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PLASTER SAINTS
BY ISRAEL ZANGWILL

PLASTER SAINTS
A HIGH COMEDY IN THREE MOVEMENTS
BY ISRAEL ZANGWILL

LONDON : WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1914

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TO
MY FRIEND AND MANAGER
GASTON MAYER
IN RECOGNITION OF
HIS GALLANT FIGHT FOR ART

THE
MACMILLAN
COMPANY

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THE CAST

[As first produced at the Comedy Theatre, Saturday, May 23, 1914.]

Rev. Dr. Rodney Vaughan	EDWARD SASS
Sir John Archmundham, Bart.	CLIFTON ALDERSON
John Archmundham, M.D., D.Sc., M.A.	HAROLD CHAPIN
Purvis	H. K. AYLIFF
Hannah Vaughan	GRACE LANE
Elsie Vaughan	ERNITA LASCELLES
Amy Archmundham	GILLIAN SCAIFE
Mrs. Morrow	INEZ BENSUSAN
The Hon. Mrs. Anon	GWENDOLINE HAY

The action passes in the Minister's study at Midstoke, between tea and dinner in the beginning of October, 1912.]

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First Movement

HANNAH VAUGHAN, a provincial lady, with the beauty of a benign middle age, and the eyes of a mystic, is sitting in the study of her husband, the REV. DR. RODNEY VAUGHAN, sorting old letters and papers at his writing-table and throwing some into the waste-paper basket. It is a solid room in a solid city, meant for solid work, comfortably done. Its outstanding impressions, besides the book-lined walls, are this large many-drawer writing-table along the right of the back wall, getting its light from the central French window, which leads to the garden. By the left wall is a small bureau sustaining a bell, two photographs of young women in standing frames, and a plaster bust of Purity. At back a large gaily-cushioned divan, strewn with large envelopes of varying colours. Near the table an arm-chair, by right wall library steps. The door near the steps leads to HANNAH'S room, the door in the left wall to a passage. As HANNAH works with precise masterful movements, she has that air of arranging other people's lives natural to a female saint who is also a clergyman's wife. The clamorous continuous sound of a gong comes from the passage. She looks up, as if surprised at the flight of time, then goes on with her work. A moment later, PURVIS, an old family factotum of somewhat dour aspect, side-whiskered and wearing an old-fashioned morning coat and black tie, enters, carrying a little tray with tea and bread-and-butter.

PURVIS

I've brought it in, mum. Dr. Vaughan and the lassie isn't back from the garden-party.

HANNAH

I know. Then why all this gong-beating?

PURVIS

Habit, mum. It overcomes us—like sin.

[*He sets down the tray by her side.*]

Eh, but they'll get a grander spread at the Lord Mayor's.

[*He begins to go, but finding she ignores the tea he turns back.*]

Dusty work, redding up th' measter's papers. M'appen yo'll be glad o' yor tea.

HANNAH

Thank you.

[*Ignoring it still.*]

PURVIS [*Choking and coughing*]

Makes a man feel like th' serpent.

HANNAH [*Absently*]

What serpent?

PURVIS [*Amazed*]

There's only one serpent, mum. Him that beguiled th' woman and was doomed to eat dust a' the days of his life. [*Coughs again.*]

HANNAH

Ah, yes—you'd better open the window.

[Drinks the tea as PURVIS throws open the French window, exhibiting a stretch of garden, and begins to go.]

You can take it away. Crumble the bread for the birds.

PURVIS *[Feeding birds and then taking tray]*

Pity there's no ravens here. I always feel we owe 'em for feeding Elijah.

[As he goes out through the door ELSIE VAUGHAN, the minister's daughter, dashes in through the window, putting down her parasol. She is still in her teens, with a strong face, both beautiful and intellectual, and is tastefully but economically clad. Behind her looms a young man, and behind him another girl.]

ELSIE *[Impetuous in speech as in movement]*

Oh, mother, you ought to have come. Fancy mugging indoors this divine day of Indian summer. The whole Church Conference was there.

HANNAH

I had my stock-taking. You know I count my year by the Conference.

[Becoming vaguely aware of the others]

Have you brought some of our clergy—?

[AMY ARCHMUNDHAM, the girl at the back, laughs as she lowers her parasol. She is older than ELSIE and more richly dressed; pretty but pale, with a passionate and high-strung look.]

AMY

Ha! Ha! Ha! Oh brother John! Fancy you being taken for a minister!

[JOHN ARCHMUNDHAM, M.D., D.SC., M.A., with a warning "Sh!" to his sister hastens to greet MRS. VAUGHAN. He is a good-looking youth of twenty-five, superior and condescending in manner, and the mock-earnestness of his tone penetrates to ELSIE'S ears, despite his obvious desire to stand well with her mother.]

JOHN

Sorry I only represent Science, Mrs. Vaughan. How do you do?

HANNAH [*Surprised*]

Mr. Archmundham!

JOHN

Yes. We drove your daughter home, so dropped in to see you.

HANNAH

That was doubly kind of you. How do you do, Miss Archmundham?

[*Shakes her hand. Then turns to ELSIE*]

But what have you done with father?

ELSIE

I lost him in the squash.

JOHN

And *our* father has nobly driven back for him.

HANNAH

That was very kind of Sir John.

[*To ELSIE*]

Don't say squash.

[*To the others*]

Won't you sit down ?

JOHN [*Suavely defending ELSIE's slang*]

Well, Mrs. Vaughan, the garden-party did suffer from congestion.

[*Sits.*]

AMY [*Dropping on the divan*]

But not of the brain. It was simply black with shovel-hats.

JOHN [*Placating MRS. VAUGHAN*]

Not so black as you paint it, Amy. Why, our own father's hat was white.

ELSIE

And think of the Mayoress's picture-hat ! Giant as the gourd that came up over Jonah.

AMY

Yes, and her Pompadour gown—quite the Scarlet Woman !

HANNAH

You shouldn't jest children, with sacred things.

AMY

The Mayoress sacred !

JOHN [*Warningly*]
Sh !

HANNAH

The Mayor and his wife have spent time and money in honouring our Church Conference. They are entitled to equal honour from us.

JOHN

A sentiment the more unimpeachable, Mrs. Vaughan, inasmuch as you personally do not appear to favour this mingling of gaiety and the Gospel.

ELSIE [*Flashing a resentful glance at him*]
Dad did thank them, mother.

HANNAH

I am very glad. And you ought to have kept close to him.

AMY

She couldn't, Mrs Vaughan. Dr. Vaughan was positively surrounded with palpitating parasols.

JOHN [*Blandly soothing*]

So many ladies took the opportunity of greeting the President of the Conference.

[*Diverting attention to the large envelopes on the divan*]
I wonder you sort your letters in that old-fashioned way. You want a proper file, such as I use for my potato-experiments.

ELSIE [*Rising and pulling AMY up*]

Yes, and we had better leave mother to her stock-taking. Suppose we sit in the summer-house till your carriage comes back.

HANNAH

But wouldn't they like some tea ?

AMY

Tea ! After strawberry ices ! Oh, Mrs. Vaughan, you shouldn't jest with sacred things.

JOHN [*Hastily*]

Good-bye Mrs. Vaughan. Ices always go to Amy's head.

[*Hurries her out by the window. ELSIE is following.*]

HANNAH [*A large envelope in her hand*]

One moment, Elsie.

ELSIE

Yes, mother ?

HANNAH

What is the matter with Miss Archmundham ?

ELSIE

So flippant you mean ?

HANNAH

So feverish. Her hand was burning. And her eyes were too brilliant.

ELSIE

I *have* been feeling something's wrong. . . . I wonder . . .

HANNAH

Poor Amy! She shall have my prayers. Such a nice girl, usually.

ELSIE

A perfect brick!

HANNAH [*Rebuking the slang*]

Elsie!

ELSIE

Well, when a girl's so beastly rich and yet so genuine—

HANNAH

I'm sure, dear, your slang sounds disrespectful to your father's position.

ELSIE

Why, dad uses slang himself!

HANNAH

He catches it from you. That is why you should be particularly careful—especially with London members here, who may one day give him the longed-for call to the capital. I sometimes think, daughter, you don't quite appreciate that your father is one of the great spiritual figures of our Communion.

ELSIE

Oh, yes I do, mother. But I don't see why one shouldn't be spiritual and slangy, too.

HANNAH

Can you imagine the Fathers of the Church using slang ?

ELSIE

But they weren't fathers at all, were they? They don't seem human. And father is so very human. That's the secret of his influence. I sometimes think, mother, you don't quite appreciate that your husband is one of the great *human* figures of our Communion.

HANNAH [*Wistfully*]

I appreciate that you are making fun of me.

ELSIE

Dear old mother Superior !

[*They embrace tenderly. JOHN re-appears at the garden window. They move apart.*]

JOHN

I'm so sorry to worry you, Mrs. Vaughan, but my sister seems to have a bad headache. Perhaps you've got something.

HANNAH

Certainly! Poor girl! Just what I feared. I'll get my salts.

[*Hurries to the door on the right. ELSIE is moving towards the garden.*]

JOHN [*Coming in*]
Best let her be, Miss Vaughan.

ELSIE
I thought something had upset her.

JOHN
Too many ices, I daresay.

ELSIE
Don't be so brotherly. . . . It's some mental trouble.

JOHN
Is it ?

ELSIE
Don't pretend. Perhaps I can help her.

JOHN
I can't give away Amy's secrets.

ELSIE [*Dropping on divan*]
Then we'll change the subject. . . . Did you know
Hubert Morrow is off to Australia ?

JOHN [*On arm of armchair*]
You . . . diplomatist !

ELSIE [*Smiling*]
Then I've guessed it. There *was* something between
your sister and Hubert Morrow.

JOHN

There *will* be—the ocean.

ELSIE

They've quarrelled ?

JOHN

You really ought to have gone to the Bar.

[MRS. VAUGHAN *passes through with smelling-salts.*]

She's in the summer-house.

HANNAH

Clear the couch !

[*Exit to garden*]

[ELSIE and JOHN *collect the envelopes and heap them on the armchair, while talking.*]

ELSIE

They *must* have quarrelled if she lets him go to Australia.

JOHN

How can she stop him ? They're not engaged.

ELSIE

Then why doesn't she propose ?

JOHN [*Shocked, dropping the envelopes*]

You'd consider that womanly ?

ELSIE

And if it's manly ! . . . Queen Victoria proposed.

And your sister is as rich as a queen compared with Hubert Morrow.

JOHN [*Sitting on table*]
You're all at sea. Hubert proposed.

ELSIE
And your sister refused ?

JOHN
No—father refused. There ! You've got it out of me.

ELSIE
Your father rejected him ! But why ?

JOHN [*Uneasily*]
I'd rather not go into it.

ELSIE
But why don't they marry without his consent ?

JOHN
And what has Hubert Morrow got to marry on ?
Unpublished symphonies ?

ELSIE
He's got your sister's money to marry on.

JOHN
No—it's only hers at marriage if father consents.
Same with mine. That's where the old generation's
got us in its grip.

ELSIE

Well, I call it beastly—just because the man's poor, he must be robbed of your sister, too.

JOHN

It's not because he's poor.

ELSIE [*Hotly*]

What other excuse can your father have? Aren't the Morrors a fine old family, finer even than yours? And the way Hubert Morrow gave up Germany and music for an office-stool when his mother lost her money——!

JOHN

Was more virtuous than my giving up my medical practice to wallow in theory—I know. But the fact remains that my father is right . . . for once.

ELSIE

Sir John is right?

JOHN

Accidents will happen.

ELSIE

I call it wicked of him, not right. And you know it is. You are only laughing at him.

JOHN

I assure you——

ELSIE

As you laughed at my mother.

JOHN

I? Why, I was as solemn as the Church Conference.

ELSIE

That's what I mean. You weren't real with her.

JOHN

Is *she* real? I beg your pardon, but I mean, all her generation. Did they ever see things with their own eyes, feel things with their own nerves? Can one fancy them in love? Or fighting for some live ideal? They seem merely . . . theological.

ELSIE

We can't all be *biological*. We can't all potter over potatoes.

JOHN [*Rising indignantly*]

That's your conception of my research work! The potatoes I breed tell me more of life and death than all the theologies.

ELSIE

I don't mean to question the value of your experiments. But you're so hard on the old people.

JOHN

Hard? What are they? Marble!

ELSIE

Dad isn't marble.

JOHN

No, *he's* a bit plastic, perhaps. But *my* father and *your* mother—what a blessing *they* didn't marry. By all the laws of Mendel, they'd have had a family of statues.

HANNAH [*Outside*]

Do, dear! I'm sure you'd be better lying down.

ELSIE

That doesn't sound like marble.

[*Enter HANNAH from the garden, supporting AMY.*]

HANNAH

And Dr. Vaughan has the most comfortable couch in the house.

[*Places AMY on it.*]

And it doesn't mind boots.

[*Puts AMY's feet up. ELSIE adjusts cushions and takes AMY's hat.*]

AMY [*Feebly*]

You are very kind.

[*HANNAH tenders salts. AMY waves them back.*]

No, not again, please—they're so strong. Haven't you got some eau-de-cologne?

HANNAH

I'm afraid we never have that!

ELSIE

Oh yes, mother, there's some in the bureau.

HANNAH

In father's bureau ?

ELSIE

When I was looking for sealing-wax yesterday, I came upon a bottle—buried under old shorthand notes.

[*Goes to bureau, laying down AMY's hat on it.*]

HANNAH

Ah, of course. Felicia Morrow must have left it.

JOHN [*Startled*]

Felicia Morrow !

[*Recovering himself with a smile*]

Oh—in the days when she was Dr. Vaughan's secretary.

HANNAH

Yes. She had headaches, poor girl—I remember her once putting some on *his* forehead, too.

ELSIE [*Triumphantly producing a small bottle*]

There ! Just a wee drappie.

HANNAH [*Taking it*]

How providential !

[*To AMY*]

Will you have it on your handkerchief ?

AMY [*Clutching at the bottle*]

Thank you. I can do it.

[*She pours some on her handkerchief and applies it to her forehead.*]

I feel much better.

[*Surveys bottle lovingly*]

Felicia Morrow's, did you say? I daresay her brother brought it back from Germany.

JOHN [*Smiling*]

Rather a far-fetched hypothesis, isn't it?

HANNAH

I'm afraid Dr. Vaughan worked her too hard—and himself too. Her shorthand made his brain act twice as quickly, he said, but I'm sure it was the beginning of his insomnia. He's never been the same man since Felicia came.

ELSIE [*Sitting with legs tucked under her*]

It can't be the shorthand, mother, for he's slept worse since Felicia left.

JOHN

Because now he feels short-handed.

ELSIE }

AMY }

Oh! Oh!

[*AMY pretends to throw the bottle at him. He laughingly tries to take it from her but she clutches it tightly.*]

AMY
Let it be !

JOHN
But it's empty.

AMY [*Blushing*]
There's the picture of Cologne Cathedral—reminds
me of our one jaunt abroad.

HANNAH [*Misreading the blush*]
It's given her quite a colour again.
[*Enter PURVIS.*]

PURVIS
A lady for Dr. Vaughan, mum.

HANNAH
But he's not back yet. What name ?

PURVIS
Didna give a name. Said she'd met Dr. Vaughan at
th' garden-party and he asked her to call.

HANNAH [*Who has dropped into an armchair*]
H'm.

[*To ELSIE*]
Another secretary at last, I'm afraid.

[*Sighs*]
I wish shorthand wasn't so difficult.

PURVIS [*Grimly*]
Dunnot look a likely secretary.

HANNAH

Eh? What then does she look like?

PURVIS

More like Lady Macbeth.

JOHN

What! Ha! Ha! Ha! Then you did go to *Macbeth*?

PURVIS [*Flustered*]

A man canna help seeing th' posters!

JOHN [*Laughingly*]

Come now. Wasn't my father right? You and our coachman——

PURVIS [*Sullenly*]

The scandal folk will tell behind a man's back.

HANNAH

Never mind that now, Purvis. Is the lady old or young?

PURVIS

I have my doubts.

JOHN

Shall *I* go and report on her?

HANNAH

Why should we trouble you? Elsie can go. That'll do, Purvis.

[*Exit PURVIS, ELSIE starts going.*]

JOHN

I think a joint report would be safer.

[Starts to follow ELSIE.]

ELSIE *[Discouraging him]*

I am not going to report. I shall either send her away or let her wait in the drawing room.

[Exit.]

JOHN

But I'm sure Amy wants to be left with her kind nurse.

[Follows ELSIE.]

HANNAH

How thoughtful your brother is! . . . Perhaps you'd like me to go too, while you have a nap.

AMY

No, I can sit up now. There!

[Puts the cushion at her back and sits up]

Do tell me more about Felicia Morrow.

HANNAH

About Felicia? But you knew her before she went to London.

AMY

Yes, of course. Sweetly pretty, wasn't she?

HANNAH

And most useful. That packet in her writing

[Points to a large pink envelope on the armchair]

includes reports on charity cases, accounts, abstracts of serm——

AMY [*Impatiently*]

Yes, yes, but did her brother ever come when she was working here ?

HANNAH

Hubert ? He may have come once or twice in the winter evenings to see her home. Why ?

AMY

And did he look tired after all that horrid office-work ?

HANNAH

I'm afraid I didn't notice. Of course he was sad at having had to give up his studies in Germany. Though why music is German I never could make out. You're crying again !

AMY

No, I'm not.

HANNAH

I wish you would let me help you, Miss Archmundham.

AMY

You *have* helped me.

HANNAH [*Sitting down by her*]

Only physically. After all a motherless girl like you might talk to a woman old enough to be her mother.

AMY

How do you know I could have talked to my mother ?

HANNAH

What are you saying ?

AMY

Don't be alarmed ! I only mean there's a gulf between my generation and yours. It's too wide to talk across. One can only shout.

HANNAH

What gulf, my dear ? What gulf is there that love cannot bridge ?

AMY [*Jumping up fretfully*]

Love ? Whose love ?

HANNAH

Your father's—to begin with——

AMY

Father's ?

[*Laughs hysterically*]

Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! Ha !

HANNAH [*Rising and going to her*]

Now do control yourself, dear.

AMY

I told you we could only shout.

HANNAH

You surely don't doubt your father loves you ?

AMY

And his love blights my womanhood as his religion blighted my childhood !

HANNAH [*Frightened rather than shocked*]

Do, do be calm.

AMY

How can I be calm when Hubert is sailing to Australia ?

HANNAH [*Astounded*]

Felicia's brother—and you !

[AMY sobs]

Oh, my dear !

[*Gathers her to her arms.*]

AMY

Just because he's got no money, father——

[*Breaks down.*]

HANNAH

But this is dreadful—putting money before everything.
And so unlike your father. Are you sure it's that ?

AMY

A Morrow is no match for *my* daughter—that's all
I can get out of him. And what *else* can he mean ?
Oh, do you think *you* could speak to him ?

HANNAH

I ?

[Shrinks back, releasing AMY]

What right should *I* have to interfere ?

AMY

You go round to the poor sick enough, telling them their duty. Why should the rich never hear——?

[A burst of laughter from two men is heard from the garden.]

HANNAH *[Relieved]*

There's Dr. Vaughan. Perhaps he'd have more authority.

AMY

No, no, not a man . . .

[Hysterically]

Please tell John I've gone home.

[Abrupt exit to passage, still clinging to the eau-de-cologne bottle.]

HANNAH *[Following her]*

But Amy !

[AMY disappears, her sobs are heard.]

Yes, yes, I *will* speak to your father. . . . My poor Amy !

[Exit.]

[The genial stentorian laughing voice of the REV. DR. RODNEY VAUGHAN is heard from the garden.]

DR. VAUGHAN [*From without*]

Good-bye, Judson. Good-bye, O man of little faith!

[*The smiling faces of DR. VAUGHAN and SIR JOHN ARCHMUNDHAM become visible at the open French window. The minister, though of a narrow sect, suggests a Broad Churchman, both physically and spiritually. His clerical costume and white tie only accentuate the sunniness of a full-blooded personality, whose magnetism is potent for men as well as women. But underneath there are signs of strain; at times the eyes are haggard, he has almost a haunted look. Evidently a man cast in a large mould, for good or evil. SIR JOHN, the lay head of the congregation, has also an imposing personality—the provincial Puritan millionaire, hearty, portly, honest and grey-whiskered. His white top-hat makes a sharp contrast with the clerical shovel hat.*]

SIR JOHN

Rather rough on Judson. Ha! Ha! Ha!

[*They step in.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

All treasurers are croakers, Sir John—especially when one proposes to enlarge the work. You were the only ideal treasurer we ever had.

SIR JOHN [*Dropping into the chair by the bureau*]

What's your definition of an ideal treasurer—a cheerful spender?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Placing both their hats on table*]
A cheerful giver, I'm afraid. Ha! Ha! Ha! The ideal treasurer is the man who donates the fund which he administers.

SIR JOHN
Ha! Ha! Ha! But that's just why I resigned. A wealthy treasurer makes everybody else so slack.

DR. VAUGHAN
That's true. And Judson's croakings do stiffen up the stingy.

SIR JOHN
Poor old Judson! You must admit that these crusades you've preached us into *will* play the dickens with his surplus.

DR. VAUGHAN
On the contrary, Sir John. Our campaigns against the African atrocities and the White Slave Traffic will touch every heart and every pocket.

SIR JOHN
Well, don't overwork, dear friend. I don't like your not sleeping.

DR. VAUGHAN
So long as I keep my congregation awake! Ha! Ha!
Ha!

[*Turns to divan.*]

Why, who has been lying on *my* bed? said the big bear.

SIR JOHN

I'm serious, Doctor. Remember *you* are Judson's greatest asset.

DR. VAUGHAN

This won't be work. This'll be the joy of battle. Great God! to think of all that villainy!

[*Clenches his fist*]

Every nerve in me tingles for the fight with these fiends. If we can't bring God's kingdom on earth yet awhile, at least we may destroy the Devil's kingdom.

SIR JOHN

God grant it! [*Rising*] But I must collect my chicks. Thank you for making me stretch my legs.

DR. VAUGHAN

Thank you for keeping *my* legs company. It's my best chance of sleep. I'll get your children.

[*Rings the bell on the bureau.*]

SIR JOHN [*Looking out with unconscious patronage*]

Your garden's a tidy size.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Joining him at window*]

Yes, that's the advantage of moving a bit out.

SIR JOHN

You won't get such a garden in London.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Eagerly*]

In London? Am I to be called to——?

SIR JOHN [*Evasively*]

Who knows? Some day, I suppose . . . after your brilliant handling of the Conference. I remember when this quarter was all garden. Old Cobb, the Quaker, it was who first saw the town would grow this way. Picked up three hundred acres for an old song and built a meeting-house to attract his fellow fanatics. How such a clever man could be a Quaker—!

DR. VAUGHAN

The spirit moved him, I presume.

SIR JOHN

The spirit of crankiness! Every man his own minister indeed! The meeting-house still exists, I suppose?

DR. VAUGHAN

As a cinematograph-hall.

SIR JOHN

Ha! Ha! Ha! Serve the cranks right.

[*Enter PURVIS, carrying a set of pyjamas.*]

PURVIS [*Perceiving* SIR JOHN, *mutters*]

Holy Moses!

[*Retreats hastily and exit.*]

SIR JOHN

What's the mountebank up to?

DR. VAUGHAN

Ha! Ha! Ha!

[*Rings the bell again*]

He was bringing in my pyjamas—I left them in the bath room, I suppose—and he didn't want you to know I sleep on this divan.

SIR JOHN

Do you?

DR. VAUGHAN

When I can't sleep. But that's a bull. Ha! Ha! Ha! I mean, not to disturb my wife. And there's the books to browse on. Those cushions turn into snowy pillows.

[*Lifts up cover and reveals pillow-cases.*]

SIR JOHN [*Laughingly*]

Whited sepulchres! Who would think anything in *your* house ever led a double life?

DR. VAUGHAN [*With sudden gravity*]

Yes, who?

[*His face grows haggard, he turns away. Enter*
PURVIS.]

SIR JOHN

Ah, there you are again, you old rascal—looking as if butter wouldn't melt in your mouth. Mr. John and Miss Amy are here, I suppose.

PURVIS

Ay, Sir John.

SIR JOHN

And my carriage ?

PURVIS

No, Sir John.

SIR JOHN

No ? When *we* have *walked* ! Why what's the rascal up to ?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Smiling*]

We've walked too fast—we've upset his calculations.

SIR JOHN

Dropped in to a music-hall, eh Purvis ?

PURVIS

Impossible, Sir. First house dunnot begin till 6.45.

SIR JOHN

You seem very well up in it all. And yet you deny the pair of you went to *Macbeth* !

PURVIS

Always rakings-up here—dust and dust.

[*Exit with dignity.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*Smilingly*]

Oh well, Sir John, it was only Shakespeare.

SIR JOHN

Only the devil! Shakespeare's the thin end of the wedge. I sometimes think Satan never did a better day's work than when he wrote Shakespeare.

DR. VAUGHAN

Ha! Ha! Ha! Not Bacon but Satan. Well, I'm afraid you'll have to wait for your coachman. Won't you browse a bit?

[*Indicates books*]

Keep off that corner—William Satan!

SIR JOHN

You may laugh, but if we had weeded our Training College Library of love-poetry, we might have escaped that student scandal. I think I'll go across and buck up Judson. His house is opposite, isn't it?

DR. VAUGHAN

Three doors to the right.

SIR JOHN [*Taking his hat from the table*]

Good! I'll see my carriage coming.

[*Goes right and puts his hand on the door.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*Laughingly*]

Whoa! I didn't say *one* door to the right. That's my wife's room.

SIR JOHN

I beg your pardon. My bump of locality——

[*Smilingly goes out by the other door.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

Ha! Ha! Ha!

[*As the door closes on SIR JOHN, his laughter ceases. His eyes wander uneasily round the signs of clearing up. Then he stoops to get his slippers under the table. As he rises, he catches sight of the pink envelope and reads the superscription.*]

“From Felicia Morrow!”

[*He drops the slippers in agitation and with every symptom of nervous apprehension runs hastily through the contents, his face relaxing as he nears the end, till at last he heaves a great sigh of relief as he stuffs them all back into their envelope.*]

Thank God!

[*As he is putting the envelope back, he suddenly alters his mind and tears the whole fiercely to pieces*]

Let it *all* be blotted out!

[*He throws the fragments into the waste-paper basket and falls on his knees*]

The peace of Thy forgiveness, Lord, the peace of Thy forgiveness!

[*He remains on his knees, praying silently as in bitter remorse. Enter HANNAH from the passage.*]

She looks at him reverently and turns to go. But he hears her and looks round with a guilty start and is about to rise.]

HANNAH

Don't let me disturb you, dear. We have much to thank God for.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Rising*]

I was just finished. How long have you been here ?

HANNAH

Only this instant. What have you done with Sir John ? I must speak to him about his daughter.

DR. VAUGHAN

He went across to Judson's—he'll be back. Such a pity, Hannah, you didn't come——!

HANNAH

After this morning's revelations about white slaves and black slaves, I didn't feel like garden-parties.

DR. VAUGHAN

So you said. But brooding over horrors won't mend them. And we must seek God in joy as well as in gloom.

[*Mystically*]

He smiles as well as scourges. I tell you, Hannah, looking at all those happy groups in a sort of Paradise,

I had a sudden sense of the meaning of that verse in Genesis: "The Lord God was walking in the garden."

HANNAH

I daresay you are right, Rodney. But God has given me joy enough all this godly week—pure, heavenly joy.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Lightly*]

Even in that infernal debate over the Training College?

HANNAH

Weren't *you* presiding over it? And to see you in the Chair—Captain of the hosts of the Lord—wasn't that my lifelong dream?

DR. VAUGHAN

You haven't known me all your life.

HANNAH

Don't tease. You know my girlish dream was to marry a servant of God.

DR. VAUGHAN

Who should also be a master of men, eh old wench?

[*Strokes her cheek.*]

HANNAH

A schoolmaster. The teaching priest! Isn't that the design on your betrothal ring?

[*Takes his hand.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

Dear queer old ring.

[*She kisses it! He draws his hand away.*]

I wish, Hannah, you wouldn't make me out such a . . . plaster saint! I grow so afraid——

HANNAH

Of losing your humility? Never!

DR. VAUGHAN

Afraid of hurting you—if ever I—you know, dear—even the saints were always being tempted of the devil.

HANNAH

Yes, and *your* temptation is always to depreciate yourself——

[*She smiles*]

to hint at the seven deadly sins—for fear I should get too proud of you, I suppose. Oh Rodney, what have I done to deserve you?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Pained*]

Don't, Hannah.

[*Withdraws his hand and turns away.*]

You've certainly left nothing *undone*.

HANNAH [*With sudden recollection*]

Oh, haven't I? Why, I've forgotten the lady!

DR. VAUGHAN

What lady?

HANNAH

In the drawing-room. I do hope you're not thinking of her for a secretary because according to Purvis—I haven't had time to see for myself—she's a most unsuitable person—very different from Felicia.

DR. VAUGHAN

No lady is suitable for a secretary—except you.

[*Takes her hand again.*]

HANNAH

Dear Rodney! You really are satisfied without shorthand?

DR. VAUGHAN

Haven't I got along all these months? What I gained in time I lost in style.

HANNAH

I'm so glad. Now I can confess that useful and delightful as Felicia was, it wasn't pleasant to see her take my place.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Starting*]

Take your place?

HANNAH

Getting to know your books and sermons before *I* did.

DR. VAUGHAN

I assure you the poor girl was much too pre-occupied

with the shorthand to think of the sense. Besides, it was you that originally suggested her.

HANNAH

Of course I wanted her to earn some money when her poor mother——

DR. VAUGHAN [*Fidgeting towards the door*]

I know, but this unsuitable person, hadn't I better get rid of her ?

HANNAH

Just a moment, dear. She's got Elsie and young Archmundham to entertain her. I want to tell you about Amy Archmundham. It was she drove the lady out of my head.

DR. VAUGHAN

What about Amy Archmundham ?

[*A knock at the door.*]

Come in !

[*Enter JOHN.*]

JOHN

Ah, Doctor, you're back. I was sent to scout. Then may I send you down a beautiful lady who insists on seeing you ?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Smiling*]

If she insists !

HANNAH

Not with those slippers showing !

[*Hides them.*]

JOHN

But where's my father ? He did find you, I hope.

DR. VAUGHAN

Oh yes—he's only at Judson's, waiting for his carriage.

JOHN

Why, where *is* the carriage ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Hasn't got here yet. You see, *we* walked. Ha ! Ha !
Ha !

JOHN

Then I'll send you the lady. Good-bye.

HANNAH

Not good-bye to *me*. I shall be joining you and Elsie
in the drawing-room.

JOHN [*His face falling*]

How delightful !

[*Exit.*]

HANNAH

What a nice boy John is growing up !

DR. VAUGHAN

Is he? Yes, I suppose he *is* an improvement on the medical student we used to hear tales of.

HANNAH [*Putting envelopes from chair on table*]

I never did believe the tittle-tattle about his frequenting playhouses.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Dropping into arm-chair*]

His potatoes seem certainly to have steadied him. I shouldn't wonder now if he marries Lady Muriel as Sir John would like.

HANNAH

And a very proper match—with the two estates joining! But I wish I could understand about these potatoes. What does he do with them?

DR. VAUGHAN

What we've just been talking about. He marries them. A potato parson!

HANNAH

Don't jest, dear.

[*Takes up books to replace tidily on shelves.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

I'm not jesting—in fact it was a pious old priest that began it, the Abbé Mendel. You study the laws of heredity with pigs or fowls or strawberries—whatever you please. Mendel did it with peas. Our young friend prefers potatoes. When two sorts are

blended, the type that triumphs in the issue is called the dominant. You, for example, are the dominant.

HANNAH [*Who has been a bit shocked by all this*]
Me dominant? Oh Rodney!

DR. VAUGHAN

Why, only think of Elsie's good looks! Ha! Ha!
Ha!

[*Enter PURVIS, announcing*]

PURVIS

The lady, sir!

HANNAH

Oh, and I haven't told you about Amy ——!

[*A lady, the flush of whose youth and beauty is only accentuated by her heavy veil enters, parasol in hand. She is exquisitely gowned and of fashionable manners, but evidently passing through an emotional crisis. She bows, but looks constrained at the sight of HANNAH, who returns her bow.*]

HANNAH

Don't shut the door, Purvis.

[*HANNAH goes, not without having scrutinized the visitor. PURVIS closes the door upon himself.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*Who has risen*]

Won't you sit down?

LADY [*Ignoring the chair ; throwing back her veil*]
You don't remember me—at the garden party—you
said I might come.

DR. VAUGHAN

Oh, ah, yes. But I thought you meant next week.

LADY

Next week? Next week I shall be back in London.
Next week the impulse may be dead.

DR. VAUGHAN

You wish to consult me ?

LADY

If you will forget all I say.

DR. VAUGHAN

I will try. I have certainly forgotten your name.

LADY

I am so glad. I knew I could count on you. I knew
it the moment you stepped on the platform amid that
thunder of cheers. I knew then, that Providence, not
chance, had led me to your strange smoky town.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Smiling*]

Oh, we are proud of our town. Do sit down.

LADY

Thank you.

[*She sits by the side of his table, he at it.*]

You are the first man I ever felt could be a priest to me.

[*She struggles with her emotion.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

Shall I get you a glass of water ?

LADY

You give me the living water. . . . But turn your face away. . . . Thank you.

[*She bows her head.*]

There is a sin on my soul . . . the sin that in Christ's day was punished with stoning. . . . But nobody knows . . . least of all, my husband. . . so I go unpunished.

[*She wrings her hands.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*Turns back to her*]

Unpunished ? When you sit like that ? To go unpunished is, perhaps, the deepest punishment of all.

LADY

Is it ? My husband's love, my children's reverence, the world's respect, wealth, station—all are mine. For ironic climax I bear the title "Honourable." Where is the punishment ?

DR. VAUGHAN

You are enduring it now.

LADY

But I was learning to forget. It was only your eyes, your words, that pierced through.

DR. VAUGHAN

The episode is closed, then ?

LADY

Absolutely. . . . A brief madness. . . . He pursued me until I— Oh, how could I ? How could I ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Calm yourself.

LADY [*Sobbing*]

I had no excuse. My husband was always so good to me.

DR. VAUGHAN

But suddenly—as under the spell of Satan—you seemed to see a world of beauty you had missed in the humdrum of duty and domesticity.

LADY

Yes, yes.

DR. VAUGHAN

And in that strange transfiguration, when all the world grew golden, under the glamour of witchcraft, the sin seemed not in the loving, but in letting the love go by.

LADY

Ah, how you understand women !

DR. VAUGHAN

Because women are human. Because we are all sinners.

LADY

Please, please, not these fly-blown phrases. I came to you for real words.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Resentfully*]

And how could I give you real words unless I too were a sinner ?

LADY [*Turning to him appealingly*]

You shall not put me off with phrases. It is for your sinlessness that I come to you—for the great white light that shines out from you, showing up all my evil.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Who has risen agitatedly*]

But surely you remember that no man dared cast the first stone, that only our Lord was sinless.

LADY

You are a parrot like the others. I'm sorry I troubled you. Good-bye.

[*She goes angrily towards the door, then turns*]

Oh, forgive me ! But don't you think I've read the passage in St. John a hundred times ? And where is the comfort of finding that some men are as bad as I ? There are plenty of good men, too. Suppose our Lord had bidden *you* cast the first stone ?

DR. VAUGHAN

But our Lord himself said, "Neither do *I* condemn thee. Go and sin no more."

LADY

But did she tell her husband ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Tell her husband ?

LADY

Yes, unless she told her husband, she was surely unpurged of her sin.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Dropping back into his seat*]

I see. You feel you ought to tell your husband.

LADY

How could I not feel it ? But I haven't the strength to speak.

DR. VAUGHAN

Has he the strength to hear ?

LADY

It would shatter his life.

DR. VAUGHAN

He is wrapped up in you ?

LADY

To absolute blindness. To worship. I often sit and look at him as he sits so secure——

DR. VAUGHAN [*Continuing eagerly*]

In the peace of love, in the happiness of the quiet evening, and you feel like a dynamiter who with one spark could bring the whole house tumbling down with a hideous roar.

LADY [*Excitedly returning to him and her seat*]

Ah, you understand! How you understand!

DR. VAUGHAN

And in those grim moments, although you know the consequences, the ruin and the chaos, and although you still love the companion of your home——

LADY

With all the passion of remorse——

DR. VAUGHAN

With all the passion of remorse—yet your conscience pricks and urges you to speak the word that blasts——

LADY

And you drop hints which are received with a worshipful smile——

DR. VAUGHAN

Until you can hardly keep from shrieking it!

LADY

Until it tears at your lips like a beast in a trap!

DR. VAUGHAN

And in the night you dread lest it escape in your slumber!

LADY

No—that was only at first. Not now. I told you I was learning to forget.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Rising*]

Then *you* are fortunate. Complete your education.

LADY

What! You tell me to forget!

DR. VAUGHAN [*Striding about the room*]

Is it a good conscience that tempts us to torture those we love? No, it is an evil conscience, I say. We must trample on it.

LADY [*Amazed, rising*]

You, a man of God, say that!

DR. VAUGHAN [*Turning on her*]

Yes, I, a man of God, say that—to you, a woman of God. Conscience was given us to keep us from sin, to scourge us after sin, not to dynamite the innocent.

LADY

Then I am—*not* to confess—?

DR. VAUGHAN

It would only be a second sin on top of——

LADY

And you are a priest !

DR. VAUGHAN

Come ! Come ! You say no cant, and when I give you real words——

LADY

But is it not said, " If we confess our sins He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness ? "

DR. VAUGHAN

Assuredly. If we confess to *ourselves* ! That is what the Apostle is thinking of. For he goes on : " If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Deceive *ourselves*, you see. That is where the real horror lies—in saying we have *no* sin. But you and I——

LADY [*Puzzled*]

You and I ?

DR. VAUGHAN

You and I might deceive others. But our conscience could never deceive itself. And so the truth would still be in us.

LADY [*Slowly*]

Then I *have* the truth in me ?

DR. VAUGHAN

I say again, "Go and sin no more."

[Hypnotised by his words she turns to go, then turns fiercely upon him.]

LADY

No! No! No! It's not true! There is *no* truth in me! Every time my husband smiles at the child of sin, he seems to brand "Liar" all over my flesh.

DR. VAUGHAN *[In a strange half-whisper]*

There is a child!!

LADY

You are shocked at last.

DR. VAUGHAN *[Mastering himself]*

No, no, only startled. . . . Then your husband does not suspect anything in the child?

LADY

No—it has my colouring, my features——

DR. VAUGHAN *[Muttering]*

Ah, the dominant.

LADY

What do you say?

DR. VAUGHAN

Nothing . . . just thinking.

LADY

But the child—don't you see that that makes my life
a daily lie !

DR. VAUGHAN

And would you gain truth at the child's cost ? Brand
the innocent babe as a—— ?

LADY [*Covering her eyes*]

Don't !

DR. VAUGHAN

Rather be thankful that you can protect it—give it
the same home influence as your other children.

[*In low tones as if staring at an unseen vision*]

Think of a girl-mother condemned to secrecy in her
agony !

LADY

I should envy her—at least she'd have no husband to
betray.

DR. VAUGHAN

And no husband to make reparation to. You must
make yours the happier for your sin, not the more
miserable.

LADY

You change things so wonderfully, the monstrous
blackness seems lifting.

DR. VAUGHAN

And what's the use of living in a fog ? Either die or be happy.

LADY

You give me fresh life.

DR. VAUGHAN

Then use it more wisely.

LADY

Ah, you believe with Tennyson

“ That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things ! ”

DR. VAUGHAN

I do. The fire that does not destroy us purifies us.
Go then and purify others.

LADY

I purify others ? But how ?

DR. VAUGHAN

In the atmosphere of your London circle there is levity towards the deeper things of the race. Rebuke it by the radiance of your purity.

LADY

My *purity* ! Oh, I am re-born !

[*Bursts into tears.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

And re-baptized in your tears !

LADY

My deliverer ! I could kneel to you.

[Is sinking at his feet.]

DR. VAUGHAN *[Perturbed]*

No, no, *please.* *[Raising her]* Who am I ?

LADY

One who speaks as no man has spoken before.

DR. VAUGHAN

Nonsense ! Read the eighteenth of Ezekiel : “ When the wicked turneth away from his wickedness he shall save his soul alive.” I only say what many have said.

LADY

No—you speak as one at the heart of things.

DR. VAUGHAN

It is you that are at the heart of things. That is the only profit of our sins—to touch reality.

[He rings, then opens the door.]

Good-bye.

[Holds out his hand.]

LADY *[Seizing and kissing it]*

Good-bye. . . . God bless you.

[Exit.]

DR. VAUGHAN

I need His blessing, indeed !

*[He covers his eyes as in prayer and deep emotion.
Enter HANNAH.]*

HANNAH

Well, and what did the creature—what's the matter

DR. VAUGHAN

That poor woman !

HANNAH

Why, she looked quite elated.

DR. VAUGHAN

Because I helped her, thank God for that !

HANNAH

Past helping she looked to me—a weak, neurotic—
ugh !

[She shudders.]

DR. VAUGHAN

Don't be such a Pharisee, dear. She's in great
distress.

HANNAH

There's distress nearer home.

DR. VAUGHAN *[Alarmed]*

Nearer home ?

HANNAH

Amy Archmundham—I've been trying to tell you—she's at a nervous crisis.

DR. VAUGHAN

Miss Archmundham? Why, at the garden-party she looked brilliant.

HANNAH [*Sinking into the armchair*]

Men can never tell the difference between the hectic and the healthy—any more than between the vicious and the deserving—she's really in a pitiful state.

DR. VAUGHAN

But what's the matter with her?

HANNAH

I've persuaded her to lie down in the spare room.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Sitting on the table*]

But what's the crisis about?

HANNAH

It's all through Hubert Morrow.

DR. VAUGHAN

Hubert Morrow?

HANNAH

Yes, Felicia's brother. He and Amy are in love.

DR. VAUGHAN

Is it possible ?

HANNAH

It's all that's possible. That's why Hubert is going to Australia. Sir John won't give his consent, and Hubert, being as proud as he's poor, puts the globe between himself and Amy.

DR. VAUGHAN

Poor things !

HANNAH

It's no use saying "poor things !" We must *do* something.

DR. VAUGHAN

But what can *we* do ? We can't find Hubert money. We haven't got enough of our own.

HANNAH

No, but we can make Sir John think less of money.

DR. VAUGHAN

I never found Sir John a Mammon-worshipper.

HANNAH

We never saw him tested. He can have nothing else against young Morrow.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Uneasily*]

How can you be sure ? Many parents shy at musicians.

HANNAH

But Hubert hasn't had a thing published yet, not even his setting of Elsie's verses. And everybody knows how strictly Mrs. Morrow has brought him and Felicia up. She may be a little unchristian with her family pride but even that one forgives her, now the poor thing has nothing else.

DR. VAUGHAN

Well, anyhow, it's not our business.

HANNAH

It's *my* business.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Alarmed*]

Yours ?

HANNAH

Amy begged me to——

[*Enter PURVIS.*]

PURVIS

Sir John Archmundham is in his carriage and wanting his childer.

DR. VAUGHAN

You'll find them upstairs.

[*PURVIS turns to go.*]

HANNAH

Ask Sir John to oblige me and come in for a moment.

PURVIS

Ay, mum.

[*Exit* PURVIS.]

DR. VAUGHAN

You don't really mean to——

HANNAH

I must, dear. I promised Amy.

DR. VAUGHAN

Sir John will be very angry.

HANNAH

Do you think I have no tact ? I must tell him about Amy's illness—that gives me an opening.

DR. VAUGHAN

Dearest Hannah, I seldom exercise my authority, but I feel so sure that harm will come of your meddling that——

HANNAH

Please, please, don't make me break my promise. I feel so sure I shall make these two young people happy that I——

[*Enter* PURVIS, *announcing*]

PURVIS

Sir John Archmundham.

[*Enter* SIR JOHN.]

SIR JOHN [*Shaking hands with HANNAH*]
Ah, Mrs. Vaughan, we missed you at the garden-party.

HANNAH
It's a pity you took your daughter. She's quite ill.

SIR JOHN
Ill? Poor chick! I thought she was off her feed. Where *is* she?

HANNAH
Lying down.

SIR JOHN
I'll 'phone to Dr. Territt.

HANNAH
It isn't a doctor she wants.

SIR JOHN
Not a doctor? You haven't joined the faith-healers!

HANNAH [*Annoyed*]
Of course not. I mean you know quite well how to cure her yourself.

SIR JOHN
Feed her up, d'you mean? Roast-beef?

HANNAH [*Disgusted*]
Roast-beef! Don't pretend you——

DR. VAUGHAN [*Hurriedly*]
Talking of roast-beef, how are John's potatoes ?

SIR JOHN [*Incapable of the swift transition*]
Eh ?

DR. VAUGHAN
Oh, I hope it isn't still a sore subject.

SIR JOHN
John's potatoes ? Not at all. I've quite turned round about John's potatoes.

HANNAH [*Snatching at her opportunity*]
Then perhaps you'll turn round too about——

DR. VAUGHAN
Do let us get to the end of this, Hannah. Why have you turned round about John's potatoes ?

SIR JOHN
Because they put such a stopper on all the silly new sex-theories.

HANNAH
We are talking of your daughter——

DR. VAUGHAN
My dear ! You are interrupting Sir John's explanation. They put such a stopper on—— ?

SIR JOHN

All that newfangled nonsense about love being everything. As if rotten tubers could yield prize potatoes! Freethinkers and Freelovers may spout and scribble but the grand old laws of God go on inexorably.

HANNAH

And one of those laws is——

DR. VAUGHAN

I'm afraid my wife hardly follows science.

[*Takes SIR JOHN'S arm and draws him doorward.*]

Shall we go and collect your children?

SIR JOHN

Yes, I've just robbed them of ten thousand pounds.
Ha! Ha! Ha!

DR. VAUGHAN

Doesn't sound a laughing matter.

[*Gets to door.*]

SIR JOHN

Promised it to Judson for our crusades. Half for the African atrocities and half——

[*Is going out with DR. VAUGHAN.*]

HANNAH [*Desperately*]

Sir John, you are positively heartless!

DR. VAUGHAN

Hannah!

SIR JOHN [*Frozen*]
Eh ?

HANNAH
Talk of African atrocities ? The way you let that poor girl pine and fret when you're simply rolling in money——!

SIR JOHN [*Coldly*]
I beg your pardon.

DR. VAUGHAN
Hannah ! For heaven's sake——!

HANNAH
It *is* for heaven's sake. Is our Church Conference nothing but a babble ? Is everything to be meted with the measure of worldliness ?

SIR JOHN
I'm afraid I can't follow you.

HANNAH
Oh yes, you can. Better than I can follow science. Why is your daughter ill ? Why is Hubert Morrow——?

DR. VAUGHAN
I forbid this. Come, Sir John, she's been upset by your daughter's illness.

HANNAH

You may stop my speaking openly to Sir John—you won't prevent other people speaking behind his back.

SIR JOHN

And pray, ma'am, what will they be saying ?

HANNAH

That your Mammon-worship broke your daughter's heart.

SIR JOHN

The devil they will ! Pardon me, Doctor, my one oath.

DR. VAUGHAN

People will say nothing of the kind, Hannah. They will believe in the righteousness of Sir John's motives.

SIR JOHN

Thank you, Dr. Vaughan. I wish, madam, you had a little of your husband's Christian charity.

DR. VAUGHAN

Mammon-worship, forsooth ! When Sir John has just given—— !

HANNAH

Charity begins at home.

SIR JOHN

And Christian charity abroad !

DR. VAUGHAN

Ha! Ha! Ha! A Roland for an Oliver.

[*Links his arm in SIR JOHN'S.*]

Come along!

HANNAH

If Sir John has anything against Hubert Morrow's character, I will beg his forgiveness—and God's!

SIR JOHN [*Turning to face her*]

I have nothing against Hubert Morrow's character.

HANNAH

Well, then!

DR. VAUGHAN

Hannah, we have not the right——

HANNAH

The girl has no mother. Somebody must stand up for her!

DR. VAUGHAN [*Drawing SIR JOHN again doorward*]

Not against a father so honoured and loved.

HANNAH

“As many as I love I rebuke.” That's in Revelation.

SIR JOHN [*Veering round and breaking away*]

Revelations, ma'am. If it's revelations you want——!

DR. VAUGHAN
Don't be profane, Sir John.

SIR JOHN [*Angrily*]
I'm not profane. But deuce take it, revelations you shall have.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Again trying to take his arm*]
We don't want them. Come, Sir John, take your daughter home.

SIR JOHN
The fact is, Mrs. Vaughan, I'm as sorry for Hubert Morrow as you are. It's his sister!

HANNAH [*Startled*]
Felicia!

DR. VAUGHAN [*Dropping into bureau-chair with a murmur*]
Miss Morrow!

SIR JOHN
I couldn't tell Amy because I wanted to protect her innocence, I couldn't tell Hubert because it's for his mother to do that. And I couldn't tell my old friend
[*Lays his hand on DR. VAUGHAN'S shoulder*]
because I hate spreading scandal—especially about his former secretary.

HANNAH
Scandal! Scandal against Felicia! I'll not believe it.

SIR JOHN

At any rate let it go no further. You know that after leaving your husband Felicia Morrow went to London.

DR. VAUGHAN

Pardon me. She was at another post in between.

SIR JOHN

What does that matter ?

DR. VAUGHAN

I merely recall that last Christmas she took a country post—for the sake of her health.

SIR JOHN

But the point is that in June she went off to London, away from all who knew her.

HANNAH

To take the secretaryship of a nursing home.

SIR JOHN

To take the services of a nursing home ! She went to have a child.

HANNAH

Felicia ! O my God !

DR. VAUGHAN [*With ashen lips*]

It's not possible !

SIR JOHN

It was a bold stroke of concealment—a flash of genius almost.

DR. VAUGHAN

That simple sweet girl——!

SIR JOHN

Had an affair. Precisely. While she was still your secretary!

HANNAH

An affair! O Rodney, say you don't believe it!

DR. VAUGHAN [*As from a dry throat*]

I cannot find words. . . . So that's why she left me . . .

HANNAH [*Her hand caressingly on his shoulder*]

But she was the flower of your flock. You knew her—how gentle and God-fearing. No, no, Sir John, this is some terrible mistake. How do you know? Who told you?

SIR JOHN

John told me.

DR. VAUGHAN

John?

HANNAH

And who told John?

SIR JOHN

The doctor at the nursing home was his old fellow student. They still correspond. The doctor tells him anything of interest bearing on birth-problems. Eugenics, they call it. And this child had—er—some Frenchman's finger.

HANNAH

Had what ?

SIR JOHN

A bend in his little finger called after the French surgeon who first cured it, I suppose.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Shuddering*]

Loathsome !

SIR JOHN

Not at all. A mere contraction of the skin. Quite a fine little chap, John said, though rather under weight.

DR. VAUGHAN

I mean the callousness of this cold-blooded science !

HANNAH

And on this hearsay, Felicia's character is to be ruined, your daughter's life spoilt ! How did John know it was Felicia ?

SIR JOHN

Why, the brazen hussy gave her own name !

HANNAH

Precisely. A brazen hussy who had stolen Felicia's name.

SIR JOHN [*Sarcastically*]

And who when they mistakenly thought she was dying stole Felicia's mother.

HANNAH

You mean, they wired here for Mrs. Morrow ?

SIR JOHN [*Imitating her*]

Precisely.

HANNAH

And Mrs. Morrow went ?

SIR JOHN

So it seems.

HANNAH

Now I know it is false. How could Mrs. Morrow hold up her head if it was true ? Why, she was at the Conference. She spoke against the new crusades—only this morning—don't you remember ? She feared they would divert us from our mission work. No, no, it is all some ridiculous blunder.

DR. VAUGHAN

And even if it were true, aren't you visiting the sins of the sister on the brother ?

SIR JOHN

I knew you were drifting to this modern sentimentality—you with your Shakespeare! I've felt it in your sermons this last twelvemonth! But I stick to my Old Testament. The sinner shall be cut off root and branch. Even John's potatoes preach that.

DR. VAUGHAN

Never mind John's potatoes. Mendelism is not yet proved, and if it were, there's no proof that—that what cropped out in Miss Morrow will crop out in her brother.

SIR JOHN

It may in his progeny. John tells me that traits may skip a generation and re-appear in the next—like this finger possibly.

DR. VAUGHAN

Come! Come! You're not really thinking of heredity—you're afraid of a scandal in your family.

SIR JOHN

And what if I am! Our record is clean, thank God. Why should Amy marry a man who brings nothing to the cupboard except a family skeleton?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Rising*]

Ah, my wife is not so wrong—you *are* thinking of his poverty.

SIR JOHN

No, by God I'm not—forgive me, but you——

DR. VAUGHAN

But if the skeleton is safely buried !

SIR JOHN

If it were buried as deep as the seducer's wickedness, I'd rather see Amy die than marry into diseased stock.

HANNAH [*Sinking on the divan*]

Oh, it is all a nightmare !

DR. VAUGHAN

But one may recover from disease—even the disease of sin. God forgives.

SIR JOHN

But He cannot forget. Consequences are consequences. That's what you preachers ought to insist on most to-day when the air reeks with romantic pestilence. All these little poets with their soul-struggles and love-lyrics that end in hospitals or lunatic asylums. And these hysterical boys and girls with their problem-plays.

DR. VAUGHAN

What do you know of problem-plays ? You won't even read Shakespeare.

SIR JOHN

One can't escape the newspapers. Problem-plays

indeed ! Silly refusals to look life in the face—plays about marriage with the first cause for which matrimony was ordained left out !

DR. VAUGHAN

You mean the child !

SIR JOHN

Of course I mean what the marriage-service means. There are delicate fools who'd have even that touch of reality cut out. But the Almighty has given me a brave ancestry and with His blessing my grandchildren shall carry no tainted blood. Good-bye, old friend.

[Claps DR. VAUGHAN'S shoulder]

I didn't mean to preach to *you* but the day England forgets her Puritanism she'll go down like a rotten ship.

DR. VAUGHAN

I quite agree.

SIR JOHN

I knew you'd come round. Good-bye, Mrs. Vaughan. Sorry I had to quote *my* Revelation.

HANNAH

I don't believe *your* Revelation.

SIR JOHN

That doesn't make it less gospel. I'll go up and get Amy, if I may.

[MRS. VAUGHAN makes a move as if to rise]

No, don't trouble. Thank you for being so kind to her.

HANNAH

She's welcome to stay on.

SIR JOHN

I'll see how she is. Thank you again.

[*Exit. Door closes.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

I told you not to interfere !

HANNAH [*Rising and moving to bureau*]

It cannot be true.

[*She rings.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

What are you going to do ?

HANNAH

I cannot accept such a ridiculous story without evidence.

DR. VAUGHAN

You will meddle again ? Rake up more dust, as Purvis says ?

HANNAH

I shall lay this dust. Frenchman's finger forsooth !
I'm not going to stand by and see all these lives ruined
—Felicia, Amy, Hubert, Mrs. Morrow—

DR. VAUGHAN

Take care you don't ruin more.

HANNAH

How can I ruin——?

[*Enter PURVIS*]

Ring up Mrs. Morrow, and if you get her, let me know.

PURVIS

Yes, mum.

[*Exit.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*Walking up and down*]

But this is more mischievous than ever! To stir up a mother's agony.

HANNAH

There's no agony, I tell you. It's all a mare's nest. We'll save her the agony of parting with Hubert.

DR. VAUGHAN

You're not going to discuss it by telephone!

HANNAH

Of course not. I shall ask her to come about the mission-work.

DR. VAUGHAN

And if she refuses?

HANNAH

I shall go to her.

DR. VAUGHAN

Hannah—let it alone—for God's sake.

HANNAH

I cannot, dearest. I can't rest till I know the truth.

DR. VAUGHAN

You seem to me driven along by some demon.

HANNAH

And I feel it is the guidance of God.

[*Enter* PURVIS]

PURVIS

Mrs. Morrow is holding the line.

HANNAH

Thank you.

[*She follows* PURVIS. *The door closes,* DR. VAUGHAN
collapses on the divan.]

DR. VAUGHAN [*In an awed whisper*]

The guidance of God!

[*The Action Pauses.*]

Second Movement

Presently PURVIS enters, bearing the pyjamas afresh, but seeing DR. VAUGHAN is sunk upon the divan, his head buried in his hands, he remains in comic perplexity. He turns to go as if baffled again, then, with a sudden resolution, he steals cautiously forward, lifts the covering and slips the pyjamas noiselessly beside the pillow-cases. Then, his harassed face relaxing, he ventures to cough. DR. VAUGHAN looks up.]

DR. VAUGHAN

What is it ?

PURVIS [*With bowed head of contrition*]

Now you're alone, doctor, I'd like to tell you about *Macbeth*.

DR. VAUGHAN

About *Macbeth* ?

PURVIS

Yes, sir. You see, Sir John's coachman——

DR. VAUGHAN

Not now, please. Another time.

[PURVIS, *with a sigh, turns to close the French window*]

No, no, it's so hot.

[*As PURVIS is going out silently, with still-bowed head, HANNAH re-enters*]

Well ?

HANNAH

Mrs. Morrow can't come to- night—it's her last night but one with her boy.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Relieved*]

Ah !

HANNAH

But he's out this afternoon—so she'll come as soon as all the boarders have had their tea.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Perturbed*]

Oh, indeed !

[Takes his hat and goes towards garden.]

HANNAH

Where are you going ?

DR. VAUGHAN

I can't stand another of your scenes.

HANNAH

You needn't be present, dear—I'll see her in the drawing-room.

DR. VAUGHAN

With the Archmundhams about ? You see you drive me out of my own house !

HANNAH

But, dearest, Felicia's good name—— !

[Exit DR. VAUGHAN into the garden. HANNAH

sighs, then sits at his table, and gets his pass-book and cheque-book from a drawer, pulls out the paid cheques and sets to work, checking the entries. After a moment ELSIE comes in.]

ELSIE

Will it disturb you if I look at the rhyming dictionary ?

HANNAH

No, dear. But why not keep it in *your* room ? You're the only poet in the house.

ELSIE [*Smiling as she mounts the library-steps*]

Am I ? Are you sure you know all father's secret sins ? Where is he, by the way ?

HANNAH

Gone for a stroll. Have you left the Archmundhams alone ?

ELSIE

Amy's got up now. I thought three was family and four society.

[Consults book from her perch on top of steps.]

HANNAH

You were quite right, dear—there is a . . . a domestic difficulty.

ELSIE

I know.

[Reading]

Haven, craven, shaven——

HANNAH
You know ?

ELSIE
About Amy ? Of course—Raven, graven—father trying to spoil her life. The old story.

HANNAH [*Wincing*]
You're not quite fair to Sir John.

ELSIE
That's what his son says—haven and graven, splendid !
[*Shuts book and replaces it on shelf*]
But if it's not a money question, what other objection can the old growler have ?

HANNAH
Never mind—I've got a money-question of my own. Trying to check father's pass-book. . . . Perhaps we can dispose of Sir John's objection.

ELSIE [*Coming towards table*]
Oh, wouldn't that be ripping—jolly, I mean ! But how ?

HANNAH
Wait a bit. . . . Come here, you know father's writing—read me this counterfoil.

ELSIE [*Looking over her shoulder*]
Binks, Forty Pounds . . .

HANNAH

But who is Binks ?

ELSIE

Haven't an idea. Where's the cheque ? June 20.

HANNAH

Here it is. But that's pay "Self" and he's endorsed it. Look!

ELSIE [*Studying counterfoil, carries it to window-light*]
Perhaps it's Barks—or Borks. No, Books! That's what it is—two o's.

HANNAH [*Taking it from her as she returns to table*]
Ah, of course! That forty pounds he spent on books when I wanted money so badly for your clothes!

ELSIE [*Smooths her frock*]

But you see we managed all right, mother—my little verses, and your embroidery work—

HANNAH

Yes, but because I asked him to state on the counterfoil what the cheque was for, whenever he drew on "Self," he states what it's for but forgets "Self."

ELSIE [*Smiling*]

But isn't that what he preaches—to forget Self ?

HANNAH

If you had to clear up his muddles, you wouldn't find them so laughable. Here's a counterfoil not filled up at all!

ELSIE

Only one?

HANNAH [*Taking it over to bureau*]

Go on laughing at me.

ELSIE

I'm laughing at *him*. If you *would* marry a genius—Don't look so tragic over trifles.

HANNAH

It's not about the cheques—it's because you make me afraid. Oh Elsie!

[*Embraces her with sudden passion*]

You don't feel there is a gulf between us?

ELSIE

Between you and father?

HANNAH

Between you and me! A great gulf fixed—as between Lazarus and the rich man?

ELSIE

What do you mean, mother?

HANNAH

A gulf you have to shout across ?

ELSIE

What an idea !

HANNAH

But that's what Amy Archmundham said—and it's been weighing upon me. You do love me ?

ELSIE

Darling mother !

[Kisses her as she sinks on the divan.]

HANNAH

And I could die for you ! . . . I wish God had let me die for your sisters. But His wisdom knew best.

[Breaks down.]

ELSIE *[Kneeling on divan to embrace her]*

Don't cry, darling. They died, doing their duty. Look at their faces !

[Points to photographs on bureau]

One would say, they were smiling with pride.

HANNAH

I could bear Mary's death in the Red Cross Army, and Ruth's among her slum-people. But to lose a living daughter—— !

ELSIE *[Rising and holding both her hands]*

Please don't talk so dreadfully.

HANNAH

Ah, daughter, perhaps you'll realise it yourself some day. It seems so strange to remember you that tiny—so frail and helpless—sleeping at my breast—and to see you growing up tall and superior and aloof——

ELSIE [*Sinking against her knees to embrace her*]

Oh never, mother, never! I never did feel like Amy Archmundham. Besides, she has no mother.

HANNAH

And you do love me? And you'll never feel I want to spoil your life? And you'll always come to me, even if I don't always understand your little poems?

ELSIE [*Smiling as they both rise*]

Always, mother.

HANNAH

Always, you said, remember. Even when you are gone from me!

ELSIE

Oh, mother, you know I shall never leave you!

[*They embrace more closely. There is a sound at the door, they stand apart. It opens, revealing JOHN.*]

HANNAH

Ah, you are going!

[*She advances, holding out her hand.*]

JOHN
Not yet, please. Amy's bad again.

HANNAH
Oh dear !

JOHN
Yes, father poured oil on the troubled flames—he told her he'd proved to you he's in the right.

HANNAH
That remains to be seen. Oh, do you think I could be of any use ?

JOHN
You are the one person who could——
[*Makes way as for her exit.*]

HANNAH
Your poor sister !
[*Exit. JOHN closes the door.*]

JOHN [*Hastening towards ELSIE*]
At last we can go on with our talk !

ELSIE
How can you think of yourself—with Amy in that state ?

JOHN
Perhaps I'm in that state too.

ELSIE

What's the matter with *you*? Potatoes diseased again?

JOHN

Don't be so heartless.

ELSIE

Heartless? When I pity your potatoes more than you pity your sister!

JOHN

Who said I didn't pity Amy?

ELSIE

You aren't half as concerned as that time your potatoes went bad.

JOHN

It wasn't their going bad—it was their having the wrong disease.

ELSIE

Are there right diseases, then?

JOHN

Naturally—the ones I infect them with. If only they develop them properly—that is the real anxiety.

ELSIE

It must be very wearing for you.

JOHN

All right, scoff away. But science is above sneers.

ELSIE

I'm not sneering. It quite touches me to think of you watching tenderly over your sick tubers.

JOHN

Go on!

[*Folds his arms*]

This, I suppose, is payment in kind for my unreal remarks to your mother.

ELSIE

My remarks are real. Your superiority to humanity overawes me. But to think of you at a sick bed—if it's only a potato bed——!

JOHN [*Approaching her*]

You know I'm only too human——

[*Re-enter HANNAH.*]

HANNAH

She won't even have me in the room. Elsie, *you* are of her own generation. Perhaps——

ELSIE

I'll try, mother.

[*Exit through open door, closing it.*]

HANNAH [*Turning on JOHN*]

I'm afraid this is all your fault.

JOHN
Mine ?

HANNAH
If you hadn't told your father that ridiculous story about the Frenchman's finger——!

JOHN
Dupuytren's finger ? But the child did have it—my friend actually operated for it, which Dupuytren himself couldn't have done at that age. Yes, and I only wish my friend could have settled the point whether it's hereditary or not. But though he took a scientific squint at the father's hand——

HANNAH
The *father's* hand ?

JOHN
A burly clean-shaven man who came to see Miss Morrow the day after.

HANNAH
And how did he know it was the father ?

JOHN
Oh well—he naturally assumed——

HANNAH
Assumed ! Just as you assumed it was Felicia. And what foreigner's finger did the *father* have ?

JOHN

Oh, there was nothing abnormal about *his* hand—except a queer signet-ring. But of course its hereditariness being dubious, that doesn't prove——!

HANNAH

I should think not indeed! And on this basis of hearsay and guess-work your father—oh I have no patience with either of you!

JOHN

Would you marry *your* daughter into a disgraced family, with a nameless brat hanging around? I wouldn't—at least

[*Smiling*]

I wouldn't marry my *father's* daughter into it. No, nor his son, either.

HANNAH

I dare say not. But you beg the question. It's your friend I consider disgraced. I always thought doctors had a code of honour—not to tell professional secrets.

JOHN

My friend only told me professionally—as a student of eugenics. And of course father and I won't blab, if you don't.

HANNAH

How can I blab as you call it, when I don't believe there's one iota——?

Ⓢ [SIR JOHN *opens the door, leading* AMY.]

SIR JOHN

May the little penitent come to apologise ?

HANNAH

What for ?

AMY

For turning you out of your own room. I forgot I wasn't at home.

[*Goes towards her*]

Do forgive me ! And thank you for trying——

HANNAH [*Looking defiantly at the men*]

I haven't given up——

AMY [*Eagerly*]

Then father *didn't* convert you ?

HANNAH

Wait ! Trust in God !

[*Kisses her and leads her to the window*]

See what a sunset He has sent us.

AMY [*Vaguely comforted*]

And what a fairy moon !

[*Becomes absorbed in skyscape. Telephone rings without.*]

SIR JOHN

Never mind the moon, Amy—get on your things.

John'll take you home.

JOHN

Aren't *you* coming ?

SIR JOHN

You know I have to be back here at seven—don't look so horrified, Mrs. Vaughan, you shouldn't have such a popular husband. Now I've been kept so late, I'll ask Judson for a game of chess rather than drive to and fro.

HANNAH

Is it a committee meeting here ?

SIR JOHN [*Embarrassed*]

A sort of committee meeting.

HANNAH

My husband never mentioned it.

SIR JOHN [*Smiling*]

He didn't know.

JOHN [*Smiling from his perch on the table*]

And there are people who call him a prophet !

HANNAH

But suppose he's not back.

SIR JOHN

Has he gone out ? My gracious ! And our Londoners *must* catch the dining-train !

HANNAH

He must be back for his own dinner.

SIR JOHN

That's what we reckoned on. Ha! Ha! Ha!

JOHN

You *might* let Mrs. Vaughan into the secret.

SIR JOHN

Well, if she'll keep it from her husband——

HANNAH

Oh, I can't do that. Rodney and I have never had a secret from each other.

SIR JOHN

Well, anyhow, you mustn't tell him that we——

[*Enter* PURVIS.]

PURVIS

Please, mum, Mr. Hubert Morrow has telephoned

[*AMY turns sharply at the name*]

to say he was sorry he was out when Dr. Vaughan called just now——

HANNAH [*Dazed*]

When Dr. Vaughan called just now?

PURVIS

Ay, mum, I wrote it down—like a text.

[*Reads from a paper*]

“ And he begs to thank Dr. Vaughan for his kindness in coming to say good-bye.”

AMY

Good-bye ?

[*Sways at window.*]

SIR JOHN [*Catching her*]

Steady, old girl.

HANNAH [*Recovering composure*]

Thank you, Purvis.

[*PURVIS goes again to shut window.*]

AMY

Don't shut out the sunset ! . . .

[*Turns to HANNAH*]

I beg your pardon, I'm always forgetting I'm not at home.

HANNAH

Leave it, Purvis.

[*PURVIS goes out silently.*]

If you'd rather wait here, Sir John, I'll have the fire lit in the drawing-room.

SIR JOHN

Oh, I couldn't trouble you—

HANNAH

No trouble—it's laid.

[*Enter ELSIE with a newspaper*]

And here comes the "Evening Sentinel."

[*Takes it from ELSIE and hands it to SIR JOHN.*]

SIR JOHN

Thank you! Amy, put on your things.

JOHN

I don't think Amy is fit to drive home yet.

AMY

What nonsense!

JOHN [*Firmly*]

Well, I won't take the responsibility—all alone. I'd rather wait with you, father.

HANNAH

It might be better for Amy—put a light to the drawing-room fire, Elsie.

[*ELSIE goes to the door.*]

JOHN

Here's matches!

[*Produces a box and hastens after ELSIE. Exeunt.*]

HANNAH [*To SIR JOHN*]

And you won't want to keep your coachman an hour on the box.

SIR JOHN

No, of course not. Judson has stables—he'll let us put up. I'll go and tell my rascal.

HANNAH

Please, leave it to me. I want to give him some tea—he must be quite faint.

[*Goes to door.*]

SIR JOHN [*Sinking on divan and unfolding newspaper*]

Don't worry too much over that scallawag. . . . Bless my soul! here's an account of the garden-party already!

AMY [*In a hollow voice from the window*]

Written yesterday!

HANNAH [*At door*]

You can't read by that light!

[*Turns up electric lights.*]

SIR JOHN

You brighten up everything!

[*Exit HANNAH. SIR JOHN reads aloud*]

“Under the genial auspices of Sol and the Lord Mayor and his charming consort, all the beauty and fashion of Midstoke with all that is most distinguished in”—won't you catch cold?

AMY

I hope so.

[*SIR JOHN throws down paper, jumps up and draws her within.*]

SIR JOHN

Why, now I see you in the light, you look like a ghost.

AMY

I *am* a ghost.

SIR JOHN

Then I'll lay it.

[*Puts her on divan*]

There, dear! You'll soon get over this, I tell you . . .

[*She turns her head from him*]

Look here, lassie—you shall have your dream. I'll take you to Italy—if you won't expect me to do the Popish churches with you—I don't know which is worse, the Papists with too many priests and ceremonies or the Quakers with none at all. To Italy, do you hear?

AMY

I don't want to go to Italy.

SIR JOHN [*Taken aback*]

Not to Italy? Well, wherever you like!

AMY

Then I'll go to Australia.

SIR JOHN

I meant this side of the globe.

AMY

This side is empty to me.

SIR JOHN

It will fill up again. Nature abhors a vacuum. You are so young.

AMY

Young ? I'm a hundred !

SIR JOHN

Older than her dad, eh ? The little puss !

AMY

Don't talk baby-talk to me !

SIR JOHN

Oh well, if you really are a centenarian, that's all right. It's the young man who'll cry off. *He's* only a quarter of a century.

AMY

Hubert will never cry off.

SIR JOHN

Then why doesn't he take you to the Antipodes ? I can't stop you.

AMY

I wanted to go.

SIR JOHN

So you just intimated. But he has more sense, eh ?

AMY

He wouldn't drag me down to poverty.

SIR JOHN

That's decent of him.

AMY

Decent? He's a Bayard and a genius. And if you had let me have my money, he could have stayed here, writing his symphonies without sordid cares.

SIR JOHN [*Perplexed, sits beside her*]

You must trust me, my child. You must trust my love.

AMY

I cannot trust you. You are cruel—cruel——

[*She sobs*]

[*DR. VAUGHAN comes in through the window.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*Drawing back*]

Oh, I beg your pardon.

SIR JOHN

No, no, we mustn't drive you out of your own den. So glad you're back. Come, Amy!

[*He tries to lift her from the divan, but she sobs on*]

Perhaps you can help me to soothe this wild young thing.

DR. VAUGHAN

What could *I* do?

SIR JOHN

We know your influence over the lambs of your flock.

DR. VAUGHAN

Miss Archmundham—Amy——

AMY

I don't want your soothing syrup.

SIR JOHN

Don't be rude ! You think I'm cruel. Do you think Dr. Vaughan is ?

AMY

He is a human being.

SIR JOHN [*With a grimace*]

Oh, indeed ! Very well, then ! If Dr. Vaughan assures you that my objection is not a mere abuse of paternal power, will you give me back your trust ?

AMY

Dr. Vaughan will say what pleases you.

SIR JOHN

Will he, by George ! I only wish he made a practice of it. Come, Amy ! Don't wriggle out of it.

AMY

Then on his honour as a human being——

SIR JOHN

Dr. Vaughan ! You know the reason that compels me to reject Hubert Morrow.

DR. VAUGHAN

I know what you told me.

SIR JOHN

Quite so. And is this reason weighty ? Or capricious ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Certainly not capricious.

SIR JOHN

There !

AMY

But would *you* act like that in papa's place ?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Hesitates*]

I—I——

AMY

On your honour !

DR. VAUGHAN

No !

AMY

Oh, you human being !

[*Springs up and hugs him.*]

SIR JOHN

Why, Doctor, you told me not twenty minutes ago that you agreed with me.

DR. VAUGHAN

You misunderstood—you were saying that without Puritanism England would go down like a rotten ship. That's what I agreed with.

AMY

So that's it! Hubert isn't Puritan enough! Because he's musical! Because God has given him the gift of melody! Because——

SIR JOHN

Don't be silly, Amy. Who was more musical than Milton? Don't I take you to Oratorios?

AMY

But Hubert writes love-music—that's what's the matter! Love-music, and you all hate everything but your gloomy conventicle! I wonder you don't pull that moon down out of heaven and turn it into a church lamp. But you *shall* hear Hubert's music—I'll give it you now!

[*Runs out through the door*]

SIR JOHN

Gloomy conventicle, indeed!

[*Follows her.*]

That girl will die a Papist.

DR. VAUGHAN

Don't stop her singing or strumming—it'll work off the hysteria.

SIR JOHN

Deuce take it all! I wish the fellow had never come back from Germany!

[*Exit.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

O God, when will this coil of consequence end?

[*He picks up the newspaper and looks at it distractedly. Enter HANNAH.*]

HANNAH

Sir John told me you were back.

DR. VAUGHAN

Has Mrs. Morrow been?

HANNAH

Not yet. She can't afford taxis like you.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Flushing*]

What do you mean?

HANNAH

You must have taken a taxi straight to her.

DR. VAUGHAN

Eh? What makes you think that?

HANNAH

You didn't go to her ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Why should I go to her ?

HANNAH [*Horried*]

Rodney ! I *know* you went to her.

DR. VAUGHAN

I went to Hubert—to say good-bye.

HANNAH

Forgive me ! Yes, that's what he said. . . . He 'phoned to thank you.

DR. VAUGHAN

Ah !

HANNAH [*Remembering*]

But I told you he was out—why did you go ?

DR. VAUGHAN

I hoped he'd be back. And you see he was—almost immediately.

HANNAH

You didn't really rush there to stop Mrs. Morrow coming here ?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Slowly*]

I don't say if I'd found Mrs. Morrow in I shouldn't

have tried to stop her—indeed, the more I think of it, the more dreadful it seems to me to let you hurt her feelings as you hurt Sir John's.

HANNAH

I know I lost my temper with Sir John. I haven't got much Christian patience, have I, dear ?

DR. VAUGHAN

I'm afraid not, darling. Nor pagan tact, either.

[*Enter* PURVIS.]

PURVIS

Mrs. Morrow for you, mum. Where shall I show her ?

DR. VAUGHAN

In here.

HANNAH

But I don't want to turn you out—there's the dining-room.

DR. VAUGHAN

Show her in here, Purvis.

PURVIS

Yes, sir.

[*Slow exit. As the door closes on him, DR. VAUGHAN turns swiftly and masterfully to HANNAH and takes her smilingly by the shoulders.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

It's you that must be turned out, dear.

HANNAH

But surely she and I—two women—

DR. VAUGHAN

You forget that as her pastor I shall seem less intrusive.

HANNAH

Perhaps you are right.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Forcing her smilingly towards the garden*]

Of course I'm right—one folly a day is all I can allow you.

HANNAH

Poor Rodney—I do bring troubles on you.

[*Kisses him and is pushed through the window as PURVIS ushers in MRS. MORROW, and closes the door. MRS. MORROW, a lady still with the traces of beauty and prosperity in her sorrowful face and shabby, well-cut clothes, enters with a proud bearing.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*With his massive cordiality*]

How do you do, Mrs. Morrow? Didn't see you at the garden-party.

MRS. MORROW

No.

DR. VAUGHAN

You'll find that most comfortable.

[*Indicates chair.*]

MRS. MORROW

Thank you.

[*Sits.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*Fetching chair and sitting beside her*]

And what's the news of your dear daughter? Still in London?

MRS. MORROW

Still in London.

DR. VAUGHAN

And getting on well in her post, I hope—let me see, a hospital, wasn't it?

MRS. MORROW

No, not exactly.

[*Uneasily*]

Isn't Mrs. Vaughan in?

DR. VAUGHAN

She thought *I'd* best discuss the matter with you.

MRS. MORROW

But it isn't only the mission-work—I want to ask her something.

DR. VAUGHAN
Can't you ask *me* ?

MRS. MORROW [*With a faint smile*]
It's hardly your department.

DR. VAUGHAN [*With a broader smile*]
Well, she intrudes enough on mine.

MRS. MORROW
It's about Felicia.

DR. VAUGHAN [*His smile checked*]
About your daughter ?

MRS. MORROW
Yes—she is coming to-morrow.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Startled*]
Really ? Any particular reason ?

MRS. MORROW
To say good-bye to Hubert.

DR. VAUGHAN
Ah yes. But doesn't he sail from London ?

MRS. MORROW
No, from Plymouth . . . it's a cheaper line. Besides,
I get a glimpse of Felicia, too.

DR. VAUGHAN

That's true. Quite a while since you've seen her, I suppose ?

MRS. MORROW

Well, you know when she left here—last Christmas.

DR. VAUGHAN

Dear me, how time flies ! And she's feeling better, I hope. . . . Let me see, didn't she go to some little country place for her headaches ?

MRS. MORROW

Yes, Pinfold something—I never can remember.

DR. VAUGHAN

And you didn't go and see her there ?

MRS. MORROW [*Curtly*]

I told you I haven't seen her since Christmas.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Relieved*]

So you did . . .

[*More cheerfully*]

And so she's coming back.

MRS. MORROW

Only for the night. She goes with Hubert as far as Plymouth—thence straight back to her London work. But

[*Embarrassed*]

the fact is, now I've had to take boarders, there's

scarcely room for her to-morrow night. So, coming along, it occurred to me that perhaps you——

DR. VAUGHAN [*Startled again*]

I ?

MRS. MORROW

You and Mrs. Vaughan—you see Hubert's cab passes here on the way to the station—and with all you dear people it would be homelier for her than at an hotel——

DR. VAUGHAN [*Perturbed*]

I'm afraid that *is* Mrs. Vaughan's department.

[*He goes to the door and opens it and calls*]

Purvis !

[*AMY's voice is heard from above in HUBERT's setting of " I arise from dreams of thee "*]

Purvis ! Ah, there you are. Ask Mrs. Vaughan to come in.

AMY [*Heard singing from the drawing-room*]

And a spirit in my feet

Hath led me—who knows how ?

To thy chamber window, sweet !

[*DR. VAUGHAN stands listening as if hypnotised, till HANNAH comes in and closes the door.*]

HANNAH

So good of you to come, Mrs. Morrow.

[*Shakes hands.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

Mrs. Morrow asks if her daughter may sleep here to-morrow night.

HANNAH [*Startled*]

Felicia ?

MRS. MORROW

You see we've let her room, and I thought she'd be less unhappy here than at——

HANNAH [*Suspiciously*]

Less unhappy ?

MRS. MORROW

About Hubert's going to Australia.

HANNAH

Ah yes—and it must be a great wrench for *you*.

MRS. MORROW

He was all I had left—I mean at home. But God does all things for the best.

HANNAH [*Impulsively*]

But we mustn't always let Him, Mrs. Morrow.

MRS. MORROW [*Shocked*]

What do you say ?

DR. VAUGHAN [*With a forced smile*]

My wife expresses herself badly. She means, you ought to make an effort to keep your boy at home.

HANNAH

Yes, indeed! I'm so glad you've mentioned Felicia because—but perhaps, Rodney, you have already disposed of that.

DR. VAUGHAN

No. Under the new circumstances I left it for you.

MRS. MORROW [*Rising uneasily*]

What is it about Felicia?

HANNAH

Her staying here will be just splendid!

MRS. MORROW

Oh, thank you.

[*She sits down in relief.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*Perturbed*]

But, Mrs. Morrow, have you *asked* your daughter if she'd like to stay here?

MRS. MORROW

I took it for granted. . . . She

[*Flushing*]

. . . she doesn't know I've had to let her room.

HANNAH

You have been keeping the boarders from her ?

MRS. MORROW

It would only have added to her . . . I mean, she's so proud . . . And sometimes they . . . they ring for me ! Oh, do you think I've done wrong ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Certainly not, Mrs. Morrow. Why make unnecessary pain ?

HANNAH

Well, it's got to come out now. Even white lies turn black by keeping. . . . But, anyhow, her staying here will be a splendid answer to Sir John !

MRS. MORROW [*Half-rising*]

Why, what has Sir John——?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Waving her down*]

Dear Mrs. Morrow, do try to be patient. Nobody knows better than I the blameless reputation of your family.

HANNAH

But there's a miserable scandal afoot——

MRS. MORROW [*Jumping up indignantly*]

A scandal against Felicia ?

HANNAH

Of course we none of us believe it.

MRS. MORROW

I have no patience even to hear it.

HANNAH

Then it isn't true ?

MRS. MORROW

It's an abominable lie.

HANNAH

What did I tell you ?

[*She rings.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

What are you ringing for ?

HANNAH

Sir John shall hear this denial.

DR. VAUGHAN

Why, you haven't even told Mrs. Morrow *what* she's to deny !

MRS. MORROW

I don't care what it is—there is nothing against Felicia !

DR. VAUGHAN

Nevertheless, before you face Sir John, you had better be prepared for what he may say. The accusation——

MRS. MORROW

Accusation ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Ridiculous, perhaps, but there it is. Tell her, Hannah !
[Retires to divan-seat.]

HANNAH

They say she has had a child.

MRS. MORROW [Staggers]

O my God ! And who dares——?

[Enter PURVIS. AMY's passionate music swells out.]

HANNAH

Ask Sir John Archmundham to step down.

PURVIS

Ay, mum.

[Exit PURVIS, shutting out the music.]

MRS. MORROW

I will not meet Sir John.

[Goes towards garden.] .

HANNAH

But, my dear Mrs. Morrow, you must !

MRS. MORROW

Why must I ? What have I to do with Sir John ?

HANNAH

Don't you love Hubert ? Don't you want him to be happy ?

MRS. MORROW

What has that to do with it ?

HANNAH

That is why Sir John objects to the match.

MRS. MORROW

What match ?

HANNAH

You don't know Hubert is leaving England because he's not allowed to marry Amy Archmundham ?

MRS. MORROW [*Dazed*]

No—I know nothing—my children are always so reticent. O my poor Hubert. So that's it ! My poor martyred boy !

HANNAH

But don't you see he needn't be martyred ? You've only got to show Sir John the story is false.

MRS. MORROW

I will not meet Sir John. If my family is not good enough——

[PURVIS opens the door for SIR JOHN who comes through and bows coldly to MRS. MORROW. She, with a stiff return bow, tries to pass him and escape.]

HANNAH [*Firmly closing the door*]

Dear Mrs. Morrow, surely you wish to keep your boy—to make him happy——

SIR JOHN

I see, Mrs. Vaughan you still doubt my revelation.

HANNAH

Not if she is silent. Mrs. Morrow, don't torture me like this!

MRS. MORROW [*Fiercely*]

What torture is it of yours?

HANNAH

What torture? To think of Felicia sunk to that! Look at my husband—don't you see it is torturing him, too? Come, Mrs. Morrow . . .

[MRS. MORROW looks round with the hopeless eyes of a trapped animal]

Why don't you speak?

MRS. MORROW

O my God, why am I scourged thus?

[*She breaks down in hysteric sobs.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*Rising and pressing her into chair*]
My poor Mrs. Morrow! Calm yourself.

SIR JOHN
My poor Amy!
[*He goes out sorrowfully.*]

MRS. MORROW
Oh, you don't know what it has been! She never said a word. When—to hide from you and me what must have happened here, she took that post at Pinfold—thirty miles away—
[*Breaks down, choked with emotion.*]

HANNAH
Pinfold?—I thought my husband said Craddock.

MRS. MORROW [*Struggling for composure*]
Craddock—yes, that's the part I can never remember.

DR. VAUGHAN [*With forced lightness*]
Just as I can never remember the Pinfold part.

HANNAH
But if it's Pinfold Craddock, you went there this Spring!

DR. VAUGHAN [*After an appreciable pause*]
So I did! To take a funeral for old Rogers when he had the flue. A fearful cross-country journey!

MRS. MORROW

Yes, she always said she had no time or money to come and see me—and then she wrote she had a new post in London—at a private nursing home—and then—end of June—a wire—she was dying! So at least they thought.

HANNAH [*Stonily*]

And she wanted you to look after the child of sin.

MRS. MORROW

Don't look at me so pitilessly. I had to lie.

HANNAH

Nobody has to lie.

MRS. MORROW

I had a husband, money, children—now there is nothing.

HANNAH

There is always God.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Eagerly*]

But the little boy—

[*Correcting himself*]
the child—has it lived? Is it well?

MRS. MORROW

It was rather small and had a bent finger, but otherwise—

[*She falls fainting on her chair.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

You are too cruel to her.

HANNAH

I'll get my salts.

[She rushes into her room. In the silence AMY'S renewed love-song faintly penetrates.]

DR. VAUGHAN *[Murmuring]*

Love! Love! The great romantic cheat!—O God!
Must I go on lying or must I break Hannah's heart?

[Re-enter HANNAH.]

HANNAH

I must have left the bottle in here. She's not come to?

DR. VAUGHAN

No. But when she does, pray remember it is for
such crises we are Christians.

HANNAH *[Finding the bottle on the divan]*

Ah, here it is! I know I was harsh, dear,

[She applies the salts to MRS. MORROW]

But you spoil me for people of this sort.

DR. VAUGHAN *[Turning away in bitter shame]*

We are all God's creatures.

HANNAH

I know, dear, but it's not so easy to copy your loving-
kindness to liars and sinners.

MRS. MORROW [*Opening her eyes*]
I will not meet Sir John !

HANNAH
No, he is gone. Dear Mrs. Morrow,
[*Raising the patient's head*]
you are all right again.

MRS. MORROW
Oh my poor children !

HANNAH [*To her husband*]
Sir John's carriage must take her home.

MRS. MORROW
No, no—nothing of Sir John's !
[*She staggers to her feet*]
I can walk.

DR. VAUGHAN
That's nonsense—I'll get you a cab.

MRS. MORROW
You know I cannot take cabs.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Recovering his bluff geniality*]
You can take one from me !

MRS. MORROW
I can quite well walk.
[*Moves proudly*]
There !

DR. VAUGHAN

How unkind you are to me !

MRS. MORROW

You shall give the fare to the mission-fund—in my name.

[*Turns toward door.* DR. VAUGHAN *precedes her* to open it.]

HANNAH

One moment, Mrs. Morrow. You may rely on our spreading the sad story no further. But——

MRS. MORROW

But you can't have Felicia sleeping here—I know. Forgive me for trying to protect her.

HANNAH

It's my duty to forgive you. And perhaps it's my duty to have her here—more than ever. I will think. I will let you know. But that's not what I was going to say.

DR. VAUGHAN [*In renewed torture*]

Need any more be said ? Mrs. Morrow is so tired.

[*Puts his hand on the door-knob.*]

HANNAH

Still, before we dismiss the subject for ever, oughtn't we to ask Mrs. Morrow the name of the man ?

MRS. MORROW

But I don't know the name of the man.

DR. VAUGHAN

And what good would revenge do ?

HANNAH

Who's thinking of revenge ? Reparation.

DR. VAUGHAN

Reparation ?

HANNAH

Marriage ! Why should he not marry her ?

MRS. MORROW [*Clasping her hands*]

Oh, if I could live to see it !

HANNAH [*Eagerly*]

And then, perhaps, Sir John would relent !

DR. VAUGHAN

But—but the man may be married.

HANNAH

Then he can be divorced.

DR. VAUGHAN

I thought you were against divorce.

HANNAH

I never realized that it might be the smaller of two evils. And the fifth of Matthew permits it!

DR. VAUGHAN

But there's his present wife to consider——

HANNAH

If there *is* a wife, she couldn't possibly live with him any longer. He belongs to Felicia—and Felicia's child.

MRS. MORROW

You will never get Felicia to give his name. Not if you cut her to pieces.

HANNAH

But surely you have some idea? Nor you, Rodney?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Desperately defensive*]

Who was the man she worked for at Pinfold, what-is-it?

HANNAH

Pinfold Craddock.

MRS. MORROW

It wasn't a man—it was an old lady, all but blind.

DR. VAUGHAN

Ha! Blind! The easier then——

HANNAH [*To her husband*]

But how do you know it *was* an old lady— ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Mrs. Morrow says so.

HANNAH

Blind, yourself, dear. Don't you see Mrs. Morrow had only Felicia's letters to go by ?

DR. VAUGHAN

That's true. Talk of the wisdom of the serpent !

HANNAH

And when you saw Felicia in the nursing home, Mrs. Morrow, wasn't there *any* clue to the man ?

DR. VAUGHAN

You really mustn't exhaust Mrs. Morrow——

HANNAH

No picture ? No keepsake ?

MRS. MORROW

Nothing !

DR. VAUGHAN

There ! She's quite worn out. Purvis *must* get a cab.

HANNAH

No letter came while you were with her ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Really, Hannah! Why should you try to ferret out Felicia's secret?

HANNAH

For Felicia's salvation. He must marry her.

MRS. MORROW

I did take an opportunity, when she was under a drug, of opening her locket.

HANNAH [*Tensely*]

Well?

MRS. MORROW

There was nothing.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Relieved*]

Ah!

MRS. MORROW

Only the pictures of her mother and her pastor.

HANNAH

Of my husband?

MRS. MORROW [*With a faint smile*]

Felicia was always a hero-worshipper.

[*Tragic again*]

If she had only listened to your teachings instead!

DR. VAUGHAN

Yes. I hope the other young ladies who carry me about do better.

HANNAH

But how could she get a miniature? I thought *I* was the only person who had one.

DR. VAUGHAN

I suppose she got my photograph reduced. And, by the way, Lovell the bookseller has been telling me what a run there's been on it during the Conference. Like an actor's, he said—and then he begged pardon, poor man. Ha! Ha! Ha!

HANNAH

Rodney, when you went to Pinfold Craddock, did you call on Felicia?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Slowly*]

Did I call on Felicia?

HANNAH

No—I forgot—you didn't even know it was an old lady she was with. But I should have thought you'd have taken the opportunity of seeing how she was getting on.

DR. VAUGHAN

Yes, but—but, you see, I met her—by chance—at the post-office.

HANNAH

And didn't you notice anything?

DR. VAUGHAN

I noticed she was looking pretty.

HANNAH

Is that all ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Didn't you say we men can never tell the difference between anything and anything ?

HANNAH

And you saw no clue to the man ? Nobody was with her ?

DR. VAUGHAN [*With a ghastly smile*]

I was with her—and a venerable gaffer drawing his old-age pension.

MRS. MORROW

But when exactly did you see her ?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Smiling*]

I never was good at dates.

HANNAH

The day you went to take the funeral was Mayday. I remember it because of the contrast of death and the Spring.

DR. VAUGHAN

That thought struck me—the world in bridal white and the tragedy lurking

MRS. MORROW

But by that date, Dr. Vaughan, you could surely see—
Why anybody but the blind woman must have seen——

HANNAH [*Paling with a now irresistible suspicion*]

My husband is right. This is fatiguing you inexcusably.
Do let me get you a cab.

MRS. MORROW

Thank you, no.

[DR. VAUGHAN *hurriedly throws open the door.*]

HANNAH

Why not? You were ready to let me entertain
Felicia.

MRS. MORROW

I have entertained Elsie. Good-night.

[*Exit.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

Good-night.

[*Follows her out in optimistic relief*]

Things will brighten—never lose hold of the goodness
of God!

[HANNAH *looks round wildly, her hands tremble. Mastering herself with a great effort, she sits down again to the pass-book. After an instant of quiet work she clutches suddenly at the salts, smells them then resumes work. Re-enter DR. VAUGHAN.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

Well, dear——

[*Touches her hair. She shudders and shakes off his hand.*]

HANNAH

Don't—I want to finish your pass-book.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Smilingly at ease again*]

So the old wench is afraid of being scolded, eh ? But there ! I won't say I told you so.

HANNAH [*Passionately*]

Yes, yes, scold me—I've had evil thoughts—silly, shameful thoughts. . . . You were right—I should have minded my own business.

DR. VAUGHAN

Never mind, dear—go on minding mine. Have I been making *great* muddles ?

[*Bends over pass-book.*]

HANNAH [*Smiling*]

Well, you forgot to fill in the . . . a—a—a—h !

[*Screams suddenly.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

You frighten me ! What is it ?

HANNAH

Those forty pounds—those mysterious forty pounds !

DR. VAUGHAN [*Looking over her shoulder in renewed torment*]
That's filled in all right. Books !

HANNAH
But where *are* the books ?

DR. VAUGHAN
Oh, all about.

HANNAH
I don't see any new books.

DR. VAUGHAN
I never said new. It's the old editions that cost the money. You see, not having got anybody to replace Miss Morrow, I thought I could afford——

HANNAH
But coming just at that time !

DR. VAUGHAN
What time ?

HANNAH
Felicia's time.
[*Points distractedly to the cheque.*]

DR. VAUGHAN
I don't understand you.

HANNAH

And you went to London that June morning—I remember now.

DR. VAUGHAN

To buy the books.

HANNAH

And you would go in mufti.

DR. VAUGHAN

It was too hot for black.

HANNAH

And the time I found you all smelling of eau-de-cologne! You said Felicia had given it you for your headache.

DR. VAUGHAN

And what else would she give it me for?

HANNAH

And the burly, clean-shaven man! God, how it all flies together!

DR. VAUGHAN

[With a desperate effort at self-command]

I think, Hannah, you are losing your wits.

HANNAH

I *shall* lose them—O Father in heaven! And Elsie

wanting clothes so badly. And the mission fund
so——

DR. VAUGHAN

Hush!

[He closes the window.]

HANNAH

And you never told me you had met her in Pinfold
Craddock!

DR. VAUGHAN

Why on earth should I——?

HANNAH

And you wouldn't let me see Mrs. Morrow, till you
had made sure she didn't know.

DR. VAUGHAN

Hannah! It comes on me suddenly what you mean.
You surely can't think that I—that Miss Morrow——

HANNAH

No—no—Mrs. Morrow has upset my nerves. . . .
I had such faith in Felicia that now I feel anybody. . . .
But no—not *you!* That is impossible.

*[Struggling with herself she resumes her study of
the pass-book]*

But I do really wish you would fill in your counter-
foils.

DR. VAUGHAN

There are always the cheques to guide you.

HANNAH

Yes—but it's a worry.

DR. VAUGHAN

I'm sorry. I do worry you, dear heart, don't I?

[*Puts his face to hers*]

But I'll turn over a new leaf, I really will.

HANNAH [*Smiling*]

Of the cheque-book?

DR. VAUGHAN [*With a forced explosive laugh*]

Ha! Ha! Ha! I must send that to *Punch*.

HANNAH [*Smiling on*]

It's all very well to laugh. But really, unless you reform, I shall have to take away your cheque-book.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Gaily*]

And my latch-key, and stand me in the corner with a fool's cap.

HANNAH

Yes, and a sermon written on it.

DR. VAUGHAN

Ha! Ha! Ha!

HANNAH

Look at this now—Thursday and no other date.

DR. VAUGHAN

But it's between cheques for May 2 and May 7, so it's easy to find out. There you are—on the calendar!

[*Points to it*]

Thursday, May 4.

HANNAH

Then May the first was Monday.

DR. VAUGHAN [*With ghastly facetiousness*]

“Which there's no denying of it, Betsy!”

HANNAH

But then—they don't pay Old Age Pensions on Monday.

DR. VAUGHAN

And who said they did?

HANNAH

You said—when you met Felicia in the post office at Pinfold Craddock on Mayday—a gaffer was drawing his Old Age Pension. But Friday is the day for that!

DR. VAUGHAN

Well, it may have been his arrears—

HANNAH

That's true.

DR. VAUGHAN

Or his savings. Only he looked so old I thought of the Pensions. And what a great thing they are for those little villages, Hannah, circulating the money and bringing grandparents back into respect.

HANNAH

Yes, I wish there could be State pensions for people like poor Mrs. Morrow.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Stroking her hair*]

I'm glad you're feeling kindlier to her, dear.

HANNAH

I do try, darling.

[*She takes his hand and rubs it against her cheek. Suddenly she utters a great agonised cry*]

Ah!

[*She seizes the hand that caressed her, and stares at the ring that has rubbed her cheek.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

What's up now?

HANNAH

The strange ring!!

DR. VAUGHAN

But it's your own ring—my engagement ring with the device of the Teaching Priest.

HANNAH

Yes, that is the horror of it !

DR. VAUGHAN [*Paling*]

Hannah !

HANNAH

The man in the nursing home had a strange ring !

DR. VAUGHAN

Your ring does not exhaust the oddities of annulation.

HANNAH

Don't give me arguments—I know each thing in itself is foolish—but it's all the rings—they make a chain—a chain that is choking me. O God help us, God help us !

[Driven to bay, he looks at her for a moment as she twists her hands, then he sighs wearily.]

DR. VAUGHAN [*In a matter-of-fact voice*]

Ah well, I see I must confess.

HANNAH [*Huskily*]

Confess !

[She stares at him.]

DR. VAUGHAN

When I met her at the post office in Pinfold Craddock I did find out what was the matter. In fact, Miss Morrow, overwhelmed with emotion at the sight of me, made me her priest, throwing herself on my

pastoral protection. What could I do? I took up the burden. I found her the nursing home. I spent the forty pounds on her.

HANNAH [*Rising and coming to him*]
And the man—she told you his name?

DR. VAUGHAN
Even his name I know. But I can't very well tell, can I?

HANNAH
But you can make him marry her!

DR. VAUGHAN [*Mystically*]
That man is dead—it was he I buried at Pinfold Craddock.

HANNAH
Poor Felicia! . . . But you only met her at the post office, you said.

Dr. VAUGHAN
She could hardly be at his funeral. . . . That was part of her burden . . .

HANNAH
Poor soul. . . . But you told me a lie about the books!

DR. VAUGHAN
That was part of *my* burden. I couldn't give away her secret, could I? And it *was* books I bought in a

sense—a little cheque-book for her, a little pass-book——

[*Airily waves at his own*]

And with the remains of the money she was able to set up a little typing office, and keep herself and her child.

HANNAH [*Moved*]
My kind husband!

DR. VAUGHAN [*Turning uneasily from her*]
I wanted to be kind, believe me, Hannah—I always want to be kind. But it's been an awful strain. As you just said, even white lies turn black with time. I shall never have another secret from you, Hannah!

HANNAH
My dear, my dear! What were your white lies to my black accusations? Oh, I could tear my tongue out! See, I am so wretchedly repentant—and yet so terribly, terribly happy! Oh! Rodney!

[*Sinks to her knees, and clings to him, sobbing hysterically.*]

DR. VAUGHAN
No, by God! I can't stand this. Get up, get up, I tell you. It is all true—all true.

HANNAH [*Dazed—checking sobs*]
True? What is true?

DR. VAUGHAN

You must get up. You must bear it. I tried to spare you. But you don't spare *me*. You kneel to me, and that's a worse hell for me than even the lies I've had to tell.

HANNAH

You've lied to me ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Lied till I felt my very tongue turning black. But I can't sink too low. I must keep some shred of self-respect.

HANNAH

Then it is true ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Yes.

[Wipes the sweat from his forehead]

I see now what a relief to the criminal to be caught !

HANNAH

It is true ? You have broken God's commandment !
. . . You !

DR. VAUGHAN

Yes.

[Bows his head.]

HANNAH

You have lied and deceived and committed adultery and ruined a girl——

DR. VAUGHAN

And shamed her child and borne false witness, and stolen the household money, and had other gods beside God, and taken His name in vain—everything, everything. Nigh the whole Decalogue stands by me desecrated.

HANNAH

And you can stand there ? And you do not sink into the earth ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Not so loud ! Nobody must hear.

HANNAH [*Rising in amaze*]

I am to shield you ?

DR. VAUGHAN [*His head bowed lower*]

To try and forgive my great sin against you.

HANNAH

What does it matter about *me* ? I feel degraded, sickened, crushed, but what do *I* count, compared with the degradation of your sacred office ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Never mind my office—I cry to you as human being to human being.

HANNAH

I can only think of your congregation.

DR. VAUGHAN

They have only cause for rejoicing !

HANNAH [*Dazed*]

Oh, my poor Rodney ! All this over-work——

DR. VAUGHAN

And shall they not share the joy in heaven over the sinner that repenteth ? I give you the commonplaces of Christianity and you stare at me as if I were mad.

HANNAH

It is my last hope.

DR. VAUGHAN

Dismiss it. I am very sane. My sin was madness, maybe. But now—I am perhaps the sanest man in this city. Because, what is sanity ? To know things as they are. Man as he is. God as he is ! I know now how man can fall—I know now how God can chastise and redeem.

HANNAH [*Sinking tragically into a chair*]

Then it *is* true ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Don't babble that again !

[*Recovering his gentleness*]

Pull yourself together, dearest, and let us face facts.

HANNAH [*Moaning*]

O God ! O God ! . . . You !!

DR. VAUGHAN

Pull yourself together—it's not so terrible as it looks now.

HANNAH

My husband!

DR. VAUGHAN

And must it always be some other woman's? Sin lieth at the door, you read in Genesis—shall it never come in? Are the battles of the soul to be always elsewhere—like our British wars always on some far frontier?

HANNAH

The husband I worshipped—next to God!

DR. VAUGHAN

And who will always worship you!

[Touches her affectionately.]

HANNAH

Don't put your hand on me—it is horrible, horrible. The sun gone out of heaven!

DR. VAUGHAN

The sun never goes out of heaven, Hannah. It is we who turn away from the sun.

HANNAH *[Half to herself]*

When I saw you in the pulpit, I felt like Joshua when

he saw the angel with the drawn sword—and knew the hosts of the Lord must win——

DR. VAUGHAN

My sword is still unsheathed !

[*She sobs tearlessly*]

Listen to me, dear wife.

HANNAH

I can't listen. I am your wife no longer. I must go away.

DR. VAUGHAN

You would divorce me ?

HANNAH [*Rising*]

I must save your soul. The child must have a father !

DR. VAUGHAN

And you—and Elsie ?

HANNAH

We must suffer for your sin.

DR. VAUGHAN

And the congregation ? And the community ? And the scandal to the Church ?

HANNAH

You should have thought of that before.

DR. VAUGHAN

And shall I not think of it now ? And the ribaldry of the masses ? And the gloating of the organs of Free-thought ? And the loss of faith among my flock ? And the——

HANNAH

Don't ! Don't !

DR. VAUGHAN

The drunkards and drabs who love me and whom I love, and whom only *my* hand can drag up from the gutter—where you would now cast *me* !

HANNAH

Don't, I tell you.

DR. VAUGHAN

And God's work undone—the work I am thrilling to do !

HANNAH

You do God's work ! It is a sacrilege.

DR. VAUGHAN

An atonement ! I never so longed to save sinners.

HANNAH

Cease your blasphemies. You are unfit to mount the pulpit.

DR. VAUGHAN

Unfit? Unfit, Hannah? I never was so fitted to preach God's word.

HANNAH

You! Oh, if I could only laugh! You—a minister of God!

DR. VAUGHAN

Yes—now at last fitted to be His instrument——
“Iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears——”

HANNAH

Don't quote poetry now. This is real.

DR. VAUGHAN

Then I assure you in prose, that when I look at my old sermons, I blush at the impudence and ignorance with which I, an innocent at home, dared to speak of sin to my superiors in sinfulness.

HANNAH

This jocosity is dreadful. A priest must be perfect.

DR. VAUGHAN

Ah, there's the jocosity that's dreadful. Perfect! Beardless boys stuck up a ladder to preach to life-battered men and women!

HANNAH

Didn't you dismiss those young men at the Training College on the mere breath of a scandal ?

DR. VAUGHAN

I did, God forgive me. I didn't know they might be qualifying better through sin than through the whole college curriculum.

HANNAH [*Putting her hands over her ears*]

A—a—a—h ! Satan has you indeed !

DR. VAUGHAN

It is because I've known sin at first hand—known for myself all the dazzle of temptation and all the anguish of contrition—that I was able to comfort that poor woman.

HANNAH

Drowse her, I warrant, not comfort her, drug the remains of her conscience. Evil you call good and good evil.

DR. VAUGHAN

On the contrary. Now I *know* the difference between good and evil. It was through sin that Adam and Eve learnt it. Has that profound allegory no teaching for us ? O this fantastic hypothesis of perfection ! A sea captain who has never made a voyage—the perfection of ignorance—and you trust him with the ship. You take a youth—the fool of the family for choice—

keep him in cotton-wool under a glass case, cram him with Greek and Latin, constrict his neck with a white choker, clap a shovel hat on his sconce, and lo ! he is God's minister ! But it is written, " He maketh His ministers flames of fire."

HANNAH

Then would you build a training college for sinners, a graduation college in iniquity ? Oh !

[*Covers her eyes.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

Don't caricature me. The seaman does not seek the storm, but he puts out to sea. The fledgling priest must face temptation, ay, and fight it to the bitter end.

HANNAH

Not such a very bitter end—for you and Felicia.

DR. VAUGHAN

If only that had been the end ! If there had been no after to the glamour of our romance——

HANNAH [*Collapses on chair, murmuring*]

Romance ! O God !

DR. VAUGHAN

Yes, I won't deny the uplift, the exultation, the stirring of dry bones—that's the bedazzlement and bedevilment I've learnt to guard my flock against—but, oh my dear ! how it was all poisoned by the deceit we

had to practise on *you* ! But as we sow, we reap, and out of our suffering we must make our education.

HANNAH

I see Felicia's suffering—not yours.

DR. VAUGHAN

And *her* suffering and yours and Amy's and Hubert's and Mrs. Morrow's—do I not suffer them all over again ?

HANNAH [*Sneering*]

Second-hand suffering !

DR. VAUGHAN

And the scourge of sleeplessness ?

HANNAH

Fear of being found out. When it comes to facing exposure and losing your pride of place and your lust of power——

DR. VAUGHAN

Hannah !

HANNAH

Satan finds for you all these sophistries.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Passionately*]

They are *not* sophistries. Every fibre in me longs to do God's work. Does He choose only perfect vessels to be His instruments ? He took Moses, the murderer

of the Egyptian, and used him to establish His people ; He took David, the beguiler of Bathsheba, and used him to establish His Kingdom ; He took Paul, the stoner of Stephen, and used him to establish His Church. And shall I, tainted though I am, and worm though I am, compared with these, be utterly thrown away ? Wasted—when so much is crying out to be done ! Think of it—the sin and shame of the world !

HANNAH

To which you have added. Oh, you sicken me with your hypocrisy.

DR. VAUGHAN

I am not thinking of private sins, but of public sins—our commercial greeds, our organized injustices, our squalors and brutalities—our ghastly wars, all the sores of our civilization, all that goads us to our crusades. I tell you, Hannah, the sins we do as a people so outweigh the sins we do as individuals, that I could almost cry : Each man as he pleases ! so long as the nation do right !

HANNAH

Let each man do right and the whole nation is righteous.

DR. VAUGHAN

Not so. One unrighteous war may wreak more misery than a myriad private crimes. Are there so

many champions of national righteousness that you would paralyse this hand ?

HANNAH

How can I paralyse it ? I must do what is right. But you can always explain you are a skilled sea captain — Ah at Lloyds, is that the phrase ?

DR. VAUGHAN

You know you would paralyse it. Even that sinful lady demanded sinlessness of *me*. It is one of the delusions of the modern world.

HANNAH

Then what an opportunity to correct it !

DR. VAUGHAN

You know it can only be corrected by teachers not compromised.

HANNAH

Ah, sinlessness *is* necessary in a teacher !

[*She sits at the table, takes up her pen and writes.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

What are you writing ?

HANNAH

What St. Paul wrote to Timothy : “ That the man of God may be perfect.”

DR. VAUGHAN

Don't mock me. What are you writing ?

HANNAH

A letter to a lawyer, of course.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Snatching away her pen*]

You shall not kill my work !

HANNAH

You are killing your soul—you must atone to Felicia.

DR. VAUGHAN

It is you who would kill my soul by stifling its activities. Felicia asks no atonement. It was all I could do to make her take the few pounds to see her through. She's a free proud spirit. She demands her equal share of the blame, and would die rather than injure me. She saw how the double life was breaking me up. And she knew how I longed for the call to London—the real centre of energy. She knew my life-work was at stake, and it was she that said as Abram said to Lot, "Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me."

HANNAH

And don't I say the same ? And yet you snatch my pen !

DR. VAUGHAN

Spare me your mockery, I tell you. Listen ! Sir John hinted just before that the call to London was

imminent. Think of the activities you propose to kill. But you shan't. Take your pen.

[*Gives it back.*]

HANNAH

What will you do ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Go again through the hell of falsehood.

HANNAH

Lie, do you mean ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Terribly.

HANNAH

With your black tongue ?

DR. VAUGHAN

With my white purpose. I have these crusades to lead—shall the slave traffickers rejoice over my broken sword ? Is it not enough that I admit to you and to my own soul that I have done evil ?

HANNAH

Admit it to the world ! All else is hypocrisy.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Smiting the table*]

No ! If I teach my flock to hate sin, do I not feel and believe it down to the bleeding depths of my heart ? And suppose I did tear open my breast to

them, show them my spots and sores, would they understand? No more than you understand. The Salvation Army understands. They raise the sinner from the dust. But your respectable classes—one stumble, and every foot, every hoof is trampling on him. But they sha'n't! By heaven, they sha'n't! I will lie—as Mrs. Morrow lied to protect Felicia. I have to protect you and my home and my daughter and my life-work.

HANNAH

You will fail as she failed.

DR. VAUGHAN

And you will succeed only in stirring up a foul puddle—at which every filthy beast will rush to drink. Why, you can't even *get* a divorce, I suddenly remember.

HANNAH

Can't *get* a divorce?

DR. VAUGHAN

No, there's no cruelty.

HANNAH

This is not cruelty? O God!

DR. VAUGHAN

No, nor desertion either. And even if you tried to get a judicial separation, what proofs have you that a judge and a jury wouldn't laugh at? *Was* I at the nursing-home? It was as the priest who held her secret.

Felicia will clear me, Felicia with her divine constancy of self-sacrifice. She, not you, is the Christian.

HANNAH

You would go into the witness-box and deny it ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Unflinchingly.

HANNAH

And add perjury to your other sins ?

DR. VAUGHAN

And add perjury to the sins I should understand. I should leave the court a plaster saint, a shining example of priestly perfection. All that is best in our church would rally round me, and you, my poor Hannah, would be branded as a morbid woman, crazed with jealousy.

HANNAH

I saw you as an angel—and you are a fiend.

[*Bursts into sobs.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

I am neither—merely a man.

[*Sobbing, HANNAH goes into her room, and the key is heard turning in the lock. DR. VAUGHAN wipes his brow again, and throwing open the window draws a long breath of cool evening air. Then he turns out the lights and throws himself upon the divan in the moonlit darkness.*]

[*The Action Pauses.*]

Third Movement

Presently ELSIE *opens the door and comes in.*

ELSIE
Nobody here ?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Wearily*]
I'm here, Baby. Don't turn up the light.

ELSIE
Poor daddy ! Did I disturb your nap ?

DR. VAUGHAN
You know I don't nap so easily. But it rests me to lie
in the moonlight.

ELSIE
Dear romantic old daddy ! And what a delicious
smell from the garden !

DR. VAUGHAN
But why aren't you in bed ?

ELSIE
Before dinner ! !

DR. VAUGHAN
What am I thinking of ?

ELSIE
Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! You must have napped after all.

DR. VAUGHAN

And night-mared ! The Archmundhams are gone, I suppose ?

ELSIE

Not yet. They're all in the drawing-room.

DR. VAUGHAN

What are they hanging about for ?

ELSIE

I can't turn them out. And it looks so odd you and mother avoiding them. You might come up and pretend nothing was the matter.

DR. VAUGHAN

Pretend ? Oh, about Amy's tantrums.

ELSIE

Yes, come along. We want livening up ! You shall give us one of your rattling songs.

DR. VAUGHAN

Sing ?

ELSIE

Now, it's not a great tenor, so it needn't put on airs. And it hasn't got a cold.

DR. VAUGHAN

I can't, Elsie.

ELSIE

Not even "The Death of Nelson?"

DR. VAUGHAN

No!

ELSIE

Yes, you will.—Or else I shall!

[Sings]

'Twas in Trafalgar Bay

We saw the Frenchman lay——

Awful grammar, I know. But come along! Amy'll play the accompaniment.

[Trying to raise him]

What a sluggish parent it is! Let us hear your rich manly voice troll it out.

[Sings]

England expects that every man

This day will do his duty,

This day will do——

[A burst of hysteric sobbing comes from HANNAH'S room]

What's that?

DR. VAUGHAN

It sounded like Amy Archmundham.

ELSIE

But it came from mother's room.

DR. VAUGHAN

One can't tell in the dark.

[ELSIE moves towards room door]

No, don't go in. Mother's resting.
[ELSIE *knocks.*]

HANNAH [*Within*]
You can't come in.

ELSIE
But it's me—Elsie.

HANNAH
I can't see you now.

DR. VAUGHAN
I told you so. Run upstairs.

ELSIE
But why does mother sound so cross ?

DR. VAUGHAN
She's upset over Miss Archmundham. And Mrs. Morrow has been bothering, too. Cut along, Baby, and try to get rid of the Archmundhams.

ELSIE
They'd go quicker if you sang.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Springing up in mock anger, itself simulated*]
You malicious minx! Why not try one of your poems ?

ELSIE

Now, father! You promised me never to mention them.

DR. VAUGHAN

Be off then—or I'll recite one.

[Strikes a drawing-room reciter's attitude]

“Dawn over the Factories,” by George Rodney!

ELSIE *[In mock terror]*

For heaven's sake!

[Rushes out]

Ha! Ha! Ha!

DR. VAUGHAN

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

[As the door closes behind ELSIE, his laughter dies abruptly. He turns towards HANNAH'S door]

God! how she suffers!

[He goes to her door and knocks. There is no answer]

Hannah! I must speak to you!

HANNAH *[Within]*

I'm too busy packing.

DR. VAUGHAN

For God's sake!

[Rattling the handle]

Hannah!

[The key is heard turning, the door is slightly opened, the light from HANNAH'S room streams through. Her white face appears in the illuminated patch.]

HANNAH

What do you want ? Why are you in the dark ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Can I be in the light ?

HANNAH

No, indeed ! But that is what you must face.

[She enters and turns it on. It shows him broken in body and spirit.]

DR. VAUGHAN

I know I must—if you insist on a judicial separation. Of course I couldn't fight against you or descend to perjury—forget my wild words. But you surely won't go away like this—without even a night for reflection !

HANNAH

My duty needs no reflection. I must set you free.

DR. VAUGHAN

But you can't, I tell you—unless we played a comedy.

HANNAH

Played a comedy ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Unless I refused you conjugal rights, for example.

HANNAH [*Outraged*]

What !!

DR. VAUGHAN

You see, dear, even for a righteous end you would have to go a little crookedly.

HANNAH [*Passionately*]

I don't care. If *that* is man's law I can't take it seriously. You must be free to marry Felicia.

DR. VAUGHAN

And bury the Rev. Rodney Vaughan! And will that make *you* any happier—I mean, my marrying Felicia?

HANNAH

It will make *you* less sinful.

DR. VAUGHAN

You madden me with your perfection—forgive me! it's my own *imperfection* that maddens me. But what I want now is for you to consider yourself.

HANNAH

I *am* considering myself. How can I stay here? Every room is profaned. To think that in this very sanctum—oh, I can't bear to look at it!

[*Covers her eyes.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

You *would* turn up the light.

HANNAH

I should see it all the more in the dark. Elsie and I must make a little home for ourselves.

DR. VAUGHN [*Overwhelmed*]
Elsie, too ?

HANNAH

Do you think Felicia would want her about ? Oh, her sisters were lucky to die ! They shall not stay here !

[*She seizes the photograph frames.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

Let them be ! They are inscribed " To Dad ! "

HANNAH

Felicia won't want *my* children, too.

[*She takes the photographs out of the frames.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

Give me my photographs !

[*He takes hold of them.*]

HANNAH

No !

[*He tries to wrest them from her. The door opens. She relaxes her hold, leaving them in his possession. Enter PURVIS, with a tray heaped high with letters and papers. He brings it to DR. VAUGHAN, who motions him impatiently to place them on his writing-table. Exit PURVIS. DR. VAUGHAN penitently hands back the photographs to HANNAH.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

You are right ! I have forfeited even the dead.

[He drops miserably into his chair at the writing-table, while she places the photographs in her bosom.]

But I love you, Hannah, despite everything.

HANNAH

Don't begin your lies again. *Please!*

DR. VAUGHAN

It's not lies. We men can love in more ways than one.

HANNAH

Then you *still* love her !

DR. VAUGHAN *[With a passionate sweep of the hand that scatters the pile of letters all over his table]*

Won't you understand ? A hurricane whirled me from my moorings—no, you women saints will never understand that—but haven't I fought my way back in the teeth of the gale ?

HANNAH

For your career's sake—not for mine.

DR. VAUGHAN

For yours, too. Isn't every thought bound up with our joint life ? Can I sit at this table without remembering that we bought it together ? Can I walk in the garden and not feel who planted the irises ? Can

I look at those frames, even though you have emptied them, and not think of the children we have loved and lost ? . . . You talk of divorce ! Can I shake off all our years together and begin a new life with a comparative stranger ?

HANNAH [*Softened—moving towards him*]
You did begin it.

DR. VAUGHAN
And end it. Since that day at the nursing home we have not exchanged a word, a look, a line !

HANNAH
Are you sure—are you very sure ?
[*Approaches the writing-table.*]

DR. VAUGHAN
I had a circular announcing her little type-writing establishment. That was the absolute last.

HANNAH
You dare tell me that when a letter from—— ?
[*Points to one of the scattered letters.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*Agitated*]
A letter from Felicia !

HANNAH
Can't you smell the reek of her eau-de-cologne ?
[*DR. VAUGHAN extends his hand to take it, then draws back.*]

DR. VAUGHAN
Open it !

HANNAH
I ?

DR. VAUGHAN
Yes ! Read it !

[HANNAH's hand goes slowly and doubtfully towards
the letter. She picks it up.]

HANNAH [*Handing it to him*]
You take it ! I can't bear the scent.

DR. VAUGHAN
Read it !

[HANNAH's trembling fingers fumble vainly at the
envelope.]

You see—you tell me to marry her—and your hand
trembles with jealousy.

HANNAH
It's not jealousy. It's the sense of a quicksand under
my feet ; no solid foothold anywhere. Nothing I
can believe.

DR. VAUGHAN
Don't deny *all* flesh and blood ! Isn't the gulf
between us wide enough ?

HANNAH

If I am jealous, all the more reason I should give her up to you. Take her letter!

DR. VAUGHAN

No!

[Puts his hands behind his back.]

HANNAH *[Opening the letter fumblingly, and reading]*
“Dear Pastor—As we may chance to meet to-morrow, when I must come up to say good-bye to Hubert, I had better—warn—” no, that’s scratched out—“tell—better tell you I shall be accompanied by my husband.”

DR. VAUGHAN

What!!

[He turns agitatedly, and takes the letter from her and reads on]

“I have married a rising young author, whose novel I had been typing. He is very good to me and fond of little Davie—

[Pauses in emotion]

—who is gaining weight fast. Always in grateful goodwill—FELICIA VENABLES.”

[He lets the letter flutter to the ground and stands miserable.]

HANNAH *[In mingled relief and horror]*

And she marries him without telling him——!

DR. VAUGHAN

She has obviously told him everything—except my name.

HANNAH

And men will marry like that !

DR. VAUGHAN

We are not so hard as you, you see.

HANNAH

And the child—he will pretend it is his ?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Gloomily*]

It will pass as his—naturally.

HANNAH

Horrible !

DR. VAUGHAN

Society has the shams it deserves.

HANNAH

How deserves ?

DR. VAUGHAN

If it will recognize only two classes of persons—the perfect and the imprisoned.

HANNAH

It makes me feel like on a rocking ship.

DR. VAUGHAN

Because you have never known the deeps of life—you're only used to the harbour. One must get one's sea-legs.

HANNAH

You seem rather white.

DR. VAUGHAN [*With sudden fierceness*]

And isn't it ghastly to think of Felicia tied to a man she doesn't love ?

HANNAH

How do you know she doesn't love him ?

DR. VAUGHAN

Don't say anything against Felicia. She couldn't change like that !

HANNAH

Poor mother ! Then it's for the child she sacrificed herself.

DR. VAUGHAN

It's for me she has sacrificed herself ! God ! see where my scoundrelism has driven her ! She feared I wouldn't be strong enough—that I should be drawn back to her—her and my boy. So she puts an impassable barrier between us. . . . She's a great creature, I tell you. . . . And perhaps she knew me better than I knew myself. . . . Anyhow, here's an end to your revelations and reparations.

HANNAH
How an end{?}

DR. VAUGHAN [*In amazed alarm*]
You don't want to divorce me all the same ? Publicly,
at least. That's not your duty now.

HANNAH
It's *your* duty I'm thinking of. You can't go into
your pulpit while your congregation remains ignorant
that——

DR. VAUGHAN
Good God ! You expect me to confess ? Now ?
And ruin Felicia's position ! I tell you not a hair of
her head——

HANNAH
You needn't mention her name any more than she
mentioned yours.

DR. VAUGHAN
You ask me to shatter everything Felicia sacrificed
herself to save !

HANNAH
You can't go on preaching while you yourself are a
whited sepulchre. You *must* make your peace with
God.

DR. VAUGHAN

Peace! What a beautiful word! Yes—the strength to fight seems snapped. Peace!

HANNAH [*Eagerly*]

Then you *will* confess?

DR. VAUGHAN

And do you think I have strength for claptrap confessions? I am tired, I tell you—suddenly tired.

HANNAH

But there is only one road to peace and rest.

DR. VAUGHAN

Yes—only one road.

[*ELSIE throws open the door and runs in excitedly, flourishing a newspaper.*]

ELSIE

Oh, father! The *Courier* has such a lovely picture of the President of the——!

DR. VAUGHAN

I wish you wouldn't rush so.

ELSIE

But it's so splendiferous!

[*He motions her impatiently to leave it*]

And you've dropped a letter.

[*Picks up FELICIA'S letter and puts it on his table*]

What an awful post! Lucky it's the last.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Broodingly*]
Yes, the last post.

ELSIE
Can't I help you ?

DR. VAUGHAN
No, Baby, you can't help me.

ELSIE [*Passing by the bureau*]
Why, who has taken away Ruth and Mary ?

DR. VAUGHAN
Do leave me in peace.
[*ELSIE flies out*]
And you, too, Hannah.

HANNAH
If it is in peace with God !

DR. VAUGHAN
God understands the faults of His creature. He knows
that my sin came out of the very glory of His world.
If I could fall asleep in His arms !
[*His head sinks on his breast in utter weariness.
There is a double rat-tat at the house-door. He
does not move.*]

HANNAH [*Vaguely terrified*]
You are drugged. Sin has drugged you. Come !
Face your sin. Be yourself.

DR. VAUGHAN

This *is* myself.

HANNAH.

Then yourself is a man I have never known.

DR. VAUGHAN

And whose acquaintance I am still making.

[*Enter PURVIS with a telegram. DR. VAUGHAN still does not move.*]

HANNAH [*Controlling her voice*]

Is that for me ?

PURVIS [*Sternly*]

No, mum, for Vaughan. Reply prepaid.

[*Gives it to her husband.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*Reading it and crumpling it up angrily*]

Those pestering papers !

[*Throws it into the waste-paper basket. PURVIS lingers.*]

No answer !

HANNAH

But you needn't waste the reply form.

[*She picks up the crumpled mass, and reads the wire aloud*]

"Kindly inform *Herald's* readers how propose start Crusades." Thirty-six words prepaid.

[*She sits at table and takes a pen.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*To PURVIS*]
I told you no answer.

PURVIS
Yes, sir. . . But can't I tell you now about *Macbeth*?

DR. VAUGHAN
What is this nonsense about *Macbeth*?
[*PURVIS looks disconcerted*]
Fire away, then!

PURVIS
I did go to th' play-house with Sir John's coachman—
we've had a searching of hearts over it just now—it's
been weighing on us both.

DR. VAUGHAN [*With a faint smile*]
Macbeth hath murdered sleep, eh?

PURVIS
I wouldna go so far as to say that.

DR. VAUGHAN
And is that all that's on your conscience?

PURVIS
Yes, sir.

DR. VAUGHAN
And you could now look Sir John in the face?

PURVIS
Like a man.

DR. VAUGHAN

Even when carrying in my pyjamas ?

PURVIS

They werna very clean, sir.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Smiling*]

I see. So now you are perfect.

PURVIS

Oh no, Dr. Vaughan. No man was ever perfect—
except Noah.

DR. VAUGHAN

And *he* got drunk !

PURVIS

That was *after* the flood, sir. M'appen he got tired
of water.

DR. VAUGHAN

Ha ! Ha ! Ha !

HANNAH [*Counting what she has written*]

Thirty-five, thirty-six ! Here's the answer !

[*Rising, she gives it to PURVIS who starts to go. DR.
VAUGHAN is taken aback but recovers himself.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

One moment !

[*He takes it from PURVIS and scans it questioningly*]

Wants a word or two altered. You needn't wait.

[*PURVIS goes out. He tears the telegram in two*]

You expect me to tell the paper that I propose to start the Crusades against iniquity by proclaiming my own sin from the pulpit !

HANNAH

And how else can you preach your new gospel ?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Puzzled*]

My new gospel ?

HANNAH

That repentant sinners make the best ministers.

DR. VAUGHAN

Oh that !

[*Throws pieces in wastepaper basket*]

Isn't that all a web of sophistry—spun just as you said—to cover up my sin ?

HANNAH

Not if you tear away the covering ! Not if you purge yourself by public confession ! That *may* be a re-baptising—so as by fire.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Kindled*]

Ha !

HANNAH

And then God might deign to use you again as His instrument.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Exalted by her fervour*]

Then you *believe* in my idea ?

HANNAH

It is for you to prove it to me. *Show* the world the triumph of conscience.

DR. VAUGHAN

And if it proves our ruin ?

[ELSIE *flies in.*]

ELSIE

You're wanted at the 'phone, mother—Oh, I'm sorry, father, I rushed so—but it's most urgent, she says.

DR. VAUGHAN

Who says ?

ELSIE

Mrs. Morrow.

HANNAH [*Surprised*]

Mrs. Morrow ?

[*Goes towards door. With parting admonition to her husband*]

Send that telegram !

[*Exit.*]

ELSIE

Shall *I* take it ?

DR. VAUGHAN

No, no, it's not ready.

ELSIE

And you haven't looked at your picture in the *Courier* !
[*Picks it up reproachfully.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

Not now, Baby.

[*He goes out to the garden, ELSIE is following*]

Please ! I want to be alone.

[*Exit.*]

ELSIE

Poor overworked Dad ! But I suppose you must pay for your pictures.

[*She stands at the open window, gloating over the biography. With a little knock, unheeded by her, JOHN comes in, pausing at the door ; then, seeing she is rapt, he steals up behind her.*]

JOHN

Another of your poems ?

ELSIE [*Startled*]

Oh ! . . . What poems ? I'm reading about father !

[*Shows the picture of him*]

Why have you come down ?

JOHN

I was bored without you. Shall we go into the garden ?

ELSIE

What for ? We don't grow potatoes.

JOHN
Don't tease. Do let us go.

ELSIE
No.

JOHN
Not with such a heavenly moon ?
[*He stands at the garden-window.*]

ELSIE
Heavenly ? What else can the moon be ?

JOHN
Come along !

ELSIE [*Shaking her head*]
Father is there !

JOHN [*Eagerly*]
Oh, you want us to be alone.

ELSIE
No, I want father to be alone.

JOHN
Always pulling me down from heaven.

ELSIE [*Looking up*]
Ursa Minor seems still there.

JOHN [*Bitterly*]

That's your idea of me—the Little Bear !

ELSIE [*Roguishly*]

Well, you don't consider yourself the Great Bear ?

That's your father.

JOHN

I should like to give you a great hug.

ELSIE [*Retreating a little*]

Don't be such a *savage* bear. Doesn't all this starry peacefulness soothe you ?

JOHN

No, it fires me—like your poem.

ELSIE

My poem ?

JOHN

In Saturday's *Courier*.

ELSIE [*Blushing, murmurs, embarrassed*]

How do you know ?

JOHN

Well, it's signed "George Rodney," and in literature George is always a lady. And Rodney wasn't very difficult to place, was it, George ?

ELSIE

Mr. Archmundham, you mustn't——

JOHN

Mustn't call you by somebody else's Christian name ?

ELSIE

We must be going back to your people.

JOHN

Besides, I didn't need that clue—I saw your tender soul in every line.

ELSIE

What do *you* know of tenderness ?

JOHN

Ah, you think me a bear because I can't take the old people seriously—this deity of theirs with his big beard and his eye on everything ! But between your poetry and my science there is no hostility. Truth and love—that's all we have for the certainties of our elders. Can't we make them enough ?

ELSIE [*Smilingly*]

Poetry and potatoes ?

JOHN

Isn't that all that really matters ?

ELSIE

But need we despise our elders ?

JOHN

You shall teach me toleration. Only love me, Elsie love me, as I love you. . . .

[She turns away]

Ah, I know you can't yet, but in time—perhaps—

ELSIE

But I do love you.

JOHN

Elsie !

ELSIE

Why else did I detest you ? I have loved you—oh, a dreadful time, ever since you took those brilliant degrees. But you seemed so far away—so abominably clever—so disgustingly rich——

JOHN

And you detested me for that ?

ELSIE

No, not for that—you couldn't help that. But you seemed so cruel, so cynical—I had to fight against myself.

JOHN

But now ?

ELSIE

Now I see you are good—good !

[She falls into his arms.]

JOHN

Oh, Elsie, I shall never be as good as you.

ELSIE

Oh, John, it has been terrible—this strange cruel aching towards you—this feeling that it could not be. Even now I feel this is only a dream.

JOHN

So long as we never wake !

[*Their lips meet. Enter HANNAH.*]

HANNAH [*Dazed*]

Elsie !

ELSIE [*Scarcely moving*]

Oh, mother, I am so happy.

JOHN

And I, too, mother.

HANNAH

You have got engaged ?

JOHN

Wasn't it clever of us ?

HANNAH [*Half to herself*]

My God ! Who could have foreseen this ?

[*Staggers, sinks into chair.*]

ELSIE [*Catching her*]
Mother !

HANNAH
It is impossible—impossible.
[*Pushes ELSIE away.*]

JOHN
You refuse your consent ?

HANNAH
Elsie is no fit match for you—we are only plain
people——

JOHN
Elsie plain ? Ha ! Ha ! Ha !

HANNAH
You are so rich !

JOHN
I am, indeed.
[*Clasps ELSIE.*]

HANNAH
One day you will be titled.

JOHN
Don't rub it in. It may happen to you yet—with a
husband like yours. . . . So now we are through
with the objections.

HANNAH

No! This marriage cannot take place.

ELSIE [*Tragically*]

What do you mean, mother?

HANNAH [*Rising*]

It is impossible. It's a saving of pain to tell you so at once.

JOHN

But how impossible? Here am I and here is Elsie.

HANNAH

And here was Amy and here was Hubert.

JOHN

I see! You mean to pay us out for rejecting Hubert.

HANNAH

As if I would hurt Elsie for that!

ELSIE [*Passionately*]

And why else would you hurt me?

HANNAH [*To JOHN*]

Please go!

JOHN

Are you not going to give me a reason?

HANNAH

Your father will give you a reason—when he knows.

JOHN

Oh, that's what you think, is it? Excuse me a moment, Elsie.

[*He runs out, HANNAH goes distractedly towards the garden.*]

ELSIE

Where are you going?

HANNAH

To tell father—I suppose he's out here.

ELSIE

But I want you to listen to me! You *must* listen!

HANNAH [*Dazed now throughout*]

Yes—yes—what do you want to say?

ELSIE

I love John. Do you understand?

HANNAH

Yes, I understand.

ELSIE

And if you take John from me, I shall not carry on like Amy—but there *will* be a great gulf fixed between you and me. Do you understand?

HANNAH

Yes, yes.

ELSIE

And I shall just break my heart—do you understand ?

HANNAH

I understand.

ELSIE

You don't look as if you did ! You are not attending to me at all.

HANNAH

Wait ! Wait—don't be so impatient with me. Yes, it is all coming to me. If I take John away from you, you will go away from me—on the other side of a gulf—

[*She screams*]

No, no, Elsie ! Not you, too !

[*Throws her arms round her, bursting into tears.*]

ELSIE

Yes, I too. I have always stood up for the old generation. But now I see how they crush the young, how they sacrifice us to their incomprehensible——

[*SIR JOHN opens the door, JOHN behind him.*]

SIR JOHN [*Radiant*]

May *I* have a look in ?

[*HANNAH tries to suppress her sobs*]

No, don't mind *me*, Mrs. Vaughan, I'm a bit choky

myself. But when you've done with my daughter, I'd like a hug at her.

JOHN [*Beaming*]
The *Great Bear*! What did I tell you?

HANNAH
Sir John, believe me, if I had dreamed of this——

SIR JOHN
You'd have dreamed true. Ha! Ha! Ha!
[*Embraces* ELSIE, *who becomes as radiant as he.*]

HANNAH [*Imperiously interrupting this dalliance*]
Sir John! I must tell you. Ten minutes ago Mrs. Morrow rang me up. She is coming here to see you.

SIR JOHN [*Throwing up his hands*]
Not again to-night!

HANNAH
I'm afraid I advised her to. She's got important news which she begged me to carry to you—but I persuaded her to jump into a taxi for once and tell you herself.

SIR JOHN
Bother! Just when I thought we'd have a bit of a jollification!

JOHN [*Shocked*]
Jollification!

SIR JOHN

Yes, you potato ! The night *I* got engaged there was a party and we all sang.

JOHN

Hymns ?

ELSIE [*Shaking her finger laughingly*]

John !

SIR JOHN

Hymns are jollier than your drawing-room ballads. Think what Amy has been squalling. And now on top of her comes Mrs. Morrow.

ELSIE [*Still laughing*]

She isn't going to sing ?

SIR JOHN

Worse ! . . . John, would you mind taking Elsie away ?

JOHN

At such a moment, father, I can refuse you nothing.

[*Facetious exit with* ELSIE.]

SIR JOHN [*Turning sternly on* HANNAH]

I do hope Mrs. Morrow hasn't been working on your feminine weakness. Facts are facts.

HANNAH

And there is a new one.

SIR JOHN

There is indeed—that I take a daughter from your hallowed home. You and I must combine now to guard our family honour.

HANNAH [*Huskily*]

Yes. . . . But suppose . . .

SIR JOHN

And your husband must help too. What's become of him ?

HANNAH

He was here just before.

[*Calling at garden-window*]

Rodney ! . . . Rodney ! . . . He must have walked into the street.

[*Summons up all her strength*]

But you mustn't speak, Sir John, as if this marriage was all settled.

SIR JOHN

Your husband may feel slighted, you mean ?

HANNAH [*Resolutely*]

I mean—if my husband opens his heart to you—

[*Her whole being seems agitated with a mental struggle. She ends weakly*]

objections may be revealed.

SIR JOHN

Fudge ! What objections can be revealed ? He'll be as delighted as I am.

HANNAH [*Wavering*]
You really *are* delighted ?

SIR JOHN
Can you ask ? The offspring of such parents !

HANNAH [*With a last flicker of resistance*]
But surely John ought to do better—Lady Muriel Travers, for example.

SIR JOHN
I don't deny Lady Muriel would have brought more land ! But not more looks ! Eh ? And John has got quite enough land for his potatoes. What ? Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! I'm so glad the Dower House is just empty for them. And what an opportunity to work off my carriages on them as wedding-presents and get motors. Ha ! Ha ! Ha !

[*Enter PURVIS.*]

PURVIS
Mrs. Morrow for Sir John Archmundham.

HANNAH
Show her in here.
[PURVIS *goes through door*, HANNAH *towards garden.*]

SIR JOHN
Don't go—I want your moral support. The family must stick together.

[HANNAH, *obviously still distressed by her conscience, turns back.* PURVIS *ushers in* MRS. MORROW *and exit.* MRS. MORROW *stands in stately pride.*]

HANNAH [*Apologetically*]

Sir John asks me to remain. Won't you sit down ?

MRS. MORROW

Thank you.

[*Ignores chair*]

Sir John, I did not think I could ever face you again, but for my boy's sake—and your girl's——

SIR JOHN

Please come to the new fact.

MRS. MORROW

Felicia is married !

[*Holds out a letter*]

She's just written.

SIR JOHN

Eh ? The scoundrel has married her ?

MRS. MORROW

So it seems.

SIR JOHN

And who *was* he ?

MRS. MORROW

He's a young author. So you see——

SIR JOHN

I shall see his works don't get into the public library.

HANNAH [*Agitated*]

But that would be unjust. . . . I mean, the *books* mightn't be evil.

SIR JOHN

I know those books. I thought you were here to give me your moral support. . . . Well, Mrs. Morrow, I'm glad the thing's put right so far, and it's better for their child. But I don't see how it removes my objection.

HANNAH

But surely, Sir John——!

SIR JOHN

Tainted stock is tainted stock.

HANNAH [*Hotly*]

One flaw doesn't——

MRS. MORROW [*Proudly*]

Please, Mrs. Vaughan! Good-bye, Sir John!

[*Sweeps to the door. Turns*]

If you could see Hubert's condition you would understand how I could humble myself. But you and I will not meet again!

AMY [*Appearing suddenly outside window*]

Oh yes, you will, mother!

HANNAH
Miss Archmundham !
SIR JOHN
Amy !
MRS. MORROW
Miss Archmundham !

} *Together.*

AMY [*Entering*]
You two are going to be great friends.

SIR JOHN
Eavesdropping !

AMY
And who has the right to decide my life behind my back ? Was I to let the old Doge hold another Council of Three ? Elsie told me Mrs. Morrow was coming to it, and as she and John didn't seem anxious for my society, I thought I'd make a fourth.

SIR JOHN
The old Doge wished to spare your delicacy.

AMY
Then he should never have let me do district visiting. Felicia has only followed the local custom. Don't look so shocked ! You know our masses only marry afterwards. The torture you've put me to, guessing at Hubert's iniquities. And all the while he's a martyred saint ! You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

SIR JOHN

You ought to be ashamed to go by the masses. We Archmundhams have to set a standard.

AMY

Yes, of justice. Even Mrs. Vaughan, who's like the angel of judgment, was shocked at you.

SIR JOHN [*Contemptuously*]

Angel of judgment! You women are all alike. Three of you, and not one standing up for law and civilization.

AMY

Hurrah! Votes for women!

SIR JOHN

But John is on my side.

AMY [*Scornfully*]

John! He thinks people are like potatoes.

SIR JOHN

So they are!

AMY

Well, you can't boil us in our skins. That's a comfort.

SIR JOHN

But we can throw you into the dust-bin. I mean the bad ones. Women with pasts should be eliminated.

AMY

Women have to marry men with pasts.

HANNAH

Or futures.

SIR JOHN

Two wrongs don't make a right.

[AMY goes to the door]

Where are you off to ?

AMY

To telephone to the shipping company.

SIR JOHN

What for ?

AMY

To cancel Hubert's passage.

SIR JOHN

Eh ?

MRS. MORROW

But the office will be closed, dear.

AMY

Bother ! Then I'll tell Hubert he's engaged.

SIR JOHN

What !

AMY [*Going to him*]

The dear old Doge has withdrawn the embargo.

SIR JOHN

No, I haven't—

[*She kisses him cajolingly*]

at least, not till Dr. Vaughan does—I wish he'd come in.

AMY

Why Dr. Vaughan ?

SIR JOHN

John and Elsie told you *they're* engaged, didn't they ? Well, then ! It all affects Dr. Vaughan's honour now—don't you see ?—and as we never consulted him about Elsie, we must leave *something* to him !

AMY [*Shaking her head at him*]

Oh you men ! You *must* save your faces. Well, anyhow

[*Links her arm in MRS. MORROW'S*]
we can go and help Hubert unpack !

MRS. MORROW

This relief is too much !

[*She droops half-fainting on AMY'S arm.*]

SIR JOHN [*With a courtly bow*]

Mrs. Morrow will do me the honour of using my carriage.

AMY

I told you you two would be great friends ! Good-night, Mrs. Vaughan. You've been *so* kind.

MRS. MORROW

Good-night, Sir John, thank you for your carriage.

AMY

A rivederci, Doge !

MRS. MORROW

Good-night, Mrs. Vaughan.

[Exit with AMY.]

HANNAH

Good-night !

[She stands like a statue.]

SIR JOHN

You see how they desert me—both my chicks.

HANNAH [*Dully*]

Yes—there's a gulf whatever one does.

SIR JOHN

Never mind—they get us the grandchicks. Cheer up, mother—don't look as if 'twas a funeral.

[AMY pops in a laughing head.]

AMY

Doge !

SIR JOHN

Yes, darling.

AMY

You're a pretty Grand Signor! You offer Mrs. Morrow your carriage and it isn't there!

SIR JOHN [*Roaring*]

Why, what has the rascal——?

HANNAH

You sent it to Judson's.

SIR JOHN

So I did.

AMY

Ha! Ha! Ha!

[HANNAH *is moving to the door.*]

SIR JOHN

No, don't trouble. I'll see to it all. All these young people with their love-affairs send one's wits wool-gathering.

[*Exit.* HANNAH *moves like a sleep-walker to the table. She catches sight of FELICIA's letter.*]

HANNAH [*Startled into terror*]

Her letter!

[*Tearing it into pieces*]

How careless of Rodney!

[*She throws the pieces into the waste-paper basket. Then she takes out the photographs from her bosom, and carefully replaces them in their frames. Enter DR. VAUGHAN by the garden window. She utters a cry of relief.*]

Rodney! Where have you been?

DR. VAUGHAN [*Who looks exalted*]
Up to the stars, I think. Your words lifted me.

HANNAH [*Dazed*]
My words ?

DR. VAUGHAN
Yes. Not sleep, struggle. Not hypocrisy, truth. I shall fight.

HANNAH
Fight ?

DR. VAUGHAN
Sweep away this modern cant of the plaster priest ! All the saints and prophets of the world were sown in sin—as lilies are reared in peat. St. Augustine, St. Francis, Tolstoy—there isn't a church in the world, to-day, would have given any of 'em a post ! Well, let them take away mine !

HANNAH [*Trembling*]
You are going to tell them—— ?

DR. VAUGHAN
Yes, dear. Without Felicia's name, of course. And if they cast stones at me, I will take those stones and of them I will build a new church—the church of reality. By God ! they shall not paralyse this hand !
. . . Is Sir John gone ?

HANNAH

Yes—no—getting his carriage.

DR. VAUGHAN

Good. Then let him cast the first stone !

[*Going towards the door.*]

HANNAH

No, no—not now—not to-night.

DR. VAUGHAN

But I must—now, while I hold the vision beautiful !
To-morrow it may have faded.

HANNAH

The sooner it fades the better ! Oh, God help us !

DR. VAUGHAN

Hannah ! What has come over you ?

HANNAH

Elsie—Elsie is engaged to John Archmundham !

DR. VAUGHAN [*Overwhelmed*]

Elsie—my little Elsie ! Why, she's a baby !

HANNAH

A woman with a will of iron, but a heart you can crush
like a bird's. And don't you see that if Sir John
knows that Elsie's father—oh, Rodney !

[*Covers her eyes.*]

Even John himself was against Amy's marriage.

DR. VAUGHAN

Wait! Let me grasp this transformation! Do you mean that Sir John has consented——?

HANNAH

Yes.

DR. VAUGHAN

But he wanted John to marry Lady Muriel!

HANNAH

He's delighted John shall marry our Elsie.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Slowly*]

Then—I am not to confess? Not to fight?

HANNAH

It would break Elsie's heart—as Amy's was nigh broken. . . . Oh, I don't wonder you look at me like that. To think that I dared to preach to you, to madden you with my perfection—I, a Pharisee, yes, you were right—a Pharisee who had never been tempted—who at the first temptation threw over everything.

[*Breaks down.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*Soothingly*]

But for Elsie's sake not your own.

HANNAH

Don't try to comfort me. It was sheer maternal

weakness. It's not even as if I was thinking purely of Elsie's broken heart. Satan kept whispering, too, of the carriages she would drive in, the title she would one day bear. And how she would hate me if I kept her from everything. And all the mud and filth if you confessed and fought. And all the horrible burden and anxiety of the fight, which might end in our all starving, and which at heart I didn't even believe we had a right to win.

[DR. VAUGHAN *makes a gesture of protest.*]

Oh, I know I talked fine about your new gospel, but I was so harrowed by the state you got into I daresay I'd have subscribed to any absurdity. And wasn't there a voice underneath all along, crying, what does anything matter but to make him happy again, but to have his arms around you again some day ?

[*Covers her face in shame*]

You said you were still making your own acquaintance. I've only begun to make mine. Oh, how ugly everything is !

[*Breaks down.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

And how beautiful ! Don't you see, dear, that all this brings us a little nearer again ? That it bridges, if only by a span, the gulf between us ?

HANNAH

Is there *any* gulf between us ? I shall have to stand by and connive at your career, as I had to stand by and hear Felicia's young husband slandered as her seducer.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Eagerly*]
They know she's married ?

HANNAH
Mrs. Morrow came back with the new fact. She hoped it would soften Sir John.

DR. VAUGHAN
And did it ?

HANNAH
Hubert and Amy are practically engaged.

DR. VAUGHAN
Thank God ! That's one burden off my conscience. I know, dear, I've been a great disillusion to you, but in time—when you see how I use my pulpit to teach what my sin has taught me, you will not find it so degrading to . . . connive at my career.

HANNAH
Oh, I didn't mean to wound you—but I *was* so looking forward to your call to London. And now—I can never be proud of you again.

DR. VAUGHAN
But you can learn to despise me less.

HANNAH

I haven't the right to despise you—weren't you ready to do the great thing? It's myself I despise for stopping you.

DR. VAUGHAN

No, no. You sacrificed your ideal to Elsie, I sacrificed mine to myself.

HANNAH [*Wailing*]

Don't try to comfort me.

[*Enter SIR JOHN. Half retreats apologetically.*]

SIR JOHN [*Murmuring*]

Oh, I'm sorry.

HANNAH [*Deaf to his entry*]

Don't try to comfort me.

SIR JOHN [*Coming forward*]

But mother! Elsie'll only be two miles off!

DR. VAUGHAN

Ah, Sir John!

[*Shakes his hand*]

We're both really very glad about Elsie and your boy. And still gladder about Amy and Hubert.

SIR JOHN

Oh, you sentimentalists! Well, after all, of course, it isn't as if Hubert's *father* had disgraced himself,

eh, Mrs. Vaughan! A sister *is* rather a side issue.
What?

[*Vigorous rat-tatting and ringing at the street door*]

Ah, there they are!

DR. VAUGHAN

There who are?

SIR JOHN [*Smiling*]

Prepare to receive cavalry.

HANNAH

A deputation?

DR. VAUGHAN

At this hour? I won't see them.

SIR JOHN

Oh, but my dear Doctor——

DR. VAUGHAN

I'm tired out. I haven't even seen Elsie since she got engaged, and I——

[*Enter PURVIS. As the door opens a motley buzz of conversation and laughter is heard from the passage.*]

PURVIS

The Elders!

DR. VAUGHAN

Ask them to come in the morning, Purvis, I'm too tired.

[PURVIS *hesitates.*]

HANNAH

Ask them into the drawing-room—I'll see them.

[PURVIS *closes the door behind him: the babble dwindles.*]

SIR JOHN

But, Mrs. Vaughan, it's a testimonial. To the President of the Conference!

DR. VAUGHAN

I don't care.

SIR JOHN

Don't be absurd.

DR. VAUGHAN

I don't feel like taking testimonials.

SIR JOHN

Because you're tired?

DR. VAUGHAN

Because I'm unworthy.

SIR JOHN

Tut! Tut! That's what they all say. But they take 'em! Ha! Ha! Ha!

[Claps DR. VAUGHAN on the shoulder]

Come along.

[PURVIS re-appears at the door, bearing a large and handsome silver salver.]

PURVIS

Does th' tray go upstairs, too?

SIR JOHN

Yes—but bring it over here. Let the Doctor see it!

DR. VAUGHAN [*Waving it back*]

I don't want to see it.

SIR JOHN

Show it to Mrs. Vaughan.

DR. VAUGHAN

Ah, trying to tempt Eve.

HANNAH [*Waving it back*]

But if my husband feels unworthy——

SIR JOHN [*Getting exasperated*]

Stuff and nonsense! Just hear the inscription. Read it, Purvis.

PURVIS

Ay, that will I.

[*Reads with unction*]

“To the Rev. Dr. Rodney Vaughan, who combines the saintliness of the minister with the ability of the statesman, this unworthy memento——”

DR. VAUGHAN

Ugh! Take it away!

PURVIS

Ay, ay, blessed are the meek.

DR. VAUGHAN

And say I don't feel able to see them or to take it.

HANNAH

But that the Doctor will acknowledge their kindness from the pulpit.

PURVIS

I understand, mum.

[Exit, carrying salver, his lips still unctuously murmuring]

“Who combines the saintliness of the minister with the ability——”

[Exit.]

SIR JOHN [*To* DR. VAUGHAN]

You really mean to insult them—and lose London?

HANNAH

Lose London? Has Dr. Edgeworth resigned?

SIR JOHN

I oughtn't to have said anything. But this presentation is merely a prelude to our highest post—a thousand a year, remember. And work after your own heart for the glory of God! Come!

[*But DR. VAUGHAN is looking at the bureau with a strange intentness.*]

DR. VAUGHAN

You've put back the photographs!

HANNAH

Yes, dear.

[*Their eyes meet.*]

SIR JOHN

Don't go wool-gathering, man. Pull yourself together. The Lord calls you.

DR. VAUGHAN

The Lord! You and Judson and a pair of London tradesmen. No, no.

[*Mystically*]

I hear the call of the Lord—to sacrifice to Him. I shall give up even this post.

SIR JOHN

What!

DR. VAUGHAN

I shall retire from the ministry.

HANNAH
Thank God !

SIR JOHN [*Turning on her*]
Eh ? Is this *your* idea ?

HANNAH
No, God be praised—it's his own. I never thought of it—I never dreamed he'd give up his work.

SIR JOHN
But how will you live ?

DR. VAUGHAN
Oh, don't be afraid ! I sha'n't sponge on Elsie's father-in-law.

SIR JOHN [*With dignity*]
I never hoped you would, Rodney.

DR. VAUGHAN
I beg your pardon, Sir John.

SIR JOHN
I beg yours. I only meant what will you do ?

DR. VAUGHAN
I only know what I won't do—make a profession of holiness.

SIR JOHN
Why, what's come over you, man ?

DR. VAUGHAN

What ought to come over every man—a change of heart.

SIR JOHN

A change of air—that's what you want. The Conference has been too much for you. I quite understand, Mrs. Vaughan, your relief at the idea of his pulling up. But—

[*Noisy voices of the descending deputation without*]
There! I told you they'd be angry. You won't send them away like this—you'll sleep over it.

DR. VAUGHAN [*With a wan smile*]
Not very likely.

SIR JOHN [*Gently*]

Ah, I know, dear Rodney, it's your insomnia that's behind all this.

DR. VAUGHAN

Then won't you leave me in peace, dear friend?

SIR JOHN

I'm sorry.

[*Going. Turns*]

But what are we to do with the testimonial?

HANNAH [*Smiling wanly*]

Judson won't ask that.

DR. VAUGHAN [*Laughingly*]
No, indeed! Melt it down for our Crusades.

SIR JOHN
For *our* Crusades? Then you *will* work with us?

DR. VAUGHAN
Yes,
[*Clasps SIR JOHN's hand*]
with the ability of the statesman, if God has given it
me.
[*Drops his hand*]
But not with the saintliness of the priest.

SIR JOHN
I don't quite follow.

DR. VAUGHAN
I am no monster of sanctity. I will work as a man
among men.

SIR JOHN
Fiddlesticks! And where are we to find a saintlier
successor?

DR. VAUGHAN
What do you want with successors? Aren't we all
children of God? Didn't *you* preach to me this
afternoon—and jolly sound doctrine! And aren't we
all sinners? Why dress one up in black and stick him
on a pedestal of perfection?

SIR JOHN
You'd abolish the clergy ?

DR. VAUGHAN
As a profession.

SIR JOHN
And who would marry John and Elsie ?

DR. VAUGHAN
They would marry themselves.

SIR JOHN
You've turned Quaker ! This is sheer Quakery !

DR. VAUGHAN
And everything else is sheer quackery.

SIR JOHN
You are overwrought. I'll come in the morning.
Get a good night's rest.

[He goes out into the passage crying cheerily :]

Ah, Judson ! The fact is, gentlemen, the strain of
the——

[The door closes.]

HANNAH [*Opening her arms*]
Husband !

*[He goes to her embrace. After an instant she
raises her wet face]*

But you needn't have talked so much rubbish ! You
know the clergy are a necessity.

DR. VAUGHAN

But not a collection of plaster saints.

[ELSIE appears radiant at the door—a bouquet in her hand. He utters a glad cry]

Elsie !

[She runs to his embrace.]

ELSIE [*Laughingly*]

Don't crush the flowers.

[*Holds them out of danger.*]

DR. VAUGHAN [*Quizzingly*]

From John already ?

ELSIE [*Happily*]

Yes, but for mother.

HANNAH

For me ? How kind of him !

[ELSIE crosses to give the bouquet to HANNAH who takes it and folds her in a passionate embrace.]

ELSIE

Oh mother, isn't life wonderful !

CURTAIN.

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