being, just as much as you are—or at least I will try to become one. I know that most people agree with you, Torvald, and that they say so in books. But henceforth I can't be satisfied with what most people say, and what is in books. I must think things out for myself, and try to get clear about them.

HELMER. Are you not clear about your place in your own home? Have you not an infallible guide in questions like these? Have you not religion?

NORA. Oh, Torvald, I don't know properly what religion is.

HELMER. What do you mean?

NORA. I know nothing but what our clergyman told me when I was confirmed. He explained that religion was this and that. When I get away from here and stand alone, I will look into that matter too. I will see whether what he has taught me is true, or, at any rate, whether it is true for me.

HELMER. Oh, this is unheard of! But if religion cannot keep you right, let me appeal to your conscience—for I suppose you have some moral feeling? Or, answer me: perhaps you have none?

NORA. Well, Torvald, it's not easy to say. I really don't know—I'm all at sea about these things.

I only know that I think quite differently from you about them. I hear, too, that the laws are different from what I thought; but I can't believe that they are right. It appears that a woman has no right to spare her dying father, or to save her husband's life. I don't believe that.

HELMER. You talk like a child. You don't understand the society in which you live.

NORA. No, I don't. But I shall try to. I must make up my mind which is right—society or I.

HELMER. Nora, you are ill, you are feverish. I almost think you're out of your senses.

NORA. I have never felt so much clearness and certainty as to-night.

HELMER. You are clear and certain enough to forsake husband and children?

NORA. Yes, I am.

HELMER. Then there's only one explanation possible.

NORA. What is that?

HELMER. You no longer love me.

NORA. No; that is just it.

HELMER. Nora! Can you say so?

NORA. Oh, I'm so sorry, Torvald; for you've always been so kind to me. But I can't help it. I do not love you any longer.

HELMER (*keeping his composure with difficulty*). Are you clear and certain on this point too?

NORA. Yes, quite. That is why I won't stay here any longer.

HELMER. And can you also make clear to me how I have forfeited your love?

NORA. Yes, I can. It was this evening, when the miracle did not happen; for then I saw you were not the man I had taken you for.

HELMER. Explain yourself more clearly; I don't understand.

NORA. I have waited so patiently all these eight years; for of course I saw clearly enough that miracles don't happen every day. When this crushing blow threatened me, I said to myself confidently, "Now comes the miracle!" When Krogstad's letter lay in the box, it never occurred to me that you would think of submitting to that man's conditions. I was convinced that you would say to him, "Make it known to all the world;" and that then——

HELMER. Well? When I had given my own wife's name up to disgrace and shame——?

NORA. Then I firmly believed that you would come forward, take everything upon yourself, and say, "I am the guilty one."

HELMER. Nora!

NORA. You mean I would never have accepted such a sacrifice? No, certainly not. But what would my assertions have been worth in opposition to yours? That was the miracle that I hoped for and dreaded. And it was to hinder that that I wanted to die.

HELMER. I would gladly work for you day and night, Nora—bear sorrow and want for your sake—but no man sacrifices his honour, even for one he loves.

NORA. Millions of women have done so.

HELMER. Oh, you think and talk like a silly child.

NORA. Very likely. But you neither think nor

talk like the man I can share my life with. When your terror was over—not for me, but for yourself—when there was nothing more to fear,—then it was to you as though nothing had happened. I was your lark again, your doll—whom you would take twice as much care of in future, because she was so weak and fragile. (*Stands up.*) Torvald, in that moment it burst upon me that I had been living here these eight years with a strange man, and had borne him three children. Oh! I can't bear to think of it—I could tear myself to pieces!

HELMER (*sadly*). I see it, I see it; an abyss has opened between us. But, Nora, can it never be filled up?

NORA. As I now am, I am no wife for you.

HELMER. I have strength to become another man.

NORA. Perhaps—when your doll is taken away from you.

HELMER. To part—to part from you! No, Nora, no; I can't grasp the thought.

NORA (*going into room, right*). The more reason for the thing to happen.

(*She comes back with out-door things and a small travelling-bag, which she puts on a chair.*)

HELMER. Nora, Nora, not now! Wait till to-morrow.

NORA (*putting on cloak*). I can't spend the night in a strange man's house.

HELMER. But can't we live here, as brother and sister?

NORA (*fastening her hat*). You know very well

that wouldn't last long. Good-bye, Torvald. No, I won't go to the children. I know they're in better hands than mine. As I now am, I can be nothing to them.

HELMER. But some time, Nora ; some time——

NORA. How can I tell? I have no idea what will become of me.

HELMER. But you are my wife, now and always !

NORA. Listen, Torvald—when a wife leaves her husband's house, as I am doing, I have heard that in the eyes of the law he is free from all duties towards her. At any rate, I release you from all duties. You must not feel yourself bound any more than I shall. There must be perfect freedom on both sides. There, there is your ring back. Give me mine.

HELMER. That too?

NORA. That too.

HELMER. Here it is.

NORA. Very well. Now it's all over. Here are the keys. The servants know about everything in the house, better than I do. To-morrow, when I have started, Christina will come to pack up my things. I will have them sent after me.

HELMER. All over! all over! Nora, will you never think of me again?

NORA. Oh, I shall often think of you, and the children, and this house.

HELMER. May I write to you, Nora?

NORA. No, never. You must not.

HELMER. But I must send you——

NORA. Nothing, nothing.

HELMER. I must help you if you need it.

NORA. No, I say. I take nothing from strangers.

HELMER. Nora, can I never be more than a stranger to you?

NORA (*taking her travelling-bag*). Oh, Torvald, then the miracle of miracles would have to happen.

HELMER. What is the miracle of miracles?

NORA. Both of us would have to change so that—— Oh, Torvald, I no longer believe in miracles.

HELMER. But I will believe. We must so change that——

NORA. That communion between us shall be a marriage. Good-bye. (*She goes out.*)

HELMER (*sinks in a chair by the door with his face in his hands*). Nora! Nora! (*He looks round and stands up.*) Empty. She's gone. (*A hope inspires him.*) Ah! The miracle of miracles——?!

(*From below is heard the reverberation of a heavy door closing.*)

THE END.

My dear Mother
I received your kind letter of the 10th and was
glad to hear from you and to hear that you
were all well.

I am well at present and hope these few lines
will find you all the same.

I have not much news to write at present
but I will believe you want to know
how I am getting on.

I am still in the same place and
hope to stay here for some time.

The winter is very cold here
and I am glad to hear that you
are all well.

I have not much news to write
at present but I will believe
you want to know how I am
getting on.

I am still in the same place
and hope to stay here for
some time.

I have not much news to write
at present but I will believe
you want to know how I am
getting on.

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