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No. 37.

One Summer's Day

BY

H. V. ESMOND

AUTHOR OF "WHEN WE WERE TWENTY-ONE."

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ONE SUMMER'S DAY

BY
H. V. ESMOND

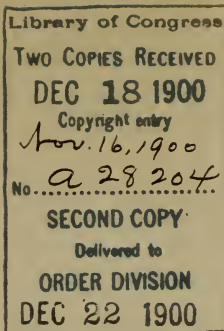
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ONE SUMMER'S DAY.

Produced at the Comedy Theatre, London, 16th September, 1897.

CHARACTERS.

MAJOR DICK RUDYARD.....	Charles Hawtrey
PHIL MARSDEN	Cosmo Stuart
THEODORE BENDYSHE	Henry Kemble
ROBERT HODDESSEN	Ernest Hendrie
TOM, <i>his Nephew</i>	Kenneth Douglas
SETH, <i>a Gipsy</i>	Lyston Lyle
THE URCHIN.	J. Bottomley
IRENE, <i>Hoddesden's Niece</i>	Lettice Fairfax
MAYSIE, <i>his Ward</i>	Eva Moore
MRS. THEODORE BENDYSHE.....	Mrs. Charles Calvert
BESS, <i>a Gipsy</i>	Lydia Rachel
CHIARA,* <i>a Gipsy</i>	Constance Collier

* Clara, Italian Chiara (Ke-ā'rā).

ONE SUMMER'S DAY.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*A corner of an island on the Thames on a bright summer's day. At back, the river, and all round trees and bushes. Overhanging the water are willow trees, and in the foreground are two roughly made haystacks, the one R. about three feet high and four feet in diameter at base; the one L. four feet high. The whole scene fresh and green and cheerful, the birds singing in the trees.*

BESS, *an old gipsy, is sitting against the smaller haystack, crooning softly to herself and plaiting a basket from a bundle of osiers. After a pause SETH lounges on from R., chewing a straw. He is a handsome gipsy, his face somewhat sullen, age about thirty-five.*

BESS. (L.; *hardly looking at him*) Well, I've been waiting here for near an hour.

SETH. (*suddenly*) She ain't back yet.

BESS. What's she up to?

SETH. (*chewing the straw*) That's our business.

BESS. I'm no talker.

SETH. (*coming down*) She's gone to Windsor—for a purpose.

BESS. What's the game?

SETH. (R. C.) Quids—and lots of 'em, likely.

BESS. Wot's it worth?

SETH. Maybe a 'undred—maybe more.

BESS. (*chuckling*) Maybe less.

SETH. Maybe. We'll chance it. She knows wot she's about.

BESS. Well, out with it—wot's the game?

SETH. (*crosses L.*) Ye can't spoil it if I tells ye—so I'll tell ye. (*BESS laughs harshly, and after a pause SETH lounges across and leans against the other haystack, bending over the old woman and talking softly*) You remember when her husband chucked her and went with his regiment to India?

BESS. I wonder he kept her so long. Lord! she was a holy terror in those days.

SETH. (*drily*) Ah—that ain't of no account. He took the kid wiv him,

BESS. And glad she was to get rid of it.

SETH. Ah—then the letter coming from that Captain Rudyard, saying her husband was dead of fever.

BESS. Aye—and the kid too, and sending her fifty quid.

SETH. (*bending down, says quickly*) It wasn't true.

BESS. (*startled*) What! her man not dead?

SETH. Oh, yes—he went right enough—but the kid's alive.

BESS. Mercy!

SETH. Chiara has found out that Captain Rudyard has got a kid—seven years old—that he keeps at the Windsor school—a kid he's awful fond of—and as he ain't married, Chiara thinks—

BESS. Thinks it's hers?

SETH. Yes.

BESS. Well, but she don't want the brat?

SETH. (*scornfully*) Not much; but if the Captain wants to keep it for hisself, we thinks it will suit him to pay a little something for the loan.

BESS. But where is this Rudyard?

SETH. 'Ere—stayin' off the High Street. He's in with the people from the Laurels—sweet on one of the gals there—we've been trying to find him for near a year now, and we've run up against him at last. She's kept out of his way till we're sure of our game—an' if it's all right—my gentleman will have to pay for keeping a loving mother from her child. (*goes back C.*)

BESS. Serve him right, the unnatural villain, turning an honest woman's child into a gentleman—make 'im pay.

SETH. (*C.*) Ah!

BESS. An' what's she gone to Windsor for?

SETH. To cast her eye over the blessed kid. (*crosses R. C.*)

BESS. How'd she know it?

SETH. (L. C.) Remember that time she swiped it over the eye? That mark'll be good enough for her.

BESS. Oh, ah!

SETH. Is that the half-hour striking?

BESS. Yes.

SETH. She ought to be—— (*a distant whistle heard*)
That's her. (*makes a quick move, is about to go when*
BESS *stops him*)

BESS. (*stopping him*) Bad luck comes fast enough—
better wait—better wait.

SETH. (*slightly up L. C.*) It's good luck that's coming
coming our way now—why, she's made over six quid out
of the young fool from the Laurels, and the old painter
there, Bendyshe, has offered 'er ten quid to sit for 'er
picture.

BESS. She's a one-er—and no mistake. (CHIARA,
the gipsy, is seen coming quickly through the bushes
from R. She is a beautiful woman of about thirty, dark-
haired, heavy-eyed, a face of strongly-marked passions.
She is picturesquely dressed in the mixed costume of the
tribe, and walks with a graceful swing, her hands on
her hips, all her white teeth shining as she smiles.
SETH *goes eagerly to meet her*)

SETH. Well?

CHIARA. (*smiling at him*) Well, my handsome Seth?

SETH. Out with it. (CHIARA *looks over her shoulder*
at BESS. Impatiently) All right—she knows. Is it the
kid?

CHIARA. (*carelessly*) Yes, I knew my mark. Who
says good don't come from evil? If I hadn't lost my
temper that night, we should ha' lost a fortune to-day.

SETH. What'll it be worth, do ye think?

CHIARA. Who knows?

SETH. We'll make my gentleman pay—and pay hand-
some.

CHIARA. I've been there—didn't see him. He's com-
ing over here this afternoon—a picnic with the folk from
the Laurels. I'll tackle him then.

SETH. You can't have it out before all the lot.

CHIARA. No, but I can meet him—look at him—re-
mind him I'm alive—and then—we'll talk seriously to-
gether a little later on. Lord! how like his father that kid
is. (*flings herself down on the ground R.*) And how

the sight of him brought back old times—those Oxford days—those stuffy rooms—me married—respectable. I wore a veil once.—Ah, ha! fancy me in a veil—what a fool I felt. Then, a mother—me—more respectable. Phew! Sick of it all! You turn up again, and then our bolt together. Ah, ha! what a time, the free fresh air—the—ah, well! What a fool I was to make Jack marry me.

BESS. Well, it didn't last long, dearie.

CHIARA. Who cares? (*suddenly*) Has the fool boy been here?

SETH. Ain't seen him. (*back L. C.*)

CHIARA. I promised to meet him here at twelve.

SETH. (*coming definitely to business*) Now, what about this Captain Rudyard? (*standing over L. C. of CHIARA*)

CHIARA. (*lazily*) What about him? Leave him to me—he's my affair. We'll get the money we want, and then we'll go north, my Seth! (*BESS gets up, moving off*)

CHIARA. (*watching her as she goes*) Moving on?

BESS. Yes, moving on.

SETH. (*fiercely*) Tell us what you mean to do with Rudyard and this kid?

CHIARA. (*lazily*) Shan't, so don't worry. Don't know as I shall do anything—depends how I feel.

SETH. (*going to her angrily*) Look ye here!

CHIARA. (*smiling at his rage*) Don't bully me, it doesn't pay. (*crawls to L. haystack*)

BESS. (*L. of her*) Tell him what you mean to do, dearie—black eyes ain't beautiful, and you're a-goin' to sit for your portrait, as I hear. (*exit L. still crooning an old dirge to herself*)

SETH. (*standing over CHIARA and talking angrily*) I'll tell you what you've got to do: you goes to Captain Rudyard, and says—" 'Ere, you've stole my child and you've got to take the consequences."

CHIARA. (*still smiling lazily at him*) Which is—

SETH. Which is—you pays me fifty quid a year for the loan of 'im, or I hands you over to the law.

CHIARA. (*to herself, smiling*) He is a wise man, is my handsome Seth. (*he makes an angry gesture, she stops him with a quick movement*)

CHIARA. Hush! Here comes the city man! (*after*)

a slight pause, the URCHIN strolls on R.—he is a chubby, brown-faced, curly-haired little street Arab—his legs are bare, his trousers rolled up to the knee, tattered and many sizes too large for him, the waist being almost under his armpits. Over his shoulder he carries a fishing rod fashioned out of a switch of willow; in the other hand is a large bottle swinging by a piece of string, the receptacle for the fish he hopes to catch. He nods to SETH and turning to CHIARA looks at her with a disapproving eye. Smiling at him) Well, city man!

URCHIN. (R. C. sternly) Don't you haddress me; I'm disgustercated wiv yer.

CHIARA. (*pathetically*) Ah! How can we of the wilds hope to please you of the great town?

URCHIN. (*somewhat mollified*) I admits the 'andicap—but, Guv'nor, you mayn't be aweer on it—but yore missis's carrying-on's is enough to—to demoralize this yer wum! (*holds up worm admiringly, preparatory to baiting his hook*)

SETH. (*laughing at CHIARA, then to URCHIN*) I've been at work—my eyes have been shut. What have you seen, city man?

URCHIN. (*to SETH with dignity*) 'Tain't for me to come atween man and wife, but yesterday there was a young torf, bless yer, a kid—orl collar and himpidence. 'E flirted round yer missis, he guv her a quid, an' she guv him a kiss.

SETH. (*laughing*) Well, city man, wot's wrong wi' that? She guv me the quid, and she guv the young torf his kiss back agin.

URCHIN. (*fishing desperately*) So long as you don't mind. 'Ow about the chap I calls 'Oppin' tub—Mr. Bendyshe, a-staying at the Laurels? I sees 'im give 'er a fiver to buy a shawl.

CHIARA. He says he's a great artist—he calls me Cleopatra.

URCHIN. (*scornfully*) Cleopatra—pickles! (*goes to bank and fishes R. C.*)

CHIARA. (*lying back, smiling lazily, her eyes half closed*) He is a great artist—he is going to paint my face and make me immortal forever. I am to meet him this afternoon and he will commence. See, city man, how we live on the wisdom of fools.

SETH. You meets 'im agin to-day? (*rises; down C.*)

CHIARA. (*laughing*) The fool boy at twelve, where we are. The fool man at four, by the osiers.

SETH. It's on the stroke of twelve now—so long. Go slow with the schoolboy, Chiara. So long! I ain't far off if yer want me. (*exit L. at back*)

CHIARA. The girls from the house-boat will come here to picnic soon. Which do you fancy, city man, the fair one or the dark?

URCHIN. Ain't a marryin' man—time enuff for gals when fishin's orf. (*scornfully—baits his hook laboriously*) There ain't one as can 'andle a wum as a wum should be 'andled—(*he strikes*) Gorn again—sickening!

CHIARA. (*laughs, then listens*) The fool boy is coming—take a lesson in folly, city man. (*glides laughingly away into the willows L.*)

URCHIN. (*relieved at her departure*) Good biz—a fellar carn't fish and tork to gals and loafers. Got 'im! (*with a yell of triumph he lands a minnow; after inspecting it with delight he puts it into bottle, then hearing some one coming he looks off*) Lor! 'ere comes the young torf, sure enuff. I ain't going to waste my time on the likes of 'im. (*gets higher up the branch which about conceals him, and resumes his fishing*)

Enter TOM REID, R. He is a handsome boy about seventeen. He carries a small parcel, and is rather flushed and agitated, looks about anxiously as if expecting some one. Takes out a Waterbury watch.

TOM. She's late. Just like all women. 'I needn't have swotted that last half-mile after all. (*flings himself down under haystack L. and mops his forehead—fanning himself*) Bother the flies! (*as he lies, CHIARA enters stealthily L. and, after looking round, catches sight of him, she creeps behind the haystack, and taking a piece of straw, tickles him with it on the nose. He is unaware of her presence and continues cursing the flies, till at last he sees the end of the straw and catching it meets her laughing face round the haystack and springs up in confusion*)

CHIARA. Ain't I a pretty fly, pretty boy?

TOM. (*abashed*) I didn't mean to—oh—I say—I'm not late, am I?

CHIARA. I like to wait for those I—— (*stops, lowering her eyes timidly*)

TOM. (*taking her hands—eagerly*) Say it.

CHIARA. Say what?

TOM. What you were going to say.

CHIARA. (*releasing her hands*) Nothing.

TOM. (*grins hugely with delight, then turning to her sheepishly*) Will you have this? (*hands her the packet awkwardly*)

CHIARA. (*laughs, opening it, guessing with her eyes shut, showing her whole teeth in a smile*) It's a jewel—no—it's a chain—no, it's a—

TOM. It's a chain—thought you'd like a chain—girls usually do.

CHIARA. (*with a cry of genuine delight, putting it on*) My pretty boy! (*then with a deep sigh*) Oh, why did you come down here? (*sits on haystack L.*)

TOM. I say, you're not sorry, are you?

CHIARA. No.

TOM. We're jolly good friends considering I've only known you three days, but I suppose that's always the way—when it's—well—I mean—serious, you know. (*goes to back of haystack and leans over her*)

CHIARA. (*earnestly*) Are you serious?

TOM. Oh, I say, you know, I'm dead serious.

CHIARA. (*sadly*) You'll go back to the great school soon, and I shall be left alone.

TOM. (*with sudden vehemence*) Suppose I don't go back—suppose I cut it—and tell the governor of—of—our love—and you and I go somewhere—where it's all like this. Haystacks and sunshine—and loneliness—and oh, I say—you know, you are a stunner.

CHIARA. (*shaking her head with mock pathos*) I couldn't live in a town, I should stifle. (*sighs and leaves him ; crosses R.*)

TOM. (*following her*) What is it—you sighed?

CHIARA. Don't ask me.

TOM. I say, you know, I must ask you. We can't have secrets from each other.

CHIARA. (*with apparent reluctance*) I'm in trouble.

TOM. No, no.

CHIARA. At least not I, but my father.

TOM. (*deeply distressed and annoyed*) I say again!

CHIARA. (*sadly*) Yes—dear father. (*then defiantly*) We must live.

TOM. Yes, but poaching, you know.

CHIARA. (*with mock dignity*) Poaching—that's what you call it, you who drive us from place to place—we must live—we will live. We are wanderers, every man's hand is against us. So our hands are against every man's rabbits.

TOM. Oh, I say!

CHIARA. They are so many—and so fat—so slow of foot—so convenient—that poor father—(*then changing her tone to one of injured virtue*) But don't fear, I shall not ask your help. I will sell your gift, and pay the fine, then we shall go away. (*goes down L.*)

TOM. (*anxiously*) I say, you know, don't go on like that, and don't sell that chain—it belongs to my sister.

CHIARA. You gave it to me.

TOM. Yes—she don't wear it much—but don't sell it, you know, because when we're married she might miss it.

CHIARA. Did she give it to you for me?

TOM. Well, no! I've not mentioned it yet; she was rather huffy this morning. (*moves a little R.*)

CHIARA. (*suddenly lifting her hand and listening*) Voices—follow! (*she darts away L. into the bushes.*)
TOM follows, forgetting his hat by the haystack

URCHIN. (*showing his head out of tree*) She's a corker—got off a father on him now. Wot'll she perduce next? I'm off women after this—they knows too much—give me wums! (*PHIL MARSDEN heard off R. Disgusted*) Lord love a duck—more torfs!

PHIL. (*off*) Hurry up, slow coach!

DICK. (*off*) I've got a pipe to carry.

Enter PHIL, a good-looking, soldierly young man about twenty-five, quickly through trees.

PHIL. (*after looking about him, goes to river at back C.*) Hang it all, they haven't come. (*MAJOR RUDYARD strolls on after him. He is a self-contained man, gentle, slow of speech, very good-humored and rather lazy*)

DICK. Of course they haven't—needn't have hurried me—much too energetic—cultivate repose—as I do. (*lies down calmly under haystack L. and puffs placidly at his pipe*)

PHIL. (*looking across river*) They said half-past twelve, didn't they?

DICK. (*calmly*) Oh, yes, they said half-past twelve.

PHIL. You're sure we were to meet them here?

DICK. Sure! At least, I don't know—perhaps they said—— (*pauses pensively, contemplating his pipe*)

PHIL. (*impatiently*) Said what?

DICK. (*much perplexed*) Did they say we were to call for them there, or meet them here—I wonder?

PHIL. Great Scotland!—you told me——

DICK. One or the other—it was one or the other; we can't be far wrong, you see.

PHIL. (*desperate*) Suppose they're waiting for us there?

DICK. Well, they can't grumble; we're waiting for them here.

PHIL. What a nice situation!

DICK. Very, but it won't last—they're sure to rout us out—they're girls, you know. (*knocks the ash out of his pipe slowly*) Now if I hadn't sent my kiddie to school this couldn't have happened. You see he looks after me like a mother, wouldn't dream of letting me forget a little thing like a picnic—at daybreak he'd dash out of his little bed into mine and pound me on the chest and bawl into my nearest ear, "Wake up, Dickie, we're going picnic;" but now you see because I was a brute, and sent the little beggar to school, we've muddled matters.

PHIL. (*scornfully*) We?

DICK. Well, I've muddled matters. (*tucks himself comfortably into haystack, then speaks dreamily*) Damn shame sending little kiddies to school—stuffy school—gorgeous green fields—great sweeping blue sky—fresh air into tiny lungs—much better than squeaky slates and horrid niggling sums that won't add up.

PHIL. Oh, shut up, Dick!

DICK. Ah, forgot—swore I wouldn't mention kiddie, all day, didn't I? Sorry—accident—you're awful rough on me—but then you're not a father.

PHIL. Neither are you.

DICK. That's true—but you needn't shove it down my throat.

PHIL. (*suddenly, looking off L., breaks into a laugh*) Dick, look here!—by Jove, it's an awful lark.

DICK. (*lazily*) Couldn't move for an earthquake. (*quickly jumping up*) Dash it—must for earwigs! (*brushes an earwig off his arm, then lies down again*)

PHIL. It's young Tom and that gipsy girl; I told you

about it last night—by Gad, the little beggar's very hard hit. It's as good as a play.

DICK. It's a play that can become very serious. It must be stopped.

PHIL. Pooh! Boys will be boys.

DICK. Boys like Tom are old enough and young enough to put millstones round their necks—as boys they like the weight—as men they find it heavy—sometimes it crushes 'em.

PHIL. What's up now?

DICK. I was thinking of poor old Jack.

PHIL. (*gravely*) By Gad, I forgot; his affair was with a gipsy, wasn't it?

DICK. His affair—we don't worry over other people's millstones.

PHIL. Pooh! Jack was a sentimental idiot; he married the girl.

DICK. (*quietly*) Jack was a gentleman; Jack was a chum of mine; Jack was the father of my kiddie; don't forget that!

PHIL. I'm sorry, old chap. (*pause*) I say though, you ought to come and look at this girl—she's magnificent. Tom's got devilish good taste.

DICK. Devilish is right.

PHIL. Come and look at her.

DICK. Not I—I hate the tribe—never feel safe when I think of 'em.

PHIL. (*crosses R.*) You're too old and too ugly for kidnapping, Dicky.

DICK. Shut up, you fool!

PHIL. My dear Dick, you're thinking of that kid again—you're as nervous as a hen with one chicken.

DICK. If the hen knew that the chicken didn't belong to her, I've the deepest sympathy with her nervousness.

PHIL. One would think that all the world had formed into a league to rob you of your most ordinary little boy.

DICK. He is not an ordinary little boy; he is a—a—(*his voice changes to one of great tenderness and he lies on his back chuckling contentedly*) He's all right; and when I get back to town I'm going to buy him the largest cannon to be got for money—you know I think that's a fine trait in that boy's character—he'd a dem sight sooner play with a cannon and talk with the chaps after mess than sit in a poky nursery learning the alphabet!

PHIL. Marvellous !

DICK. (*grunts with pleasure, smokes peacefully—after long pause*) Phil, you blundering ass, if you ever let out to a soul that I'm not kiddie's real father, I'll use my influence with the War Office, and get you reduced to the ranks.

PHIL. I'm as safe as a house ; but I wonder what has become of his mother.

DICK. (*desperately*) Great Scotland !—the sun's blazing upon us—the gentle breezes are kissing us—the earwigs and centipedes are crawling in and out and all over us—two jolly girls are kicking their heels waiting for us, Heaven knows where—and you rake up that eternal nightmare of mine—and for the love of goodness give me a match, for my pipe's out.

PHIL. (*chucking him a matchbox*) Go easy, there are only three.

DICK. (*strikes one, the head comes off*) Wrong 'un ! (*strikes another, again the head comes off*) Two wrong 'uns ; my dear Phil, why don't you support home industries, who cares for Sweden on the banks of the Thames ! (*strikes the last and lights his pipe, handing back the empty box*)

PHIL. Thanks, old man ; hope there were enough !

DICK. (*puffing peacefully*) Just !

PHIL. (*rises ; looking at him*) Lazy beggar ; don't you think we had better go and see if the girls— (*up c. a little*)

DICK. My dear chap, why girls ? You know perfectly well that there's only one girl you think about—a girl with dark hair and gentle eyes—a girl with a sweet voice and—and a little turned-up nose.

PHIL. Shut up, Dick !

DICK. (*after a pause*) If I ask you a straight question, will you give me a straight answer ?

PHIL. Yes. (*pause*) Well ?

DICK. Don't quite like to ask you now.

PHIL. Go on, out with it !

DICK. Shall—I—yes—I—I think I will.

PHIL. Well ? (*a long pause, the two men looking awkwardly at one another*)

DICK. Do you love her very dearly ?

PHIL. Very dearly, Dick.

DICK. (*after a pause*) Good luck to you, boy.

PHIL. (*coming down slowly*) Dick!

DICK. Old man!

PHIL. (*huskily*) Will you answer me a straight question straightly?

DICK. Can't say; what is it?

PHIL. (*simply, but with an almost trembling voice*) Do you—love her, Dick?

DICK. (*after a pause—smokes vigorously, then says slowly*) My dear boy—I'm thirty-eight—I've got four hundred a year, I've got a little kiddie to launch into the dreary old sea of trouble—I promised Jack he should have all the modern armor plates and improvements to keep him afloat—metaphor's a bit mixed—but translated it means—my hands are too full to tackle such a serious subject as matrimony.

PHIL. You've not answered me, Dick.

DICK. Not answered you? (*pause, then with mock gravity*) Circumstances have made me the father of a family of one; it's obviously too late to think of a wife now. (*gets up, holds out his hand cheerily*) Good luck to you, boy, you're a damned good chap and—and—she's—she's, well *you* know what she is, and don't forget to ask kiddie and me to the wedding. (*crosses R. C.*)

PHIL. (*C., laughing*) Perhaps she won't have me.

DICK. (*R. C.*) Won't have you—she must have you. Don't stand any nonsense like that.

PHIL. Women are curious critters.

DICK. (*dreamily*) Women are women still, some of 'em, and let's be grateful for those that are left, say I—

PHIL. (*quietly*) I mean to ask her to-day.

DICK. (*suddenly*) What! you've not asked her yet—God bless my soul—and you've left her eating her heart out on a picnic basket all this time. By Gad! if I'd been in your shoes I'd have eloped with her years ago, picnic basket and all.

PHIL. I've only known her five months.

DICK. (*half to himself, dreamily*) I've known her since she was a baby in arms—and—and—I've—I've been damned fond of her all the time.

PHIL. Let's go and see if they're at the other place.

DICK. You go, I'll finish my pipe. (*returns to haystack*)

PHIL. (*looking down the river*) By Jove, here they

come—then we were right—oh, I say, hang it all, they've brought old Bendyshe with them.

DICK. What an all-absorbing power is jealousy!—it doesn't stop short of an Adonis of fifty with a sixty-inch waist.

PHIL. (*shouting cheerfully at the approaching punt*) Oh, I say, this isn't 12.30.

MAYSIE. (*calls back*) We had to go back; Mr. Bendyshe forgot his umbrella. (PHIL *groans at DICK, who is still propped up against the haystack smoking placidly. The punt appears in sight. MAYSIE is punting, she is dressed in white. In the punt IRENE, a cheerful, jolly girl, and BENDYSHE, a rubicund, cherubic little man of about fifty, very jaunty in his manner; he walks very springily, and is evidently proud of the smallness of his hands, and unconscious of the largeness of his waist*)

MAYSIE. (*from the punt*) We're very sorry; do say, better late than never.

PHIL. Rather!

MAYSIE. Why, where's Major Rudyard? (IRENE *gets ashore*)

PHIL. He's having a snooze in the haystack.

DICK. (*not moving*) Be thou as chaste as ice, as wideawake as winkles, thou shalt not escape calumny. (MAYSIE *gets ashore and stands at back, L. PHIL is mooring the punt*)

IRENE. (*directing*) Yes, that's the branch; hang on there, Mr. Bendyshe. (*stoops over the punt for newspapers*)

BEN. (*jauntily*) I'm hanging on to a branch—dear me, the idea is quite Absalomitic.

PHIL. The fulfilment isn't. He did have *some* hair. (BENDYSHE, *who has been gracefully fanning himself with his hat, hastily puts it on to conceal his baldness*)

DICK. Don't mind him, Bendyshe, baldness is beautiful to the artistic soul. Doesn't it gratify you to know that your head is a delicate harmony in pink and gray?

BEN. (*is about to say something withering when a wasp circling round his hat, he strikes at it with terror*) A wasp again—another wasp—why do they always want to sit down on me?

IRENE. Your fatal fascination! There! beauty to the rescue of brains. (*hits out with newspaper and knocks the wasp into the river. Gives paper to DICK*)

and moves C. and works up to punt, L. Meanwhile the punt has been tied up and they all have got on to the island)

MAYSIE. Shall we lunch in the punt or on shore?

PHIL. Oh, the old spot! (*he sits behind L. haystack, smokes cigarette*)

IRENE. Uncle Robert and Mrs. Bendyshe are coming the other way; they ferried over.

MAYSIE. (*has come round haystack and is looking down at DICK*) Good-morning, Major Dick.

DICK. (*looking up at her lazily*) Morning, miss.

MAYSIE. Are you quite comfortable?

DICK. Caterpillary—caterpillary. (*he reads*)

BEN. (*to PHIL at back*) Marsden, I'm dreadful bold coming here.

PHIL. Why?

BEN. My ideal Cleopatra is on this island—my absolute ideal.

PHIL. What, another?

BEN. Hush! I've got an appointment with her at four; don't tell my wife—breaks her heart. A few years ago *she* was my ideal Cleopatra—dear thing, she's past it—don't tell her, but—she really has, you know—she don't think she's changed a bit, women never do, you know, but she has, you know.

DICK. (*to MAYSIE, looking at her through his half-closed eyes*) Then the skirt did get back from the cleaners!

MAYSIE. Obviously.

DICK. (*critically*) Um!—you look—all right.

MAYSIE. Thank you; you look grumpy as usual.

DICK. Am grumpy—hate picnics without kiddie.

MAYSIE. (*holding out her hand*) Sixpence, please.

DICK. Eh?

MAYSIE. Mr. Marsden's fine whenever you mention kiddie.

DICK. (*groans and gives her sixpence*) You're all awful rough on me. Tell me, am I a bore about him?

MAYSIE. A bore?—gracious, no. (*laughing*)

DICK. Then why do you all—

MAYSIE. Fine you? For fun.

DICK. Can't help it, you know. I'm awful fond of him.

MAYSIE. So am I.

DICK. (*delighted*) Are you, though?

MAYSIE. But you should say "awfully fond," not awful fond.

DICK. Should I? I say, he's going to write me a long letter to-day. You'll let me read it to you, won't you?

MAYSIE. Yes.

DICK. I read 'em to everybody, but I like reading 'em to you best.

MAYSIE. (*pleased*) Do you? Why?

DICK. Because everybody else laughs at his spelling.

MAYSIE. Is that the only reason you like to read them to me?

DICK. Er—well——

MAYSIE. *Your* spelling isn't very good, you know, so I expect it's hereditary.

DICK. You're awful rough on me.

MAYSIE. (*correcting*) Awfully!

DICK. You confess it.

PHIL. (*coming down*) What do you confess?

MAYSIE. That I've got a plebeian appetite and it's waking up. Please get the basket, it's in the punt. (*PHIL goes and gets luncheon basket from punt. BENDYSHE and IRENE begin to get out cushions, which they arrange between the two haystacks*)

DICK. (*to MAYSIE, as he lies smoking, his hat tilted over his eyes*) Dear old chap, Phil, isn't he? (*pause*) Don't you think so?

MAYSIE. He's very nice.

DICK. Smartest soldier I know.

MAYSIE. Really?

DICK. Well off, too.

MAYSIE. I dare say.

DICK. Awfully in love with somebody I know.

MAYSIE. How interesting!

DICK. Sort of man—make a good husband.

MAYSIE. Then I hope he'll marry her.

DICK. So do I.

MAYSIE. Ah!

DICK. What do you mean by "ah"?

MAYSIE. What do you mean by being silly?

DICK. You're awful rough on me.

MAYSIE. You're awful dense. (*BENDYSHE wanders about. IRENE gets up. L. URCHIN throws twigs at him*)

DICK. (*repeating slowly*) Awful dense—bad grammar—worse than kiddie's spelling, I'll swear. Ought I to get up and help?

MAYSIE. I shouldn't. You look *awful* comfortable.

DICK. Am—but your grammar disturbs me—something awful. (*smokes placidly. IRENE is up L. at back picking flowers*)

MAYSIE. Mr. Marsden and I will do all the work as usual. (*goes to PHIL; they commence to unpack basket*)

PHIL. It's rather early for lunch, you know. Hullo! somebody's been sitting on the butter.

DICK. (*to himself*) She's awful fond of him. Poor old kiddie'll have to be content with me, after all. (*BENDYSHE has been pottering about; suddenly he gives a little scream. Is coming R., sees URCHIN*) Hullo, Bendyshe, what's up?

BEN. (*coming to DICK*) There's that dreadful boy that laughed at me last week, sitting up in that tree.

DICK. (*calmly*) You don't say so. Is he violent?

BEN. Not yet. But he's—he's an urchin—I cannot feel safe in his presence. Do you know, only last Friday he met me in the High Street and he said quite loudly, "'Ullo, old 'Oppin' tub, what price, Cleopatra?'"

DICK. (*calmly*) Write to the *Times*.

BEN. You're a very curious young man—you don't seem to take any interest in anything.

DICK. (*calmly*) You're quite wrong; your disclosure has deeply agitated me. Now if I were you—

BEN. Well?

DICK. Well—I should never forgive him—in fact I should tell him so. "Hopping tub"—what could he mean?

BEN. Heaven knows. But the policeman who overheard him laughed quite loudly, till I gave him—a glance.

DICK. Ah! (*BENDYSHE crosses R. IRENE, who has been wandering about picking flowers, comes across the hat TOM has left by the haystack, L.*)

IRENE. (*picking up hat*) Good gracious!

ALL. What's up?

IRENE. Tom's hat. How on earth did it get here?

MAYSIE. On Tom's head, I should think.

DICK. Awful brainy girl.

IRENE. Now—where's Tom?

BEN. Where's Tom?

PHIL. Oh, Tom's all right, he's about the island somewhere—seven bottles of ginger beer.

MAYSIE. One's milk.

PHIL. Which?

MAYSIE. How can I tell?

IRENE. (*with TOM'S hat, counting*) One, two, three, seven flies sticking in the lining.

URCHIN. (*putting his head out of tree*) Seven—them's mine.

BEN. That dreadful boy! Come out of that tree, urchin. (*goes R. of tree*)

URCHIN. (*swinging himself down*) Just a-comin', mister.

BEN. (*feebly*) He'll call me that awful name again.

URCHIN. Shan't, mister—you kin rely on me—I knows what I knows, but mum's the word.

PHIL. Get away, small boy.

URCHIN. Right, guv'nor. (*swaggers off R., humming a cockney ballad. As he passes BENDYSHE he says in a melodramatic whisper*) 'Ta, ta, 'Oppin' tub, what price, Cleopatra? (*exit R.*)

BEN. Gracious, that boy does know something. Are you going, Miss Reid?

IRENE. Will you come? I'm going to look for my brother. The head can't be far from the hat, can it? (*goes R.*)

BEN. The dreadful urchin went that way. I trust he won't think I'm pursuing him?

IRENE. Uncle Robert and your wife ferried over to that end of the island, so you're quite safe. The most depraved urchin becomes as meek as a lamb at a sight of Uncle Robert.

BEN. Yes, Robert is invertebrate, but awe-inspiring. I think it must be the side whiskers, don't you? (*they exeunt, talking, R. MAYSIE and PHIL meanwhile have laid the lunch on the grass and are kneeling on opposite sides of the cloth, contemplating it*)

PHIL. Seems to be an awful lot of food.

MAYSIE. We are a large party—seven of us.

PHIL. Old Bendyshe usually eats enough for three.

MAYSIE. He's been at the death of Cleopatra for fifteen years, it takes it out of him. Besides, all great artists want a lot of sustaining, you know. (*goes to punt*)

PHIL. Great artists—um—I didn't know he was a great artist.

DICK. (*from the other side of haystack*) He is—weigh him.

PHIL. Hullo! Thought you'd gone for a walk.

DICK. Eh? (*looks round hurriedly, sees for the first time he is the only one left*) Oh, by Jove, of course—quite forgot I wanted a walk. (*gets matches. MAYSIE is at back hunting for something. PHIL signals to DICK to go. Fiercely*) All right, you're awful rough on me—such a restful haystack. (*lights his pipe—to himself*) Why the deuce can't they walk—hate walking—such monotonous movement. (*has previously got matches from lunch basket*)

MAYSIE (*up; suddenly*) There, I knew we'd do it, and we have.

PHIL. What have we done?

MAYSIE. Forgotten the salt.

DICK. (*sarcastically*) Good gracious!

MAYSIE. Somebody must go and fetch it.

DICK. Now *she's* at it, she loves him fearfully.

MAYSIE. Oh, please somebody be quick—it's past luncheon time now.

DICK. All right, don't bother me—somebody's going as fast as he can. (*stalks off up C.*)

MAYSIE. Where are you going?

DICK. I'm going for a long walk.

MAYSIE. What on earth for?

DICK. Phil thinks it will do me good.

MAYSIE. Then when Mr. Marsden goes for the salt I shall be left alone.

DICK. (*sarcastically*) When Mr. Marsden goes for the salt you will be *quite* alone.

MAYSIE. But I *won't* be left alone.

DICK. Phil, how dare you glare at me? All right. Maysie, I'm off. Don't be cross, you shan't be left alone; but seriously I don't think I can conscientiously devote more than a quarter of an hour to looking for salt by the riverside; I should lose respect for myself.

MAYSIE. Mr. Marsden could fetch it, but, (*gets rather angry*) of course, if you *want* to go—

DICK. I do.

MAYSIE. You'll have to punt across, it's in the left-hand corner of the boathouse.

DICK. Oh, I say, I bar punting. Can't I get it just as effectually if I lie down over there?

MAYSIE. (*coming to him fiercely, clenching her hands and stamping her foot, looking into his face*) Major Dick, I hate you; you've been perfectly horrid for weeks.

DICK. (*greatly astonished*) I am doing my best; you're awful rough on me.

MAYSIE. (*coldly*) Mr. Marsden, will you get the salt, please?

PHIL. (*aghast*) Do you really want salt?

MAYSIE. Of course I do. What do you think I—oh—(*tossing her head*) You're both very rude, I'll get it myself. (*jumps into the punt*)

DICK. (*aghast to PHIL*) She *does* want salt. You're an ass, Phil.

PHIL. How could I tell she wanted salt? (*MAYSIE is trying to untie punt*)

DICK. She *said* so. (*suddenly*) Here! Come out of that punt.

MAYSIE. I shall do no such thing. Oh, who tied this awful knot?

DICK. (*firmly*) Come out of that punt—out of it. I've been as good as a father to you ever since you were a snub-nosed little infant, and I'm not going to be disobeyed now, just because you've developed an absurd but genuine craving for salt. Out of it! (*jumps into punt, helps her out*) Left-hand corner of the boathouse. I'll fetch it, if the exertion exhausts me. (*to PHIL aside earnestly*) Gook luck, old boy, good luck. (*shoves off; MAYSIE walks about picking at the haystack, L.; PHIL watches her and gets very nervous*)

PHIL. There's nobody here now.

MAYSIE. So I perceive.

PHIL. (*feebly*) Yes, but you know I mean—they're all gone.

MAYSIE. I thought you meant that. (*down haystack, L.*)

PHIL. I am going *too* in—in a month or so.

MAYSIE. Yes.

PHIL. I don't suppose I shall be back for some time. (*long pause*)

MAYSIE. Your mother will miss you fearfully.

PHIL. I couldn't possibly take her with me, you know.

MAYSIE. I suppose not. A soldier taking his mother about with him would be odd.

PHIL. Yes ; but of course—if she were one's *wife*—it would be quite different, wouldn't it ?

MAYSIE. Quite different.

PHIL. That's often done, you know.

MAYSIE. Is it ?

PHIL. (*earnestly*) Will you ? I—I love you so. I can't go away from you—I want——(*he makes a move towards her*)

MAYSIE. Hush, please.

PHIL. Oh, Maysie !

MAYSIE. I like you very much, Phil dear—but—but—let go my hand, there's a good boy.

PHIL. (*huskily*) You mean, you won't marry me ?

MAYSIE. Oh, don't—please don't.

PHIL. How—what can I do ?

MAYSIE. Nothing. Oh, Phil dear, I'm so sorry—so very sorry.

PHIL. It's all right, Maysie, it's all right. (*turns from her and goes quickly to bank where he stands for a moment to recover himself*)

MAYSIE. (*sadly*) I feel so wicked, but I can't help it. It's not my fault.

PHIL. It's all right—it's all right. I was a fool as usual, that's all. (*speaks almost fiercely to hide his breaking down*) When we get abroad, Dick will soon knock this out of me.

MAYSIE. (*looking up quickly*) Dick ! You don't mean—he's not going.

PHIL. Yes, he's going too, but he doesn't want it known yet.

MAYSIE. Dick—going away—going away. (*goes up L. to C. back*)

PHIL. (*watching her—to himself*) It's Dick after all—after all. (*gets R.*)

HODD. (*heard talking in the distance*) My dear madam, it's not more swampy than most islands.

Enters energetically R., followed by MRS. BENDYSHE. BENDYSHE and IRENE complete the party. HODD is intensely commonplace, his whiskers cut plainly, his chin clean-shaved, his linen scrupulously clean.

MRS. BENDYSHE *and* BENDYSHE *simultaneously express delight at the sight of lunch.*

MRS. B. Lunch ready—how considerate.

BEN. The river does make one hungry.

HODD. Fall to—fall to. Bendyshe, help your wife to sit down.

MAYSIE. (*coming down C., R. of BENDYSHE*) Hadn't we better wait? Major Rudyard has gone for the salt.

IRENE. (R. C.) Mr. Bendyshe, I solemnly committed the salt to your charge.

BEN. (L. C., *helping his wife to reach the ground*) I did endeavor—are you all down, my dear?—that's right. But I forgot it on the canoe in the right-hand corner of the boathouse.

MAYSIE. (*firmly*) Left hand.

BEN. Right-hand, because I bumped my body on the stern—of the canoe.

MAYSIE. I told Major Dick *left* hand.

MRS. B. (*interrupting feverishly*) Theodore, raise me—I'm sitting on something.

BEN. (*raising her with difficulty*) You're rather fussy, dear.

MRS. B. (*with dignity*) I was sitting on something knobby, Theodore.

BEN. (*picking it up*) Only a ginger beer bottle; really, you're *quite* fussy. (*sits down R. URCHIN strolls on, smiles blandly at BENDYSHE, who frowns feebly and pretends not to see him*)

IRENE. What's the matter with you, Mr. Marsden, you look depressed?

PHIL. Not I. I suppose I'm hungry.

BEN. (*with artificial gaiety, being upset by the proximity of the URCHIN*) Won't somebody open the ginger beer? The bottle nearest my wife will open itself in a minute. It's hizzing a positive tune.

URCHIN. (*to himself*) The fat lady was a-sitting on it.

MAYSIE. Mr. Bendyshe, to make up for the salt, we order you to put them in the river by that willow to keep them cool. (*she loads him with five or six bottles, and he retires to the bank, closely followed by URCHIN*)

HODD. (*attacking the food*) What the dickens has become of Tom? Haven't seen him all day.

MRS. B. (*calmly eating*) The way you worry over that freckled schoolboy is ridiculous.

HODD. Ridiculous!

MRS. B. Yes. You bully the life out of him when he's with you—salt, please. Of course it's forgotten.

HODD. Discipline—discipline.

MRS. B. (*continuing*) And when he's gone away from you, you're perfectly miserable.

HODD. (*eating*) Of course I am; he—he's a young scoundrel.

MRS. B. You love him all the better for it.

HODD. Of course I do. I'm an old fool.

MRS. B. (*preparing a salad, screams*) It's charming of nature to make caterpillars such a beautiful green, but it would help if she made lettuces black. I hate misunderstandings over one's food. (*throws away small caterpillar with the help of spoon*)

HODD. Pie—who says pie?

Enter TOM, L.

TOM. (*cheerfully*) I don't mind a little pie. (*he sits L.*)

HODD. Hullo, sir! Where have you been all the morning?

TOM. All over the place, uncle. Where's Major Dick?

HODD. (*fiercely*) How dare you question the whereabouts of your elders?—he's fetching salt. (*BENDYSHE retires with ginger beer*)

MRS. B. That man's a mystery! More bread, please. I asked him yesterday what his wife died of.

IRENE. Well?

MRS. B. Well, my dear, he looked quite scared, and—and said he didn't know. Don't laugh, it's very odd. Old Lady Carter, who was in India at the time, says she never met her anywhere, and went so far as to insinuate—

MAYSIE. (*interrupting quickly*) Major Dick is a very old friend of mine, Mrs. Bendyshe. Can you eat crust? (*hands her bread on the point of knife, which MRS. BENDYSHE takes with a sniff*)

MRS. B. I prefer it—quite right to stand up for your friends, my dear—quite stale—perhaps he confided in you—more digestible.

MAYSIE. I have no curiosity on the subject.

MRS. B. (*eating*) His little boy is a nice little boy, and very fond of his father, but whenever I look at him, I shake my head—I can't help it. (BENDYSHE *returns for the other three bottles*)

HODD. (*briskly*) Come, come, no scandal! Dick's all right, though he does spoil that brat.

MRS. B. But all the mystery makes one wonder.

HODD. (*interrupting*) Pooh! He'll be back in a minute; ask him what you like to his face.

MRS. B. Not for worlds!—such impertinence. Please pass the lettuce. I'll chance the caterpillars. (BENDYSHE *has meanwhile been endeavoring to deposit the bottles in the river. URCHIN being deeply interested in the operation*)

URCHIN. (*wonderingly*) 'Oppin' tub, wot are you at?

BEN. (*shaking a bottle at him*) Go away, you dreadful little boy.

URCHIN. (*stolidly*) 'Oppin' tub, is that stout party, with geraniums sticking out of 'er 'at and green stuff stickin' out of 'er mouth, your missis? No bunkum!

BEN. (*feebly*) Yes—oh, yes.

URCHIN. Then the question as arises is: Wot price, Cleopatra?

BEN. He is a dreadful boy. (URCHIN *in pantomime levies blackmail in the form of all the ginger beer, which he carries off and mysteriously secretes in the long grass; meanwhile general chatter going on from the party round the food*)

HODD. (*fiercely to TOM*) Don't eat so much, sir—you'll explode. (*in the pause is heard a sweet, low voice singing*)

Watching the restless skies

Chiara dreams.

Watching the pale moon rise

Chiara dreams.

Kissed by the sun's warm rays

Chiara dreams.

Dreams are her nights, her days.

Chiara dreams.

(BENDYSHE *resumes his seat*)

PHIL. By Jove! it's the gipsy. (*gets up, goes to back R., looks off L.*)

IRENE. Oh, what fun!

TOM *and* BEN. A gipsy! (*they at once become absorbed in pie*)

MRS. B. Where? Oh, yes.

HODD. Gipsies—wasps—give me my own mahogany.

BEN. (*looking off nervously*) Dear, oh, dear—it's my Cleopatra!

CHIARA *enters slowly, her basket of osiers on her arm.*

IRENE. (*in a whisper*) Isn't she handsome, Mr. Bendyshe?

BEN. (*swallowing his food in chunks, not daring to look up*) No! Plain—perfectly plain.

MRS. B. Theodore, look at her; she's beautiful!

BEN. (*furtively glances*) No, no. Plain—perfectly plain.

HODD. (*fiercely*) Who's attending to the drinks? I'm parched.

PHIL. (*comes down R. of MAYSIE. Has been to the riverside*) Can't find it. What on earth has become of the ginger beer?

BEN. (*smiling feebly*) Perhaps it has been washed away. (*CHIARA comes down to the picnic party and commences in the gipsy whine to MAYSIE*)

CHIARA. Tell your fortune, pretty lady—cross the gipsy's hand with a piece of silver. Tell your fortune with the handsome gentleman at your side.

His eyes are blue,

His heart is true.

Is his love for you,

Or who?

PHIL. (*fiercely*) No! no! (*moves to R. of IRENE. Sits*)

CHIARA. (*smiles and turns to BENDYSHE*) Tell your fortune, pretty gentleman?

BEN. (*loftily*) No, no, my dear—go away.

CHIARA. (*seizes his hand as he waves her off, looking eagerly at it but speaking to him*) Married where you do not love.

MRS. B. Theodore! You've been chatting again.

CHIARA. Loving where you may not marry. A dark girl with a passionate soul claims you. Here is a line which says, beware! she has a husband. Beware the husband.

BEN. Oh, my gracious!

CHIARA. (*turning to TOM*) Tell your fortune, pretty boy?

IRENE. (*aside to MAYSIE*) Look at the chain she's wearing.

MAYSIE. It's yours exactly.

IRENE. It's extraordinary.

CHIARA. (*chanting over TOM's hand*) Someone is leaving you that you dearly love—someone whom you will never see again. She will wander all over the dreary world—but she will always keep a corner in her heart for you.

HODD. There's half a crown. Go away, my good girl, or I'll send for the police.

CHIARA. Don't be hard on a poor girl, pretty gentleman.

HODD. Damn the wasps! (*the punt shoots on at back. DICK springs out, carrying a large brown bag of salt*)

DICK. Not in the boathouse at all. Bought sixpenny worth. Lord, such a quantity! Gave all I could to little boys. (*as he steps into the circle he sees CHIARA, stops dead; they recognize each other, she smiles at him*)

CHIARA. God bless you, pretty gentleman. Lives once crossed, will cross and cross again. (*she backs off into the willows, R., her eyes fixed on DICK, her laugh heard as she disappears, breaking into a chant-like song. Simultaneously the bag drops from his hand, and the salt falls in a cascade on to the cloth. They all lean forward to gather it up, with various exclamations*)

MAYSIE. What does she mean?

OMNES. (*greatly excited*) You're spilling the salt! Look out! Good gracious! etc. (*DICK stands staring blankly after CHIARA*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

After lunch. MRS. BENDYSHE *has retired to the punt, as has* HODD. ; PHIL *is smoking gloomily and chatting to* TOM *up* R. C. TOM R. C. ; PHIL R. ; BENDYSHE *is dozing by haystack* L.

IRENE. (*back of haystack, R., energetically*) I never in my life saw such a congregation of dull people. We came here for a happy day, and look at you. Mr. Marsden, dumb and morose, declines to flirt with me ; Maysie mooning about with her eyes on the ground. Mr. Bendyshe snoring under a haystack ; Mrs. Bendyshe and Uncle Robert alternately reading and dozing in the punt ; Tom, evidently with something desperate on his mind ; Major Dick—oh ! as for Major Dick, look at him ; (*points off R.*) something has happened to upset him. It's a nice picnic. I believe it's all due to the spilling of that salt.

MAYSIE. (*L., slightly advancing to C., almost to herself*) Why did he start when he saw that gipsy girl ? They know each other, I'm sure of that.

IRENE. (*mischievously*) Perhaps she's an old flame of his. What do you think, Tommy dear ?

TOM. (*overhearing and coming R. C.*) What do you mean, Irene ?

IRENE. Oh, ho, Master Tom. Is she a protégé of yours ?

TOM. Don't be a fool.

IRENE. Kings have fallen in love with gipsies. (*sits R.*) Why not middle-aged majors and schoolboys ?

TOM. She's not that sort.

IRENE. Really ?

TOM. (*loftily*) Oh, of course conventional girls like you who ride bicycles and flirt, are bound to sneer at—at—a—er——

IRENE. A gipsy girl.

TOM. Suppose she is. Is it a crime ?

IRENE. Do you know her ?

TOM. No, I don't, but—but—I know a fellow can't see a girl run down, you know, unless he knows——

IRENE. Too much nose, don't you think, Tommy dear ? (*interrupting*)

TOM. Didn't look at her.

MAYSIE. Dick looked at her—I—what does it mean?
(*strolls off L. PHIL goes and leans over branch C.*)

IRENE. Of course, if you didn't look at her, you wouldn't have noticed a curious chain she was wearing?

TOM. Er—oh—was she?

IRENE. When you were in my room this morning, you might have noticed one exactly like it on my dressing table.

TOM. Oh!

IRENE. Funny, isn't it?

TOM. Don't see it.

IRENE. It'll be funnier still, if I can't find mine when I get home, won't it?

TOM. Very,—that is,—Oh, I say, this is dull enough. I shall go down to the lock. (*stalks off R.*)

IRENE. (*rises*) There's something going on. I'm sure of it. Has he—? and has she—? I must find out. (*exit L. MAYSIE has gone off L. IRENE looks from MAYSIE to PHIL who is up at back looking into river, gloomily. She goes after MAYSIE, as DICK re-enters hurriedly R. from the other side*)

DICK. Phil!

PHIL. (*up C. gloomily, without turning*) Hullo!

DICK. Come here, I can't shout.

PHIL. (*comes down L. C.*) Well?

DICK. (*looking around at BENDYSHE*) Is he asleep?

PHIL. Been snoring damnably.

DICK. (*quickly*) It's the woman.

PHIL. The mother?

DICK. Yes. What the devil am I to do?

PHIL. Hold your tongue.

DICK. She'll find out.

PHIL. She thinks the kid's dead.

DICK. Yes, yes, but if she finds out that I've got him, she—by Gad, she shan't. She'll never have him. Phil, give me your solemn word of honor that nobody shall know through you that—that he isn't mine.

PHIL. My dear boy, frightened at a shadow again. Did you speak to her?

DICK. No. Haven't seen her; couldn't catch a glimpse of her anywhere.

PHIL. I should keep out of her way if I were you.

DICK. What's the use? She was waiting for me. She's been following me. There wasn't a bit of surprise

on her face when we met. No! the struggle's going to begin. I wonder has she found out anything. If she has I know what I'll do.

PHIL. What?

DICK. Never mind now, but I expect it'll take the wind out of her sails. What a good thing I made up my mind to go away.

PHIL. (*looking at him meaningly*) Perhaps you'll change your mind.

DICK. Not I.

PHIL. (*pointedly*) Could nothing happen to induce you to stay?

DICK. What do you mean?

PHIL. Couldn't Miss Linden induce you to stay?

DICK. Phil!

PHIL. (*slowly*) It's all over with me. I was a fool all along.

DICK. You don't mean to say——

PHIL. Yes, I do.

DICK. (*tenderly*) My poor old chap!

PHIL. Oh, it's all right. It's a bit of a knock just at first, but—it'll all dry straight, I suppose. (*turns away*)

DICK. (*to himself*) Poor old Phil! (*suddenly*) Don't give up, old chap. Faint heart, you know. She's young—doesn't know her own mind. Try again. She daren't refuse a good chap like you. She—she—don't listen to her—tell her she's a silly little girl. Hang it, whenever she's done anything I objected to, I've never stood it. She wants holding—she's wilful. Don't you stand it, old boy.

PHIL. Dick, you don't understand women.

DICK. Don't I? You leave her to me.

PHIL. It's what I'm *going* to do, Dick.

DICK. That's right. I'll talk to her like a Dutch uncle. (*down R. C.*)

PHIL. (*fiercely*) Dick, are you as blind as an owl?

DICK. Eh?

PHIL. Oh! I see it now—see it in a hundred different things that I never noticed before. It's you—you—you! She thinks of you all the time. I'm nothing, nothing at all. But I can't help loving her all the same. (*crosses R.*)

DICK. You're wrong, Phil. She—she's very fond of me, I hope—but—but I'm old enough to be her father. I've always been almost a father to her.

PHIL. (*fiercely*) You know you love her. Own it, own it. I'm not an infernal fool. Own up you love her.

DICK. I do love her. If I were twenty-eight I should insist on her marrying me. As I am thirty-eight, I shall insist on her marrying an obstinate and rather bad-tempered young soldier who isn't worth the dust on her tiny shoes.

PHIL. That's true. (*goes to bank up R. C.*)

DICK. Where's she gone?

PHIL. Over there. She hasn't looked at me for more than an hour—not since you went for the salt.

DICK. Poor boy, it's awful rough on you. (*crosses L. C.*) But never mind, I'll give her a serious talking to, you see! It'll be all right. I'll attack her now—strike while the iron's hot.

PHIL. What's the use? (*coming down*) She told me——

DICK. (*interrupting*) What right have you to pay any attention to what she told you? What did she say?

PHIL. Well, I don't exactly know what she said, but I gathered——

DICK. You don't know what she said, but you gathered—— (*scornfully*) Fiddlesticks! You leave it to me. I'll see it's all right.

PHIL. Do you really think——

DICK. I—*never!* Only fools think. I *do*.

PHIL. You *are* a good chap—you're always helping me.

DICK. Don't be an ass, but do something for me in return.

PHIL. What?

DICK. Go down to the lock and try to find out something—all you can about—about that woman. Do it carefully, so that none can suspect. Find out how long she's been here—where she's going—you know. All you can, will you?

PHIL. (*listlessly*) Yes, old chap.

DICK. And, for the love of heaven, buck up! You'd put any girl off with an expression like that.

PHIL. (*laughing*) All right.

DICK. That's better; and if your left ear burns, don't worry, it's only me.

PHIL. Right. You are a good chap.

DICK. (*as PHIL goes*) Don't let anybody suspect, you know. (*exit PHIL R.*) Poor old chap! Lord, what fools young women are! It's quite time one of them was brought to her senses. (*goes off after MAYSIE, L. 2 E. There is a complete pause. The stage deserted save for the three slumbering figures, MRS. BENDYSHE and HODDESSEN, just visible in the punt, through the trees, and BENDYSHE, propped up against haystack L. A bird is singing, also an occasional snore from BENDYSHE*)

Enter URCHIN slowly, rather depressed, R. 1 E. He contemplates one by one the sleeping forms.

URCHIN. Dozin'. Full, all of 'em. Well, I'm pretty full myself. Five bottles of ginger beer—good, too, fizzy. Five bottles. It ain't made me dozy—made me feel airified. My inside wants to fly, but carn't 'cos of the roof of my mouth. A penny on each bottle wasn't a bad idea, neither. (*he conceives another brilliant idea, and crossing to BENDYSHE, prods him with a bit of stick till he wakes up*) Sleepy, 'Oppin' tub?

BEN. (*contemplating him with horror and apprehension*) Oh, my gracious me!

URCHIN. (L. C.) Sorry to disturb you, 'Oppin tub, but I wants to propose a proposition.

BEN. (L.) You wicked boy. What is it?

URCHIN. Wot would you think of givin' me a shilling?

BEN. I should decline to think of it.

URCHIN. Ah! (*pause*) That *is* your missis with the geraniums in 'er 'at?

BEN. You awful boy!

URCHIN. I must interjuce myself to her.

BEN. To think that I am in the hands of such an urchin! (*with many manifestations of despair, gives him a shilling*)

URCHIN. 'Oppin' tub, I ain't disappointed in yer. 'Ere. (*beckons to him mysteriously*) Yea 'as a rival, the kid with the stror 'at.

BEN. Tommy Reid?

URCHIN. (*disdainfully*) Yus, Tommy Reid. 'E gives 'er jewels, I'm on 'im. 'E's comin'—go to sleep, 'Oppin tub. Watch me settle 'im.

BEN. (*feebly sits down against haystack, murmuring*) Why do I yield to this? (*pretends to sleep.*)
 URCHIN *plumes himself for struggle*)

Enter TOM, R. 2 E.

TOM. (*cheerfully*) Hullo, small boy.

URCHIN. (*c., wincing*) Small boy! One to 'im. I was 'avin' a little talk about you just now.

TOM. (*R. C., surprised*) Eh?

URCHIN. The gent with the whiskers on the edge of his face are your uncle, ain't he?

TOM. Yes, but what the dickens—

URCHIN. (*interrupting*) Was I a-doin' up in that tree—when you were deludin' the pore girl with jewels? I was fishin'!

TOM. You—in that tree! You've told my uncle, you little—

URCHIN. (*backing off*) No—but 'e *is* your uncle? It's 'ard on him bein' kept in the dark.

TOM. I'll break your neck if you say a word.

BEN. (*aside*) Oh, what a relief that would be.

URCHIN. I s'pose 'e'd break yours if 'e knew?

TOM. He doesn't know.

URCHIN. S'pose somebody told 'im?

TOM. (*furiously*) You little—

URCHIN. Don't call me that name, it makes my blood bile. 'Ere, fireworks, I 'ave a proposition to propose.

TOM. Eh?

URCHIN. Fust, for yours truly, mum's the word. But, stor rat, wot would you say to givin' me a shilling? (*pause*)

TOM. I don't mind, but look here, you take jolly good care to hold your tongue.

URCHIN. You're a gent, stor rat. (*pockets shilling, then becomes magnanimous*) 'Ere. (*mysteriously*) You 'as a rival.

TOM. What?

URCHIN. (*jerking his thumb spasmodically at BENDYSHE*) 'Oppin' tub give 'er a fiver to buy a shawl.

TOM. You young liar!

URCHIN. Stor rat, this is honest injun, 'e calls 'er Cleopatra, and swears he'll paint her face and make her immoral forever.

BEN. (*jumping up, furious*) Immortal, you dreadful boy, immortal!

URCHIN. 'Oppin' tub, I thought you was asleep.

BEN. How could I sleep under such an imputation? Besides, you know, I never was asleep. I was shamming—at your suggestion I shammed. At your suggestion I swore at lunch that I had allowed five bottles of ginger beer to fall into the river, making myself appear little less than a fool, that you might glut yourself with the noxious fluid—but I've had enough, sir. Leave this peaceful spot, or I shall undoubtedly endeavor to box your ears.

URCHIN. (*calmly*) This is gratitude. 'Oppin' tub, don't excite yourself. Remember you 'as an appointment with Cleopatra at 4.30. (*goes back, then R. Exit punt*)

BEN. He knows—everything—everything! What is he?

TOM. (*crosses C., loftily*) Mr. Bendyshe, I should like a word with you.

BEN. (L. C.) Not now, Tommy, I am not quite myself.

TOM. (*angrily*) I wish it now, and you'll oblige me by not calling me Tommy.

URCHIN. (*up R.*) 'Ear, 'ear! (*business with river*)

TOM. (*fiercely*) Shut up!

BEN. Oh, here's another dreadful boy.

TOM. I'm not a boy. I may have been last week, but I'm changed now. Don't go, Bendyshe, I want an explanation.

URCHIN. Stick to 'im, stor 'at.

TOM. Shut up! An explanation, Bendyshe.

BEN. Gracious! What about?

URCHIN. (*scornfully*) As if you didn't know.

TOM. Shut up! Did you give five pounds to—to—Miss—Miss—I don't know her name, but you know who I mean.

BEN. I certainly did—to buy a shawl.

URCHIN. To buy a shawl! 'Ark at 'Oppin' tub!

TOM. How dare you, Bendyshe?

BEN. (*furious*) How dare? What the devil has it got to do with you?

TOM. A great deal. I must ask you to take it back. I cannot allow her to accept presents from any one but me. Take it back, sir! Take it back!

URCHIN. If yer can get it!

BEN. I shall do no such thing.

TOM. I must insist! I don't happen to have any money now, but—I—I shall consider I owe it to you, and let me tell you, Miss—Miss—er—you know! Well, she would not have taken it, but for some pecuniary trouble that has come unexpectedly upon her father. (*URCHIN gives an ironical yell of delight, TOM rushes fiercely at him, but he darts away into the bushes and disappears up R.*)

BEN. (*moving C.*) You take an interest in the lady?

TOM. (*R. C.*) She has consented to be my wife.

BEN. Do you join the caravan or does she return with you to school?

TOM. Your remarks are on a par with the rest of your conduct. From men such as you, no woman is safe. (*laughing hardly*) Fair game, I suppose you consider them, and all the time they little know that you have a wife asleep in the punt. (*up C.*)

BEN. (*desperate*) If he was *very* small I think I could smack him.

TOM. (*down C.*) This time, let me tell you, the lady is not entirely unprotected.

BEN. Perhaps you will listen to me. I am an artist. I meet a beautiful girl, an ideal Cleopatra. In my gratitude to her for being so beautiful, and also having a ragged shawl I gave her a fiver and she gave me the promise of three sittings, one of which will take place this afternoon.

TOM. I forbid it, and don't insult me by mentioning the fiver.

BEN. (*wildly*) My fiver! I will dwell upon it, if I like, positively dwell upon it! She took my fiver, and she did not suggest by her manner of welling it that she intended to present it to an embarrassed father.

TOM. (*crosses C., approaching threateningly*) Do you insinuate—

BEN. (*backing off timidly*) Nothing! nothing! Marry the lady at once, fiver and all, by all means.

TOM. Do you think your paltry fiver tempts me! I love her for herself alone, and I shall make a point of not marrying her till you've been paid back every farthing.

BEN. As you please. You will oblige me by not mentioning my name in connection with this affair. My wife—

TOM. (*crosses R. with withering contempt*) Your wife would not believe your story, I suppose?

BEN. (*crosses L.*) I decline to discuss my matrimonial infelicities with a freckled schoolboy. (*the punt reappears at back with MRS. BENDYSHE and HODDESSEN*)

TOM. Ah! That's what will be thrown in my teeth, I know.

BEN. Your freckles?

TOM. No, my youth. Uncle's sure to drop on that. I must tell him *all*, I know—but what's the good? How can one's uncle respect one's feelings when he pays for one's education? How can he who has caned me as a little boy realize that that little boy could ever grow up? But I have grown up, and I'm not going to have the girl I love best in the world torn from me by uncles or artists either.

HODD. (*L. C. from the punt*) Quite right, quite right! Bendyshe, by what right do you seek to tear from my nephew the girl he loves?

MRS. B. (*C.*) Theodore! Don't tell me you're flirting again?

BEN. (*L. of haystack*) Oh, my gracious! These are dreadful boys.

TOM. (*moves up R. C. most impressively*) Uncle, I meant to tell you to-night, but since you've overheard, I may as well tell you now. I have met the lady I hope to make my wife. It's pretty nearly settled, though I suppose we want your consent.

HODD. Surely not! (*calmly*) Is she in every way desirable?

TOM. She's an angel. Bendyshe gave her five pounds. That was an insult. We will pay it back.

HODD. The five pounds, not the insult, Tom.

MRS. B. Five pounds, Theodore?

BEN. For sittings, darling, and to buy a shawl. Cleopatra!

HODD. Where does the lady live?

TOM. (*romantically*) Men have made her a wanderer on the face of the earth; the sky is her roof, the wild flowers her pillow—

HODD. I know the type—very fascinating—might have been much worse; come home—we'll talk it over.

TOM. Nothing will move me. (*going to punt*)

HODD. No, no!

TOM. Sneer at me, and call me *boy*. I don't care!
(*stoops down for pole*)

HODD. No, no! Take the lighter pole. (TOM *does so almost in tears ; gets into punt L. of MRS. BENDYSHE*)

MRS. B. Theodore, will you come too?

BEN. With alacrity, dearest! (*goes up*)

TOM. (*to MRS. BENDYSHE*) You have no cause for anger, Mrs. Bendyshe, your husband has been a *fool*, he has *not* been a criminal!

BEN. Oh, what a position!

MRS. B. Tommy, in another moment, I shall box your ears.

BEN. Oh, thank you, dear one.

MRS. B. And yours too, Theodore.

BEN. Oh, thank you, dearest, I think I'll walk. (*exit BENDYSHE*)

Enter IRENE, MAYSIE and DICK, L. 2 E.

IRENE. (*crossing over to R. haystack*) Good gracious! are you going?

HODD. We are going. Tom wishes to talk to me *re* his approaching marriage.

ALL THREE. What!

TOM. I don't care! A man's life is his own. You can't chaff me out of it. I'm in love and I don't care a damn for anybody.

IRENE. Tom!

TOM. Yes, I swore! I never swore as hard as that before ladies before, but you drive me to it. I love her—she loves me. Whose fault is it if she's a gipsy?

IRENE.

DICK. } (*come down L.*) The gipsy!

MAYSIE. }

TOM. Yes, the most beautiful woman in the world!

IRENE. (*crosses C. to TOM*) I knew it was my chain, you little thief!

TOM. She'll give it back. (*IRENE gets R. C.*)

MRS. B. The chain and the fiver. She must be a good girl!

HODD. Shove off, sir, you're wasting time. (*the punt begins to disappear*)

TOM. You can't move me! You can't move me!

HODD. Damn it, sir,—move the punt. (*exeunt*)

IRENE. (*comes down R. C.*) Well, I think that's the comickest thing I've ever heard of—Tom in love with a gipsy. (*MAYSIE wanders gradually up to river and then off R.*)

DICK. (*crosses C.*) Thank Heaven he's not three years older. (*suddenly*) Look here, Miss Reid, I've been following you and Maysie about for at least a quarter of an hour—but I can't get you apart.

IRENE. I don't understand.

DICK. No? Well, would you mind going over there and looking for some salt? (*IRENE looks at him blankly, he beseeches her to leave them alone*) You silly young woman, don't you see I want to talk to her like a Dutch uncle?

IRENE. Oh! I beg your pardon. I'll look for salt by all means. (*MAYSIE has strolled off R. IRENE disappears L. 2 E. DICK stands for a moment in doubt*)

DICK. (*C.*) This is a difficult job. How shall I begin? Think I'll begin with a pipe. (*fills his pipe, then calls*) Maysie! (*she comes back; has picked a small bunch of wild flowers*) Ah! there you are. I suppose you don't know that I've been wanting a private talk with you for the last quarter of an hour?

MAYSIE. (*coming R. C.*) A private talk?

DICK. And you glued yourself to that Miss Reid—nice girl—now, thanks to my diplomacy, looking for salt.

MAYSIE. You have sent her off, then?

DICK. I was forced to drop a hint.

MAYSIE. Suppose I don't want a private chat with you? Suppose that was the reason I glued myself to her, as you call it?

DICK. You couldn't have known I wanted a private chat.

MAYSIE. Couldn't I? Why, I can read you like a book.

DICK. You're too clever by half, young woman. Oblige me by sitting down while I talk to you.

MAYSIE. I don't care about sitting down, thank you. You begin as if you meant to be very dull. (*strolls off to back, swinging her hat by the ribbons*)

DICK. (*L. C., looking after her*) She's a most tiresome young woman. (*then sternly*) Come here. (*she doesn't move*) Come here! (*again she doesn't move*) This is flat insubordination! (*she leans on willow and looks*

into stream) Are you aware that you're not paying the slightest attention to me? (*she remains silent; he changes his peremptory tone and pleads*) Oh, Maysie dear, do come and listen to what I do so want to say. (*she comes down to him at once. They laugh, she holds out both hands, he takes them and holds them tenderly*)

DICK. You're a horrid little tyrant, aren't you?

MAYSIE. There, that's your haystack, (L.) this is mine. (R. *both sit*) Now let's get quite comfortable and you can say all you want to say.

DICK. That's right. (*pause*)

MAYSIE. (R.) Well?

DICK. Well, in the first place I want you to think I am doing my best. I want you to believe that you and my kiddie are—well—you give me the best thoughts I have. I want to know that you trust me absolutely, in fact, that you look upon me as a father. Do you?

MAYSIE. (*after a pause, laughs a little*) Of course I do. (*leans her chin on her hands and looks at him*)

DICK. You've been a most obedient child for the last five years. Don't go and break the record now.

MAYSIE. What's all this leading up to?

DICK. Well, to—what the dickens do you mean by breaking poor Phil's heart and making him think seriously of going to the devil?

MAYSIE. (*rising*) Dick!

DICK. Oh, it's all very well to strut about and look dignified, but it's what you're doing. He's the best chap in the world, and he loves you. He'd lie down and let you jump on him! That always seems to be a clinching proof of a man's love for a woman, though I've never heard of it's being put into practice. Maysie dear, give him a chance. I'm sure you love him fearfully, but like all women, you fool about with your feelings just for the fun of being miserable.

MAYSIE (*tossing her head*) I don't fool about with my feelings—and I know whether I want to marry Mr. Marsden or not, thank you, Major Dick.

DICK. Oh, it's no use putting on frills with me. I told Phil you'd marry him, and I'm not going to disappoint the boy. Of course, if you were a regular grown-up woman you might know your own mind, but as I've watched you grow since you were so high, I shouldn't be surprised if, so far, you haven't a mind to know. Think

it over, Maysie. I'm sure you'll discover when you look into yourself that you love him fearfully all the time. Girls can't tell right off, I'm sure.

MAYSIE. You know a lot about girls, Major Dick.

DICK. I'm not a chicken, Miss Maysie, and I've devoted a good deal of my time to studying girls.

MAYSIE. Gipsy girls? (*pause, she sees the change in his face and is sorry she has said so much*)

DICK. (*in a whisper*) What do you mean?

MAYSIE. I don't mean anything—why should I?

DICK. Why should you? Exactly. Look here, I'll smoke half a pipe while you walk up and down and look into yourself.

MAYSIE. I've looked into myself, thank you.

DICK. Well, what do you say?

MAYSIE. I—I'll think it over.

DICK. (*starting up in delight, goes to her*) That means—you'll marry him! Good girl! I'm jolly glad!

MAYSIE. (*turning to him, her face close to his, her eyes on his eyes*) You are glad—you mean it—you mean it?

DICK. (*after a pause, awkwardly*) Of course I mean it. What an odd girl you are! (*she swings on her heel and goes up R. C. to river, breaking a twig from the tree, throwing it into the water and watching it drift away, then suddenly*)

MAYSIE. Dick, what was your *first* wife like?

DICK. (*embarrassed*) Eh? Oh! I don't know—quite ordinary, I suppose. (*she turns and look at him in wonder, continuing nervously*) Er—and I don't like the expression *first* wife. It seems to insinuate that I shall have a second.

MAYSIE. Will she be ordinary too?

DICK. Not if I know it! No more wives for me.

MAYSIE. (*quietly*) I think you'll marry again.

DICK. Not I!

MAYSIE. Why not, pray?

DICK. (*slowly*) I'm too old—too ugly—too poor—too selfish—too lazy!

MAYSIE. (*interrupting*) Yes, that's true. That's what prevents you making yourself and—other people—happy.

DICK. Good gracious!

MAYSIE. It's true! You don't know it, but you're too lazy to look into yourself. (*comes to him sweetly and*

takes his arm) Dick, I'll hold your pipe. Walk up and down and do it now.

DICK. (*taken aback*) Don't be ridiculous! I know perfectly well what's in me.

MAYSIE. Do you? Then why don't you let it out?

DICK. Because I don't choose to. (*suddenly, fiercely*) Look here, don't you dictate to me!

MAYSIE. You're content to shut yourself within yourself for ever and ever?

DICK. Yes.

MAYSIE. (*passionately*) Then I'm sorry, oh, so sorry to hear it.

DICK. Why?

MAYSIE. Because if you're content like that, then—then you haven't a heart. You don't know what love is—or you *couldn't*—you *couldn't*!

DICK. (*pause*) My dear little girl, sometimes it's one's duty to shut oneself up. I don't say it isn't hard, I've found it very hard. I've been nearly giving in and making a fool of myself more than once; but I've managed to pull through.

MAYSIE. Tell me, Dick.

DICK. Yes, I don't see why I shouldn't. (*takes her to R. haystack. She sits*) There was a little girl that I was very fond of, a little girl whose eyes looked into mine, and looked my heart right away. A little girl whose happy laughter was like the sunshine, and I couldn't help loving her after all. But I looked into myself. I said, "You're old, Dick Rudyard; she's young. You've got ideas, Dick Rudyard; she hasn't. And then you've got responsibilities and a kiddie with a huge appetite and an enormous capacity for wearing out his clothes. You can't be cad enough to saddle her with all these loads."

MAYSIE. She'd do her best.

DICK. I dare say she would, but there's a great gap between the little Shetland pony and the old war-horse. Besides I said to myself, "You're bad-tempered, Dick Rudyard. You don't like to be questioned, you don't like to be contradicted. You'd be both."

MAYSIE. No, no!

DICK. You don't know this little girl as well as I do. She's fearfully inquisitive,—pokes her little nose into everything, and stamps her little foot if she's ever snubbed.

She's got a temper too, oh, yes, but I don't think it's as bad as his.

MAYSIE. You make her perfectly horrid. I'm sure she wouldn't question you if you said it was best not.

DICK. Are you ?

MAYSIE. Quite.

DICK. I wouldn't trust her.

MAYSIE. Then it's a good thing you didn't marry her.

DICK. Very ! That's what I think.

MAYSIE. Did you distrust your first wife like this ?

DICK. Question number one.

MAYSIE. No, it isn't. That's absurd.

DICK. F'lat contradiction number two.

MAYSIE. (*getting angry*) And you never talk of your first wife at all.

DICK. That's strange.

MAYSIE. Of course it is. Lots of people remark on it.

DICK. Do they ?

MAYSIE. Some say—— (*she stops suddenly*)

DICK. What ?

MAYSIE. That you were never married.

DICK. They may be right.

MAYSIE. Some say—she's still living.

DICK. They may be right. (*moves C.*)

MAYSIE. (*rises*) Oh, Dick, Dick, you *are* unkind !

DICK. Yes, of course I am. I said I was. Now you see how wise I was to say nothing to that little girl.

MAYSIE. It isn't fair to make a mystery of yourself. Oh, Dick, do trust me a little bit ! (*crosses L.*)

DICK. My dear little girl, you know all that it's wise for you to know. Oh, don't look so fierce ! I'm not Master Phil, I don't tremble and bow down before your juvenile tantrums. There, I won't be exasperating. You're a fairly good girl, and you've made two people very happy to-day.

MAYSIE. Two ?

DICK. Me and Phil.

MAYSIE. Phil ! By telling him I don't love him ?

DICK. No, but by telling him what you are going to tell him—that you will marry him.

MAYSIE. I never said any such thing.

DICK. No, but you said you'd think it over. It's almost the same. At any rate it's near enough for Phil.

MAYSIE. Oh, is it? I'm not so sure! (*suddenly*) Look, look, the gipsy again.

DICK. (*turns quickly and stares off, then to MAYSIE without turning to her*) Go away, dear, go away!

MAYSIE. (*jealously*) You're going to speak to her! What for?

DICK. Question number three. Run away!

MAYSIE. You've met her before?

DICK. Question—still question! Away with you, child, this is important.

MAYSIE. You're hateful—perfectly hateful! and I shan't say what I meant to say. (*moves off in a temper L. 2 E.*)

DICK. (*still staring in the same direction*) She's coming to speak to me. Now to play my last card. She shan't have him, Jack, old boy—she shan't have him, I give you my word. (*CHIARA is seen through the bushes up R. SETH joins her hurriedly for an instant and whispers*)

SETH. Mind ye, he's got to pay us a 'undred a year reg'lar for that kid.

CHIARA. I'll work him.

SETH. Not a quid less. Stick to it. He'll pay up every penny; I'll wait down here. (*points, then creeps off R. I E.*)

CHIARA lounges on gracefully, her basket over her arm, then she and DICK stand looking at one another till she leans back smiling against the trunk of the willow.

CHIARA. It's a small world, Captain Rudyard.

DICK. You've not forgotten me.

CHIARA. (*smiling*) Not much! Wasn't it good of me not to speak to you before all your fine friends?

DICK. (*drily*) You weren't always so considerate.

CHIARA. Ah, I'm changed now. Don't I look a reformed character? You look a bit changed too—older than you used to be—aren't you? Isn't it odd that we should run up against each other like this?

DICK. Very odd.

CHIARA. I've had a lot of trouble since we met, but of course you know.

DICK. (*stolidly*) Ah! (*beginning to fill his pipe, sits L. haystack*)

CHIARA. Yes—awful trouble. Lost my husband—

lost my child—(*goes quickly to him, watching him intently*) It was the loss of my child changed me. (*pause*) Ye don't say anything—don't ye believe me?

DICK. (*coldly*) No.

CHIARA. (*mimicking his tone*) No!- Bah! just as grumpy as you were years ago. Ain't you been in a good temper since.

DICK. What do you want?

CHIARA. I want to have a chat about old times—you was a pal of my husband's.

DICK. I was.

CHIARA. Well, isn't that a kind of bond between us—Lord! how I loved that man!

DICK. Did you? You had a curious way of proving it.

CHIARA. (*angrily*) He shouldn't have tried to make me respectable—he was a fool.

DICK. (*quietly*) Yes, in that instance I think he was.

CHIARA. Ah! well, he's gone. I'm a poor lonely woman now, Captain. All the devil knocked out of me—at least nearly all. (*comes to him, grinning up into his face*) I ain't even so pretty as I was, am I?

DICK. You're much the same.

CHIARA. I ain't your style, though, am I?

DICK. (*calmly*) No.

CHIARA. (*smiling wickedly*) I hate you, Dick Rudyard. I always did.

DICK. I dare say! But you didn't surely come here to tell me that?

CHIARA. No. I came to ask you how it was my child came to die so quick.

DICK. (*after a pause*) I don't know. (*looks at her suspiciously, but she is apparently unconcerned*)

CHIARA. (*smiling at him*) Want of a mother's care, do you think?

DICK. I dare say.

CHIARA. (*pensively*) Ah, that does make a difference. (*with a toss of her head*) I shouldn't ha' brought him up to be a gentleman—gentlemen are mostly fools. He should ha' been like me—free—no law but his own blessed will. He'd ha' finished in jail, I dare say, but think of the good time he'd have had before he got there. (*suddenly*) I suppose you think it's a good thing I didn't have the charge of him?

DICK. It's no affair of mine.

CHIARA. Oh, isn't it? Of course it isn't. (*goes towards him, with a smile*) Have you been to Windsor College lately, Captain?

DICK. (*completely dumfounded, stammers*) What do you mean?

CHIARA. You know what I mean, ye liar! (*bursts into a loud laugh*) For the last ten minutes I've been having a high old time of it! It's prime to see that goody-goody gentlemen can lie nearly as well as us. This is what I've followed you for, my gent—this is what it's all about. I want my child, and I'm going to have him. Out of that school he comes, and away north with me he goes—with me, his mother—this very week. What do you think of that, my pretty gentleman?

DICK. (*very quietly*) I think it's a pity you didn't say so before, and save my time and your own.

CHIARA. How dare you keep a child from its mother?

DICK. I really don't know—but it's a situation that can easily be altered. The long-lost offspring shall be at once restored.

CHIARA. What do you mean?

DICK. I'm busy this afternoon, but I'll go down to Windsor to-morrow, bring the boy back, hand him over to you, and my responsibility is at an end.

CHIARA. (*stares at him in blank astonishment, then falters*) You—you'll give him up?

DICK. Well, I don't see how I can keep him if you want him.

CHIARA. Don't you want him?

DICK. Of course I should like to keep him, but we all like a great many things we can't have. You'll find him a jolly little chap. But, by Jove! if I'd known children were such expensive luxuries, I'd have seen your husband further before I saddled myself with the boy. Do you know the school fees alone are something over a hundred a year?

CHIARA. (*almost dazed*) You can part with him like that—the little boy who loves you like a father—your dead pal's child—you have the heart to desert him?

DICK. Desert him? What are you talking about? You ought to be jolly grateful to me for having done what I have done; there isn't another chap in a hundred would have done as much. Of course if things were different, I should have asked you to let me stick to the boy, but as things are, it's just as well you've turned up.

CHIARA. What do you mean by—different?

DICK. Well, the fact is, I'm devilish hard up. Apart from that I'm off to India in a couple of months, and until you suggested taking the boy I was at my wits' ends to know what to do with him. (*goes to her seriously*) I'm sure you'll be kind to him—in spite of what you said. He's such a jolly little chap.

CHIARA. (*breathing hard, clenching and unclenching her hands, bursts out fiercely*) And you call yourself a gentleman?

DICK. Do I? I don't know. I'm a very ordinary sort of chap.

CHIARA. (*bursting into a fury, while DICK smilingly watches her*) Do you know what I call you? A black-hearted brute. You rob a poor woman of her child, you teach the poor babe to love you, you lead us all to think you love it, and then—then you turn it out of doors—to starve—to starve—because that's what it comes to, and you know it!

DICK. But hang it all, woman—I—you shouted at me just now for keeping it—the child was yours—you would have it—out of the school it should come—those were your very words.

CHIARA. (*whiningly*) Yes, but I didn't mean it. I don't want to stand in the boy's light if you want to make a gentleman of him.

DICK. Perhaps some day I may have children of my own, and I shall probably have quite enough to do to make gentlemen of them.

CHIARA. (*beginning to lose her head at the unexpected turn of events*) But—but the boy is too young to rough it with us.

DICK. (*laughingly*) I don't think roughing it does boys any harm. Besides it's a free, healthy, open-air sort of life—probably do him a lot of good; you don't mind his writing to me now and then, I suppose?

CHIARA. (*suddenly*) Here! Wait! wait! I'll fetch my husband.

DICK. (*jumping up with a shout*) What! you're married again! Then that settles it! I'm hanged if I pay another farthing; it's his business, not mine.

CHIARA. (*fiercely*) What'll you give me if I let you keep this boy forever?

DICK. (*laughing*) Upon my word! I like your cheek.

CHIARA. (*desperate, backing towards trees R.*) Keep it for a little—you must—you must—cos we're going away to-night. (*MAYSIE enters and listens at back L.*)

DICK. To-night! Then when shall I hear from you?

CHIARA. Soon—very soon.

DICK. You've got my address?

CHIARA. Yes.

DICK. We must settle it this week, mind you. I think it's a pity we can't arrange to keep the kid at school. He'd have been a credit to us, I'm sure.

CHIARA. Let him bide for a bit—a week—a week.

DICK. My good woman, I'm so jolly hard up!

CHIARA. (*whiningly*) So am I! Oh, yes, I'm poor—so poor—give me what you can. (*whistle heard off*) Hush! my husband! I must go! Give me something—for the sake of old times.

DICK. (*takes out handful of money*) Help yourself! (*she grabs it eagerly*) Here, hold on—leave me something to go on with.

CHIARA. There's not three quid—I'll swear! (*turns to go*)

DICK. Not left so much as a copper for the ferry. (*CHIARA almost tumbles over SETH, who creeps on behind bushes. They are hidden from DICK, but he hears them*)

SETH. (*in an eager whisper*) A hundred?

CHIARA. (*fiercely, between her teeth*) The game's up! He wants us to take the kid—he's sick of it.

SETH. (*horror-struck*) No!

CHIARA. Yes, fool!

SETH. We'd better bolt.

CHIARA. To-night? (*dashes off*)

SETH. (*creeping after her*) He don't want to keep the kid—s'welp me! there's an unnatural brute.

DICK. (*softly to himself with a great triumph, as he turns towards the river*) Sold 'em! Beat her at her own game! It was the only way—he's mine now—my kiddie forever!

MAYSIE enters slowly from the willows L.; he turns hearing her; she drops her eyes, then says chokingly)

MAYSIE. I listened!

DICK. (*turning to her*) You listened?

MAYSIE. I've heard too much and too little—tell me all.

DICK. It's no affair of yours, Miss Maysie, and I'm sorry you played the spy.

MAYSIE. I had to. You spoke of a boy—did you mean your boy?

DICK. (*slowly*) Yes.

MAYSIE. What is he to her?

DICK. Don't question me.

MAYSIE. I must!

DICK. (*lifting his hand firmly*) This is what I warned you of. The gap between the child that questions and the man that will not answer.

MAYSIE. You should answer. This is different. (*he makes a movement to check her. Stamping her foot*) I must question—I must know!

DICK. You shall know. She is—his mother (*pause*)

MAYSIE. (*looks at him in horror; to herself*) Then you and she—(*looking straight in front of her*) I see now why you disliked being questioned. In future, when people sneer at you I shall know how to hold my tongue. I—I am going to Irene. (*goes slowly L., then stops, not turning to him*) Will you tell Mr. Marsden—you were quite right—I did not know my own mind—I know it now—I will marry him if he cares to take me. (*she goes off slowly L., her head bowed down. DICK stands staring after her. Long pause*)

DICK. (*repeating*) When people sneer—what does she—why did she look at me as if—

PHIL dashes on excitedly R.

PHIL. What luck, old chap? Have you seen her? What did she say?

DICK. (*slowly, still staring after MAYSIE*) She said, "Will you tell Mr. Marsden I did not know my own mind—I know it now—I will marry him if he cares to take me."

PHIL. (*gives a great shout of delight*) She said that? My dear old Dick, you've been a trump! Where is she?

DICK. (*who has never moved*) She's over there.

PHIL. (*bursting into a peal of joyous laughter*) She'll marry me! Maysie's mine! She'll marry me! Houp la! (*jumps over small haystack*) Who'd have

thought it? She will marry me! Good old Dick, she'll marry me! (*dashes off after MAYSIE*)

DICK. She'll marry him—they'll be awfully happy. I'm jolly glad. She shouldn't have listened, though. What did she mean by jealous? The gipsy? the boy— (*pause. He thinks hard, then with a sudden cry springs to his feet*) By Gad! she thinks I—she believes that woman—my boy—her boy—how dare she—how dare she! (*stops suddenly, dropping his voice*) That's why she looked at me like that—that's why she knew her own mind so soon. Poor little girl. And I shouted at her as if she were a regiment on parade. (*long pause. He stands deep in thought*) Perhaps it's a good thing I did. She'll marry him—and—kiddie and I will give her away. Perhaps she won't let us do even that now. They'll go away. Then kiddie and I will be all by ourselves—all by ourselves. (*slowly his head drops on his hands, and a sound rather like a sob is heard*)

URCHIN *creeps on R., contemplates him anxiously, then with great concern comes to his side.*

URCHIN. Guv'nor! guv'nor! Don't cry!

DICK. (*looking up fiercely*) Cry, you young rip? I'm a philosopher.

URCHIN. (*sitting down at his feet facing him*) Are ye? So am I.

DICK. Are you? Come on, then, give us your views of life.

URCHIN. (*with great deliberation lifts his forefinger—solemnly*) Gals! (*then his eloquence ceases to flow*)

DICK. Well?

URCHIN. (*gloomily*) Gals—that's all.

DICK. (*slowly*) Gals—that's all? (*seizes and shakes URCHIN'S dirty little hand cordially*) A very good philosophy, too.

Curtain comes down with the two sitting on the hay solemnly staring at one another.

ACT III.

It is after dinner about half-past nine on a beautiful summer evening. The lawn of MR. HODDESSEN'S house. The old-fashioned verandah on L., showing the drawing-room. Lamps lighted and cosy beyond. Chinese lanterns, etc. The back cloth is a view of the river and a full moon rising. As curtain rises HODDESSEN is walking up and down the lawn with MRS. BENDYSHE, while IRENE, MAYSIE, PHIL and BENDYSHE are singing plaintive nigger melodies in the drawing-room to harp accompaniment. Harp supposed to be played by IRENE.

HODD. My dear Jane, in spite of the absurdity of it all, I actually lost my temper with him.

MRS. B. Poor Tom!

HODD. Poor Tom indeed! He's as obstinate as—I am! I've made inquiries about the girl; she's the wife of that chap who loafs about the island. Do you think I can get Tom to believe it? Not he! He laughs at me, says, "Ha! I was prepared for this," then he rolls his eyes and calls me a calumniator—marvellous how love elevates one's language. Then he repeats that ridiculous assertion, "You can't move me."

MRS. B. He's quite right, you can't.

HODD. I'd move him—if—if—I wasn't afraid he'd never forgive me.

MRS. B. How? (*sits R.*)

HODD. He wants a thrashing—a good sound thrashing! Something he can think about when he's by himself! Something that would take his thoughts from this absurdity and concentrate them on his—back.

MRS. B. My dear Robert, it would break your heart to lay a finger on the boy.

HODD. I dare say; but he's rapidly driving me to sacrifice myself. Poor young beggar! I've locked him up there in the library for to-night, till those gipsies are gone.

MRS. B. Locked him up! Oh, let me go and try my powers of persuasion.

HODD. Here's the key—try away, it's hopeless, there's

nothing for it but the rod, and by Gad, he shall have it, if he won't give way.

MRS. B. (*rises and crosses over*) Oh, it will blow over.

HODD. I wish the young woman's husband would take the matter up. That's the sort of man to shake the nonsense out of Master Tom! But there, see what you can do. Laugh him out of it, Jane, laugh him out of it if you can. Nothing like ridicule for such stupidity.

MRS. B. (*laughing*) I'll do my best. (*goes into drawing-room.* HODDESSEN *grunts.* *The people in the drawing-room are seen moving through the blinds.* BENDYSHE *begins his song*)

HODD. God bless the boy—he makes me feel young again. (*after a pause, R. U. E., SETH lounges on from behind the bushes at back, carrying switch, comes down to the verandah and peers into drawing-room through the chinks in the blind*)

SETH. (*quietly*) There's the old gent sure enough—a-singin' fit to bust! 'Ow can I get to 'im? Now the Captain's turned out a stiff un, must make a honest fiver out of somebody.

HODD. (*starting up, seeing SETH*) Hullo, my man, what do you want?

SETH. I've got a message for a gent—

HODD. Gad! it's the husband, and a nice scoundrel you must be!

SETH. (*fiercely*) Eh?

HODD. (*fiercely*) Don't answer me, sir! What are you doing here?

SETH. 'Ow am I to tell you if I don't answer?

HODD. Quite right! I apologize. I'll have you locked up for loitering with intent to commit a felony.

SETH. There's a gent in this house as has business with my missis! I wants to give him a message.

HODD. By Gad! He has found him out! Poor old Tom! Serve him right, the young rip! This will save me a lot of trouble. (*to SETH*) Quite right, my man, don't you stand it, take the matter in hand and knock the nonsense out of him.

SETH. (*blankly*) Eh?

HODD. (*growls*) What do you mean by "Eh"? You know what he's up to—it's your business to stop it.

SETH. Stop it—why should I?

HODD. (*aghast*) Why should you! You discover that there's a fool making love to your wife under your very nose, and you don't see why you should stop it.

SETH. (*scornfully*) Making love! I know my wife!

HODD. I dare say, but you don't know him. He's desperate. I tell you—declares he'll never leave her, swears he'll roam the world with her, laughs to scorn the idea of her having a husband, says it's impossible!

SETH. (*getting angry*) Oh, does he?

HODD. That's right, get excited, convince him that you are her husband and know how to look after your own property. Knock the nonsense out of him!

SETH. (*C. looking at HODDESDEN curiously*) You wants me to lick him?

HODD. (*C.*) Lick him? Yes—gently, mind, gently but firmly.

SETH. Ain't he a bit past it, Guv'nor?

HODD. Past it, pooh! I was often licked at his age.

SETH. Was ye now? ye surprise me!

HODD. Mind ye, don't overdo it! One or two cuts with that switch across the shoulders—it's the shame of it will do the trick, not the blow.

SETH. 'Ow about the action for assault?

HODD. You leave that to me. There'll be no action. You will hear no more of it as long as you don't hurt him. Only make him smart, no real damage. (*then fiercely*) Mark me, sir, if you go too far I'll get you six months of the hardest labor you ever had—the hardest! Don't you dare to hurt him—frighten him, that's all, do you hear? There's a sovereign for you to cure him of his folly—there's half a sovereign for the trouble—cheap at the price. (*crosses L.*)

SETH. 'Ere, suppose I gets excited—wot then?

HODD. You'd better not.

SETH. Well! (*beckons*) 'ere! 'Ow deep's that there pond? (*pointing off at back of house*)

HODD. Two foot!

SETH. S'posin' I don't lick him! S'posin' I jest pops 'im in there for a bit to cool.

HODD. Pop him in to cool! Capital! The very thing! Don't mention my name in the matter! Hide! I'll send him out to you. Don't hurt him! By Gad, don't you hurt him, or you'll have to deal with me. (*exit into drawing-room*)

SETH. 'Ere's a rum go! Poor old gent! Well, it'll serve him right. Wot business 'ad he to get flirty! You sits to an artist as business—and if business is to come to roamin' the world—well— (*goes to window*) There 'e is, poor old gent, smilin' all over his face. Wot's t'other old gent's little game? Had a row and don't like to tackle 'im 'imself, shouldn't wonder. (*enter BENDYSHE L. cheerfully singing*)

BEN. Delightful music! (*sings*) La, la, la, la, too high! Fills me with inspiration. I could do great things to-night. (*sings*) La, la, la, la,—too low. Silly little boy Tom, to lose his heart to my Cleopatra! My dusky maid!

SETH. (*up L. from the shadows at back, sepulchrally*) Your dusky maid!

BEN. (*startled*) Good gracious, my good man!

SETH. (*ironically*) Your good man!

BEN. Are you aware you're trespassing?

SETH. Are you aware *you're* trespassing?

BEN. Gracious! How you repeat my words.

SETH. *Your* words! *your* Cleopatra! *your* dusky maid! (*fiercely*) What price *me*?

BEN. I haven't the slightest idea!

SETH. A-paintin' of her face, was yer? A-goin' to hang her in the Academy, was yer? A-goin' to roam the world with 'er, was you? I repeat wot price *me*? (*gets between BENDYSHE and window*)

BEN. What's the matter with the fellow? Help!

SETH. 'Tain't no use shouting, the old gent's took 'em all away.

BEN. (*standing on tiptoe and looking into drawing-room from opposite side of stage*) They're all in the billiard-room. This is awful!

SETH. The other old gent don't approve of your little game, nor do I.

BEN. What little game?

SETH. A-roamin' the world with my missis. 'E says I ain't to 'it you 'ard, so I sha'n't 'it you at all.

BEN. Hit me!

SETH. To cool your arder, I'm to pop you in the pond. (*moves over*)

BEN. (*aghast*) Pop me in the pond? (*gets up R. C.*)

SETH. Pity you ain't got a mackintosh.

BEN. The man's mad ! Oh, if I could only run very fast.

SETH. Don't slither about like that, Guv'nor, you've got to 'ave it. (*BENDYSHE with a shout for help bolts off up L. behind the house pursued by SETH. Laughing heartily*) You've got to 'ave it—a job's a job !

Enter HODDESSEN from drawing-room.

HODD. My good man, you needn't wait. Hullo, he hasn't, hang the fellow ! Perhaps it's as well. Where the dickens has the boy gone to ? I locked him in the library, he's got out of the window—tore up the table cover, tied it into knots and dropped twenty feet if it's an inch. God bless him ? he's a chip of the old block— young fool ! hang the man ! why didn't he wait ? He'd have knocked the nonsense out of him, bless his pig-headed young heart ! Gad's life, he makes me feel young again—dashed young fool ! (*exit into drawing-room*)

Enter TOM R., generally dilapidated, sees HODDESSEN.

TOM. (*despairingly*) Governor !

HODD. Eh ? (*wheels round and sees TOM*) God bless the boy !

TOM. Governor !

HODD. (*turns quickly, coming down stage*) Hullo ! Hullo ! What's up ?

TOM. Governor ! (*tumbles into HODDESSEN'S arms*)

HODD. The scoundrel, he's hurt him ! Tom, boy, what is it, old chap ?

TOM. (*faintly*) Oh, Governor ! She—she—she is married !

HODD. He *has* hurt him !

TOM. He ? Who ?

HODD. That brute, her husband.

TOM. I've not seen him. I don't want to see him. Oh, Governor, I've been such a fool.

HODD. No, no, boy, it's all right. We can't help these things.

TOM. We can. You locked me in. I got out of the window, that's why I'm lame.

HODD. (*excited*) Lame ?

TOM. Only a little sprain. I got over to the island all

right enough. I had to see her. Oh, Governor, my heart's broken! I saw her.

HODD. Cheer up, old boy!

TOM. No, I saw her. She was going away; all the things were in the caravan. She's married, Governor, she's married.

HODD. Of course she is. Oh, my dear boy, that is, you young fool, I mean. How's your leg?

TOM. (*plaintively*) It won't go at all. I can't walk any more. Oh, to think that she's married!

HODD. Here! Hi! (*shouts*) Hang it, where are the servants? Here! Hi! (*shouts again*) Come on, boy, we'll soon put you straight. There! put your arm round my neck. I can carry you, boy—don't do it again, will you? (*tries to lift TOM*)

TOM. You can't move me!

HODD. Shut up!

TOM. I don't mean that. I mean I'm too heavy.

HODD. Nonsense, damn nonsense. (*half carries him across stage*) Hi! here! where are the servants? Bless the boy! he's all right. Serve him right. No, it don't; I'm a brute! Does it hurt?

TOM. Not much. She was lovely, wasn't she?

HODD. Hang her! don't know. I mean, of course she was. Cheer up, old boy, you're all right.

Enter MRS. BENDYSHE from window.

MRS. B. (L. C.) I can't find the boy anywhere! You've got him!

HODD. (C.) I've got him, and he's got a sprained ankle.

Enter IRENE.

IRENE. (L., *excitedly*) Is he found?

TOM. (R. C.) Oh, bother all the fuss.

Enter PHIL.

PHIL. (L.) He's not lost?

TOM. Shut up! All right, Governor, I can stand!

Enter MAYSIE.

MAYSIE. (*on steps*) Then he is quite safe?

TOM. Oh, my gracious! you'd think I was a precious jewel.

HODD. It's a good thing you were out of the way just now. The husband came up to look for you, young man. I gave him a sovereign and recommended him to duck you in the pond.

ALL. (*excitedly*) Duck him in the pond!

BEN. (*outside*) Not again! Oh, not again!

Enter BENDYSHE, a woe-begone, bedraggled, befouled object, his curly hair limp and long about his eyes, the weeds round his neck and water oozing from every pore. Runs to C., then down.

ALL. Gracious! What's happened?

BEN. (*completely out of breath, feebly waves his arms*) That dreadful man! I ran rapidly for miles, I did indeed! But he was always just behind me. I heard him between my puffs. "It's no use, Guv'nor, you've got to have it," he remarked, repeatedly. He was quite right! I did have it! Look at me!

MRS. B. (*R., crosses C. to him*) My dearest, you'll catch your death.

BEN. (*C.*) I don't mind. Nothing seems to matter now. I keep on finding tadpoles in my hair.

HODD. (*R. C.*) Take him inside and give him something hot. Here, the boy, too. A nice couple of Romeos, upon my word!

BEN. (*almost in tears*) He called me sonny when he pulled me out. It sounded so friendly. It made me wonder why he pushed me in.

MRS. B. Don't talk now, dear! Come and change every stitch. (*exeunt BENDYSHE, supported by his wife, TOM, by HODDESSEN; all expressing wonderment and distress*)

PHIL. What on earth's happened?

MAYSIE. Who pushed him in?

IRENE. He didn't say.

PHIL. The gipsy fellow, of course. (*pause. MAYSIE moves off thoughtfully one side. PHIL goes up at back humming. IRENE sits on chair*)

IRENE. What's become of Major Dick?

PHIL. He's got a fit of the blues.

IRENE. Has he? Why doesn't he come up here; we'll cure him.

PHIL. He had to go down to the town to get a telegram that went wrong—or something.

IRENE. Oh! (*pause; she watches the couple, then suddenly*) Good gracious me! I beg your pardon. How careless of me!

PHIL. (*up C.*) What's up?

IRENE. Leaving myself about like this when there's a nice moon and a newly-engaged couple.

MAYSIE. (*down L.*) Don't go! Please don't go, Irene?

IRENE. (*cheerfully*) Well, I won't. (*sits down firmly. PHIL and MAYSIE L., moon about dejectedly; IRENE watches them out of the corner of her eye—sighs*) Oh, what a happy thing is love! (*pause*) Look at them! They can't really like it, you know. (*another pause*) Oh, I give it up. This may be entralling to you two, but it gets on my nerves. If somebody would only say something, I'd—

PHIL. Oh, don't go!

IRENE. Certainly. I was only staying to oblige you.

PHIL. I don't mean—(*warn music*)

IRENE. Don't glare at me in the moonlight, Mr. Marsden. I'm doing my best. I shall play sweet music to you because it's the food of love, and you two poor people look starving. (*runs up steps into drawing-room*)

PHIL. (*after a pause*) Aren't you happy? (*MAYSIE sits L.*)

MAYSIE. (*listlessly*) Very happy. Why do you say that?

PHIL. You seem—odd somehow.

MAYSIE. (*dreamily*) How did he fall into the pond?

PHIL. I don't know—but—oh, don't let's think of him, let's think of ourselves. (*takes her hand*) Oh, my dear little girl, you have made me so happy.

MAYSIE. Have I? (*IRENE is heard playing the harp in drawing-room*)

PHIL. It is awful to be so awfully in love as I am. I can't think of anything else. Do I bore you talking like this? I can't help it.

MAYSIE. It is nice to hear one is loved.

PHIL. Is it?

MAYSIE. (*looking at him*) You said that strangely.

PHIL. You said it was nice to hear one was loved. (*softly*) I haven't heard it yet—won't you say "Phil, I love you?" See, I can take you in my arms, you little mite of a thing, and—oh, I could crush you—don't hide your face, Maysie! don't hide your face! (*kisses her*) Oh, I will try and make you happy, little one. I'm not good enough for you, I know; but I'll try to be. Dick said to-day I wasn't worth the dust on your tiny shoes.

MAYSIE. Did he?

PHIL. He was about right. But all the same, won't you say, "Phil, I love you?" Why, Maysie, you're not crying?

MAYSIE. No—but—I—it all seems strange, doesn't it?

PHIL. It's all splendid. You know if it hadn't been for Dick I should never have had the courage to ask you again.

MAYSIE. (*quickly*) Why do you keep on talking about Dick?

PHIL. Do I? I didn't mean to. I suppose because he's such a good chap.

MAYSIE. He's not a good chap; he's—he's—Oh, I wish I didn't know. I wish I didn't know. (*crosses R.*)

PHIL. (*goes to her; quickly*) Maysie!

MAYSIE. (*repulsing him*) No, no! Don't speak to me now.

PHIL. What do you wish you didn't know?

MAYSIE. All the miserable truth about it. I thought him so strong, so brave—I could have—and then to find out—all! Oh, it was terrible!

PHIL. All! What?

MAYSIE. The lies about his dead wife,—all the shame he has lived in—all the disgrace—the dishonor—the lies about his boy. I saw the woman! I saw him give her money—he told me she was (*long pause*) she was—the mother of his boy.

PHIL. (*very deliberately*) You believe that woman and Dick—

MAYSIE. (*interrupts; scornfully*) Believe! He told me so himself.

PHIL. (*slowly, watching her intently*) But suppose—suppose it is all a mistake—suppose Dick was not guilty—suppose he had been free and had asked you to marry him, what would you have said (*she walks*

slowly away, crosses C. to L., and leans her head against the pillars of the verandah; he follows her
Tell me, Maysie.

MAYSIE. Yes, it's right you should know. If Dick had asked me this morning, I should have been, oh, so proud. After what I heard—what he told me this afternoon—I hope I shall never see him again.

PHIL. *(after long pause—slowly)* Then you don't love me after all—but I'll try to make you love me, dear. I'll try all my life! If I were brave I—I ought to give you up. But I love you too much to be brave. Try and love me a little, won't you, dear?

MAYSIE. I do love you, Phil.

PHIL. But Dick?

MAYSIE. Hush! That was different. That's over. Oh, if you knew how I despise him now!

PHIL. Don't! don't! I can't bear to hear you so unjust to him.

MAYSIE. *(scornfully)* Unjust! Do you admire him for it?

PHIL. No, but—but! Don't be too hard on him! Perhaps you don't know all.

MAYSIE. I know enough, thank you.

PHIL. Yes, but—if I could prove that you were wrong—that Dick never did a thing in his whole life to be ashamed of—that this story is a mistake—if I could prove this?

MAYSIE. *(turning to him quickly)* If you could prove this, I should be the happiest woman in the world; but you can't, Phil—you can't, can you?

PHIL. *(looks at her, holds out his hands, then turns from her with bent head)* No, I can prove nothing. *(she turns and walks listlessly up the steps)*

MAYSIE. *(quietly)* When did you say you wanted our wedding to be?

PHIL. *(huskily, not turning to her)* Some time next month.

MAYSIE. *(slowly)* Next month—yes, I remember! Then—we—we—go away! I remember! *(goes slowly into drawing-room)*

PHIL. *(to himself)* You coward!—you allowed her to believe a lie—to think Dick—— You coward! afraid to tell her the truth—afraid—— *(music gets softer.*

DICK *is seen coming out of the darkness beyond the*

trees and across the lawn. He comes slowly with unsteady steps. PHIL watches him for a moment, then starts forward with a subdued cry) Dick! (DICK comes out of the shadow, the light falls on his face, which is drawn and pale, his lips trembling with suppressed suffering. In a whisper) Dick! Great God! What is it? (pause. DICK looks at him for a moment as if dazed. Repeats) What is it?

DICK. (*chokingly*) Don't speak to me—don't—where's Maysie? I—I want her.

PHIL. What's happened?

DICK. (*hoarsely*) Kiddie—kiddie's dead! Don't speak to me! Where's Maysie?

PHIL. (*dumfounded*) Dead? Kiddie dead!

DICK. (*jerkily*) Killed—to-day—run over—just as he started out to—to post his little letter to me. (*sways a little. PHIL catches him*) Oh, God help me!—my own little kiddie! (*sits by table in half light*)

PHIL. My dear old boy.

DICK. Don't—don't pity me! I shall be a fool! (*long pause—he sways to and fro recovering his self-control*) I told his mother to-day that he was dead! I thought I was lying, but it was the truth—it's like a judgment—Maysie, ask her to come to me. I don't want to face the light.

PHIL. (*goes slowly to verandah, turns, looks at DICK, then in a whisper to himself*) If I bring her to him she— (*pauses again, irresolute, then with fierce determination*) I can't! I can't! Why should I lose her now? (*returns to DICK, who is sitting with his head on his folded arms*) Dick! (*rouses him*) Dick! Must you see her? (DICK raises his head) I mean—you—you don't know all; she has promised to marry me; it's all arranged.

DICK. (*listlessly*) Yes—yes—I know. I'm going away alone. We settled that—you and I.

PHIL. (*slowly*) Yes—but—this afternoon you allowed her to think you and that woman were—

DICK. (*quickly, as if to himself*) Yes, yes, that's why I've come! It was a misunderstanding. I didn't see what she was driving at till afterwards, but I can tell her now. I must tell her now, because I shall never see her again, and—and when I saw her last!—I know she despised me—it was in her eyes. She won't do that

any more, will she, Phil? She'll help me now, when she knows the truth.

PHIL. (*slowly*) When she knows the truth she will despise you no longer. She will—— (*with a sudden outburst*) Oh, man, don't you understand? (DICK *looks at him, then suddenly the meaning flashes into his face, and he lifts his hands as if to ward off a blow*)

DICK. (*despairingly*) Phil! You wouldn't have me—oh, Phil!

PHIL. (*huskily*) I love her so—and—and—the wedding is arranged. (*long pause*)

DICK. (*looks at him slowly, sinks back into chair mechanically*) The wedding is arranged! I never thought of that. Yes—yes—I understand! (*rises, slowly turns to go away*)

PHIL. (*holds out his hands to him imploringly*) Dick!

DICK. (*turns and looks at him, ignoring the outstretched hands*) Hush! don't say anything for a bit! (*pauses, then conquers himself and turns to PHIL*) We—we've been chums for a long time, Phil, a long time. I—I've been damned fond of you—we won't go back on it now. You've asked a great deal—you're right, I suppose—but I'm too tired to see things clearly now.

PHIL. You think I'm a coward, Dick?

DICK. No. You're young, I'm old—that's all the difference. (*then with an effort at cheerfulness*) After all, what does it matter whether she despises me or not? I shall be a long way off, and I shall love her all the time. (*takes PHIL'S hand earnestly*) Be kind to her, Phil, be very kind to her, and perhaps some day you'll tell her for me—some day—all in your own good time. (*drops PHIL'S hand and turns as if to go*)

PHIL. (*huskily*) Where are you going?

DICK. (*gently*) I'm going—to kiss—my boy. (MAYSIE *comes out of the drawing-room. He sees her as she stands in the light*)

MAYSIE. Who—who is that?

PHIL. (*stopping her quickly*) Hush!

MAYSIE. Major Rudyard! (*stands on verandah, the light from the room on her*)

PHIL. (C.) He's going away—he came to say good-bye.

DICK. (L. C., *falteringly*) Yes, yes; good-bye to Phil—to you.

MAYSIE. (*very quietly, not looking at him, not moving*) You are going abroad, then?

DICK. Yes.

MAYSIE. For long?

DICK. For ever.

MAYSIE. (*drearily*) For ever?

DICK. (*hasn't moved or looked at her*) There's nothing to keep me here. I'm alone now. I—won't you say good-bye to me?

MAYSIE. Good-bye.

DICK. Won't you shake hands? (*she doesn't move*) You won't shake hands—you won't shake hands?

MAYSIE. I can't. You know why I can't. I shouldn't mean it if I did—after to-day. (DICK *looks at her pleadingly, dumbly, his lips quivering. She goes on speaking softly, keeping back her tears*) I will try and think less hardly of you—when you are gone. I'll try to think you all I once thought you. I will pray to God to bless you and to bless your boy. (*stops and half turns to DICK*)

DICK. (R. C., *slowly*) To bless my boy—yes, God has blessed him; He's taken him from me—kiddie's gone!

MAYSIE. (C., *looks up swiftly for the first time into DICK's face, then with a movement of infinite tenderness turns to him with a cry*) Dick!—Oh, Dick!

DICK. (*brokenly*) Don't—don't speak kindly to me, I can't bear it. For God's sake shake hands—good-bye—good-bye! (MAYSIE *gives him both her hands. He holds them tremblingly a minute, looking into her eyes, then drops them and turns to go. PHIL has been standing at back wrestling with himself. As DICK turns, he breaks out passionately*)

PHIL. (L. C.) I can't do it! I can't! Maysie, you're wrong! Don't let him go. Tell her the truth, Dick—the truth!

DICK. No, no! (*he sinks on to chair and bows his head on his arms on the table*)

PHIL. Then I will. The boy was Jack Townsend's boy. Dick, for Jack's sake, adopted him, worked for him, loved him. He promised to save him from that woman. He did his best. Dick, Dick, forgive me, forgive me!

MAYSIE. (*with a glad cry*) Dick!

PHIL. May, dear, you told me you couldn't love me—

I understand. You are quite free, Maysie, quite free. *(turns hurriedly and disappears into the trees. There is a long pause, broken only by the soft sounds of the harp and distant voices from a far boat on the river singing an old air)*

MAYSIE. *(goes slowly to DICK, holding out her hands)* Dick, oh, my dear, dear Dick! Dick, don't, don't, don't! Let me help you to bear it, dear, won't you? *(steals nearer to him and rests her hand on his bowed head)* Won't you, dear? I'll try to understand. I'll never question again, if you'll only keep me with you always. I—I want to be your wife, Dick, won't you take me?

DICK. *(turns to her as if dazed, then with a cry, half laugh, half sob, he drops his weary head on her hands and murmurs brokenly)* Oh, my dear—my dear! *(the song dies away in the distance as the curtain falls)*

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